

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6694

As Passed Senate, February 9, 1996

Title: An act relating to microchipping of equine.

Brief Description: Microchipping equine.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Agriculture & Agricultural Trade & Development (originally sponsored by Senators Morton, A. Anderson and Rasmussen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Agricultural Trade & Development: 1/30/96, 2/1/96 [DPS].

Passed Senate, 2/9/96, 48-1.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & AGRICULTURAL TRADE & DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6694 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Loveland, Vice Chair; A. Anderson, Bauer, Morton, Newhouse and Snyder.

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: Implanting microchips in horses as a means of identification is becoming more common. Normally, the chip is located in the neck ligament where it can be scanned with a microchip reader.

Livestock can be identified as to ownership by placing on the animal a brand registered with the Department of Agriculture. Removal or alteration of a brand without the prior written permission of the director is gross misdemeanor.

There currently is no specific penalty for removal of a microchip from horses.

Summary of Bill: Microchipping is defined as the implantation of a microchip or similar electronic identification device for the purpose of establishing the identity of an individual animal. In horses, microchips may be implanted in the nuchal ligament in the neck. For other livestock, when requested by an association of producers of that species of livestock, the director may establish by rule the location that a microchip may be implanted.

A person who removes or causes to be removed a microchip with the intent to defraud a subsequent purchaser is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

The Department of Agriculture is authorized to investigate incidents where it is apparent that a microchip is removed from a horse.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Microchipping of horses is beginning to become more common. The lachal ligament is generally regarded by meat processors to be the best place to locate a microchip in a horse to avoid it getting into the edible portion. Removal of a microchip is difficult and would require a surgical procedure. If removed, the horse's identity can be changed. The penalty provided is equivalent to that for changing a brand on cattle.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Lothar Pinkers, WA State Horse Council (pro); Greg Hanon, WA State Veterinary Medical Assn. (pro); Julie Sandberg, Department of Agriculture (pro).