

CS/HB 765 — Animal Protection

by Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Committee and Rep. Garcia and others (CS/SB 1708 by Criminal Justice Committee and Senators Crist and Bullard)

This bill amends s. 474.203, F.S., which exempts certain people from the veterinary licensure requirements of ch. 474, F.S. The bill specifically eliminates the exemption from being applied to people who have been convicted of a ch. 828, F.S., animal cruelty violation. It also eliminates application of the exemption from licensure to unlicensed veterinarians practicing veterinary medicine temporarily in this state.

The bill amends s. 500.451, F.S., to include four additional horse meat offenses: transporting, distributing, purchasing, or possessing. The bill increases an existing violation of market sales of unstamped horse meat to a third degree felony punishable by up to a \$5,000 fine and up to five years in prison plus applicable administrative fees and court costs. The bill further provides for a minimum mandatory fine of \$3,500 and a minimum mandatory period of incarceration of one year for horse meat human consumption offenses. Additionally, the bill authorizes the suspension of any license of any restaurant, store, or other business, as provided for in the applicable licensing law, upon the conviction of an owner or employee of the business for a violation of s. 500.451, F.S.

The bill amends s. 828.125, F.S., to expand the classification of protection for horses to include any animal of the genus *Equus* (horse) and any recognized registered hybrid of the genus *Bos* (cattle). Also, the bill provides for a minimum mandatory fine of \$3,500 and a minimum mandatory period of incarceration of one year for violations of this section.

The bill amends s. 828.073, F.S., to provide additional flexibility for the court in determining the proper disposition of distressed animals seized by law enforcement, a county agent, or other agent appointed under s. 828.03, F.S. It also provides for a more expeditious hearing process in such cases.

Finally, the bill requires local governments that have licensure programs for dogs to notify the dog's owner at least 45 days prior to the expiration of the dog's license. Local governments are encouraged to create an online licensing process for convenience and efficiency.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2010, except that sections 3 and 5 of this act shall take effect October 1, 2010.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 114-0