

By Senator Wright

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A bill to be entitled
An act relating to animal cruelty; amending s.
474.214, F.S.; providing that failure to report
suspected animal cruelty is grounds for certain
disciplinary actions; amending s. 474.2165, F.S.;
clarifying that the authorization to furnish medical
records related to veterinary medical services to
certain parties under certain circumstances includes,
but is not limited to, instances where a veterinarian
suspects animal cruelty; creating s. 828.124, F.S.;
defining terms; requiring certain individuals to
report incidents of animal cruelty to certain
officials; requiring that a veterinarian, veterinary
technician, or other animal treatment provider
employee who makes a good faith report of animal
cruelty to certain officials be held harmless from
certain liability, disciplinary action, and
retaliation; providing penalties for certain
veterinarians, veterinary technicians, or animal
treatment provider employees or volunteers who
knowingly alter or destroy a medical record for the
purpose of concealing animal cruelty; providing
construction; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Paragraph (qq) is added to subsection (1) of
section 474.214, Florida Statutes, to read:

474.214 Disciplinary proceedings.—

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(1) The following acts shall constitute grounds for which the disciplinary actions in subsection (2) may be taken:

(qq) Failing to report suspected animal cruelty to the proper authorities pursuant to s. 828.124.

Section 2. Paragraph (d) of subsection (4) of section 474.2165, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

474.2165 Ownership and control of veterinary medical patient records; report or copies of records to be furnished.—

(4) Except as otherwise provided in this section, such records may not be furnished to, and the medical condition of a patient may not be discussed with, any person other than the client or the client's legal representative or other veterinarians involved in the care or treatment of the patient, except upon written authorization of the client. However, such records may be furnished without written authorization under the following circumstances:

(d) In any criminal action or situation where a veterinarian suspects a criminal violation, including, but not limited to, animal cruelty. If a criminal violation, including but not limited to animal cruelty as defined in s. 828.124, is suspected, a veterinarian may, without notice to or authorization from the client, report the violation to a law enforcement officer, an animal control officer who is certified pursuant to s. 828.27(4)(a), or an agent appointed under s. 828.03. However, if a suspected violation occurs at a commercial food-producing animal operation on land classified as agricultural under s. 193.461, the veterinarian must provide notice to the client or the client's legal representative before reporting the suspected violation to an officer or agent under

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this paragraph. The report may not include written medical records except upon the issuance of an order from a court of competent jurisdiction.

Section 3. Section 828.124, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

828.124 Reporting animal cruelty; medical records.—

(1) As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Animal cruelty" means any act or omission that constitutes a violation of s. 828.12, s. 828.122, s. 828.126, or s. 828.13.

(b) "Animal treatment provider" includes:

1. Any animal care facility, hospital, mobile service or clinic, or shelter;

2. A private veterinary practice;

3. A college of veterinary medicine or veterinary technology program;

4. A specialized veterinary hospital; or

5. Any place dogs or cats are seen for any kind of treatment.

(c) "Good faith report" means a report of animal cruelty which is made by a person without malice or consideration of personal benefit who has probable cause to believe such a report is true.

(2) All of the following individuals must report suspected, both past or ongoing, incidents of animal cruelty to a local law enforcement officer, an animal control officer certified pursuant to s. 828.27(4)(a), or an agent appointed under s. 828.03:

(a) A veterinarian, if he or she has a

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88 veterinarian/client/patient relationship with the animal.

89 (b) A veterinary technician employed by an animal treatment
90 provider or any other employee of the animal treatment provider,
91 if the animal is a past or current patient of the animal
92 treatment provider with whom the technician or employee is
93 employed.

94 (3) A veterinarian, veterinary technician, or other animal
95 treatment provider employee who makes a good faith report of
96 animal cruelty pursuant to this section to a local law
97 enforcement officer, an animal control officer, or an agent
98 appointed pursuant to subsection (2) shall be held harmless from
99 criminal liability, civil liability, professional disciplinary
100 action, and employer retaliation.

101 (4) A veterinarian, excluding veterinarians subject to
102 chapter 474, a veterinary technician, or an animal treatment
103 provider employee or volunteer, who knowingly alters or destroys
104 a medical record for the purpose of concealing or attempting to
105 conceal animal cruelty or who causes the same to be done,
106 commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as
107 provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

108 (5) This section may not be construed to prohibit any
109 person from making a good faith report of suspected animal
110 cruelty to any national, state, or local law enforcement
111 authority or any animal control agency.

112 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.