



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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SB 872

DATE: March 5, 2024

SPONSOR: Senator Kramer

ASSIGNED TO: Judicial Proceedings Committee

CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (sara.morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: SUPPORT (Montgomery County Office of Animal Services)

Criminal Law - Animal Abuse or Neglect - Penalties

SB 872 would amend §10-604 when a violation of the section leads to the death or euthanasia of animals subjected to violations of this section. I want to share with you a couple of cases that highlight the need for stricter penalties including a ban on owning animals as part of sentencing beyond the probationary period. I have personally investigated these cases as part of my work as a Field Supervisor for the Office, plus a case from St. Mary's County. The following three cases consistently demonstrate seemingly unintentional actions that led to the death of the animal(s) or the animal(s) had to be euthanized.

In response to a veterinarian's report of suspected animal cruelty, an investigation was conducted into an event where a dog had died while in the custody of a Dog Trainer hired by the owners. The dog was placed with the trainer in his home for a period of two weeks where the dog would be trained to overcome some specific behavioral issues. A trial revealed that the Dog Trainer had worked with the dog in the summer heat and ignored the obvious symptoms of heat stroke leading to the dogs prolonged suffering and subsequent death.

At the onset of the pandemic, my office began receiving several reports related to an individual selling very sick, underage kittens (under 8 weeks). The investigation revealed that the suspect was searching for feral cats that had recently had litters in his neighborhood and separate the kittens from their birthing mother and advertise and sell them through Craigslist at a premium price. The suspect had no knowledge of underage kitten care requirements and failed to provide them with proper nutrition or sustainable care including no veterinary care. Two of the five kittens related to this investigation died due to the lack of proper care.

An investigation was conducted into a report of a gravely underweight dog in St. Mary's County that was subsequently seized by the responding Animal Control Officer. The Officer that seized the dog observed that the dog was so underweight that their ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones, and all bony prominences were evident from a distance, the dog was describe as having the appearance of a fur covered skeleton. The treating Veterinarian euthanized the dog for untreatable medical issues. At no point had the owner provided veterinary care that would have saved the dog from its deteriorating condition.

As one of the Field Supervisors with the Montgomery County Office of Animal Services, I support Senate Bill 872 and would urge that the Committee adopt a favorable report.