

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6256

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & Environment, February 3, 1998

Title: An act relating to animal cruelty.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to prevention of cruelty to animals.

Sponsors: Senators Morton, Rasmussen and Swecker.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Environment: 1/15/98, 2/3/98 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Morton, Chair; Swecker, Vice Chair; Newhouse, Oke and Rasmussen.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser and McAuliffe.

Staff: Paul Mabrey (786-7412)

Background: Animal care and control agencies enforce this state's animal cruelty laws. Animal cruelty is punished according to the severity of the offense. First degree animal cruelty is punished as a class C felony, while animal cruelty in the second degree is punished as a misdemeanor.

Certain animal activities are exempt from the cruelty statute. Accepted husbandry practices used in commercial livestock or poultry raising and slaughtering, the use of animals in the normal and usual course of rodeo events, and the customary use or exhibiting animals in normal and usual events at fairs are exempt.

Summary of Bill: The humane, normal, and usual use of horses in racing activities authorized under the laws of Washington and subject to the rules of the Washington Horse Racing Commission is provided exemption from the cruelty statute. The humane, normal and usual use of animals for activities such as logging, riding, and showing is provided exemption.

For the purposes of the section, the term "humane" is objectively defined as the kind, merciful, or compassionate use of an animal as characterized by a reasonably prudent animal owner who would be using the animal under the same conditions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 13, 1998.

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

Testimony For: There is support for the bill because certain animal rights activists harass equestrian events and make unfounded allegations of cruelty when the horse activity is within the scope of humane, normal and usual use.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Eddie Armstrong, Washington State Horse Council (pro).