

## Summary of changes to Ohio dog law in 2014-15 budget

*Lawmakers often tack favored bills or projects onto budget bills even though the actual link to the budget may be tenuous at best. This year, they added three bills affecting dog ownership and care as amendments to the two-year budget that went into effect July 1, 2013 and ends June 30, 2015.*



### 1. Changes in individual dog licensing

- ORC Section 955.01: Now allows owners to license a dog for one year, three years, or permanently. Fees listed are \$2 per year for one year or three years and \$20 for permanent registration unless the county commissioners set a higher fee.

### 2. Sheriffs can become dog wardens

- ORC Section 955.121 (new): County commissioners can appoint the county sheriff to enforce animal control law in the county. The appointment must be for a period of two years and can only begin after an election year in which at least one county commissioner is elected. (County commissioners come up for election every four years with two of the three seats in one election and the third seat two years later.)
- If the county chooses to appoint the sheriff's department as the animal control agency, the sheriff cannot appoint peace officers as dog wardens, leaving the door open to transfer current dog wardens with their benefits to the sheriff's department.
- Dog wardens appointed by the sheriff's department must comply with the requirements of ORC Section 955.12, including any applicable training.

### 3. Some animal cruelty could become felony offenses

This amendment started life as HB 90; you can read the bill at [http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/bills.cfm?ID=130\\_HB\\_90](http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/bills.cfm?ID=130_HB_90)

- New definitions in ORC 959.131, the companion animal cruelty law:
  - "Dog kennel" means an animal rescue for dogs that is registered under section 956.06 of the Revised Code, a boarding kennel, or a training kennel.
  - "Boarding kennel" "Boarding kennel" means an establishment operating for profit that keeps, houses, and maintains dogs solely for the purpose of providing shelter, care, and feeding of the dogs in return for a fee or other consideration.
  - "Training kennel" means an establishment operating for profit that keeps, houses, and maintains dogs for the purpose of training the dogs in return for a fee or other consideration.
- Prosecutors will have the discretion to charge kennel owners and their employees with a felony in horrible abuse cases and a high level misdemeanor in serious neglect cases.
- Originally, this discretion was limited to breeding kennels, but the sponsors amended it by dropping breeding kennels and adding rescue, boarding, and training kennels.

The budget bill (HB 59) signed by the governor is at [http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/BillText130/130\\_HB\\_59\\_EN\\_N.html](http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/BillText130/130_HB_59_EN_N.html); search on 955.01 to begin the section on dog law changes.

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