

HB 111 -- ANIMAL ABUSE

SPONSOR: Sommer

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 7 to 0.

This bill changes the laws regarding animal abuse. In its main provisions, the bill:

(1) Specifies that, upon the first conviction of animal abuse, the court may order the individual to undergo psychological or psychiatric evaluation and treatment at the expense of the convicted individual, unless the conviction involved torture or mutilation or is a second or subsequent conviction, in which case the court must order the evaluation;

(2) Specifies that, if a child under 18 years of age is found to be a delinquent by a juvenile court based on animal abuse, the court may order the child to undergo psychological or psychiatric evaluation and treatment at the expense of the convicted person. Upon a second or subsequent conviction, the court must order the evaluation. If the evaluation determines the child needs counseling, the court must require the counseling take place and establish its frequency and duration. The court may order the parent, guardian, or other person having care to pay for the evaluation, counseling, or both;

(3) Specifies that anyone who in good faith reports suspected animal abuse to a law enforcement agency or officer is immune from civil liability resulting from the report; and

(4) Allows the court to order that an animal be returned to or remain in the home of a child who has been found guilty of animal abuse if the court determines the animal is not at risk for future abuse or neglect.

This bill is similar to HB 2359 (2018).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that there is a correlation between people who commit animal abuse and what it can lead to. Some of the most notorious serial killers began with abusing animals before abusing humans. This legislation is intended to help stave off abuse to humans down the road. This happens all the time, where people abuse animals, serve time, and go back to abusing. It took a long time to recognize the psychological factor that goes into abusing another being.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Sommer; Missouri

Alliance for Animal Legislation; and the Humane Society Legislative Fund of Missouri.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.