



Please speak out for animals in Ohio!

Ohio House Bill 274, also known as "Goddard's Law," passed out of the House of Representatives in December 2013 and was immediately assigned to the Senate Agriculture Committee. The bill has now stalled at the committee level. Hearings where testimony is given that will guide the committee's vote and recommendation to move the bill to the full Senate floor for a vote still need to be scheduled.

What major changes does HB 274 make for companion animals (cats, dogs, and any animal living in a residential structure) under Ohio law?

- Prohibits any person from knowingly causing "serious physical harm" to a companion animal and provides prosecutorial discretion to charge violators with a felony of the fifth degree on a first offense. Currently, unless the violator is the owner, manager, or employee of a dog kennel who was confining or caring for the companion animal at the time of the act, the strongest penalty for first offense animal cruelty is a misdemeanor of the first degree.

"Serious physical harm" means any of the following:

- a) Physical harm that carries a substantial risk of death;
 - b) Physical harm that involves either partial or total permanent incapacity;
 - c) Physical harm that involves acute pain of a duration that results in substantial suffering or that involves any degree of prolonged or intractable pain;
 - d) Physical harm that results from a person who confines or who is the custodian or caretaker of a companion animal depriving the companion animal of good, wholesome food and water that proximately causes the death of the companion animal.
- Requires the Attorney General, Veterinary Medical Licensing Board, Board of Pharmacy, and Ohio Veterinary Medical Association to collaborate in developing resources to assist veterinarians in identifying clients who may use their animals to secure opioids for abuse.

Please consider taking action by calling or writing letters to Senate President Keith Faber, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Cliff Hite, and your own senator. Politely request that hearings be scheduled and state your support for the bill. A thoughtful, respectful one page letter that conveys your passion, yet is logical and fact-based, but not emotional, is often more impactful than phone calls and emails, but please take whatever action you can!

You can also write or email the rest of the Senate Agriculture Committee asking for their "Yes" vote. (<http://www.ohiosenate.gov/committee/agriculture>)

We are their voices.

For the animals ... THANK YOU!

Ohio Senate Contact Information

Senator Keith Faber
President, Ohio Senate
1 Capitol Square, 2nd Floor
Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 466-7584

Senator Cliff Hite
Chairman, Senate Agriculture Committee
Senate Building, 1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 466-8150

Suggested Letter Format and Content

Date

Title of Recipient
Address of Recipient

Re: House Bill 274

Dear [*Recipient's title and name*],

<Open with a statement that identifies concern about acts of serious animal cruelty becoming a growing concern in Ohio and the need for our prosecutors to have the discretion to leverage felony charges in egregious cases. Urge the legislator to support HB 274 and pass it out of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Indicate if you are a constituent of the legislator to whom you're writing.>

<Explain the problem in a concise and factual manner. Be passionate, but not emotional. Mentioning that research has shown animal cruelty to be a "red flag" for future violent crimes, particularly domestic violence, is most likely to resonate with legislators, some of whom may not feel as strongly about the animals themselves. Describe your thoughts on how the bill's passage would affect you and your community.>

<Thank him or her and respectfully request a response.>

Sincerely,

[Your name, address and email]