



HOUSE BILL 577: Limit Ownership of Certain Animals.

2019-2020 General Assembly

Committee:	House Judiciary. If favorable, re-refer to Wildlife Resources. If favorable, re-refer to Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	April 29, 2019
Introduced by:	Reps. R. Turner, Fraley, Faircloth	Prepared by:	Shawn Middlebrooks Staff Attorney
Analysis of:	First Edition		

OVERVIEW: *House Bill 577 would create Article 7 of Chapter 19A of the General Statutes for purposes of regulating the possession, import, purchase, or sale of Big Cats, Bears, Hyenas, and Great Apes.*

CURRENT LAW: Chapter 19A of the General Statutes regulates the humane treatment and protection of certain domesticated animals, such as dogs and cats, as well as protection of black bears.

BILL ANALYSIS:

House Bill 577 would create "Article 7. Big Cats, Bears, Hyenas, and Great Apes" within Chapter 19A of the General Statutes for purposes of regulating the possession, import, purchase, or sale of *Big Cats, Bears, Hyenas, and Great Apes* (hereinafter "covered animals").

House Bill 577 would do the following:

- Establish defined terms related to the regulation and enforcement of covered animals.
- Make it unlawful to *import, possess, keep, purchase, have custody or control of, breed, or sell* a covered animal.
- Exempt certain institution and entities from engaging in acts prohibited by this Article.
- Exempt persons who lawfully possessed a covered animal prior to June 1, 2019 from acts prohibited by this Article, provided certain conditions are met.
- Require a covered animal be kept in a species-appropriate cage or travel container during transport, and make it unlawful to release a covered animal into the wild.
- Authorize State and local law enforcement officers, or any *animal control officer*, to enforce the provisions of this Article.
- Clarify that a city or county may adopt or enforce ordinances that further regulate covered animals.
- Establish procedures related to the seizure and forfeiture of covered animals.
- Authorize law enforcement to humanely euthanize a covered animal that is found at-large.
- Make each violation of this section punishable as a Class 2 misdemeanor, and payment of a civil penalty not to exceed \$5,000.
- Make it a Class A1 misdemeanor if a covered animal is found running at-large or causes property damage.

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House Bill 577

Page 2

- Make it a Class I felony if an act or omission under this Article causes serious bodily injury to a member of the public.
- Allow a person who resides in a county where a covered animal is kept to bring a civil action to enjoin any violation of this Article.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This act becomes effective December 1, 2019, and applies to offenses committed on or after that date.