

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 113

(Delegate Elmore)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental  
Affairs

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Somerset County - Regulation of Dogs and Cats - Violations of Ordinances and  
Regulations

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This bill authorizes the Somerset County Commissioners to prosecute violations of animal control ordinances as a criminal or civil infraction. Violations may be punishable as misdemeanors, with a maximum penalty of a \$1,000 fine and six months imprisonment.

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**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 Somerset County Commissioners.

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

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** County governments have responsibility for the licensing of dogs, recording of licenses, and enforcement of licensing provisions. The grant of authority varies depending on county. For some counties, specifications regarding the terms, licensing forms, and licensing fees are set in statute, while other counties have authority

to determine some or all of those provisions. Counties may also prosecute individuals violating State animal cruelty laws.

Garrett, Dorchester, and Somerset counties may, by ordinance, provide a comprehensive system for the regulation of dogs and cats within their respective counties. Additionally, Dorchester and Garrett counties may prosecute violations of animal control ordinances as a civil or criminal infraction.

In Somerset County, dog control fees ranging from \$5 to \$50 are established by county ordinance. County Ordinance #924 establishes fees for dog licenses, turning in puppies to the pound, redeeming a dog from the pound, adoption of unredeemed dogs, and disposition of dead dogs. The fee for redeeming a potentially dangerous/dangerous dog impounded while running at large is \$500. There is no ordinance for the regulation of cats.

**Background:** Chapter 380 of 2002 granted Dorchester County the authority to prosecute violations of animal control ordinances as a civil or criminal infraction. Chapter 414 of 2003 granted Garrett County the same authority. In Dorchester County, a person violating the animal control ordinance may be subject to a fine of up to \$525 or 30 days in jail. In Garrett County, the maximum fine is \$250.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 5, 2008  
ncs/hlb

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