

## May Legislation Presented to the membership by Deb Krsnich

By [AKC Government Relations](#)

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Yesterday, the U.S. House of Representatives passed HR 7567, the *Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026*, also known as the Farm Bill. This measure reauthorizes key U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs for five years and addresses federal priorities for numerous animal related issues, including animal welfare provisions in the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

The American Kennel Club was proud to support this bill and is grateful for the Congressional leadership that made it possible. Executive Secretary & VP Government Relations Sheila Goffe commented, "House Agriculture Chairman G.T. Thompson and his staff have demonstrated extraordinary bi-partisan leadership in developing and shepherding a measure that not only supports crucial U.S. agricultural programs, but also supports important priorities for dog enthusiasts including canine health, welfare and the rights of responsible dog owners and sportsmen."

### Dog-related highlights of the bill include:

- **Enhancement of Pet Protections Under the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA): Additional resources for USDA to better enforce the AWA**, including expanded resources for educational outreach and reporting to Congress on existing enforcement with recommendations for improving enforcement.
- **Enhancement of USDA's electronic health documentation requirements for pets entering the United States to protect pet and public health.** This reflects language in the Healthy Dog Importation Act (HR 3349 ) by requiring electronic records documentation on dogs prior to their importation that confirms the dog is in good health; microchipped; has received all necessary vaccination and parasite treatments, demonstrated negative test results, and has a health certificate from an accredited veterinarian; and in the case of a dog intended for transfer, is at least 6 months old. Exceptions are provided for dogs that are personal pets of United States origin returning to the United States; United States military working dogs; for research purposes; and coming to the United States solely for veterinary treatment; among several others. AKC believes this is an appropriate alternative to current, across-the-board bans on the import of puppies under the age of 6 months.
- **Protecting Animals with Shelter.** Reauthorizes funding for transitional shelters that allow victims of domestic violence to seek safety without leaving their pets behind.
- **National Detector Dog Training Center.** Authorizes the USDA National Detector Dog Training Center to establish additional training facilities to prepare specially selected dogs and their handlers to detect invasive pests and diseases that threaten American agriculture.

Throughout the legislative process, numerous problematic proposals were also advanced. AKC is grateful to Chairman Thompson, his staff, and members of The House Agriculture Committee for their emphasis on a science-based approach to agriculture and animal care, and their opposition to amendments promoted by extremists that would have restricted responsible dog breeders or hindered widely accepted animal husbandry practices, traditional dog competitions, hunting with dogs, or common dog training methods.

From there the bill must: Pass Senate and then on to the President before becoming law.

To follow the progress and view bill text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/7567>

<https://www.akc.org/legislative-alerts/pennsylvania-bill-introduced-providing-non-economic-damages-for-pets/>

By [AKC Government Relations](#)

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Recently, Pennsylvania State Representative Kristine Howard introduced a bill that would significantly change Pennsylvania law by allowing courts to award non-economic damages of up to \$15,000 when a companion animal is injured or killed due to another person's actions.

These non-economic damages would compensate an owner for the loss of the expected society, companionship, love, and affection of a pet, in addition to any recovery of economic damage such as veterinary costs.

Under current law, recovery is limited to economic damages. [HB 2387](#) expands civil liability beyond that framework by introducing subjective emotional damages that are difficult to predict, insure against, or clearly define. The bill is pending before the Pennsylvania House Judiciary Committee. While no hearing is currently scheduled, Pennsylvania residents are encouraged to contact the sponsor and committee to oppose HB 2387 as introduced (*Scroll down for more information*).

### **AKC Concerns With HB 2387:**

While pets are beloved family members, HB 2387 would create broad unintended consequences for animal owners, veterinarians, shelters, rescues, and small pet-related businesses across the Commonwealth without improving outcomes for animals.

Supporters often cite troubling individual cases. Those situations deserve serious attention. However, existing Pennsylvania law already allows recovery of economic damages as well as professional discipline and administrative or civil remedies. Isolated cases should not be used to justify sweeping changes to long-standing tort and property law that would affect every pet owner and animal care provider statewide.

While bills seeking non-economic damages for an owner may seem to provide a benefit, such damages provide no direct benefit to the animal itself. Instead, they are harmful to pets as they result in such things as:

- Higher veterinary and animal care costs passed on to all pet owners;
- Reduced willingness of providers to perform complex or high-risk care;
- Increased litigation against veterinarians, shelters, rescues, pet businesses, and individual owners; and
- Expanded and unpredictable liability from subjective emotional damages.

[Read more about AKC's concerns about this issue](#) in our Legislative Action Center.

By [AKC Government Relations](#)

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Earlier this week, the American Kennel Club (AKC) submitted a response to the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (USDA APHIS) [February 2026 Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) regarding the health of breeding females, and the exercise and socialization needs of all dogs, kept by breeders licensed under the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

(public comment period ended in April) The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is seeking public comments, scientific data, and stakeholder input to help

determine whether updates are needed to Federal regulations governing the humane care of dogs. These standards—which apply to licensed breeders and other regulated entities under the Animal Welfare Act—have not undergone a major revision in more than three decades.

This effort reflects USDA’s commitment to strengthening dog welfare nationwide, a top priority for Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins. The review will focus on care standards for breeding females, as well as requirements for exercise and socialization—areas where science and best practices have advanced significantly since the early 1990s.

APHIS is requesting public input on topics such as:

- What veterinary and nutritional care breeding females require
- How age, litter frequency, and genetics affect health outcomes
- Best practices for exercise and socialization to promote dog welfare

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[Wondering if you need to be licensed under the AWA? Use the APHIS Licensing and Registration Assistant to find out.](#)

AKC’s submission reiterates the organization’s long-standing concern with the ongoing lack of a clear definition for the term “breeding female” in AWA regulations. It also emphasizes the paramount importance of brood bitch health in breeding, and explains how responsible breeders rely on the latest information and expert guidance to provide the best care to breeding females. AKC also highlights the crucial roles that socialization and exercise practices play in ensuring that dogs are confident and well adjusted. Throughout the document, AKC calls for flexibility to remain a hallmark of the AWA’s dog care regulations, which allows breeders to tailor care, exercise, and socialization and play practices for the breed maintained and to meet the needs of individual dogs.

[Click here to read AKC’s response to APHIS’s information request \(PDF download\).](#)

WHAT IS APHIS? ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE, under USDA.

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/>

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-A-PURL-LPS2239/pdf/GOVPUB-A-PURL-LPS2239.pdf>

## Do I Need a USDA License?

The answer depends on **how you sell** your dogs. Here is the simple test:

1. **Do you breed and sell dogs?**

If no, you do not need a USDA license. The federal requirement only applies to people who breed or deal in dogs commercially.

## 2. Do you sell any dogs sight-unseen?

“Sight-unseen” means the buyer does not **physically see the dog in person** before the sale is completed. Under the USDA rule, the seller, the buyer, and the animal must all be **physically present in the same location** so the buyer can personally observe the dog before purchasing it.

**Video calls do not count.** Seeing a dog over FaceTime, Zoom, or Skype is *not* the same as seeing it in person. If you show a buyer the dog on video and then ship it, that is a sight-unseen sale.

**Deposits are OK.** A buyer can place a deposit and make arrangements before visiting, as long as the sale is not finalized until the buyer physically sees the dog in person. For example, a buyer who pays a deposit online and then drives to your home to see the dog and complete the purchase is a face-to-face sale — not sight-unseen.

- **No** — Every buyer physically sees the dog in person before you finalize the sale. **No USDA license needed** (you qualify as a retail pet store). But [check your state requirements](#) — you may still need a state license.
- **Yes, but I have 4 or fewer breeding females** — You sell only offspring born and raised on your premises for pets or exhibition. **No USDA license needed.** The small breeder exemption (9 CFR 2.1(a)(3)(iii)([opens in new tab](#))) applies regardless of whether sales are face-to-face or sight-unseen.
- **Yes, and I have more than 4 breeding females** — **You need a USDA Class A Breeder license.**

Hobby Breeders—Small-scale breeders with gross sales under \$500 per year are exempt, as long as these sales do not include wild or exotic animals, dogs, or cats. If you own no more than three breeding female -----dogs or cats and sell the offspring, into the pet channels only, you are exempt.

To look up dog breeding/licensing regulations by state: <https://www.dogbreederlicensing.org/>  
Has a USDA license look-up and also link to APHIS requirements.

TO SEE WISCONSIN REQUIREMENTS: <https://www.dogbreederlicensing.org/states/wisconsin>

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Under current law, no person may do any of the following to any animal that is used by a law enforcement agency or fire department to perform agency or department functions or duties: frighten, intimidate, threaten, abuse or harass the animal; strike, shove, kick or otherwise subject the animal to physical contact; or strike the animal by using a dangerous weapon. Under current law, any person who does any of those actions is subject to a Class B forfeiture, or, if the person knows the animal is a police or fire dog, is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor. Any person who intentionally does any of those actions and causes injury to the animal is guilty of a Class I felony, and any person who intentionally does any of those actions and causes death of the animal is guilty of a Class H felony. Additionally, for such a violation, a sentencing court must require a criminal violator to pay restitution, including veterinary care expenses or the value of a replacement animal.

This bill expands this prohibition to include search and rescue dogs in addition to animals that are used by a law enforcement agency or fire department to perform agency or department functions or duties. Under the bill, “search and rescue dog” means a dog that has been trained or is being trained by a state or nationally recognized search and rescue agency to locate lost or missing individuals and victims of disasters in search and rescue activities.

#### 2025 WISCONSIN ACT 152

AN ACT *to amend* 951.095 (title), 951.095 (1) (intro.), 951.095 (2) (b) and 951.18 (2m); *to create* 951.01 (4s) of the statutes; **relating to:** harassment of search and rescue dogs and providing a penalty.

*the people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:*

**SECTION 1.** 951.01 (4s) of the statutes is created to read:

951.01 (4s) “Search and rescue dog” means a dog that has been trained or is being trained by a state or nationally recognized search and rescue agency to locate lost or missing individuals and victims of disasters in search and rescue activities.

**SECTION 2.** 951.095 (title) of the statutes is amended to read:

**951.095 (title) Harassment of police and fire animals and search and rescue dogs.**

**SECTION 3.** 951.095 (1) (intro.) of the statutes is amended to read:

951.095 (1) (intro.) No person may do any of the following to any animal that is used by a law enforcement agency or fire department to perform agency or department functions or duties or to a search and rescue dog:

**SECTION 4.** 951.095 (2) (b) of the statutes is amended to read:

951.095 (2) (b) Any act that is necessary for the training of an animal to perform functions or duties for a law enforcement agency, fire department, or state or nationally recognized search and rescue agency.

**SECTION 5.** 951.18 (2m) of the statutes, as affected by 2025 Wisconsin Act 28, is amended to read:

951.18 (2m) Any person who violates s. 951.095 is subject to a Class B forfeiture. Any person who intentionally or negligently violates s. 951.095, knowing that the animal that is the victim is used by a law enforcement agency or fire department to perform agency or department functions or duties or that the animal is a search and rescue dog, is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor. Any person who intentionally violates s. 951.095, knowing that the animal that is the victim is used by a law enforcement agency or fire department to perform agency or department functions or duties or that the animal is a search and rescue dog and causing injury to the animal, is guilty of a Class H felony. Any person who intentionally violates s. 951.095, knowing that the animal that is the victim is used by a law enforcement agency or fire department to perform agency or department functions or duties or that the animal is a search and rescue dog and causing death to the animal, is guilty of a Class G felony.