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§ 3.2-6585. Dogs and cats deemed personal property; rights relating thereto.

All dogs and cats shall be deemed personal property and may be the subject of larceny and malicious or unlawful trespass. Owners, as defined in § [3.2-6500](#), may maintain any action for the killing of any such animals, or injury thereto, or unlawful detention or use thereof as in the case of other personal property. The owner of any dog or cat that is injured or killed contrary to the provisions of this chapter by any person shall be entitled to recover the value thereof or the damage done thereto in an appropriate action at law from such person.

An animal control officer or other officer finding a stolen dog or cat, or a dog or cat held or detained contrary to law, shall have authority to seize and hold such animal pending action before a general district court or other court. If no such action is instituted within seven days, the animal control officer or other officer shall deliver the dog or cat to its owner.

The presence of a dog or cat on the premises of a person other than its legal owner shall raise no presumption of theft against the owner, and the animal control officer may take such animal and notify its legal owner. The legal owner of the animal shall pay a reasonable charge as the local governing body by ordinance shall establish for the keep of such animal while in the possession of the animal control officer.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.95; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.127; 1988, c. 537; 1998, c. [817](#); 2008, c. [860](#).

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