
Judiciary Committee

SSB 5383

Title: An act relating to wolf-hybrids.

Brief Description: Regarding wolf-hybrids.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senators Morton, Jacobsen, Swecker, Stevens, Hargrove, Schoesler, Pflug and King).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Includes wolf-hybrids in the definition of a potentially dangerous wild animal, thereby prohibiting a person from possessing or breeding wolf-hybrids.
- Allows a person who is in legal possession of a wolf-hybrid before the effective date of the act to keep the animal for the remainder of the animal's life.

Hearing Date: 2/17/10

Staff: Rebecca Jones (786-5793) and Trudes Tango (786-7384).

Background:

A person may not possess or breed a potentially dangerous wild animal. A potentially dangerous wild animal is defined to include: large cats, wolves, bears, nonhuman primates, certain snakes, crocodiles, elephants, and rhinoceroses. Wolf-hybrids are specifically excluded from the definition. Wolf-hybrids are a combination of wolf and domestic dog.

A person in legal possession of a potentially dangerous wild animal prior to July 22, 2007 may keep the animal for the duration of the animal's lifetime, provided the possessor maintains adequate records and can prove possession prior to the effective date of the act.

Certain entities, such as zoos and aquariums, veterinary hospitals, certain game farms, research facilities, circuses, and persons temporarily transporting animals through the state are exempt from the prohibition on possessing or breeding a potentially dangerous wild animal.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

An animal control authority may confiscate a potentially dangerous wild animal if: (1) it is being kept in violation of the act; (2) it poses a public safety or health risk; or (3) it is in poor health and the animal's condition is attributable to the possessor. An animal confiscated by an animal control authority may be returned to the possessor only if the animal control authority establishes that the possessor had the animal prior to July 22, 2007, and the return does not pose a public safety or health risk.

If the animal is not able to be returned to the possessor, the animal control authority may relocate the animal to a wildlife sanctuary or other exempted facility. If relocation is not possible within a reasonable period of time, the animal control authority may euthanize the animal. The animal may be euthanized only if all known reasonable placement options, including relocation, are unavailable.

A violation of the act is a civil penalty subject to a fine of between \$200 and \$2,000 per animal for each day of the violation. Local jurisdictions may adopt ordinances that are more restrictive than the state law. The animal control authority and local law enforcement are authorized and empowered to enforce the dangerous wild animals law, but if a locality does not have a local animal control authority, the Department of Fish and Wildlife must enforce the law.

Summary of Bill:

Wolf-hybrids are included in the definition of potentially dangerous wild animals. A person may not possess or breed a wolf-hybrid. If, however, a person is in legal possession of a wolf-hybrid prior to the effective date of the act, the person may keep the animal for the remainder of the animal's life. The person must maintain adequate records showing that the person possessed the animal prior to the effective date of the act. The current laws regarding confiscation and return of the animal and relocation and euthanasia apply to wolf-hybrids.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.