
**Economic Development,
Agriculture & Trade Committee**

SB 6371

Brief Description: Regulating the disposal of dead animals.

Sponsors: Senators Rasmussen, Schoesler, Shin, Jacobsen and Sheldon; by request of Department of Agriculture.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides the Department of Agriculture with rule-making authority to prescribe the time frame and approved methods for disposing of livestock that die because of disease.

Hearing Date: 2/15/06

Staff: Meg Van Schoorl (786-7105).

Background:

The Department of Agriculture (Department) Animal Health program is charged with preventing the introduction or spreading of infectious, contagious, communicable or dangerous animal diseases, such as brucellosis, tuberculosis, salmonella, rabies, and avian influenza. The program monitors animal movement across state lines, conducts tests and inspections to detect and eliminate certain diseases, and undertakes emergency management planning related to tracing back and controlling foreign or domestic diseases of concern.

The Department has a role in the disposal of dead animals through its administration of Chapter 16.68 RCW. The statute focuses primarily on the collection and rendering of dead meat food animals (cattle, horses, mules, swine, sheep, and goats). However, one section applies specifically to the routine disposal of animals that die from disease. Any animal that has died from disease or been killed because of disease must immediately be buried at least three feet deep. Any animal found dead is presumed to have died from disease.

The State Board of Health (Board), the Department of Health (Health), the Department of Ecology (Ecology), as well as local health departments have responsibilities pertaining to dead animal disposal. In 2005, legislation was enacted amending Ecology's solid waste statutes to allow composting of cows and horses under certain conditions, and the Board began the process of revising its dead animal disposal rules.

Summary of Bill:

The Department is provided rule-making authority to prescribe the time frame and approved methods for disposing of livestock that die because of disease. Disposal options include but are not limited to: burial, composting, incineration, landfilling, natural decomposition, or rendering. Only livestock found dead of an unknown cause are presumed to have died from disease.

The term "animal" is replaced with the term "livestock." As defined in Chapter 16.36 RCW, "livestock" includes horses, mules, donkeys, cattle, bison, sheep, goats, swine, rabbits, llamas, alpacas, ratites, poultry, waterfowl, game birds, and other species designated by statute. It does not include free ranging wildlife as defined in Title 77 RCW.

The section providing for livestock disposal is recodified under the Department's animal health statute, Chapter 16.36 RCW.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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