

2026 -- H 7487

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LC004808

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S T A T E O F R H O D E I S L A N D

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO ANIMALS AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY -- DOGS

Introduced By: Representatives Bennett, McEntee, Corvese, Shanley, Speakman, McGaw, Kislak, Shallcross Smith, Edwards, and Morales

Date Introduced: February 04, 2026

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 4-13-13, 4-13-39 and 4-13-42 of the General Laws in Chapter 4-13
2 entitled "Dogs" are hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **4-13-13. Wrongful removal of collar — Theft or destruction of licensed dogs —**

4 **Poisoning.**

5 (a) Whoever wrongfully removes the collar from the neck of a dog licensed and collared
6 according to the provisions of this chapter, or steals a dog licensed or collared, or kills, maims,
7 entices, carries away, or detains a licensed dog, or distributes or exposes a poisonous substance,
8 with the intent that the poisonous substance shall be eaten by a licensed dog, shall be punished by
9 a fine of not less than ~~ten dollars (\$10.00)~~ one hundred dollars (\$100), nor more than ~~one hundred~~
10 ~~dollars (\$100)~~ one thousand dollars (\$1,000) or be imprisoned not exceeding thirty (30) days, or
11 both, and shall be liable to the dog's owner for damages in a civil action.

12 (b) Any person who has been previously convicted of an offense provided for in chapter
13 13 of title 4 shall, upon conviction of a second or subsequent violation within a ten-year (10) period,
14 be punished by a fine of not less than five hundred dollars (\$500) and not exceeding one thousand
15 dollars (\$1,000) or be imprisoned for a period not exceeding one year, or both. In addition, every
16 person convicted under chapter 13 of title 4 of a second or subsequent offense shall be required to
17 serve one hundred (100) hours of public community restitution, as defined in § 11-62-1. The public
18 community restitution penalty shall not be suspended or deferred and is mandatory.

19 **4-13-39. Penalties.**

1 **Any Except where otherwise specified that a violation shall result in a greater penalty, any**
2 person convicted of a violation of this chapter shall be fined fifty dollars (\$50) for a first offense
3 and one hundred dollars (\$100) for a second and subsequent offense.

4 **4-13-42. Care of dogs.**

5 (a) It shall be a violation of this section for an owner or keeper to:
6 (1) Keep any dog on a permanent tether that restricts movement of the tethered dog to an
7 area less than one hundred thirteen square feet (113 sq. ft.), or less than a six foot (6') radius at
8 ground level.

9 (2) Tether a dog with a choke-type collar, head collar, or prong-type collar. The weight of
10 any chain or tether shall not exceed one-eighth (1/8) of the dog's total body weight.

11 (3) Keep any dog tethered for more than ten (10) hours during a twenty-four-hour (24)
12 period or keep any dog confined in an area or primary enclosure for more than fourteen (14) hours
13 during any twenty-four-hour (24) period, and more than ten (10) hours during a twenty-four-hour
14 (24) period, if the area is not greater than that which is required under the most recently adopted
15 version of the department of environmental management's rules and regulations governing animal
16 care facilities.

17 (4) Tether a dog anytime from the hours of ten o'clock p.m. (10:00 p.m.) to six o'clock
18 a.m. (6:00 a.m.), except for a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes.

19 (5) Keep any dog outside, either tethered or otherwise confined, when the ambient
20 temperature is beyond the industry standard for the weather safety scale as set forth in the most
21 recent adopted version of the Tufts Animal Care and Condition Weather Safety Scale (TACC).

22 (b) It shall be a violation of this section for an owner or keeper to fail to provide a dog with
23 adequate feed, adequate water, or adequate veterinary care as those terms are defined in § 4-19-2;
24 provided however, that adequate veterinary care may be provided by an owner using acceptable
25 animal husbandry practices.

26 (c) Exposing any dog to adverse weather conditions strictly for the purpose of conditioning
27 shall be prohibited.

28 (d) The provisions of this section, as they relate to the duration and timeframe of tethering
29 or confinement, shall not apply:

30 (1) If the tethering or confinement is authorized for medical reasons in writing by a
31 veterinarian licensed in Rhode Island, the authorization is renewed annually, and shelter is
32 provided;

33 (2) If tethering or confinement is authorized in writing by an animal control officer, or duly
34 sworn police officer assigned to the animal control division, for the purposes of, including, but not

1 limited to, hunting dogs, dogs protecting livestock, and sled dogs. Written authorization must be
2 renewed annually. The written authorization issued by an animal control officer or duly sworn
3 police officer assigned to the animal control division in the political subdivision of the state where
4 the dogs are kept shall be considered valid in every other political subdivision of the state. The
5 written authorization issued by an animal control officer or duly sworn police officer assigned to
6 the animal control division in the political subdivision of the state where the dogs are kept is
7 revocable by that animal control officer or police officer if there are any conditions present that
8 warrant revocation. The conditions include, but are not limited to, changes in the number or type
9 of dogs, changes in the facility structure or safety, and changes in the health of the dog;

10 (3) To any entity licensed by the state pursuant to chapter 19 of title 4, or any veterinary
11 facility; or

12 (4) [Deleted by P.L. 2018, ch. 118, § 1 and P.L. 2018, ch. 198, § 1.]

13 (5) [Deleted by P.L. 2018, ch. 118, § 1 and P.L. 2018, ch. 198, § 1.]

14 (6) To an exhibitor holding a class C license under the Animal Welfare Act (7 U.S.C. §
15 2133) that are temporarily in the state, if authorized by the department of environmental
16 management (DEM).

17 (7) [Deleted by P.L. 2018, ch. 118, § 1 and P.L. 2018, ch. 198, § 1.]

18 (e)(1) Any person in violation of this section shall be imprisoned not exceeding eleven (11)
19 months, or fined not less than one hundred dollars (\$100) nor exceeding one thousand dollars
20 (\$1,000), or both. Each day of violation shall constitute a separate offense.

21 (2) For a second or subsequent violation, sequentially removed in time from the violation(s)
22 of subsection (e)(1) of this section, the fine shall be not less than five hundred dollars (\$500), or
23 more than two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) and up to two (2) years imprisonment.

24 (f) General Animal control officers of the cities and towns, or general agents or special
25 agents of the Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RISPCA) are hereby
26 authorized to enforce the provisions of this chapter in cooperation with animal control officers and
27 the department of environmental management (DEM).

28 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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- 1 This act would increase penalties for a second or subsequent offense with a fine of not less
- 2 than five hundred dollars (\$500) or no more than two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) and
- 3 up to two years (2) imprisonment, for violating the law on the care of dogs. This act would further
- 4 amend existing law to include city and town animal control officers as agents authorized to enforce
- 5 the provisions of this law.
- 6 This act would take effect upon passage.

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