

HB 373 -- OFFENSES AGAINST ANIMALS

SPONSOR: Hannegan

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Local Government by a vote of 11 to 0.

The bill specifies that a court must order a person found guilty of the offense of sex with an animal to submit to and pay for a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a licensed mental health professional prior to the person's sentencing. The court will use the evaluation to determine appropriate sentencing. If the court determines that the defendant is indigent, the state will pay for the evaluation. If the evaluation recommends treatment, the defendant will be ordered to complete an appropriate treatment program, as determined by the court, designed to address the underlying causative factors.

The bill also establishes that a person commits the offense of animal neglect if the person has a hoarding disorder causing the accumulation of custody or ownership of animals. The offense of animal neglect because of a hoarding disorder is a class C misdemeanor, unless the person has previously been found guilty of animal hoarding, in which case it is a class E felony. A court must order a person who has pled guilty or been found guilty of the offense of animal neglect due to having a hoarding disorder to submit to and pay for a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a licensed mental health professional prior to the person's sentencing. The court will use the evaluation to determine appropriate sentencing. If the court determines that the defendant is indigent, the state will pay for the evaluation. If the evaluation recommends treatment, the defendant will be ordered to complete an appropriate treatment program, as determined by the court, designed to address the underlying causative factors.

The bill specifies that a person who is found guilty of the offense of animal abuse must be ordered by the court to submit to and pay for a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a licensed mental health professional prior to the person's sentencing. The court will use the evaluation to determine appropriate sentencing. If the court determines that the defendant is indigent, the state will pay for the evaluation. If the evaluation recommends treatment, the defendant will be ordered to complete an appropriate treatment program, as determined by the court, designed to address the underlying causative factors.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that animal abuse is a precursor for crimes against people. Comprehensive evaluation is necessary to

help people. This bill gives clarity, while hindsight only gives clarity through tragedy.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Hannegan; Arnie C. Dienoff; Sinclair, and the Missouri Alliance for Animal Legislation.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.