

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 520 (Washington County Delegation)

Environmental Matters

Washington County - Removal of Animals - Authorization
by State Veterinarian

In Washington County only, this bill requires written authorization from the Maryland State Veterinarian prior to removal of any animal in order to protect it from neglect or cruelty. Current law authorizes an officer or agent of an animal humane society, police officer, or other public official to remove any animal if it is necessary for the animal's health. Farm animals cannot be removed without prior recommendation by a licensed veterinarian. Currently, the Maryland State Veterinarian is only authorized to remove diseased animals from farms.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Indeterminate effect on State expenditures. No effect on revenues.

Local Effect: Washington County finances would not be effected by the bill's requirement.

Small Business Effect: None.

Fiscal Analysis

State Effect: It is unclear from the bill whether Maryland State Veterinarian personnel would have to be present to make a determination prior to written authorization for removal of an animal. Washington County advises that there were 132 animals removed out of the 659 cases of animal neglect or abuse in fiscal 1997. The Maryland State Veterinarian's Office advises that if a field visit is required for each case in which Washington County officials requested authorization to remove an animal, one part-time veterinarian would be needed to handle the additional workload. Salary and fringe benefits for a part-time veterinarian would be approximately \$38,000 annually. There are currently no personnel of

the Maryland State Veterinarian's Office in Washington County, therefore personnel would have to travel from Frederick County for each case, resulting in increased travel expenses. Personnel of the Maryland State Veterinarian's Office would also require additional training to deal with domestic pets, since they are specialized in the area of farm animal disease. The cost for additional training cannot be reliably estimated at this time, but is assumed to be minimal.

On the other hand, if authorization could be given over the telephone, the costs would be minimal.

Local Effect: Requiring written authorization by the Maryland State Veterinarian prior to removal of an animal by authorized personnel would not increase Washington County expenditures.

Information Source(s): Washington County, Department of Agriculture (State Veterinarian's Office), Department of Legislative Services

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