



HOUSE BILL 657: Duke's Rescue Act.

**This Bill Analysis
reflects the contents
of the bill as it was
presented in
committee.**

2025-2026 General Assembly

Committee:	House Judiciary 1. If favorable, re-refer to Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	June 16, 2026
Introduced by:	Reps. Ross, Carney, Cotham	Prepared by:	Robert Ryan
Analysis of:	PCS to First Edition H657-CSCEa-39		Committee Co-Counsel

OVERVIEW: *The Proposed Committee Substitute (PCS) to House Bill 657 would create a new criminal law establishing minimal standards of care for companion animals. The PCS would also appropriate \$10,000 in nonrecurring funds to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.*

CURRENT LAW: Article 47 of Chapter 14 contains multiple criminal laws related to cruelty to animals.

G.S. 14-360, Cruelty to animals, provides the following:

- If any person shall intentionally overdrive, overload, wound, injure, torment, kill, or deprive of necessary sustenance, or cause or procure to be overdriven, overloaded, wounded, injured, tormented, killed, or deprived of necessary sustenance, any animal, every such offender shall for every such offense be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.
- If any person shall maliciously kill, or cause or procure to be killed, any animal by intentional deprivation of necessary sustenance, that person shall be guilty of a Class H felony.
- If any person shall maliciously torture, mutilate, maim, cruelly beat, disfigure, poison, or kill, or cause or procure to be tortured, mutilated, maimed, cruelly beaten, disfigured, poisoned, or killed, any animal, every such offender shall for every such offense be guilty of a Class H felony.

BILL ANALYSIS: Section 1 of the PCS would enact a new criminal law, G.S. 14-360.5, care of companion animals, establishing minimum standards of care for companion animals. Companion animals are defined to only include domestic dogs and cats. Any person who owns a companion animal must provide all of the following adequate means to the animal: care, exercise, feed, shelter, space, water, and veterinary treatment. Each of these terms is specifically defined in the PCS.

A first violation of this law would be a Class 3 misdemeanor, and a second or subsequent violation would be a Class 2 misdemeanor.

Section 2 of the PCS would provide that any local ordinances regulating the standard of care for companion animals that were adopted prior to the date this act becomes law may remain in effect after this act becomes law. The governing body of a county or city may adopt ordinances regulating the standard of care for companion animals after the date this act becomes law if the ordinances meet or exceed the requirements of G.S. 14-360.5.

Section 3 of the PCS would appropriate \$10,000 in nonrecurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for the Animal Welfare Section for costs related to

Kara McCraw
Director



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public education and educational materials pertaining to the companion animal standards related to this PCS.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Section 1 of this PCS becomes effective December 1, 2026, and applies to offenses committed on or after that date. Section 3 of this PCS becomes effective July 1, 2026. This remainder of this PCS is effective when it becomes law.