

# FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

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**BILL #:** [CS/CS/CS/HB 1521](#)

**TITLE:** Domestic Animals

**SPONSOR(S):** Weinberger

**COMPANION BILL:** [CS/SB 1004](#) (Gaetz)

**LINKED BILLS:** None

**RELATED BILLS:** None

**FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION:** 110 Y's

0 N's

**GOVERNOR'S ACTION:** Approved

## SUMMARY

### Effect of the Bill:

The bill requires the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), by January 1, 2027, to post specified information on its website regarding individuals that have been convicted of cruelty to animals.

The bill requires the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) to develop and publish on its website a list of voluntary best management practices for dog breeders, recommending the minimum standards of care for the breeding, feeding, housing, health, enrichment, recordkeeping, selling, and transferring of dogs in the state.

The bill modifies provisions governing the sale of cats and dogs in the state. Specifically, the bill imposes additional requirements on pet dealers; extends certain notification time frames related to the sale of an ill or unfit animal; and clarifies jurisdiction and remedies for disputes over the sale of an animal.

The bill also requires DBPR to maintain on its website information relating to animal cruelty and abuse, and instructions on how to report suspected abuse to the appropriate local authority.

### Fiscal or Economic Impact:

None.

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## ANALYSIS

### EFFECT OF THE BILL:

CS/CS/CS/HB 1521 passed as [CS/SB 1004](#).

### Animal Cruelty

The bill expands the information that the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) must include on its website for a person convicted of animal cruelty, before January 1, 2027. The information is expanded to include, all aliases, date of birth, race, counties of conviction, charges, case numbers, depositions, description of any identifying marks and tattoos, and a photograph taken at the time of booking related to the animal cruelty offense of each individual convicted of cruelty to animals. (Section 1)

**STORAGE NAME:** h1521z1

**DATE:** 5/13/2026

### [Best Management Practices for Dog Breeders](#)

The bill directs the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) to develop and publish on its website a list of voluntary best management practices for dog breeders. These practices are intended to recommend minimum standards of care related to animal care, facility operations, and breeding practices in the state. However, the bill does not require dog breeders to adopt or comply with the recommended best management practices. (Section 3)

Specifically, DBPR must develop best management practices addressing the following areas:

- Breeding;
- Feeding;
- Housing;
- Health;
- Enrichment;
- Selling and transferring; and
- Record keeping. (Section 3)

In addition to the recommended best management practices for dog breeders, the bill requires DBPR to develop and publish information for the public on how to identify whether a breeder is adhering to the recommended practices, including a checklist for consumers to use when purchasing a dog. (Section 3)

### [Consumer Protections](#)

The bill revises ch. [828.29, F.S.](#), governing the [sale of cats and dogs](#) to strengthen consumer protections and promote animal welfare throughout the state. Specifically, the bill:

- Extends the [return or exchange period](#) for an ill or unfit animal to 30 days.
- Extends the timeframe within which a consumer must notify the pet dealer and provide documentation that an animal is unfit following such diagnosis to seven days.
- Clarifies that a consumer may seek [reimbursement](#) from a pet dealer for emergency medical services and treatment provided to alleviate the suffering of an ill or unfit animal.
- Expressly prohibits a consumer from returning or exchanging, or otherwise seeking reimbursements, for an animal with a [congenital or hereditary disorder](#), based solely on such disorder, if the pet dealer notified the consumer that the animal had such disorder at the time of the sale.
- Clarifies that [jurisdiction](#) over disputes regarding the return of an ill or unfit animal includes the county court or the small claims court division in the county where the consumer resides.
- Authorizes the consumer to recover punitive damages in a dispute involving the return of an ill or unfit animal.
- Establishes that a violation of [s. 828.29, F.S.](#), is a violation of the [Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act](#). (Section 2)

The bill also imposes additional requirements on pet dealers, including that the pet dealer must:

- Disclose all financial terms to the consumer before the sale of an animal.
- Ensure that any pet financing arrangement is terminated without penalty to the consumer when an animal is determined to be unfit for purchase due to illness or disease.
- Retain copies of all records given to the consumer for a minimum of seven years. (Section 2)

The bill revises the technical and substantive requirements for the [notice](#) that every pet dealer must provide to a consumer at the time of the sale. The notice must:

- Be separate from the sales contract.
- Be printed, in 14-point bold font.
- Be signed by the consumer.
- Specifically inform the consumer of their rights to return the animal, exchange the animal, and receive reimbursement for certain veterinary expenses under certain circumstances.
- Further, the pet dealer must retain a signed copy of the notice and give the consumer a copy. (Section 2)

The bill amends the definition of “[pet dealer](#)” as used in [s. 828.29, F.S.](#), to exclude not-for-profit entities that do not purchase animals from a breeder or broker. (Section 2)

The bill requires DBPR to maintain information on its website relating to [animal cruelty and abuse](#), including instructions for reporting suspected abuse to the appropriate local authority. Such information must include a description of conduct that constitutes animal cruelty, the penalties for such conduct, and contact information for at least one appropriate authority in each county in the state. (Section 3)

### **Effective Date**

The bill was approved by the Governor on May 12, 2026, ch. 2026-76, L.O.F., and will become effective on July 1, 2026. (Section 4)

## **RELEVANT INFORMATION**

### **SUBJECT OVERVIEW:**

#### **Sale of Domestic Animals**

Florida does not currently regulate the breeding of domestic animals.<sup>2</sup> However, [s. 828.29, F.S.](#), provides restrictions on the sale of cats and dogs within the state, including requirements related to the animals being sold, the actions of the seller, and the conditions under which sales may occur.

A “[pet dealer](#)” is any person, firm, partnership, corporation, or other association that, in the ordinary course of business, sells more than two litters or 20 dogs or cats per year, whichever is greater, to the public. This includes breeders who sell animals directly to consumers.<sup>3</sup>

In Florida, all cats and dogs sold, offered for sale, or transported into the state must be at least 8 weeks of age.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Required Medical Treatment and Documentation**

Currently, all dogs and cats sold or transported into the state are required to receive tests, vaccines, and antiparasitic treatments under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian at least 14-30 days prior to the animal entering the state.<sup>5</sup> Animals offered for sale within the state must also be treated before sale, unless a veterinarian certifies that such treatment would not be in the animal’s best medical interest.<sup>6</sup> All dogs and cats sold, or offered for sale, within the state must be accompanied by a current official certificate of veterinary inspection<sup>7</sup> at all times, detailing all medical treatment that the animal has received. The examining veterinarian must retain a copy of the official certificate of veterinary inspection for at least one year. The seller must provide a copy of the certificate to the buyer, and retain a copy for at least one year following the sale of the animal.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [S. 455.2035, F.S.](#)

<sup>2</sup> “Domestic animal” includes any equine or bovine animal, goat, sheep, swine, domestic cat, dog, poultry, ostrich, emu, rhea, or other domesticated beast or bird. [S. 585.01\(11\), F.S.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [S. 828.29\(13\), F.S.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [S. 828.29\(4\), F.S.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [S. 828.29\(1\)\(a\) and \(2\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

<sup>6</sup> [S. 828.29\(1\)\(b\) and \(2\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

<sup>7</sup> An official certificate of veterinary inspection is a document signed by a veterinarian licensed in the state of origin and accredited by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It must include the animal’s age, sex, breed, color, and health record; the names and addresses of the seller and purchaser; and the examining veterinarian’s name and license number. It must also list all vaccines and deworming treatments administered with specificity. The examining veterinarian must certify that, to the best of their knowledge, the animal shows no signs of contagious or infectious disease and no evidence of internal or external parasites, excluding fleas and ticks. [S. 828.29\(3\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [S. 828.29\(3\), F.S.](#)

### Required Notice

Every pet dealer who sells an animal to a consumer must provide the consumer with a written notice at the time of sale. The notice must read as follows:<sup>9</sup>

It is the consumer's right, pursuant to section 828.29, Florida Statutes, to receive a certificate of veterinary inspection with each dog or cat purchased from a pet dealer. Such certificate shall list all vaccines and deworming medications administered to the animal and shall state that the animal has been examined by a Florida-licensed veterinarian who certifies that, to the best of the veterinarian's knowledge, the animal was found to have been healthy at the time of the veterinary examination. In the event that the consumer purchases the animal and finds it to have been unfit for purchase as provided in section 828.29(5), Florida Statutes, the consumer must notify the pet dealer within 2 business days of the veterinarian's determination that the animal was unfit. The consumer has the right to retain, return, or exchange the animal and receive reimbursement for certain related veterinary services rendered to the animal, subject to the right of the dealer to have the animal examined by another veterinarian.

### Consumer Protections

Under Florida's Lemon Pet law, consumers who purchase dogs or cats from pet dealers are entitled to specified remedies if the animal is later determined to be unfit for purchase. An animal may be deemed unfit for purchase after sale if:<sup>10</sup>

- Within 14 days of sale, a veterinarian certifies that the animal was ill, showing signs of contagious or infectious disease, or had internal or external parasites, excluding fleas or ticks.
- Within 1 year of the sale, a veterinarian certifies that the animal has a congenital or hereditary disorder adversely affecting the health of the animal.
- Within 1 year of the sale, the consumer discovers that the pet dealer misrepresented the breed, sex, or health of the animal.

However, an animal may not be deemed unfit for sale based on an injury or illness that occurs after the consumer takes possession of the animal. Further, the presence of intestinal parasites alone does not render an animal unfit, unless the animal is clinically ill as a result of the condition.<sup>11</sup>

### Right to Refund or Exchange of Animal

If a dog or cat sold by a pet dealer is determined to be unfit for purchase, the consumer may choose to:

- Return the animal for a refund, including sales tax and reasonable<sup>12</sup> veterinary costs;<sup>13</sup>
- Return the animal for an exchange of equivalent value and receive reimbursement of reasonable veterinary costs;<sup>14</sup> or
- Keep the animal and receive reimbursement for reasonable veterinary costs related to treatment or attempts to cure the animal.<sup>15</sup>

However, reimbursement for veterinary costs may not exceed the purchase price the consumer paid for the animal.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>9</sup> [S. 828.29\(12\), F.S.](#)

<sup>10</sup> [S. 828.29\(5\), F.S.](#)

<sup>11</sup> [S. 828.29\(9\), F.S.](#)

<sup>12</sup> The cost of veterinary treatment is considered reasonable if it is comparable to the cost charged by other nearby licensed veterinarians for the same services. [S. 828.29\(5\), F.S.](#)

<sup>13</sup> [S. 828.29\(5\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

<sup>14</sup> [S. 828.29\(5\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

<sup>15</sup> [S. 828.29\(5\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

<sup>16</sup> [S. 828.29\(5\), F.S.](#)

### [Congenital or Hereditary Disorders](#)

At the time of purchase, a consumer may sign a waiver relinquishing the right to return a dog or cat due to a congenital or hereditary disorder. If such waiver is signed, the consumer has 48 normal business hours, excluding weekends and holidays, to have the animal examined by a licensed veterinarian of the consumer's choosing. If the veterinarian certifies that, at the time of sale, the dog or cat was unfit for purchase due to congenital or hereditary disorder, the pet dealer must allow the consumer to either:<sup>17</sup>

- Return the animal and receive a refund of the purchase price, including sales tax, but not including veterinary costs; or
- Return the animal and receive an exchange of the consumer's choice of equivalent value, with no reimbursement for veterinary costs.

However, if the pet dealer notified the consumer in writing at the time of the sale that the animal had a specific congenital or hereditary disorder, the consumer has no right to any refund or exchange for those disorders.<sup>18</sup>

### [Refund or Exchange Timeline and Notice Requirements](#)

Upon receiving a veterinarian's determination that an animal is unfit for purchase, the consumer must notify the pet dealer within two business days. The written certification of unfitness must be submitted to the pet dealer no more than three business days after the consumer receives it.<sup>19</sup>

If a consumer that is entitled to return or exchange the animal elects to exercise that right, the pet dealer must provide the refund or exchange within 10 business days after receiving the signed veterinary certification.<sup>20</sup>

### [Challenged Refund or Exchange](#)

If a pet dealer wishes to contest a consumer's demand for veterinary expenses, a refund, or an exchange, the dealer may require the consumer to produce the animal for examination by a licensed veterinarian of the pet dealer's choice. However, if the consumer and the pet dealer are unable to reach an agreement within ten business days after the dealer's receipt of the animal for examination, the consumer may initiate an action in a court of competent jurisdiction to recover or obtain reimbursement of veterinary expenses, a refund, or an exchange.<sup>21</sup>

### [Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act](#)

Under the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act (FDUTPA), it is unlawful for a party to take part in "unfair methods of competition, unconscionable acts or practices, and unfair or deceptive acts or practices in the conduct of any trade or commerce."<sup>22</sup> Such practices include fraudulent billing,<sup>23</sup> misleading a consumer or misrepresenting a product's characteristics,<sup>24</sup> or other behavior determined to be unfair by a court.<sup>25</sup> The office of the state attorney or Department of Legal Affairs, either by their own inquiry or through complaints, may investigate violations of the FDUTPA.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to other remedies under state and federal law, the enforcing authority may bring actions for declaratory judgment, injunctive relief, actual damages on behalf of consumers and businesses, issue cease and

<sup>17</sup> [S. 828.29\(6\), F.S.](#)

<sup>18</sup> [S. 828.29\(7\), F.S.](#)

<sup>19</sup> [S. 828.29\(8\), F.S.](#)

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

<sup>21</sup> [S. 828.29\(10\), F.S.](#)

<sup>22</sup> [S. 501.204, F.S.](#)

<sup>23</sup> *State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co. v. Medical Service Center of Florida, Inc.*, 103 F. Supp. 3d 1343 (S.D. Fla. 2015).

<sup>24</sup> *Lewis v. Mercedes-Benz USA, LLC*, 530 F. Supp. 3d 1183 (S.D. Fla. 2021); *Marty v. Anheuser-Busch Companies, LLC*, 43 F. Supp. 3d 1333 (S.D. Fla. 2014).

<sup>25</sup> *See Siever v. BWGaskets, Inc.*, 669 F. Supp. 2d 1286, 1292-93 (M.D. Fla. 2009).

<sup>26</sup> The enforcing authority under the FDUTPA may "administer oaths and affirmations, subpoena witnesses or matter, and collect evidence." [S. 501.206, F.S.](#)

desist orders, and impose civil penalties up to \$10,000 per violation.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, consumers may bring private actions against parties for violating the FDUTPA, resulting in either:

- Declaratory judgment and injunctive relief if the consumer is aggrieved by a FDUTPA violation; or
- Actual damages, attorney fees, and court costs, if the consumer has suffered a loss due to the FDUTPA violation.<sup>28</sup>

### Dog Breeding

Dog breeding refers to the practice of mating selected dogs with the intention of producing puppies that possess particular genetic traits and characteristics. Currently, Florida does not regulate dog breeding, leaving oversight of breeder practices largely unmonitored. However, many other states have established various regulatory frameworks to protect animal welfare, including implementing breeder licensing requirements, mandatory standards for housing and care, and periodic inspections to ensure compliance with animal welfare laws.<sup>29</sup>

Beyond regulatory oversight, programs recognizing breeder excellence are becoming increasingly common. These programs reward breeders who adhere to high standards of animal care, health, and ethical breeding practices. For example, in 2013, Purdue University's College of Veterinary Medicine created the Canine Care Certified Standards. This voluntary, nationwide program provides science-based, peer-reviewed guidelines for breeders to ensure the physical and behavioral health of dogs in the care of breeders. The Canine Care Certified program emphasizes five key pillars of care: physical health, behavioral health, environment, breeding life and retirement, and caretaker expectations. Today, 208 breeders across the country are Canine Care Certified.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, in 2020, Minnesota launched a statewide breeder excellence program to recognize commercial breeders demonstrating outstanding practices in five categories: behavior and socialization, facility management, health screening, illness specific testing, and continuing education.<sup>31</sup>

### Animal Cruelty

In Florida, animal cruelty includes any act, omission, or neglect that causes unnecessary or unjustifiable pain or suffering to any living animal.<sup>32</sup> A person commits the offense of animal cruelty, a first degree misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in county jail, a fine of not more than \$5,000, or both, if he or she:<sup>33</sup>

- Unnecessarily overloads, overdrives, torments, mutilates, or kills an animal;
- Deprives an animal of necessary sustenance or shelter;
- Causes any of the above to be done to an animal; or
- Carries an animal in or upon a vehicle, or otherwise, in a cruel or inhumane manner.

A person commits the offense of aggravated animal cruelty, a third degree felony, punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine of not more than \$10,000, or both, by intentionally committing an act on an animal, or failing to act if the person owns and has custody and control of the animal, and such action or omission:<sup>34</sup>

- Results in the cruel death of the animal;
- The excessive or repeated infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on the animal; or
- Causes the same to be done to the animal.

<sup>27</sup> Ss. [501.207](#), [501.2077](#), [501.2075](#), and [501.208, F.S.](#)

<sup>28</sup> Ss. [501.2105](#), and [501.211, F.S.](#)

<sup>29</sup> See American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, *State Puppy Mill Chart*, <https://www.aspc.org/sites/default/files/puppy-mill-chart.pdf> (last visited Feb. 1, 2026).

<sup>30</sup> Purdue University, College of Veterinary Medicine, *Canine Care Certified*, <https://vet.purdue.edu/ccf/> (last visited Feb. 1, 2026).

<sup>31</sup> Minnesota Board of Animal Health, *Breeder Excellence Program*, <https://www.bah.state.mn.us/breeder-excellence> (last visited Feb. 1, 2026).

<sup>32</sup> [S. 828.02, F.S.](#)

<sup>33</sup> [S. 828.12\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>34</sup> [S. 828.12\(2\), F.S.](#)

A person who is convicted of animal cruelty or aggravated animal cruelty may be prohibited from owning, possessing, keeping, harboring, or having custody or control over any animal for a period of time as determined by a court.<sup>35</sup>

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement is required to post on its website, in a searchable format as prescribed by the department, the names of those individuals who have been convicted of animal cruelty.<sup>36</sup>

**OTHER RESOURCES:**

[Animal Welfare Act and Animal Welfare Regulations](#)

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<sup>35</sup> [S. 828.12\(6\), F.S.](#)

<sup>36</sup> [S. 828.12\(7\), F.S.](#)