



VIRGINIA LAW

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Article 6. Authority of Local Governing Bodies.

§ 3.2-6537. Ordinances; penalties.

The governing body of any locality may, by ordinance, require a person operating a pet shop or operating as a dealer in companion animals to obtain a permit. Such local governing body may charge no more than \$50 per year for such permit. The revenues derived therefrom shall be used for the administration and enforcement of such ordinance.

The aforementioned ordinance may provide: (i) that records be kept by the permittees as are deemed necessary; (ii) for public hearing prior to issuance, renewal or revocation of any such permit; or (iii) for the denial of issuance, denial of renewal or for the revocation of such permit for fraudulent practices or inhumane treatment of the animals dealt with by the permittee.

The ordinance may provide for either a criminal penalty not to exceed a Class 3 misdemeanor or a civil penalty not to exceed \$500 for any violation of the ordinance. Any civil penalties collected shall be deposited by the local treasurer pursuant to § [3.2-6534](#).

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.54; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.84; 2005, c. [307](#); 2008, c. [860](#).

§ 3.2-6538. Governing body of any locality may prohibit dogs from running at large.

The governing body of any locality may prohibit the running at large of all or any category of dogs in all or any designated portion of such locality during such months as they may designate. Governing bodies may also require that dogs be confined, restricted or penned up during such periods. For the purpose of this section, a dog shall be deemed to run at large while roaming, running or self-hunting off the property of its owner or custodian and not under its owner's or custodian's immediate control. Any person who permits his dog to run at large, or remain unconfined, unrestricted or not penned up shall be deemed to have violated the provisions of this section.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.63; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.93; 2008, c. [860](#).

§ 3.2-6539. Ordinance requiring dogs to be kept on leash.

The governing body of any locality may adopt ordinances requiring that dogs within any such locality be kept on a leash or otherwise restrained and may, by resolution directed to the circuit court, request the

court to order a referendum as to whether any such ordinance so adopted shall become effective. Such referendum shall be held and conducted, and the results thereof ascertained and certified in accordance with § 24.2-684. The court shall require the governing body to give appropriate notice of the time, place and subject matter of such referendum.

The results of the referendum shall not be binding upon the governing body of the locality but may be used in ascertaining the sense of the voters.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.65; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.95; 2008, c. 860.

§ 3.2-6540. Control of dangerous dogs; penalties.

A. As used in this section:

"Dangerous dog" means a canine or canine crossbreed that has bitten, attacked, or inflicted injury on a person or companion animal that is a dog or cat, or killed a companion animal that is a dog or cat. When a dog attacks or bites a companion animal that is a dog or cat, the attacking or biting dog shall not be deemed dangerous (i) if no serious physical injury as determined by a licensed veterinarian has occurred to the dog or cat as a result of the attack or bite; (ii) if both animals are owned by the same person; (iii) if such attack occurs on the property of the attacking or biting dog's owner or custodian; or (iv) for other good cause as determined by the court. No dog shall be found to be a dangerous dog as a result of biting, attacking, or inflicting injury on a dog or cat while engaged with an owner or custodian as part of lawful hunting or participating in an organized, lawful dog handling event. No dog that has bitten, attacked, or inflicted injury on a person shall be found to be a dangerous dog if the court determines, based on the totality of the evidence before it, that the dog is not dangerous or a threat to the community.

B. Any law-enforcement officer or animal control officer who has reason to believe that a canine or canine crossbreed within his jurisdiction is a dangerous dog shall apply to a magistrate serving the jurisdiction for the issuance of a summons requiring the owner or custodian, if known, to appear before a general district court at a specified time. The summons shall advise the owner of the nature of the proceeding and the matters at issue. If a law-enforcement officer successfully makes an application for the issuance of a summons, he shall contact the local animal control officer and inform him of the location of the dog and the relevant facts pertaining to his belief that the dog is dangerous. The animal control officer shall confine the animal until such time as evidence shall be heard and a verdict rendered. If the animal control officer determines that the owner or custodian can confine the animal in a manner that protects the public safety, he may permit the owner or custodian to confine the animal until such time as evidence shall be heard and a verdict rendered. The court, through its contempt powers, may compel the owner, custodian, or harbinger of the animal to produce the animal. If, after hearing the evidence, the court finds that the animal is a dangerous dog, the court shall order the animal's owner to comply with the provisions of this section. The court, upon finding the animal to be a dangerous dog, may order the owner, custodian, or harbinger thereof to pay restitution for actual damages to any person injured by the animal or whose companion animal was injured or killed by the animal. The court, in its discretion, may also order the owner to pay all reasonable expenses incurred in caring and providing for such dangerous dog from the time the animal is taken into custody until such time as the animal is disposed of or returned to the owner. The procedure for appeal and trial shall be the same as provided by law for misdemeanors. Trial by jury shall be as provided in Article 4 (§ 19.2-260 et seq.) of Chapter 15 of Title 19.2. The Commonwealth shall be required to prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt.

C. No canine or canine crossbreed shall be found to be a dangerous dog solely because it is a particular breed, nor is the ownership of a particular breed of canine or canine crossbreed prohibited. No animal shall be found to be a dangerous dog if the threat, injury, or damage was sustained by a person who was

(i) committing, at the time, a crime upon the premises occupied by the animal's owner or custodian; (ii) committing, at the time, a willful trespass upon the premises occupied by the animal's owner or custodian; or (iii) provoking, tormenting, or physically abusing the animal, or can be shown to have repeatedly provoked, tormented, abused, or assaulted the animal at other times. No police dog that was engaged in the performance of its duties as such at the time of the acts complained of shall be found to be a dangerous dog. No animal that, at the time of the acts complained of, was responding to pain or injury, or was protecting itself, its kennel, its offspring, a person, or its owner's or custodian's property, shall be found to be a dangerous dog.

D. If the owner of an animal found to be a dangerous dog is a minor, the custodial parent or legal guardian shall be responsible for complying with all requirements of this section.

E. The owner of any animal found to be a dangerous dog shall, within 45 days of such finding, obtain a dangerous dog registration certificate from the local animal control officer or treasurer for a fee of \$150, in addition to other fees that may be authorized by law. The local animal control officer or treasurer shall also provide the owner with a uniformly designed tag that identifies the animal as a dangerous dog. The owner shall affix the tag to the animal's collar and ensure that the animal wears the collar and tag at all times. By January 31 of each year, until such time as the dangerous dog is deceased, all certificates obtained pursuant to this subsection shall be updated and renewed for a fee of \$85 and in the same manner as the initial certificate was obtained. The animal control officer shall post registration information on the Virginia Dangerous Dog Registry.

F. All dangerous dog registration certificates or renewals thereof required to be obtained under this section shall only be issued to persons 18 years of age or older who present satisfactory evidence (i) of the animal's current rabies vaccination, if applicable; (ii) that the animal has been neutered or spayed; and (iii) that the animal is and will be confined in a proper enclosure or is and will be confined inside the owner's residence or is and will be muzzled and confined in the owner's fenced-in yard until the proper enclosure is constructed. In addition, owners who apply for certificates or renewals thereof under this section shall not be issued a certificate or renewal thereof unless they present satisfactory evidence that (a) their residence is and will continue to be posted with clearly visible signs warning both minors and adults of the presence of a dangerous dog on the property and (b) the animal has been permanently identified by means of electronic implantation. All certificates or renewals thereof required to be obtained under this section shall only be issued to persons who present satisfactory evidence that the owner has liability insurance coverage, to the value of at least \$100,000, that covers animal bites. The owner may obtain and maintain a bond in surety, in lieu of liability insurance, to the value of at least \$100,000.

G. While on the property of its owner, an animal found to be a dangerous dog shall be confined indoors or in a securely enclosed and locked structure of sufficient height and design to prevent its escape or direct contact with or entry by minors, adults, or other animals. While so confined within the structure, the animal shall be provided for according to § 3.2-6503. When off its owner's property, an animal found to be a dangerous dog shall be kept on a leash and muzzled in such a manner as not to cause injury to the animal or interfere with the animal's vision or respiration, but so as to prevent it from biting a person or another animal.

H. The owner shall cause the local animal control officer to be promptly notified of (i) the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all owners; (ii) all of the means necessary to locate the owner and the dog at any time; (iii) any complaints or incidents of attack by the dog upon any person or cat or dog;

(iv) any claims made or lawsuits brought as a result of any attack; (v) chip identification information; (vi) proof of insurance or surety bond; and (vii) the death of the dog.

I. After an animal has been found to be a dangerous dog, the animal's owner shall immediately, upon learning of same, cause the local animal control authority to be notified if the animal (i) is loose or unconfined; (ii) bites a person or attacks another animal; or (iii) is sold, is given away, or dies. Any owner of a dangerous dog who relocates to a new address shall, within 10 days of relocating, provide written notice to the appropriate local animal control authority for the old address from which the animal has moved and the new address to which the animal has been moved.

J. Any owner or custodian of a canine or canine crossbreed or other animal is guilty of a:

1. Class 2 misdemeanor if the canine or canine crossbreed previously declared a dangerous dog pursuant to this section, when such declaration arose out of a separate and distinct incident, attacks and injures or kills a cat or dog that is a companion animal belonging to another person;

2. Class 1 misdemeanor if the canine or canine crossbreed previously declared a dangerous dog pursuant to this section, when such declaration arose out of a separate and distinct incident, bites a human being or attacks a human being causing bodily injury; or

3. Class 6 felony if any owner or custodian whose willful act or omission in the care, control, or containment of a canine, canine crossbreed, or other animal is so gross, wanton, and culpable as to show a reckless disregard for human life, and is the proximate cause of such dog or other animal attacking and causing serious bodily injury to any person.

The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to any animal that, at the time of the acts complained of, was responding to pain or injury, or was protecting itself, its kennel, its offspring, a person, or its owner's or custodian's property, or when the animal is a police dog that is engaged in the performance of its duties at the time of the attack.

K. The owner of any animal that has been found to be a dangerous dog who willfully fails to comply with the requirements of this section is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

Whenever an owner or custodian of an animal found to be a dangerous dog is charged with a violation of this section, the animal control officer shall confine the dangerous dog until such time as evidence shall be heard and a verdict rendered. The court, through its contempt powers, may compel the owner, custodian, or harbinger of the animal to produce the animal.

Upon conviction, the court may (i) order the dangerous dog to be disposed of by a local governing body pursuant to § 3.2-6562 or (ii) grant the owner up to 45 days to comply with the requirements of this section, during which time the dangerous dog shall remain in the custody of the animal control officer until compliance has been verified. If the owner fails to achieve compliance within the time specified by the court, the court shall order the dangerous dog to be disposed of by a local governing body pursuant to § 3.2-6562. The court, in its discretion, may order the owner to pay all reasonable expenses incurred in caring and providing for such dangerous dog from the time the animal is taken into custody until such time that the animal is disposed of or returned to the owner.

L. All fees collected pursuant to this section, less the costs incurred by the animal control authority in producing and distributing the certificates and tags required by this section and fees due to the State Veterinarian for maintenance of the Virginia Dangerous Dog Registry, shall be paid into a special dedicated fund in the treasury of the locality for the purpose of paying the expenses of any training course required under § 3.2-6556.

M. The governing body of any locality may enact an ordinance parallel to this statute regulating dangerous dogs. No locality may impose a felony penalty for violation of such ordinances.

1993, c. 977, § 3.1-796.93:1; 1994, c. 115; 1997, cc. 582, 892; 1998, c. 817; 2000, cc. 11, 727; 2003, cc. 785, 841; 2006, cc. 837, 864, 898; 2008, cc. 360, 551, 691, 860; 2009, c. 377; 2012, cc. 107, 236; 2013, cc. 58, 732.

§ 3.2-6540.1. Vicious dogs; penalties.

A. As used in this section:

"Serious injury" means an injury having a reasonable potential to cause death or any injury other than a sprain or strain, including serious disfigurement, serious impairment of health, or serious impairment of bodily function and requiring significant medical attention.

"Vicious dog" means a canine or canine crossbreed that has (i) killed a person, (ii) inflicted serious injury to a person, or (iii) continued to exhibit the behavior that resulted in a previous finding by a court or, on or before July 1, 2006, by an animal control officer as authorized by ordinance that it is a dangerous dog, provided that its owner has been given notice of that finding.

B. Any law-enforcement officer or animal control officer who has reason to believe that a canine or canine crossbreed within his jurisdiction is a vicious dog shall apply to a magistrate serving the jurisdiction for the issuance of a summons requiring the owner or custodian, if known, to appear before a general district court at a specified time. The summons shall advise the owner of the nature of the proceeding and the matters at issue. If a law-enforcement officer successfully makes an application for the issuance of a summons, he shall contact the local animal control officer and inform him of the location of the dog and the relevant facts pertaining to his belief that the dog is vicious. The animal control officer shall confine the animal until such time as evidence shall be heard and a verdict rendered. The court, through its contempt powers, may compel the owner, custodian, or harbinger of the animal to produce the animal. If, after hearing the evidence, the court finds that the animal is a vicious dog, the court shall order the animal euthanized in accordance with the provisions of § 3.2-6562. The court, upon finding the animal to be a vicious dog, may order the owner, custodian, or harbinger thereof to pay restitution for actual damages to any person injured by the animal or to the estate of any person killed by the animal. The court, in its discretion, may also order the owner to pay all reasonable expenses incurred in caring and providing for such vicious dog from the time the animal is taken into custody until such time as the animal is disposed of. The procedure for appeal and trial shall be the same as provided by law for misdemeanors. Trial by jury shall be as provided in Article 4 (§ 19.2-260 et seq.) of Chapter 15 of Title 19.2. The Commonwealth shall be required to prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt.

C. No canine or canine crossbreed shall be found to be a vicious dog solely because it is a particular breed, nor is the ownership of a particular breed of canine or canine crossbreed prohibited. No animal shall be found to be a vicious dog if the threat, injury, or damage was sustained by a person who was (i) committing, at the time, a crime upon the premises occupied by the animal's owner or custodian; (ii) committing, at the time, a willful trespass upon the premises occupied by the animal's owner or custodian; or (iii) provoking, tormenting, or physically abusing the animal, or can be shown to have repeatedly provoked, tormented, abused, or assaulted the animal at other times. No police dog that was engaged in the performance of its duties as such at the time of the acts complained of shall be found to be a vicious dog. No animal that, at the time of the acts complained of, was responding to pain or injury or was protecting itself, its kennel, its offspring, a person, or its owner's or custodian's property, shall be found to be a vicious dog.

D. Any owner or custodian of a canine or canine crossbreed or other animal whose willful act or omission in the care, control, or containment of a canine, canine crossbreed, or other animal is so gross, wanton, and culpable as to show a reckless disregard for human life and is the proximate cause of such dog or other animal attacking and causing serious injury to any person is guilty of a Class 6 felony. The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to any animal that, at the time of the acts complained of, was responding to pain or injury or was protecting itself, its kennel, its offspring, a person, or its owner's or custodian's property, or when the animal is a police dog that is engaged in the performance of its duties at the time of the attack.

E. The governing body of any locality may enact an ordinance parallel to this statute regulating vicious dogs. No locality may impose a felony penalty for violation of such ordinances.

2013, cc. [58](#), [732](#).

§ 3.2-6541. Authority to prohibit training of attack dogs.

Fairfax County may enact an ordinance that prohibits persons from training dogs on residential property to attack. As used in this section, "attack" means to attack or respond aggressively, either with or without command. Any such ordinance shall exempt from its provisions the training of dogs owned by any person who resides on the property.

1999, c. [848](#), § 3.1-796.93:2; 2008, c. [860](#).

§ 3.2-6542. Establishment of Dangerous Dog Registry.

The Commissioner shall establish the Virginia Dangerous Dog Registry to be maintained by the Department, Office of Animal Care and Health Policy. The State Veterinarian shall maintain information provided and posted by animal control officers or other such officials statewide on a website. All information collected for the Dangerous Dog Registry shall be available to animal control officers via the website. Registration information shall include the name of the animal, a photograph, sex, age, weight, primary breed, secondary breed, color and markings, whether spayed or neutered, the acts that resulted in the dog being designated as dangerous and associated trial docket information, microchip or tattoo number, address where the animal is maintained, name of the owner, address of the owner, telephone numbers of the owner, and a statement that the owner has complied with the provisions of the dangerous dog order. The address of the owner along with the name and breed of the dangerous dog, the acts that resulted in the dog being deemed dangerous, and information necessary to access court records of the adjudication shall be available to the general public. By January 31 of each year, until such time as the dangerous dog is deceased, the owner shall submit to an animal control officer or other designated local official of the county or city in which he currently resides a renewal registration that shall include all information contained in the original registration and any updates. The owner shall verify the information is accurate by annual resubmissions. The animal control officer or other such official shall post any updates on the website. In the event that the dangerous dog is moved to a different location, or contact information for the owner changes in any way at any time, the owner shall submit a renewal containing the address of the new location or other updated information within 10 days of such move or change to an animal control officer or other such official for the new location. There shall be no charge for any updated information provided between renewals. Each county and city shall submit to the State Veterinarian by January 31 of each year \$90 for each dangerous dog it initially registered and \$25 for each dangerous dog for which it renewed registration within the previous calendar year. Any funds collected pursuant to this section shall be used by the State Veterinarian to maintain the registry and website. The website list shall be known as the Virginia Dangerous Dog Registry.

Actions of the Department relating to the establishment, operation, and maintenance of the Virginia Dangerous Dog Registry under this section shall be exempt from the provisions of the Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.).

Copies of all records, documents, and other papers pertaining to the Dangerous Dog Registry that are duly certified and authenticated in writing on the face of such documents to be true copies by the State Veterinarian or the Dangerous Dog Registry administrator shall be received as evidence with like effect as the original records, documents, or other papers in all courts of the Commonwealth.

2006, cc. 837, 864, 898, § 3.1-796.93:3; 2008, c. 860; 2009, c. 354; 2012, cc. 107, 236.

§ 3.2-6543. Governing body of any locality may adopt certain ordinances.

A. The governing body of any locality of the Commonwealth may adopt, and make more stringent, ordinances that parallel §§ 3.2-6521 through 3.2-6539, 3.2-6546 through 3.2-6555, 3.2-6562, 3.2-6569, 3.2-6570, 3.2-6574 through 3.2-6580, and 3.2-6585 through 3.2-6590. Any town may choose to adopt by reference any ordinance of the surrounding county adopted under this section to be applied within its town limits, in lieu of adopting an ordinance of its own.

Any funds collected pursuant to the enforcement of ordinances adopted pursuant to the provisions of this section may be used for the purpose of defraying the costs of local animal control, including efforts to promote sterilization of cats and dogs.

B. Any locality may, by ordinance, establish uniform schedules of civil penalties for violations of specific provisions of ordinances adopted pursuant to this section. Civil penalties may not be imposed for violations of ordinances that parallel § 3.2-6570. Designation of a particular violation for a civil penalty shall be in lieu of criminal sanctions and preclude prosecution of such violation as a criminal misdemeanor. The schedule for civil penalties shall be uniform for each type of specified violation and the penalty for any one violation shall not be more than \$150. Imposition of civil penalties shall not preclude an action for injunctive, declaratory or other equitable relief. Moneys raised pursuant to this subsection shall be placed in the locality's general fund.

An animal control officer or law-enforcement officer may issue a summons for a violation. Any person summoned or issued a ticket for a scheduled violation may make an appearance in person or in writing by mail to the department of finance or the treasurer of the locality issuing the summons or ticket prior to the date fixed for trial in court. Any person so appearing may enter a waiver of trial, admit liability, and pay the civil penalty established for the offense charged.

1976, c. 182, § 15.1-29.1:1; 1984, c. 492, § 29-213.64; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.94; 1993, c. 959; 1994, cc. 115, 630; 1995, c. 832; 1997, c. 587; 1998, c. 817; 2005, c. 304; 2008, c. 860; 2009, c. 107.

§ 3.2-6544. Regulation of keeping of animals and fowl.

A. Any locality may, for the preservation of public health, regulate by ordinance the keeping of animals or fowl, other than dogs and cats, within a certain distance of residences or other buildings or wells, springs, streams, creeks, or brooks, and provide that all or certain of such animals shall not be kept within certain areas.

B. Any locality may, by ordinance, prohibit cruelty to and abuse of animals and fowl; and may regulate or prohibit the running at large and the keeping of animals and fowl and provide for the impounding and confiscation of any such animal or fowl found at large or kept in violation of such regulations. Any such ordinance may require that owners of any exotic or poisonous animal found running at large pay a fee to cover the locality's actual cost in locating and capturing or otherwise disposing of the animal.

Code 1950 §§ 15-20.1, 15-20.2; 1952, c. 694; 1954, c. 94; 1962, c. 623, §§ 15.1-517, 15.1-870; 1997, cc. 411, 587, § 3.1-796.94:1; 1999, c. 663; 2008, c. 860.

§ 3.2-6545. Regulation of sale of animals procured from animal shelters.

Any locality that maintains or supports, in whole or in part, a public or private animal shelter may by ordinance provide that no person who acquires an animal from such shelter shall be able to sell the animal within a period of six months from the time the animal is acquired from the shelter. Violation of the ordinance is a Class 1 misdemeanor.

1972, c. 347, § 15.1-517.1; 1997, c. 587, § 3.1-796.94:2; 2008, c. 860; 2014, c. 148.

§ 3.2-6546. County or city public animal shelters; confinement and disposition of animals; affiliation with foster care providers; penalties; injunctive relief.

A. For purposes of this section:

"Animal" shall not include agricultural animals.

"Rightful owner" means a person with a right of property in the animal.

B. The governing body of each county or city shall maintain or cause to be maintained a public animal shelter and shall require dogs running at large without the tag required by § 3.2-6531 or in violation of an ordinance passed pursuant to § 3.2-6538 to be confined therein. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit confinement of other companion animals in such a shelter. The governing body of any county or city need not own the facility required by this section but may contract for its establishment with a private group or in conjunction with one or more other local governing bodies. The governing body shall require that:

1. The public animal shelter shall be accessible to the public at reasonable hours during the week;
2. The public animal shelter shall obtain a signed statement from each of its directors, operators, staff, or animal caregivers specifying that each individual has never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment, and each shelter shall update such statement as changes occur;
3. If a person contacts the public animal shelter inquiring about a lost companion animal, the shelter shall advise the person if the companion animal is confined at the shelter or if a companion animal of similar description is confined at the shelter;
4. The public animal shelter shall maintain a written record of the information on each companion animal submitted to the shelter by a private animal shelter in accordance with subsection D of § 3.2-6548 for a period of 30 days from the date the information is received by the shelter. If a person contacts the shelter inquiring about a lost companion animal, the shelter shall check its records and make available to such person any information submitted by a private animal shelter or allow such person inquiring about a lost animal to view the written records;
5. The public animal shelter shall maintain a written record of the information on each companion animal submitted to the shelter by a releasing agency other than a public or private animal shelter in accordance with subdivision F 2 of § 3.2-6549 for a period of 30 days from the date the information is received by the shelter. If a person contacts the shelter inquiring about a lost companion animal, the shelter shall check its records and make available to such person any information submitted by such releasing agency or allow such person inquiring about a lost companion animal to view the written records; and

6. The public animal shelter shall maintain a written record of the information on each companion animal submitted to the shelter by an individual in accordance with subdivision A 2 of § 3.2-6551 for a period of 30 days from the date the information is received by the shelter. If a person contacts the shelter inquiring about a lost companion animal, the shelter shall check its records and make available to such person any information submitted by the individual or allow such person inquiring about a lost companion animal to view the written records.

C. An animal confined pursuant to this section shall be kept for a period of not less than five days, such period to commence on the day immediately following the day the animal is initially confined in the facility, unless sooner claimed by the rightful owner thereof.

The operator or custodian of the public animal shelter shall make a reasonable effort to ascertain whether the animal has a collar, tag, license, tattoo, or other form of identification. If such identification is found on the animal, the animal shall be held for an additional five days, unless sooner claimed by the rightful owner. If the rightful owner of the animal can be readily identified, the operator or custodian of the shelter shall make a reasonable effort to notify the owner of the animal's confinement within the next 48 hours following its confinement.

If any animal confined pursuant to this section is claimed by its rightful owner, such owner may be charged with the actual expenses incurred in keeping the animal impounded. In addition to this and any other fees that might be levied, the locality may, after a public hearing, adopt an ordinance to charge the owner of an animal a fee for impoundment and increased fees for subsequent impoundments of the same animal.

D. If an animal confined pursuant to this section has not been claimed upon expiration of the appropriate holding period as provided by subsection C, it shall be deemed abandoned and become the property of the public animal shelter.

Such animal may be euthanized in accordance with the methods approved by the State Veterinarian or disposed of by the methods set forth in subdivisions 1 through 5. No shelter shall release more than two animals or a family of animals during any 30-day period to any one person under subdivisions 2, 3, or 4.

1. Release to any humane society, public or private animal shelter, or other releasing agency within the Commonwealth, provided that each humane society, animal shelter, or other releasing agency obtains a signed statement from each of its directors, operators, staff, or animal caregivers specifying that each individual has never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment and updates such statements as changes occur;

2. Adoption by a resident of the county or city where the shelter is operated and who will pay the required license fee, if any, on such animal, provided that such resident has read and signed a statement specifying that he has never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment;

3. Adoption by a resident of an adjacent political subdivision of the Commonwealth, if the resident has read and signed a statement specifying that he has never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment;

4. Adoption by any other person, provided that such person has read and signed a statement specifying that he has never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment and provided that no dog or cat may be adopted by any person who is not a resident of the county or city where the shelter is operated, or of an adjacent political subdivision, unless the dog or cat is first sterilized, and the shelter may require that the sterilization be done at the expense of the person adopting the dog or cat; or

5. Release for the purposes of adoption or euthanasia only, to an animal shelter, or any other releasing agency located in and lawfully operating under the laws of another state, provided that such animal shelter, or other releasing agency: (i) maintains records that would comply with § 3.2-6557; (ii) requires that adopted dogs and cats be sterilized; (iii) obtains a signed statement from each of its directors, operators, staff, and animal caregivers specifying that each individual has never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment, and updates such statement as changes occur; and (iv) has provided to the public or private animal shelter or other releasing agency within the Commonwealth a statement signed by an authorized representative specifying the entity's compliance with clauses (i) through (iii), and the provisions of adequate care and performance of humane euthanasia, as necessary in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

For purposes of recordkeeping, release of an animal by a public animal shelter to a public or private animal shelter or other releasing agency shall be considered a transfer and not an adoption. If the animal is not first sterilized, the responsibility for sterilizing the animal transfers to the receiving entity.

Any proceeds deriving from the gift, sale, or delivery of such animals shall be paid directly to the treasurer of the locality. Any proceeds deriving from the gift, sale, or delivery of such animals by a public or private animal shelter or other releasing agency shall be paid directly to the clerk or treasurer of the animal shelter or other releasing agency for the expenses of the society and expenses incident to any agreement concerning the disposing of such animal. No part of the proceeds shall accrue to any individual except for the aforementioned purposes.

E. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the immediate euthanasia of a critically injured, critically ill, or unweaned animal for humane purposes. Any animal euthanized pursuant to the provisions of this chapter shall be euthanized by one of the methods prescribed or approved by the State Veterinarian.

F. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the immediate euthanasia or disposal by the methods listed in subdivisions 1 through 5 of subsection D of an animal that has been released to a public or private animal shelter, other releasing agency, or animal control officer by the animal's rightful owner after the rightful owner has read and signed a statement: (i) surrendering all property rights in such animal; (ii) stating that no other person has a right of property in the animal; and (iii) acknowledging that the animal may be immediately euthanized or disposed of in accordance with subdivisions 1 through 5 of subsection D.

G. Nothing in this section shall prohibit any feral dog or feral cat not bearing a collar, tag, tattoo, or other form of identification that, based on the written statement of a disinterested person, exhibits behavior that poses a risk of physical injury to any person confining the animal, from being euthanized after being kept for a period of not less than three days, at least one of which shall be a full business day, such period to commence on the day the animal is initially confined in the facility, unless sooner claimed by the rightful owner. The statement of the disinterested person shall be kept with the animal as required by § 3.2-6557. For purposes of this subsection, a disinterested person shall not include a person releasing or reporting the animal.

H. No public animal shelter shall place a companion animal in a foster home with a foster care provider unless the foster care provider has read and signed a statement specifying that he has never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment, and each shelter shall update such statement as changes occur. The shelter shall maintain the original statement and any updates to such statement in accordance with this chapter and for at least so long as the shelter has an affiliation with the foster care provider.

I. A public animal shelter that places a companion animal in a foster home with a foster care provider shall ensure that the foster care provider complies with § 3.2-6503.

J. If a public animal shelter finds a direct and immediate threat to a companion animal placed with a foster care provider, it shall report its findings to the animal control agency in the locality where the foster care provider is located.

K. The governing body shall require that the public animal shelter be operated in accordance with regulations issued by the Board. If this chapter or such regulations are violated, the locality may be assessed a civil penalty by the Board or its designee in an amount that does not exceed \$1,000 per violation. Each day of the violation is a separate offense. In determining the amount of any civil penalty, the Board or its designee shall consider: (i) the history of previous violations at the shelter; (ii) whether the violation has caused injury to, death or suffering of, an animal; and (iii) the demonstrated good faith of the locality to achieve compliance after notification of the violation. All civil penalties assessed under this section shall be recovered in a civil action brought by the Attorney General in the name of the Commonwealth. Such civil penalties shall be paid into a special fund in the state treasury to the credit of the Department to be used in carrying out the purposes of this chapter.

L. If this chapter or any laws governing public animal shelters are violated, the Commissioner may bring an action to enjoin the violation or threatened violation of this chapter or the regulations pursuant thereto regarding public animal shelters, in the circuit court where the shelter is located. The Commissioner may request the Attorney General to bring such an action, when appropriate.

1984, c. 492, §§ 29-213.36, 29-213.66; 1985, c. 21; 1987, c. 488, §§ 3.1-796.66, 3.1-796.96; 1988, c. 538; 1989, c. 344; 1991, c. 348; 1993, cc. 174, 817, 959; 1994, c. 936; 1995, c. 496; 1997, c. 159; 1998, c. 817; 1999, cc. 627, 672; 2000, c. 1010; 2002, cc. 53, 208, 787; 2003, c. 1007; 2008, cc. 345, 860; 2014, c. 148.

§ 3.2-6547. Acceptance of animals for research or experimentation; prohibition.

No person shall use or accept for the purpose of medical research or experimentation any animal bearing a tag, license, or tattooed identification, unless the individual who owns such animal consents thereto in writing.

1990, c. 904, § 3.1-796.96:1; 2008, c. 860.

§ 3.2-6548. Private animal shelters; confinement and disposition of animals; affiliation with foster care providers; penalties; injunctive relief.

A. A private animal shelter may confine and dispose of animals in accordance with the provisions of subsections B through G of § 3.2-6546.

B. Each private animal shelter shall obtain a signed statement from each of its directors, operators, staff, and animal caregivers specifying that the individual has never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment, and each shelter shall update such statement as changes occur.

C. The State Veterinarian or his representative shall inspect a private animal shelter prior to the shelter confining or disposing of animals pursuant to this section. The shelter shall meet the requirements of all laws with regard to confinement and disposition of animals before the shelter is approved to receive animals and provide a reasonable and comfortable climate appropriate for the age, species, condition, size, and type of animal.

D. A private animal shelter that confines an animal that has not been received from its owner shall, pursuant to this section, transmit a description of the animal including at least species, color, breed, size, sex, and other identification or markings and where the animal was found, and its contact

information, including its name, address, and telephone number, to the public animal shelter in the county or city where the animal was found within 48 hours of the shelter receiving the animal. A shelter that confines and disposes of animals pursuant to this subsection shall be accessible to the public at reasonable hours, shall have its telephone number and address listed in a telephone directory, and shall post its contact information, including at least its name, address, and telephone number, in the public animal shelter in the locality where the shelter is located.

E. For purposes of recordkeeping, release of an animal by a private shelter to a public or private animal shelter or other releasing agency shall be considered a transfer and not an adoption. If the animal is not first sterilized, the responsibility for sterilizing the animal transfers to the receiving entity.

F. No private animal shelter shall place a companion animal in a foster home with a foster care provider unless the foster care provider has read and signed a statement specifying that he has never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment, and the shelter shall update the statement as changes occur. The shelter shall maintain the original statement and any updates to such statement in accordance with this chapter and for at least so long as the shelter has an affiliation with the foster care provider.

G. A private animal shelter that places a companion animal in a foster home with a foster care provider shall ensure that the foster care provider complies with § 3.2-6503.

H. If a private animal shelter finds a direct and immediate threat to a companion animal placed with a foster care provider, it shall report its findings to the animal control agency in the locality where the foster care provider is located.

I. No private animal shelter shall be operated in violation of any local zoning ordinance.

J. A private animal shelter that confines and disposes of animals pursuant to this section shall be operated in accordance with this chapter. If this chapter is violated, the shelter may be assessed a civil penalty by the Board or its designee in an amount that does not exceed \$1,000 per violation. Each day of the violation is a separate offense. In determining the amount of any civil penalty, the Board or its designee shall consider: (i) the history of previous violations at the shelter; (ii) whether the violation has caused injury to, death or suffering of, an animal; and (iii) the demonstrated good faith of the shelter to achieve compliance after notification of the violation. All civil penalties assessed under this section shall be recovered in a civil action brought by the Attorney General in the name of the Commonwealth. Such civil penalties shall be paid into a special fund in the state treasury to the credit of the Department to be used in carrying out the purposes of this chapter.

K. If this chapter or any laws governing private animal shelters are violated, the Commissioner may bring an action to enjoin the violation or threatened violation of this chapter or the regulations pursuant thereto regarding private animal shelters, in the circuit court where the shelter is located. The Commissioner may request the Attorney General to bring such an action, when appropriate.

2001, c. 727, § 3.1-796.96:2; 2002, cc. 53, 208, 787; 2003, cc. 770, 1007; 2008, c. 860; 2014, c. 148.

§ 3.2-6549. Releasing agencies other than public or private animal shelters; confinement and disposition of companion animals; recordkeeping; affiliation with foster care providers; penalties.

A. A releasing agency other than a public or private animal shelter:

1. May confine and dispose of companion animals in accordance with subsections B through G of § 3.2-6546 if incorporated and not operated for profit;

2. Shall keep accurate records of each companion animal received for two years from the date of disposition of the companion animal. Records shall (i) include a description of the companion animal, including species, color, breed, sex, approximate weight, age, reason for release, owner's or finder's name, address, and telephone number, and license number or other identifying tags or markings, as well as disposition of the companion animal, and (ii) be made available upon request to the Department, animal control officers, and law-enforcement officers at mutually agreeable times. A releasing agency other than a public or private animal shelter shall annually submit a summary of such records to the State Veterinarian in a format prescribed by him, wherein a post office box may be substituted for a home address; and

3. Shall annually file with the State Veterinarian a copy of its intake policy.

For purposes of recordkeeping, release of a companion animal by a releasing agency to a public or private animal shelter or other releasing agency shall be considered a transfer and not an adoption. If the animal is not first sterilized, the responsibility for sterilizing the animal transfers to the receiving entity.

B. Each releasing agency other than a public or private animal shelter shall obtain a signed statement from each of its directors, operators, staff, or animal caregivers specifying that each individual has never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment, and each such releasing agency shall update such statement as changes occur.

C. No releasing agency other than a public or private animal shelter shall place a companion animal in a foster home with a foster care provider unless the foster care provider has read and signed a statement specifying that the foster care provider has never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment, and such releasing agency shall update the statement as changes occur. A releasing agency other than a public or private animal shelter shall maintain the original statement and any updates to such statement for so long as the releasing agency has an affiliation with the foster care provider.

D. A releasing agency other than a public or private animal shelter that places a companion animal in a foster home with a foster care provider shall ensure that the foster care provider complies with § 3.2-6503.

E. If a releasing agency other than a public or private animal shelter finds a direct and immediate threat to a companion animal placed with a foster care provider, it shall report its findings to the animal control agency in the area where the foster care provider is located.

F. Any releasing agency other than a public or private animal shelter that finds a companion animal or receives a companion animal that has not been released by its owner and (i) provides care or safekeeping or (ii) takes possession of such companion animal shall within 48 hours:

1. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the owner of the companion animal, if the owner can be ascertained from any tag, license, collar, tattoo, or other identification or markings, or if the owner of the companion animal is otherwise known to the releasing agency; and

2. Notify the public animal shelter that serves the locality where the companion animal was found and provide to the shelter contact information including at least a name and a contact telephone number, a description of the companion animal including at least species, breed, sex, size, color, information from any tag, license, collar, tattoo, or other identification or markings, and the location where the companion animal was found.

G. A releasing agency other than a public or private animal shelter shall comply with the provisions of § 3.2-6503.

H. No releasing agency other than a public or private animal shelter shall be operated in violation of any local zoning ordinance.

I. A releasing agency other than a public or private animal shelter that violates any provision of this section, other than subsection G, may be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed \$250.

2002, c. 787, § 3.1-796.96:5; 2003, cc. 770, 1007; 2008, c. 860; 2014, c. 148; 2016, c. 678.

§ 3.2-6550. Requirements for foster homes; penalty.

In addition to any other requirements of this chapter, foster homes shall be subject to the following:

1. No foster home shall be operated in violation of any local zoning ordinance; and
2. No private residential dwelling and its surrounding grounds that serves as a foster home shall keep more than 50 companion animals on site at one time.

Any foster home found in violation of this section may be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed \$250.

2003, c. 1007, § 3.1-796.96:6; 2008, c. 860; 2014, c. 148.

§ 3.2-6551. Notification by individuals finding companion animals; penalty.

A. Any individual who finds a companion animal and (i) provides care or safekeeping or (ii) retains the companion animal in such a manner as to control its activities shall within 48 hours:

1. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the owner of the companion animal if the owner can be ascertained from any tag, license, collar, tattoo, or other form of identification or markings or if the owner of the animal is otherwise known to the individual; and
2. Notify the public animal shelter that serves the locality where the companion animal was found and provide to the shelter contact information, including at least a name and a contact telephone number, a description of the animal, including information from any tag, license, collar, tattoo, or other identification or markings, and the location where the companion animal was found.

B. If an individual finds a companion animal and (i) provides care or safekeeping or (ii) retains the companion animal in such a manner as to control its activities, the individual shall comply with the provisions of § 3.2-6503.

C. Any individual who violates this section may be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed \$50 per companion animal.

2003, c. 1007, § 3.1-796.96:7; 2008, c. 860; 2014, c. 148.

§ 3.2-6552. Dogs killing, injuring, or chasing livestock or poultry.

A. It shall be the duty of any animal control officer or other officer who may find a dog in the act of killing or injuring livestock or poultry to seize or kill such dog forthwith whether such dog bears a tag or not. Any person finding a dog committing any of the depredations mentioned in this section shall have the right to kill such dog on sight as shall any owner of livestock or his agent finding a dog chasing livestock on land utilized by the livestock when the circumstances show that such chasing is harmful to the livestock. Any court shall have the power to order the animal control officer or other officer to kill any dog known to be a confirmed livestock or poultry killer, and any dog killing poultry for the third time

shall be considered a confirmed poultry killer. The court, through its contempt powers, may compel the owner, custodian, or harbinger of the dog to produce the dog.

B. Any animal control officer who has reason to believe that any dog is killing livestock or poultry shall be empowered to seize such dog solely for the purpose of examining such dog in order to determine whether it committed any of the depredations mentioned herein. Any animal control officer or other person who has reason to believe that any dog is killing livestock, or committing any of the depredations mentioned in this section, shall apply to a magistrate serving the locality wherein the dog may be, who shall issue a warrant requiring the owner or custodian, if known, to appear before a general district court at a time and place named therein, at which time evidence shall be heard. If it shall appear that the dog is a livestock killer, or has committed any of the depredations mentioned in this section, the district court shall order that the dog be (i) killed or euthanized immediately by the animal control officer or other officer designated by the court or (ii) removed to another state that does not border on the Commonwealth and prohibited from returning to the Commonwealth. Any dog ordered removed from the Commonwealth that is later found in the Commonwealth shall be ordered by a court to be killed or euthanized immediately.

C. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection B, if it is determined that the dog has killed or injured only poultry, the district court may, instead of ordering killing, euthanasia, or removal to another state pursuant to this section, order either (a) that the dog be transferred to another owner whom the court deems appropriate and permanently fitted with an identifying microchip registered to that owner or (b) that the dog be fitted with an identifying microchip registered to the owner and confined indoors or in a securely enclosed and locked structure of sufficient height and design to prevent the dog's escape; direct contact with the dog by minors, adults, or other animals; or entry by minors, adults, or other animals. The structure shall be designed to provide the dog with shelter from the elements of nature. When off its owner's property, any dog found to be a poultry killer shall be kept on a leash and muzzled in such a manner as not to cause injury to the dog or interfere with its vision or respiration, but so as to prevent it from biting a person or another animal.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.85; 1985, c. 385; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.116; 1990, c. 222; 1993, c. 977; 1998, c. 817; 2008, cc. 551, 691, 860; 2014, c. 137; 2016, c. 757.

§ 3.2-6553. Compensation for livestock and poultry killed by dogs.

Any person who has any livestock or poultry killed or injured by any dog not his own shall be entitled to receive as compensation the fair market value of such livestock or poultry not to exceed \$750 per animal or \$10 per fowl if (i) the claimant has furnished evidence within 60 days of discovery of the quantity and value of the dead or injured livestock and the reasons the claimant believes that death or injury was caused by a dog; (ii) the animal control officer or other officer shall have been notified of the incident within 72 hours of its discovery; and (iii) the claimant first has exhausted his legal remedies against the owner, if known, of the dog doing the damage for which compensation under this section is sought. Exhaustion shall mean a judgment against the owner of the dog upon which an execution has been returned unsatisfied.

Local jurisdictions may by ordinance waive the requirements of clause (ii) or (iii) or both provided that the ordinance adopted requires that the animal control officer has conducted an investigation and that his investigation supports the claim. Upon payment under this section, the local governing body shall be subrogated to the extent of compensation paid to the right of action to the owner of the livestock or poultry against the owner of the dog and may enforce the same in an appropriate action at law.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.87; 1986, c. 108; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.118; 1992, c. 461; 1998, c. 817; 2008, c. 860; 2014, cc. 116, 160.

§ 3.2-6554. Disposal of dead companion animals.

The owner of any companion animal shall forthwith cremate, bury, or sanitarily dispose of the animal upon its death. If, after notice, any owner fails to do so, the animal control officer or other officer shall bury or cremate the companion animal, and he may recover on behalf of the local jurisdiction from the owner his cost for this service.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.90; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.121; 1993, c. 174; 1998, c. 817; 2008, c. 860.

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