

Chapter 183

(Senate Bill 80)

AN ACT concerning

**Criminal Law – Animal Abuse or Neglect – Penalties**

FOR the purpose of ~~establishing increased penalties for the abuse or neglect of an animal if the abuse or neglect results in the death or euthanasia of the animal; authorizing the court, as a condition of sentencing a certain defendant, to prohibit the defendant from owning, possessing, or residing with an animal for a certain period of time; prohibiting a person from committing a violation of the prohibition against abusing or neglecting an animal that results in the death of a domestic animal or livestock or the need to euthanize the domestic animal or livestock; authorizing a court to impose certain conditions of sentencing and probation; and generally relating to animal abuse and neglect.~~

BY ~~repealing and reenacting, with amendments,~~ adding to  
Article – Criminal Law  
Section ~~10-604~~ 10-604.1  
Annotated Code of Maryland  
(2021 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

**Article – Criminal Law**

~~10-604.~~

~~(a) A person may not:~~

~~(1) overdrive or overload an animal;~~

~~(2) deprive an animal of necessary sustenance;~~

~~(3) inflict unnecessary suffering or pain on an animal;~~

~~(4) cause, procure, or authorize an act prohibited under item (1), (2), or (3) of this subsection; or~~

~~(5) if the person has charge or custody of an animal, as owner or otherwise, unnecessarily fail to provide the animal with:~~

~~(i) nutritious food in sufficient quantity;~~

- ~~(ii) necessary veterinary care;~~
- ~~(iii) proper drink;~~
- ~~(iv) proper air;~~
- ~~(v) proper space;~~
- ~~(vi) proper shelter; or~~
- ~~(vii) proper protection from the weather.~~

~~(b) (1) A person who violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction is subject to:~~

~~(I) FOR A VIOLATION THAT DOES NOT RESULT IN THE DEATH OF AN ANIMAL OR THE NEED TO EUTHANIZE THE ANIMAL, imprisonment not exceeding 90 days or a fine not exceeding \$1,000 or both; OR~~

~~(II) FOR A VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION THAT RESULTS IN THE DEATH OF AN ANIMAL OR THE NEED TO EUTHANIZE THE ANIMAL BASED ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF A LICENSED VETERINARIAN, IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 3 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$5,000 OR BOTH, IF THE DECISION TO EUTHANIZE THE ANIMAL IS VALIDATED, BEFORE OR AFTER THE EUTHANASIA OF THE ANIMAL BY:~~

~~1. A SECOND LICENSED VETERINARIAN; OR~~

~~2. IF THE ANIMAL IS A LIVESTOCK OR AGRICULTURAL ANIMAL, THE STATE VETERINARIAN.~~

~~(2) As a condition of sentencing OF A DEFENDANT CONVICTED OF VIOLATING THIS SECTION, the court may:~~

~~(I) order [a] THE defendant [convicted of violating this section] to:~~

~~[(i)] 1. participate in and pay for psychological counseling; and~~

~~[(ii)] 2. pay, in addition to any other fines and costs, all reasonable costs incurred in removing, housing, treating, or euthanizing an animal confiscated from the defendant; AND~~

~~(II) PROHIBIT THE DEFENDANT FROM OWNING, POSSESSING, OR RESIDING WITH AN ANIMAL FOR A PERIOD OF TIME DETERMINED BY THE COURT.~~

~~(3) As a condition of probation, the court may prohibit a defendant from owning, possessing, or residing with an animal FOR A PERIOD OF TIME DETERMINED BY THE COURT.~~

**10-604.1.**

**(A) A PERSON MAY NOT COMMIT A VIOLATION OF § 10-604 OF THIS SUBTITLE THAT RESULTS IN:**

**(1) THE DEATH OF A DOMESTIC ANIMAL OR LIVESTOCK; OR**

**(2) THE NEED TO EUTHANIZE A DOMESTIC ANIMAL OR LIVESTOCK BASED ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF A LICENSED VETERINARIAN, IF THE DECISION TO EUTHANIZE THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL OR LIVESTOCK IS VALIDATED BEFORE OR AFTER THE EUTHANASIA BY A SECOND LICENSED VETERINARIAN.**

**(B) A PERSON WHO VIOLATES THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 1 YEAR OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$5,000 OR BOTH.**

**(C) AS A CONDITION OF SENTENCING OF A DEFENDANT CONVICTED OF VIOLATING THIS SECTION, THE COURT MAY:**

**(1) ORDER THE DEFENDANT TO:**

**(I) PARTICIPATE IN AND PAY FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING; AND**

**(II) PAY, IN ADDITION TO ANY OTHER FINES AND COSTS, ALL REASONABLE COSTS INCURRED IN REMOVING, HOUSING, TREATING, OR EUTHANIZING AN ANIMAL CONFISCATED FROM THE DEFENDANT; AND**

**(2) PROHIBIT THE DEFENDANT FROM OWNING, POSSESSING, OR RESIDING WITH AN ANIMAL FOR A PERIOD OF TIME DETERMINED BY THE COURT.**

~~SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2025.~~

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act is an emergency measure, is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health or safety, has been passed by a ye and nay vote supported by three-fifths of all the members elected to each of the two Houses of the General Assembly, and shall take effect from the date it is enacted.

**Approved by the Governor, April 22, 2025.**