
**Agriculture & Ecology
Committee**

SSB 6037

Brief Description: Authorizing animal care and control agencies and nonprofit humane societies to provide limited veterinarian services.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Agriculture & International Trade (originally sponsored by Senators Prentice, Kohl-Welles and Parlette).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes animal care and control agencies and nonprofit humane societies to provide limited veterinary services to animals owned by qualified low-income households.
- Specifies requirements regarding provision of limited veterinary services and requires rulemaking to ensure compliance.

Hearing Date: 2/14/02

Staff: Caroleen Dineen (786-7156).

Background:

The practice of veterinary medicine is defined in statute to include a variety of activities, such as:

- diagnosing animal diseases, deformities, defects, wounds, or injuries;
- prescribing or administering drugs or treatments; and
- performing operations, manipulations, or application of any apparatus for cure, amelioration, correction, or reduction of any animal disease, deformity, defect, wound, or injury.

Education, training, and examination requirements for licensing of veterinarians are specified in statutes and rules of the Veterinary Board of Governors (Board). The Board also administers certificate of registration programs for veterinary technicians and veterinary medication clerks, who work under the supervision of licensed veterinarians.

"Animal care and control agency" is defined as any city or county animal control agency or authority allowed to enforce city or county municipal ordinances regulating the care, control, licensing, or treatment of animals within the city or county. The definition also includes any corporation organized as a humane society under state law that contracts with a city or county to enforce the city or county ordinances governing animal care and control.

"Low-income household" is defined for purposes of the state's affordable housing program, which is administered by the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, as a single person, family, or unrelated persons living together whose adjusted income is less than 80 percent of the median family income, adjusted for household size, for the county in which the project is located.

Summary of Bill:

Animal care and control agencies and nonprofit humane societies that have qualified under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code are authorized to provide limited veterinary services to animals owned by qualified low-income households. The authorized limited veterinary services are electronic identification, surgical sterilization, and vaccinations. "Low-income household" has the same meaning as in the affordable housing program statutes (i.e., adjusted income less than 80 percent of median family income in the county).

Animal control agencies and nonprofit humane societies receiving animals on an emergency basis may provide emergency care according to the local ordinance's definition of an emergency situation and its provisions regarding temporary time limits. Local ordinances addressing these issues that preexist the effective date of this new authority remain in effect.

Veterinarians employed at animal care or control agencies or nonprofit humane societies must be licensed by the state. These facilities may not impose employment terms or conditions or direct or attempt to direct an employed veterinarian in any way that interferes with the free exercise of the veterinarian's professional judgment or infringes upon the utilization of the veterinarian's professional skills.

Veterinarians and animal control agencies and humane societies providing limited veterinary services must meet the statutory requirements and rules in the same ways as other licensed veterinarians. The Veterinary Board of Governors must adopt rules to ensure compliance with the limited veterinary medical services authority and may suspend, revoke or condition the authority for noncompliance.

Legislative intent is specified to allow qualified animal control agencies and humane societies to provide limited veterinary services for household pets of low-income persons, not the general public.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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