

**Department of Fiscal Services**  
Maryland General Assembly

**FISCAL NOTE**

House Bill 426 (Delegate Perry, et al.)  
Environmental Matters

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**Disease Prevention - Rabies - Ferrets**

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This bill excludes domestic ferrets from the animals that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene may find to be dangerous to human health and safety. The bill includes ferrets under current law vaccination requirements applicable to cats and dogs.

In addition, the bill provides that apparently healthy dogs, cats, or ferrets that have been adequately vaccinated against rabies that bite or otherwise expose a person to rabies must be quarantined. Public health veterinarians or local health officers may order the immediate and humane destruction of a biting animal “clinically suspected to be rabid” for rabies testing purposes under certain circumstances. Current law makes no reference to clinical suspicion.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** Minimal (see below).

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**Fiscal Analysis**

**Local Effect:** A limited survey of local governments finds that this bill would have a minimal, if any, measurable fiscal impact on local governments. The actual number of ferrets desired to be kept as domestic animals is unknown, but is assumed to be small. The burden for the costs of vaccinations would be borne by ferret owners.

However, for purposes of illustration, St. Mary’s County reports that, if ferrets were made licensed domestic pets, county revenues would increase by an amount reflecting the number of licenses issued. Present license fees for dogs are either \$3 or \$6. In addition, the county estimates that testing costs for rabies could increase by \$150 annually assuming two ferret

bites per year.

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**Information Source(s):** Carroll County, Harford County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Queen Anne's County, St. Mary's County, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Epidemiology and Disease Control Program), Department of Fiscal Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 20, 1996

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