

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Criminal Justice Committee

BILL: SB 744

INTRODUCER: Senator Rich

SUBJECT: Sexual Activities Involving Animals

DATE: April 11, 2008

REVISED: 04/16/08

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Cellon	Cannon	CJ	Fav/2 amendments
2.			AG	
3.			JU	
4.			JA	
5.				
6.				

Please see Section VIII. for Additional Information:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| A. COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Statement of Substantial Changes |
| B. AMENDMENTS..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Technical amendments were recommended |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Amendments were recommended |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Significant amendments were recommended |

I. Summary:

Senate Bill 744 creates a new section of law which prohibits as a first degree felony, sexual conduct, or contact for the purpose of sexual gratification, with animals, and other acts related to the prohibited behavior.

This bill creates section 828.126 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Despite the best efforts of prosecutors in the State of Florida, persons who are actually caught in the act of sexual intercourse with an animal cannot generally be charged with or convicted of a sex-related crime. There have been several recently reported incidents of the abuse of animals in this particular way.

Reported incidents in Florida include:

- In Leon County, in 2005, a man was convicted of a misdemeanor disorderly conduct charge for sexually battering his own Guide Dog.

- In April of 2004 a Marion County man pled no contest to animal cruelty after his fiancé caught him sexually battering her 1-year old female dog. The dog was physically injured in the process. The Sheriff's Office reports indicated that the man told deputies that this type of behavior had been a "life-long problem." (Ocala Star Banner, April 15, 2004)
- A West Palm Beach man was caught sexually battering a neighbor's dog in January of 2004. The dog was alleged to have been yelping in pain. The man was charged with animal cruelty and indecent exposure. The perpetrator is a registered sex offender.
- A family's pregnant goat was sexually battered and asphyxiated in January of 2008 in a small panhandle town. The suspect in the case, a 48 year old man, is currently serving a sentence in an unrelated livestock theft charge. Prosecutors were unable to charge him in the mistreatment and death of the goat because DNA tests were inconclusive. (Miami Herald, January 4, 2008)
- Martin County Sheriff's deputies were called to investigate an animal in distress and found a man sexually battering a four-month old puppy. Reports indicate that when the deputy approached the man, she saw him in the act as the puppy whined and tried to break free.

These acts and behaviors cannot always be prosecuted as animal cruelty unless there is injury or evidence of excessive or repeated infliction of pain to the animal. Section 828.12, F.S., subsection (2) is the felony animal cruelty statute. It states: "A person who intentionally commits an act to any animal which results in the cruel death, or excessive or repeated infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering, or causes the same to be done, is guilty of a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or by a fine of not more than \$10,000, or both."

In other states, situations like those set forth above have resulted in the passage of laws designed to more accurately capture these behaviors within the criminal law as the particularized crimes that they are. Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Virginia, Oklahoma, and South Carolina are among the states in the southeast that currently have felony bestiality statutes.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Senate Bill 744 creates a felony offense for knowingly engaging in sexual conduct or sexual contact with an animal, as defined in the newly created section of law. It also prohibits aiding or abetting another in committing those acts, in permitting such acts to be conducted, and in organizing, promoting, or performing acts in furtherance of such acts. Photographing, filming or knowingly transmitting or selling films or photos of the prohibited acts is also a felony under the provisions of the bill.

All of the acts prohibited by the bill are designated as first degree felony offenses.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Although the bill creates new felony offenses, the Criminal Justice Impact Conference expected an insignificant prison bed impact if the law goes into effect.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

Barcode 505468 by Criminal Justice on April 16, 2008:

This amendment changes the level of the felony offense created by the bill from a first degree to a third degree felony.

Barcode 932764 by Criminal Justice on April 16, 2008:

The amendment exempts accepted animal husbandry and veterinary practices from the prohibitions in the bill.