

The Delaware 146th General Assembly session has ended. Here is a summary of activity regarding animal protection:

SB 211 to end continuous dog tethering - PASSED: Senator Patti Blevins (D-Elsmere) introduced a bill that would limit the amount of time a dog could be continuously tethered in a 24-hour period per DE Animal Cruelty statutes. The bill, which passed the Senate 17-4 and the House of Representatives 32-8 (1 not voting), will allow law enforcement officers, including animal cruelty investigators, the authority to intervene when a dog is chained continuously by issuing a warning for first-time offenders and escalating the punishment for repeat offenders. The bill is currently awaiting Governor Markell's signature, which is anticipated, and will take effect on January 1, 2013.

SB 129 to list coyotes as unprotected species –DEFEATED: This bill, sponsored by Senator David Lawson (R-Marydel) would have opened unrestricted hunting, trapping, and snaring of coyotes – without a season, limit of take, or license. The coyote population is very small in Delaware (estimated to be between 50-100 coyotes) and there have been no documented reports of attacks on pets, livestock or humans. Coyotes are wary of humans and prefer to stay clear of human establishments. They are also opportunistic hunters, feeding on plants and animals, and are valuable to our ecosystem in reducing rodent, deer, and goose populations.

HB 324 to protect sharks from shark finning – STALLED: This bill, sponsored by Representative Earl Jaques (D-Glasgow) would forbid the possession, sale, offer for sale, and distribution of shark fins in Delaware. Tens of thousands of sharks are killed every year for their fins. The practice of shark finning, where the fins are cut off of a shark and the shark is tossed back into the water, usually alive, is a cruel and unsustainable practice. The practice is already prohibited in the United States but as long as a marketplace for the fins exist, which are used to make an Asian dish called shark fin soup, finning will still occur globally. Although HB 324 passed the House of Representatives without dissent, it was blocked from getting a place on the Senate agenda before close of session (June 30). We were very disappointed in this outcome but are committed to the bill and will continue efforts in January.

SB 236 – Rabies Vaccination Duration Disclosure - PASSED: This bill, sponsored by Senator Karen Peterson (D-Stanton) requires Veterinarians to disclose manufacturer duration of immunity when administering rabies vaccinations. This will help to ensure that pet owners are aware of the duration of immunity to reduce possible over-vaccination. The bill passed both chambers of the legislature and awaits Governor Markell's signature.

SCR 44 - Animal Welfare Task Force - PASSED: Complaints on how animal control was being handled and funded in the state led to a Senate Concurrent Resolution, sponsored by Senator Patti Blevins (D-Elsmere) to establish an Animal Welfare Taskforce. The taskforce will consider and evaluate the state of animal welfare in DE, including animal welfare services and funding resources.

The 147th General Assembly will convene in January 2012. Please check back then for information on Delaware legislation concerning animals and what you can do to help.