

# FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

*This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.*

**BILL #:** [CS/HB 593](#)

**TITLE:** Dangerous Dogs

**SPONSOR(S):** Sapp

**COMPANION BILL:** [CS/CS/SB 572](#) (Collins)

**LINKED BILLS:** None

**RELATED BILLS:** None

**FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION:** 112 Y's

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**GOVERNOR'S ACTION:** Approved

### SUMMARY

#### Effect of the Bill:

The bill creates the "Pam Rock Act," revising provisions relating to dangerous dogs by requiring:

- An animal control authority to humanely euthanize a dangerous dog in certain instances.
- A dog owner who has knowledge of a dog's dangerous propensities to securely confine the dog in a proper enclosure as if the dog had been determined to be "dangerous."
- Animal control authorities to hold dogs during the course of a dangerous dog investigation in certain instances.
- Dogs that have been declared dangerous to be microchipped and spayed or neutered.
- The owner of a dangerous dog to obtain at least \$100,000 of liability insurance.

The bill makes the intentional removal of a microchip from a dangerous dog a third-degree felony and resisting or obstructing an animal control authority investigation into a dangerous dog a first-degree misdemeanor. The bill increases criminal penalties for the owners of dogs that severely injure or cause the death of a person if the dog has previously been declared dangerous or the owner knew of dog's dangerous propensities. The bill also increases the maximum fine for violations of the dangerous dog statute.

#### Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on local governments to the extent animal control authorities are required to hold dogs during the course of an investigation.

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### ANALYSIS

#### **EFFECT OF THE BILL:**

The bill creates the "Pam Rock Act." (Section [1](#))

The bill revises provisions relating to [dangerous dogs](#) by requiring:

- A dog owner who has knowledge of a dog's dangerous propensities to securely confine the dog in a [proper enclosure](#) as if the dog had been determined to be dangerous. (Section [2](#))
- Animal control authorities to hold a dog during the course of a dangerous dog investigation if the dog has killed a human being or has bitten a human being and left a bite mark that scores 5 or higher on the [Dunbar bite scale](#). (Section [5](#))
- An animal control authority to notify the owner of the final order classifying his or her dangerous dog by registered mail or certified hand delivery in conformance with the provisions relating to service of process. (Section [5](#))
- Dogs that have been declared dangerous to be microchipped and spayed or neutered. (Section [5](#))
- The owner of a dog classified as dangerous to obtain at least \$100,000 of liability insurance. (Section [5](#))
- An animal control authority to humanely euthanize a dangerous dog that has killed a person or has bitten and left a mark that scores 5 or higher on the Dunbar bite scale and has been surrendered to an animal control authority. (Section [5](#))

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**DATE:** 5/22/2025

- Animal shelters to post signs informing potential adopters if a dog is dangerous, inform those who do adopt of their responsibilities, including providing a copy of the dangerous dog declaration and requiring the person to sign a contract with the animal control authority agreeing to abide by the declaration. (Section [5](#))

The bill requires a dog that is the subject of a dangerous dog investigation because it has killed a human being or left a bite mark that scores 5 or higher on the Dunbar bite scale to be immediately confiscated by an animal control authority. (Section [5](#))

The bill explicitly authorizes animal control authorities to humanely euthanize any other dog that is declared dangerous that has been surrendered to the authority. (Section [5](#))

The bill makes the knowing and willful removal of a microchip from a dog classified as dangerous a third-degree felony and increases the maximum fine for violations of the dangerous dog statute from \$500 per violation to \$1,000. (Section [5](#))

The bill makes resisting or obstructing an animal control authority investigation into a dangerous dog a first-degree misdemeanor. (Section [5](#))

The bill increases the criminal penalty for the owner of a dog that has previously been declared dangerous who later attacks and causes severe injury or death to a human from a third-degree felony to a second-degree felony (Section [6](#)).

The bill increases the criminal penalty for the owner of a dog that has not been declared dangerous that causes severe injury or death to a human, if the owner was aware of the dog's dangerous propensities and demonstrated reckless disregard for those propensities, from a second-degree misdemeanor to a first-degree misdemeanor. (Section [8](#)).

The bill makes editorial and conforming changes to current law concerning dangerous dogs. (Section [7](#))

The bill was approved by the Governor on May 21, 2025, ch. 2025-61, L.O.F., and will become effective on July 1, 2025. (Section [9](#))

## **FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT:**

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on local governments to the extent animal control authorities are required to hold dogs during the course of an investigation.

## **RELEVANT INFORMATION**

### **SUBJECT OVERVIEW:**

#### **Dangerous Dogs**

[Part II of ch. 767, F.S.](#), outlines the state's "Dangerous Dogs Law," originally enacted in 1990.<sup>1</sup> The Legislature found that "dangerous dogs are an increasingly serious and widespread threat to the safety and welfare of the people of this state because of unprovoked attacks which cause injury to persons and domestic animals<sup>2</sup> or livestock;<sup>3</sup> that such attacks are in part attributable to the failure of the owners to confine and properly train and control their

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 90-180, Laws of Fla.

<sup>2</sup> "Domestic animals" include any equine or bovine animal, goat, sheep, swine, domestic cat, dog, poultry, ostrich, emu, rhea, or other domesticated beast or bird. S. [585.01\(10\), F.S.](#)

<sup>3</sup> "Livestock" includes grazing animals, such as cattle, horses, sheep, swine, goats, other hoofed animals, poultry, ostriches, emus, and rheas, which are raised for private use or commercial purposes. S. [585.01\(13\), F.S.](#)

dogs; that existing laws inadequately address this growing problem; and that it is appropriate and necessary to impose uniform requirements on the owners of dangerous dogs.”<sup>4</sup>

Local governments may adopt ordinances to address safety and welfare concerns stemming from dog attacks on people or domestic animals, placing restrictions and additional requirements on owners of dangerous dogs, provided that no regulations may be specific to breed, weight, or size.<sup>5</sup>

A “dangerous dog” is a dog that, according to the records of the appropriate authority, has:

- Aggressively bitten, attacked, endangered or inflicted severe injury<sup>6</sup> on a human being on public or private property;
- More than once severely injured or killed a domestic animal while off the owner’s property; or
- When unprovoked,<sup>7</sup> chased or approached a person upon the streets, sidewalks, or any public grounds in a menacing fashion or apparent attitude of attack, provided such actions are attested to in a sworn statement by one or more persons and dutifully investigated by the appropriate authority.<sup>8</sup>

Incidents involving a potentially dangerous dog are investigated by animal control officers.<sup>9</sup> In areas unserved by an animal control authority, the sheriff assumes the duties required of an animal control officer.<sup>10</sup>

Upon receiving a report of a potentially dangerous dog, the animal control authority must investigate the incident, interview the owner, and require a sworn affidavit from any person who seeks to have a dog classified as dangerous.<sup>11</sup> An animal that is the subject of a dangerous dog investigation because of severe injury or death to a human being may be immediately confiscated by an animal control authority, placed in quarantine, if necessary, for the proper length of time, or impounded and held.<sup>12</sup> The owner of the dog is responsible for all boarding costs and other fees required to humanely and safely keep the animal pending any appeal or hearing.

#### [Proper Enclosure of a Dangerous Dog](#)

A dog being investigated as a dangerous dog that is not impounded with the animal control authority must be humanely and safely confined by the owner in a securely fenced or enclosed area pending the outcome of the investigation.<sup>13</sup> The owner must provide the address at which the animal resides to the animal control authority and may not relocate or transfer ownership of the animal pending the outcome of the investigation, including any hearing or appeals.

#### [Designation as a “Dangerous Dog”](#)

The animal control authority may not declare a dog as “dangerous” if:

- The injured person was unlawfully on the property or, if lawfully on the property, was tormenting, abusing, or assaulting the dog, or its owner or a family member; or
- The dog was protecting a person within the immediate vicinity of the dog from an unjustified attack or assault.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> S. [767.10, F.S.](#)

<sup>5</sup> S. [767.14, F.S.](#)

<sup>6</sup> “Severe injury” is defined as any physical injury resulting in broken bones, multiple bites, or disfiguring lacerations requiring sutures or reconstructive surgery. S. [767.11\(3\), F.S.](#)

<sup>7</sup> “Unprovoked” is defined as a victim who conducted himself or herself peacefully and lawfully was bitten or chased in a menacing fashion or attacked by a dog. S. [767.11\(2\), F.S.](#)

<sup>8</sup> S. [767.11\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>9</sup> “Animal control officer” means any individual employed, contracted with, or appointed by the animal control authority for the purpose of aiding in the enforcement of this act or any other law or ordinance relating to the licensure of animals, control of animals, or seizure and impoundment of animals and includes any state or local law enforcement officer or other employee whose duties in whole or in part include assignments that involve seizure and impoundment of any animal. See [s. 767.11\(6\), F.S.](#)

<sup>10</sup> S. [767.11\(5\), F.S.](#)

<sup>11</sup> S. [767.12\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>12</sup> Ss. [767.12\(1\)\(a\)](#) and [767.135, F.S.](#)

<sup>13</sup> S. [767.12\(1\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

<sup>14</sup> S. [767.12\(2\)\(a\)-\(b\), F.S.](#)

After investigating, the animal control authority must initially determine whether sufficient cause exists to classify the dog as dangerous, and if sufficient cause is found, provide the owner with an opportunity for a hearing before making a final determination regarding the classification or penalty.<sup>15</sup> The animal control authority must provide written notice of sufficient cause and proposed penalty to the owner by registered mail, certified hand delivery, or service in conformity with how service of process is made.

The owner has seven calendar days from receiving the notice to file a written request for a hearing. If the owner requests a hearing, the hearing officer must hold the hearing as soon as possible, but no later than 21 calendar days and no sooner than five days after receiving the request for a hearing.<sup>16</sup> If a hearing is not timely requested, the authority's determination becomes final.

If a dog is classified as a dangerous dog due to an incident that causes severe injury to a human being, the animal control authority may require the dog be destroyed in an expeditious and humane manner based upon the nature and circumstances of the injury and the likelihood of a future threat to public safety, health, and welfare.<sup>17</sup> If a dog causes the death of a human being, the dog must be destroyed unless the dog is found to not be dangerous after a hearing.<sup>18</sup>

Otherwise, within 14 days after the classification of the dog as dangerous by the animal control authority, the owner must register the dog with the animal control authority and renew the certification annually.<sup>19</sup> An animal control authority may only issue a certificate or renewal to a person 18 years of age or older who provides sufficient evidence of:

- A current certificate of rabies vaccination;
- A proper enclosure to confine a dangerous dog and the posting of the premises with a clearly visible warning sign at all entry points that informs both children and adults of the presence of a dangerous dog on the property; and
- Permanent identification of the dog, such as a tattoo on the inside thigh or electronic implantation.<sup>20</sup>

The owner must immediately notify the animal control authority if the dog:

- Is loose or unconfined;
- Bites a person or attacks another animal;
- Is sold, given away, or dies; or
- Is moved to another address.<sup>21</sup>

If a dangerous dog is sold or given away, the owner must provide the name, address, and telephone number of the new owner to the animal control authority.<sup>22</sup> The new owner must abide by these requirements. If the dog is moved to another jurisdiction, the owner is responsible for informing the local animal control officer.

A dangerous dog must remain in its enclosure at all times unless it is muzzled and restrained by a chain or leash and under a person's control.<sup>23</sup> Any violation of these requirements is a noncriminal infraction punishable by a fine not to exceed \$500.<sup>24</sup> In addition to civil penalties, the owner of a dog can be charged with the following criminal violations:

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<sup>15</sup> S. [767.12\(3\), F.S.](#)

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> S. [767.12\(5\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

<sup>18</sup> S. [767.135, F.S.](#)

<sup>19</sup> S. [767.12\(5\)\(a\)1., F.S.](#)

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> S. [767.12\(5\)\(a\)2., F.S.](#)

<sup>22</sup> S. [767.12\(5\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

<sup>23</sup> S. [767.12\(5\)\(a\)3., F.S.](#)

<sup>24</sup> S. [767.12 \(7\), F.S.](#)

- First degree misdemeanor, if the dog has previously been declared dangerous and attacks or bites a person or domestic animal without provocation.<sup>25</sup> A first-degree misdemeanor is punishable by up to one year in jail and a criminal fine of up to \$1,000.<sup>26</sup>
- Second degree misdemeanor, if the dog has not previously been declared dangerous but causes severe injury to or death of any human and the owner had prior knowledge of, but recklessly disregarded, the dog's dangerous propensities.<sup>27</sup> A second-degree misdemeanor is punishable by up to 60 days in jail and a criminal fine of up to \$500.<sup>28</sup>
- Third degree felony, if the dog has previously been declared dangerous, attacks and causes severe injury to or death of any human.<sup>29</sup> A third-degree felony is punishable by up to five years in prison and a criminal fine of up to \$5,000.<sup>30</sup>

According to the Department of Health, each year more than 600 Floridians are hospitalized because of injuries from dog bites, and about two people die from them. In August 2022, a postal worker was delivering mail when she was attacked by five dogs in Putnam County and died the next day.<sup>31</sup> An 86-year-old veteran had to have her leg amputated after being attacked by a neighbor's dog in early 2023 in Hawthorne.<sup>32</sup> In January 2025, an eight-year-old boy was attacked and killed by two dogs.<sup>33</sup>

### [Dunbar Dog Bite Scale](#)

The Dunbar Dog Bite Scale describes the levels of severity of dog bites as follows:

- Level 1 - Obnoxious or aggressive behavior, but no skin-contact by teeth.
- Level 2 - Skin-contact by teeth, but no skin-puncture. However, skin nicks (less than one tenth of an inch deep) may be slight bleeding caused by forward or lateral movement of teeth against skin, but no vertical punctures.
- Level 3 - One to four punctures from a single bite with no puncture deeper than half the length of the dog's canine teeth.
- Level 4 - One to four punctures from a single bite with at least one puncture deeper than half the length of the dog's canine teeth. May also have deep bruising around the wound ) or lacerations in both directions .
- Level 5 - Multiple-bite incident with at least two Level 4 bites or multiple-attack incident with at least one Level 4 bite in each.
- Level 6 - Victim dead.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>25</sup> S. [767.13\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>26</sup> Ss. [775.082\(4\)\(a\)](#) and [775.083\(1\)\(d\), F.S.](#)

<sup>27</sup> S. [767.136\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>28</sup> Ss. [775.082\(4\)\(a\)](#) and [775.083\(1\)\(d\), F.S.](#)

<sup>29</sup> S. [767.13\(2\), F.S.](#)

<sup>30</sup> Ss. [775.082\(4\)\(a\)](#) and [775.083\(1\)\(d\), F.S.](#)

<sup>31</sup> Senait Gebregiorgis, [Florida bill aims to make 'dangerous dogs' registry, add tougher penalties for owners](#), KTVZ News Channel 21, (Jan. 5, 2024) (last visited Feb. 25, 2025).

<sup>32</sup> Anne Maxwell, [State senator's office drafting legislation to address dangerous dogs after attacks](#), News4Jax, (July 18, 2023) (last visited Feb. 25, 2025).

<sup>33</sup> Brenda Argueta, [Dogs that attacked and killed 8-year-old boy near DeLand have been euthanized](#), Click Orlando News, (Jan. 30, 2025) (last visited Feb. 25, 2025).

<sup>34</sup> Association of Professional Dog Trainers, [Dr. Ian Dunbar's Dog Bite Scale](#) (last visited May 1, 2025).