

By Senator Osgood

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the sale of rabbits; creating s.
3 828.44, F.S.; prohibiting the sale of rabbits in
4 specified locations and during specified months;
5 specifying unlawful acts relating to the sale,
6 offering for sale, and the giving away as
7 merchandising premiums of certain rabbits; providing
8 requirements for rabbits offered for sale at retail
9 pet stores; requiring retail pet stores to maintain
10 and make available specified records; requiring local
11 authorities to retrieve, return, and place abandoned
12 rabbits in a specified manner; authorizing specified
13 officials to enter retail pet stores and conduct
14 compliance inspections; prohibiting persons from
15 refusing or interfering with such inspections;
16 providing criminal penalties; providing applicability;
17 providing an effective date.

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19 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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21 Section 1. Section 828.44, Florida Statutes, is created to
22 read:

23 828.44 Pet rabbits.—

24 (1) The sale of rabbits is prohibited:

25 (a) On any public or private streets or rights-of-way,
26 within 50 feet of any right-of-way, at any flea market, in
27 private parking lots, or at any open-air venue, such as a
28 parade, concert, and festival.

29 (b) In retail pet stores during the months of March and

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30 April. During the months of March and April, retail stores shall
31 keep rabbits in a separate area, off the sales floor and out of
32 view of the public, and label each cage, kennel, or enclosure
33 with signage indicating that the rabbits are not for sale until
34 May 1.

35 (2) It is unlawful to sell, offer for sale, or give away as
36 a merchandising premium any rabbit under 2 months of age to be
37 used as a pet, toy, or retail premium. Rabbits under 2 months of
38 age may not be kept on the premises of a retail pet store.

39 (3) Each rabbit offered for sale at a retail pet store
40 must:

41 (a) Be kept one per cage, kennel, or enclosure to avoid
42 unwanted pregnancies. The cage, kennel, or enclosure must be
43 kept clean and dry and may not have wire floors.

44 (b) Have proper food, water, and hay for digestion at all
45 times.

46 (c) Have signage posted on its cage, kennel, or enclosure
47 which includes its date of birth; the name, city, and state of
48 its breeder; and its microchip number.

49 (d) Be microchipped and have its microchip registered with
50 the name, city, and state of both the retail pet store and the
51 breeder.

52 (4) (a) Each retail pet store shall maintain records
53 documenting the source of each rabbit acquired by the retail pet
54 store. The records must:

55 1. Include a certificate of source and veterinary
56 inspection;

57 2. Be located in close proximity to the rabbit enclosure;
58 and

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59 3. Be available for review by potential purchasers.

60 (b) Records must be kept for at least 2 years following the
61 date of acquisition and must be made available, immediately upon
62 request, to any police officer, code enforcement officer, animal
63 control officer, humane law enforcement officer, or other
64 investigating official.

65 (5) Abandoned rabbits must be retrieved by local
66 authorities, and, if an owner is not found, the rabbit must be
67 returned to the retail store that registered the microchip. If
68 the retail store is no longer in business, the rabbit must be
69 returned to the breeder. If the breeder is no longer in
70 business, authorities must find a legitimate rabbit rescue or
71 animal shelter to care for the rabbit.

72 (6) A city, a county, or any investigating official may
73 enter the premises of any retail pet store during regular
74 business hours to conduct reasonable inspections to ensure and
75 verify compliance with this section. A person may not refuse or
76 interfere with a lawful inspection of a retail pet store by
77 investigating officials.

78 (7) A person who violates this section commits a
79 misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s.
80 775.082 or s. 775.083.

81 (8) This section does not apply to rabbits raised for any
82 of the following:

83 (a) Agricultural purposes by persons with proper facilities
84 to care for them.

85 (b) Livestock exhibitions.

86 (c) Future Farmers of America or 4-H activities.

87 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.