

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 475 (Delegates Glassman and Parrott)  
Environmental Matters

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Agriculture - Regulation of Domesticated Reindeer

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This bill requires the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to regulate domesticated reindeer as livestock and specifies that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) may not regulate domesticated reindeer as wildlife.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Assuming only a small number of individuals will want to import or possess reindeer in the State, MDA could handle the bill's requirements with existing resources. The bill would not have a significant impact on DNR operations or finances.

**Local Effect:** The bill would not directly affect local operations or finances.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal. To the extent MDA's regulations are less restrictive than DNR's regulations, the bill could benefit small businesses wishing to own, breed, rent, or import reindeer for displays and exhibits. However, the number of small businesses interested in those activities is not anticipated to be significant.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** DNR is authorized to adopt regulations prohibiting or restricting the importation, exportation, sale, release, or possession of wildlife not native to Maryland on a finding that the wildlife is harmful to native wildlife or to natural ecosystems. Wildlife means every living creature, not human, wild by nature, endowed with sensation and power of voluntary motion.

MDA is required to protect the health of livestock from contagious or infectious diseases and is authorized to adopt rules and regulations governing the importation of livestock. Livestock dealers and operators of livestock markets must obtain an annual license from

MDA. Livestock generally means living or dead cattle, equines, goats, sheep, or swine, unless otherwise provided. The term does not include domesticated reindeer.

**Background:** There are 38 species of cervids (members of the deer family). While reindeer are closely related to caribou, the Smithsonian Institute Museum of Natural History classifies caribou as new world, wild *Rangifer tarandus* and reindeer as old world, domesticated *Rangifer tarandus*. Reindeer were introduced in Alaska in 1892 by the federal government as a new enterprise for the Alaskan Eskimos who were starving because of over-fishing by the American whaling industry.

Regulations adopted by DNR in the mid-1980s prohibited the possession of cervids, including reindeer, with exceptions for licensed animal exhibitors and existing herds of licensed game breeders. DNR recently adopted regulations to generally prohibit the importation and movement of live cervids within the State in order to help protect the animals from getting Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), a costly disease that DNR reports could have a significant impact on deer hunting and related industries. DNR advises that it receives about six calls each year from individuals who are interested in importing reindeer into the State for use in live displays and exhibits. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), as of December 2002 there were 31 USDA licensed animal exhibitors in Maryland. The number of exhibitors that would import reindeer into the State, if allowed, is unknown. DNR has not received any calls from individuals interested in owning or breeding reindeer in Maryland.

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### Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Applewood Farm, Department of Legislative Services

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