

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 Committee on Criminal Justice

BILL: CS/SB 150

INTRODUCER: Criminal Justice Committee and Senators Gaetz and Arrington

SUBJECT: Animal Cruelty During a Declared State of Emergency

DATE: February 28, 2025

REVISED: 2/28/25

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Cellon</u>	<u>Stokes</u>	<u>CJ</u>	Fav/CS
2.	<u>Becker</u>	<u>Becker</u>	<u>AG</u>	Favorable
3.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u>RC</u>	<u> </u>

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 150 amends s. 828.13, F.S., to create a new offense of animal cruelty for abandoning an animal by using a restraint on the animal and leaving it restrained outside during a natural disaster. The offense is a third degree felony.^{1,2}

The bill defines the terms “natural disaster” and “restraint.”

The bill names the act “Trooper’s Law.”

The bill has a positive indeterminate impact. *See Section V. Fiscal Impact Statement.*

The bill takes effect on October 1, 2025.

¹ A third degree felony is punishable by up to five years imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine. Sections 775.082, F.S. and 775.083, F.S.

² As is the case with other animal cruelty offenses, the bill provides for the possibility of a fine that may be elevated above the typical fine. For example, the third degree felony fine is generally up to \$5,000 but this new offense provides for a fine up to \$10,000. Sections 775.082(3) F.S., 775.083(1)(g), F.S., and 820.13, F.S.

II. Present Situation:

Dog Rescued by Florida Highway Patrol Trooper Tied Up During Hurricane Milton

Hurricane Milton struck the state in early October 2024. During the storm, a Florida Highway Patrol trooper discovered a dog tied to a fence off I-75 surrounded by rising water. The dog, now named Trooper, was rescued and taken to the Tallahassee Humane Society, where he was subsequently adopted. This bill addresses that situation.³

General Animal Cruelty Statutes

Section 828.12(1), F.S., provides first degree misdemeanor penalties⁴ for certain cases involving cruelty to animals. A person commits the crime of animal cruelty if he or she:

- Unnecessarily overloads;
- Overdrives;
- Torments;
- Deprives of necessary sustenance or shelter;
- Unnecessarily mutilates, or kills any animal, or causes such to be done; or
- Carries in or upon any vehicle, or otherwise, any animal in a cruel or inhumane manner.

A person who is convicted of a violation of s. 828.12, F.S., may be prohibited by the court from owning, possessing, keeping, harboring, or having custody or control over any animal for a period of time determined by the court.⁵

Section 828.12(2), F.S., specifies that a person who intentionally commits an act to any animal, or a person who owns or has the custody or control of any animal and fails to act, which results in the cruel death, or excessive or repeated infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering, or causes the same to be done, commits aggravated animal cruelty, a felony of the third degree.⁶

Also, s. 828.13(2)(a), (b), and (c) F.S., provide that a person commits a first degree misdemeanor⁷ if he or she:

- Impounds or confines any animal in any place and fails to supply the animal during such confinement with a sufficient quantity of good and wholesome food and water;
- Keeps any animals in any enclosure without wholesome exercise and change of air; or
- Abandons to die any animal that is maimed, sick, infirm, or diseased;

³ Tallahassee Democrat, *Trooper, abandoned amid Hurricane Milton and sent to Leon County, finds 'fur-ever' home*, December 2, 2024, Kyla A. Sanford, available at <https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/local/2024/12/02/trooper-dog-abandoned-amid-hurricane-milton-finds-fur-ever-home-leon-county-humane-society/76709656007/> (last visited February 28, 2025).

⁴ A first degree misdemeanor is punishable by up to 1 year in the county jail or a \$1,000 fine or both. Sections 775.082, F.S., and 775.083, F.S. However, a violation of s. 828.12(1), F.S., may result in a fine of up to \$5,000. Section 828.12(1), F.S.

⁵ Section 828.12(6), F.S.

⁶ A third degree felony is punishable by up to 5 years imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine. Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S. However, a violation of s. 828.12(2), F.S., may result in a fine of up to \$10,000. Sections 775.082(3) F.S., 775.083(1)(g), F.S., and 828.12(2), F.S.

⁷ A first degree misdemeanor is punishable by up to 1 year in the county jail or a \$1,000 fine or both. Sections 775.082, F.S., and 775.083, F.S. However, a violation of s. 828.13(2), F.S., may result in a fine of up to \$5,000. Sections 775.082, 775.083, and 828.13(2), F.S.

Section 828.13(3), F.S., prohibits a person who is the owner or possessor or has charge or custody of any animal who abandons such animal to suffer injury or malnutrition or abandons any animal in a street, road, or public place without providing for the care, sustenance, protection, and shelter of such animal which is punishable as a misdemeanor of the first degree.⁸

Section 828.13(1)(a), F.S., defines the term “abandon” to mean to forsake an animal entirely or to neglect or refuse to provide or perform the legal obligations for care and support of an animal by its owner. The term “owner” is defined as any owner, custodian, or other person in charge of an animal.

Emergency Powers, Disaster Preparedness

Section 252.36, F.S., specifies that in the event of an emergency beyond local control, the Governor may assume direct operational control over all or any part of the emergency management functions within this state and is authorized to delegate such powers as she or he may deem prudent. The Governor has declared a state of emergency for various weather related conditions, including numerous hurricanes.⁹

Section 252.3568, F.S., provides, in accordance with s. 252.35, F.S.,¹⁰ the Division of Emergency Management within the Executive Office of the Governor (Division) must address strategies for the evacuation of persons with pets in the shelter component of the state comprehensive emergency management plan and must include the requirement for similar strategies in its standards and requirements for local comprehensive emergency management plans. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Department of Education must assist the division in determining strategies regarding this activity.

If a county maintains designated shelters, it must also designate a shelter that can accommodate persons with pets. The shelter must be in compliance with applicable FEMA Disaster Assistance Policies and Procedures and with safety procedures regarding the sheltering of pets established in the shelter component of both local and state comprehensive emergency management plans.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill creates a third degree felony¹¹ animal cruelty offense in s. 812.13, F.S., for abandoning an animal by using a restraint on the animal and leaving it restrained outside during a natural disaster.

The bill defines the following terms:

⁸ A first degree misdemeanor is punishable by up to 1 year in the county jail or a \$1,000 fine or both. Sections 775.082, F.S., and 775.083, F.S. However, a violation of s. 828.13(3), F.S., may result in a fine of up to \$5,000. Sections 775.082, and 775.083, F.S. and 828.13(3), F.S..

⁹ See Fla. Exec. Order No. 24-215 (October 5, 2024), available at, <https://www.flgov.com/eog/sites/default/files/executive-orders/2024/EO-24-215-1.pdf> (Last visited February 28, 2025).

¹⁰ Section 252.35, F.S., relates to Emergency management powers and the Division of Emergency Management.

¹¹ The third degree felony is punishable by up to 5 years imprisonment, and in these cases up to a \$10,000 fine. Sections 775.082(3) F.S., 775.083(1)(g), F.S., and 828.13(4).

- “Natural disaster” means a situation in which a hurricane, tropical storm, or tornado warning has been issued for a municipality or a county by the National Weather Service, or in which a municipality or county is under a mandatory or voluntary evacuation order.
- “Restraint” means a chain, rope, tether, leash, cable, or other device that attaches an animal to a stationary object or trolley system.

The bill names the act “Trooper’s Law.”

The bill takes effect on October 1, 2025.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill has a positive indeterminate impact due to the penalties provided in the bill. It is unknown how many offenses of animal cruelty have taken place during a declared emergency, and therefore the prison bed impact cannot be determined.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 828.12

IX. Additional Information:

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS/150 by Criminal Justice on February 11, 2025:

The committee substitute:

- Creates an animal cruelty offense in s. 828.13, F.S., for abandoning an animal by using a restraint on the animal and leaving it restrained it outside during a natural disaster.
- It defines the terms “natural disaster” and “restraint”.
- The CS names the act “Trooper’s Law”.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.