

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 223

(Garrett County Delegation)

Environmental Matters

Judicial Proceedings

Garrett County - Animal Control - Civil and Criminal Penalties

This bill authorizes the Commissioners of Garrett County to prosecute violations of animal control ordinances as a civil infraction.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Minimal increase in general fund revenues due to cases heard in District Court for citations not paid within the time limit set by the Garrett County Commissioners.

Local Effect: Garrett County revenues would increase due to citations issued for violations of Garrett County dog and cat control ordinances. Unpaid citations would go to the District Court.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Garrett, Dorchester, and Somerset counties may, by ordinance, provide for a comprehensive system for the regulation of dogs and cats within their county, including licensing and control. Garrett County has an ordinance for animal control, but the Commissioners of Garrett County do not have the authority to impose civil penalties for violations of county animal control ordinances. Per local ordinance, a person who violates the Garrett County animal control ordinance is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a fine of at least \$50 and not exceeding \$200. Per State law, a person who violates animal control ordinances is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a fine of not

less than \$5 and not more than \$25, or imprisoned in the county jail for not more than 30 days or both.

Dorchester County may impose civil penalties for violations of county dog and cat control ordinances as an infraction with a fine not to exceed \$1,000 for each violation. Somerset County does not have this authority.

Background: Garrett County advises that there is a strong public demand for increased enforcement of animal control throughout the county. The county commissioners have not settled on a fine structure or a time limit that violators must pay fines to the county before cases are turned over to the District Court.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Garrett County, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 10, 2003
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Analysis by: Christopher J. Kelter

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510