

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2009

SESSION LAW 2009-304
SENATE BILL 467

AN ACT TO ASSIST OWNERS IN RECOVERING LOST PETS, RELIEVE
OVERCROWDING AT ANIMAL SHELTERS, AND FACILITATE ADOPTIONS OF
ANIMALS FROM SHELTERS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. G.S. 130A-192 reads as rewritten:

"§ 130A-192. Dogs and cats not wearing required rabies vaccination tags.

(a) The Animal Control Officer shall canvass the county to determine if there are any dogs or cats not wearing the required rabies vaccination tag. If a dog or cat is found not wearing the required tag, the Animal Control Officer shall check to see if the owner's identification can be found on the animal. If the animal is wearing an owner identification tag, tag with information enabling the owner of the animal to be contacted, or if the Animal Control Officer otherwise knows who the owner is, the Animal Control Officer shall notify the owner in writing to have the animal vaccinated against rabies and to produce the required rabies vaccination certificate to the Animal Control Officer within three days of the notification. If the animal is not wearing an owner identification tag and the Animal Control Officer does not otherwise know who the owner is, the Animal Control Officer may impound the animal. The duration of the impoundment of these animals shall be established by the county board of commissioners, but the duration shall not be less than 72 hours. During the impoundment period, the Animal Control Officer shall make a reasonable effort to locate the owner of the animal. If the Animal Control Officer has access at no cost or at a reasonable cost to a microchip scanning device, the Animal Control Officer may scan the animal and utilize any information that may be available through a microchip to locate the owner of the animal, if possible. If the animal is not reclaimed by its owner during the impoundment period, the animal shall be disposed of in one of the following manners: returned to the owner; adopted as a pet by a new owner; sold to institutions within this State registered by the United States Department of Agriculture pursuant to the Federal Animal Welfare Act, as amended; or put to death by a procedure approved by rules adopted by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services or, in the absence of such rules, by a procedure approved by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Humane Society of the United States or of the American Humane Association.

(a1) Before an animal may be sold or put to death, it shall be made available for adoption under procedures that enable members of the public to inspect the animal, except in cases in which the animal is found by the operator of the shelter to be unadoptable due to injury or defects of health or temperament. An animal that is seriously ill or injured may be euthanized if the manager of the animal shelter determines, in writing, that it is appropriate to do so. Nothing in this subsection shall supercede (i) any rules adopted by the Board of Agriculture which specify the number of animals allowed for kennel space in animal shelters, or (ii) the duration of impoundment established by the county board of commissioners, or the 72-hour holding period, as provided in subsection (a) of this section.

(a2) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, a person who comes to an animal shelter attempting to locate a lost pet is entitled to view every animal held at the shelter, subject to rules providing for such viewing during at least four hours a day, three days a week. If the shelter is housing animals that must be kept apart from the general public for health reasons, public safety concerns, or in order to preserve evidence for criminal proceedings, the shelter shall make reasonable arrangements that allow pet owners to determine whether their lost pets are among those animals.

(a3) The Animal Control Officer shall maintain a record of all animals impounded under this section which shall include the date of impoundment, the length of impoundment, the



method of disposal of the animal and the name of the person or institution to whom any animal has been released.

(b) In addition to domesticated dogs and cats not wearing the required rabies tags, the provisions of subsection (a) of this section concerning the holding of animals for at least 72 hours and the permissible means of disposition of animals after expiration of that holding period also apply to all of the following:

- (1) Dogs and cats that are wearing rabies tags but are taken into custody for violation of statutes or ordinances not related to rabies control, such as ordinances requiring the leashing or restraining of dogs and cats.
- (2) Dogs and cats surrendered to an animal shelter by the owners of the animals, unless an owner provides to the shelter the following:
 - a. Some proof of ownership of the animal, and
 - b. A signed written consent to the disposition of the animal, in a manner authorized by this section, before the expiration of the 72-hour holding period or of a longer period established by ordinance or local rule to which the shelter is subject.

(c) If an animal is not wearing tags, or other mode of identification indicating its owner, and is delivered to an animal shelter by (i) a person who has found and captured the animal, or (ii) by an approved rescue organization that received the animal from a person who found and captured the animal, then the shelter may, in writing, appoint the finder or approved rescue organization to be the agent of the shelter. For purposes of this subsection, the term "approved rescue organization" means a nonprofit corporation or association that cares for stray animals that has been favorably assessed by the operator of the animal shelter through the application of written standards.

- (1) If the animal is a dog or cat, the finder or approved rescue organization shall hold the animal for the 72-hour holding period provided for in subsection (a) of this section or such longer holding period that may be applicable to the shelter by ordinance or local rule. If the animal is not a dog or cat, then the holding period shall be by agreement between the animal shelter and the person or organization receiving the animal.
- (2) After the expiration of the applicable holding period, the shelter may:
 - a. Transfer the animal by adoption to the person or organization that has held it as agent, or
 - b. Extend the period of time the finder or rescue organization holds the animal as agent of the shelter.
- (3) A shelter may terminate an agency created under this subsection at any time by directing the finder or rescue organization to deliver the animal to the shelter.
- (4) The city, county, or organization operating the animal shelter, as principal in the agency relationship, shall not be liable to reimburse the agent for the costs of care of the animal and shall not be liable to the owner of the animal for harm to the animal caused by the agent, absent a written contract providing otherwise.

(d) During the 72-hour or longer holding period established under subsection (a) of this section, an animal shelter may place an animal it is holding in foster care.

(e) If an animal shelter transfers physical possession of a dog or cat under subsection (c) or (d) of this section, so that the animal is no longer on the animal shelter premises, at least one photograph which depicts the head and face of the animal shall (i) be displayed at the shelter in a conspicuous location that is available to the general public during hours of operation, and (ii) remain posted for the 72-hour or longer holding period established under subsection (a) of this section."

SECTION 2. G.S. 130A-184(1) reads as rewritten:

- "(1) "Animal Control Officer" means a city or county employee designated as dog warden, animal control officer, animal control official or other designations that may be used whose responsibility includes animal control. The term "Animal Control Officer" also includes agents of a private organization that is operating an animal shelter under contract with a city or county whenever those agents are performing animal control functions at the shelter."

SECTION 3. This act becomes effective January 1, 2010. The provisions of G.S. 130A-192(a2) may be waived by the Department of Agriculture until July 1, 2010, for counties that do not have an employee who is employed a minimum of 30 hours per week fulfilling the responsibilities of an animal control officer for the county.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 8th day of July, 2009.

s/ Walter H. Dalton
President of the Senate

s/ Joe Hackney
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Beverly E. Perdue
Governor

Approved 5:19 p.m. this 17th day of July, 2009