

**SENATE, No. 920**

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**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

**219th LEGISLATURE**

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INTRODUCED JANUARY 27, 2020

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator TROY SINGLETON**

**District 7 (Burlington)**

**Senator VIN GOPAL**

**District 11 (Monmouth)**

**Co-Sponsored by:**

**Senators Diegnan, Greenstein and Cruz-Perez**

**SYNOPSIS**

Prohibits surgical declawing of cats and other animals.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



**(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 2/4/2021)**

1 AN ACT concerning the surgical declawing of cats and other  
2 animals, supplementing Title 4 of the Revised Statutes, and  
3 amending R.S.4:22-26.  
4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State  
6 of New Jersey:  
7

8 1. (New section) a. No person shall perform, or cause to be  
9 performed, an onychectomy (declawing) or flexor tendonectomy  
10 procedure by any means on a cat or other animal, unless the  
11 procedure is deemed necessary for a therapeutic purpose by a  
12 licensed veterinarian. A person who violates this provision shall be  
13 guilty of a disorderly persons offense.

14 b. Whenever a licensed veterinarian determines that an  
15 onychectomy or flexor tendonectomy is necessary for a therapeutic  
16 purpose, the veterinarian shall prepare and file a written statement  
17 with the Department of Health setting forth the purpose for  
18 performing the procedure and providing the name and address of  
19 the owner or keeper of the animal, and provide a copy of that  
20 statement to the owner of the animal. A veterinarian who fails to  
21 comply with the provisions of this section shall be subject to  
22 disciplinary action by the State Board of Veterinary Medical  
23 Examiners.

24 c. As used in this section, “therapeutic purpose” means for  
25 purpose of necessity to address the medical condition of the animal,  
26 such as an existing or recurring illness, infection, disease, injury, or  
27 abnormal condition in a claw that compromises the animal’s health.  
28 “Therapeutic purpose” shall not mean cosmetic or aesthetic reasons  
29 or reasons of convenience in keeping or handling the animal.  
30

31 2. R.S.4:22-26 is amended to read as follows:

32 4:22-26. A person who shall:

33 a. (1) Overdrive, overload, drive when overloaded, overwork,  
34 abuse, or needlessly kill a living animal or creature, or cause or  
35 procure, by any direct or indirect means, including but not limited  
36 to through the use of another living animal or creature, any such  
37 acts to be done;

38 (2) Torment, torture, maim, hang, poison, unnecessarily or  
39 cruelly beat, cruelly abuse, or needlessly mutilate a living animal or  
40 creature, or cause or procure, by any direct or indirect means,  
41 including but not limited to through the use of another living animal  
42 or creature, any such acts to be done;

43 (3) Cause the death of, or serious bodily injury to, a living  
44 animal or creature from commission of any act described in  
45 paragraph (2), (4), or (5) of this subsection, by any direct or indirect

**EXPLANATION** – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is  
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

- 1 means, including but not limited to through the use of another living  
2 animal or creature, or otherwise cause or procure any such acts to  
3 be done;
- 4 (4) Fail, as the owner or a person otherwise charged with the  
5 care of a living animal or creature, to provide the living animal or  
6 creature with necessary care, or otherwise cause or procure such an  
7 act to be done; or
- 8 (5) Cause bodily injury to a living animal or creature from  
9 commission of the act described in paragraph (4) of this subsection;
- 10 b. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2003, c.232)
- 11 c. Inflict unnecessary cruelty upon a living animal or creature,  
12 by any direct or indirect means, including but not limited to through  
13 the use of another living animal or creature; or leave the living  
14 animal or creature unattended in a vehicle under inhumane  
15 conditions adverse to the health or welfare of the living animal or  
16 creature;
- 17 d. Receive or offer for sale a horse that is suffering from abuse  
18 or neglect, or which by reason of disability, disease, abuse or  
19 lameness, or any other cause, could not be worked, ridden or  
20 otherwise used for show, exhibition or recreational purposes, or  
21 kept as a domestic pet without violating the provisions of article 2  
22 of chapter 22 of Title 4 of the Revised Statutes;
- 23 e. Keep, use, be connected with or interested in the  
24 management of, or receive money or other consideration for the  
25 admission of a person to, a place kept or used for the purpose of  
26 fighting or baiting a living animal or creature;
- 27 f. Be present and witness, pay admission to, encourage, aid or  
28 assist in an activity enumerated in subsection e. of this section;
- 29 g. Permit or suffer a person's place owned or controlled by the  
30 person to be used as provided in subsection e. of this section;
- 31 h. Carry, or cause to be carried, a living animal or creature in  
32 or upon a vehicle or otherwise, in a cruel or inhumane manner;
- 33 i. Use a dog or dogs for the purpose of drawing or helping to  
34 draw a vehicle for business purposes;
- 35 j. Impound or confine or cause to be impounded or confined in  
36 a pound or other place a living animal or creature, and shall fail to  
37 supply the living animal or creature during such confinement with a  
38 sufficient quantity of good and wholesome food and water;
- 39 k. Abandon a maimed, sick, infirm or disabled animal or  
40 creature to die in a public place;
- 41 l. Willfully sell, or offer to sell, use, expose, or cause or permit  
42 to be sold or offered for sale, used or exposed, a horse or other  
43 animal having the disease known as glanders or farcy, or other  
44 contagious or infectious disease dangerous to the health or life of  
45 human beings or animals, or who shall, when any such disease is  
46 beyond recovery, refuse, upon demand, to deprive the animal of  
47 life;

1       m. Own, operate, manage or conduct a roadside stand or market  
2 for the sale of merchandise along a public street or highway; or a  
3 shopping mall, or a part of the premises thereof; and keep a living  
4 animal or creature confined, or allowed to roam in an area whether  
5 or not the area is enclosed, on these premises as an exhibit; except  
6 that this subsection shall not be applicable to: a pet shop licensed  
7 pursuant to P.L.1941, c.151 (C.4:19-15.1 et seq.); a person who  
8 keeps an animal, in a humane manner, for the purpose of the  
9 protection of the premises; or a recognized breeders' association, a  
10 4-H club, an educational agricultural program, an equestrian team, a  
11 humane society or other similar charitable or nonprofit organization  
12 conducting an exhibition, show or performance;

13       n. Keep or exhibit a wild animal at a roadside stand or market  
14 located along a public street or highway of this State; a gasoline  
15 station; or a shopping mall, or a part of the premises thereof;

16       o. Sell, offer for sale, barter or give away or display live baby  
17 chicks, ducklings or other fowl or rabbits, turtles or chameleons  
18 which have been dyed or artificially colored or otherwise treated so  
19 as to impart to them an artificial color;

20       p. Use any animal, reptile, or fowl for the purpose of soliciting  
21 any alms, collections, contributions, subscriptions, donations, or  
22 payment of money except in connection with exhibitions, shows or  
23 performances conducted in a bona fide manner by recognized  
24 breeders' associations, 4-H clubs or other similar bona fide  
25 organizations;

26       q. Sell or offer for sale, barter, or give away living rabbits,  
27 turtles, baby chicks, ducklings or other fowl under two months of  
28 age, for use as household or domestic pets;

29       r. Sell, offer for sale, barter or give away living baby chicks,  
30 ducklings or other fowl, or rabbits, turtles or chameleons under two  
31 months of age for any purpose not prohibited by subsection q. of  
32 this section and who shall fail to provide proper facilities for the  
33 care of such animals;

34       s. Artificially mark sheep or cattle, or cause them to be  
35 marked, by cropping or cutting off both ears, cropping or cutting  
36 either ear more than one inch from the tip end thereof, or half  
37 cropping or cutting both ears or either ear more than one inch from  
38 the tip end thereof, or who shall have or keep in the person's  
39 possession sheep or cattle, which the person claims to own, marked  
40 contrary to this subsection unless they were bought in market or of  
41 a stranger;

42       t. Abandon a domesticated animal;

43       u. For amusement or gain, cause, allow, or permit the fighting  
44 or baiting of a living animal or creature;

45       v. Own, possess, keep, train, promote, purchase, or knowingly  
46 sell a living animal or creature for the purpose of fighting or baiting  
47 that animal or creature; or own, possess, buy, sell, transfer, or  
48 manufacture animal fighting paraphernalia as defined pursuant to

- 1 R.S.4:22-24 for the purpose of engaging in or otherwise promoting  
2 or facilitating the fighting or baiting of a living animal or creature;
- 3 w. Gamble on the outcome of a fight involving a living animal  
4 or creature;
- 5 x. Knowingly sell or barter or offer for sale or barter, at  
6 wholesale or retail, the fur or hair of a domestic dog or cat or any  
7 product made in whole or in part from the fur or hair of a domestic  
8 dog or cat, unless such fur or hair for sale or barter is from a  
9 commercial grooming establishment or a veterinary office or clinic  
10 or is for use for scientific research;
- 11 y. (1) Knowingly sell or barter, or offer for sale or barter, at  
12 wholesale or retail, for human consumption, the flesh of a domestic  
13 dog or cat, or any product made in whole or in part from the flesh of  
14 a domestic dog or cat;
- 15 (2) Knowingly slaughter a horse for human consumption;
- 16 (3) Knowingly sell or barter, or offer for sale or barter, at  
17 wholesale or retail, for human consumption, the flesh of a horse, or  
18 any product made in whole or in part from the flesh of a horse, or  
19 knowingly accept or publish newspaper advertising that includes the  
20 offering for sale, trade, or distribution of any such item for human  
21 consumption;
- 22 (4) Knowingly transport a horse for the purpose of slaughter for  
23 human consumption;
- 24 (5) Knowingly transport horsemeat, or any product made in  
25 whole or in part from the flesh of a horse, for the purpose of human  
26 consumption;
- 27 z. Surgically debark or silence a dog in violation of section 1  
28 or 2 of P.L.2002, c.102 (C.4:19-38 or C.4:19-39);
- 29 aa. Use a live pigeon, fowl or other bird for the purpose of a  
30 target, or to be shot at either for amusement or as a test of skill in  
31 marksmanship, except that this subsection and subsections bb. and  
32 cc. shall not apply to the shooting of game;
- 33 bb. Shoot at a bird used as described in subsection aa. of this  
34 section, or is a party to such shooting; **[or]**
- 35 cc. Lease a building, room, field or premises, or knowingly  
36 permit the use thereof for the purposes of subsection aa. or bb. of  
37 this section; or
- 38 dd. Perform, or cause to be performed, an onychectomy  
39 (declawing) or flexor tendonectomy procedure on a cat or other  
40 animal in violation of section 1 of P.L. , c. (C. ) (pending  
41 before the Legislature as this bill) --
- 42 Shall forfeit and pay a sum according to the following schedule,  
43 to be sued for and recovered, with costs, in a civil action by any  
44 person in the name of the municipality or county wherein the  
45 defendant resides or where the offense was committed:
- 46 For a violation of subsection e., f., g., u., v., w., or z. of this  
47 section or of paragraph (3) of subsection a. of this section, or for a  
48 second or subsequent violation of paragraph (2) or (5) of subsection

1 a. of this section, a sum of not less than \$3,000 nor more than  
2 \$5,000;

3 For a violation of subsection l. of this section, for a first violation  
4 of paragraph (2) or (5) of subsection a. of this section, a sum of not  
5 less than \$1,000 nor more than \$3,000;

6 For a violation of paragraph (4) of subsection a. of this section,  
7 or subsection c. or dd. of this section, a sum of not less than \$500  
8 nor more than \$2,000;

9 For a violation of subsection x. or paragraph (1) of subsection y.  
10 of this section, a sum of not less than \$500 nor more than \$1,000 for  
11 each domestic dog or cat fur or fur or hair product or domestic dog  
12 or cat carcass or meat product sold, bartered, or offered for sale or  
13 barter;

14 For a violation of paragraph (2), (3), (4), or (5) of subsection y.  
15 of this section, a sum of not less than \$500 nor more than \$1,000 for  
16 each horse slaughtered or transported for the purpose of slaughter  
17 for human consumption, or for each horse carcass or meat product  
18 transported, sold or bartered, or offered or advertised for sale or  
19 barter;

20 For a violation of subsection t. of this section, a sum of not less  
21 than \$500 nor more than \$1,000, but if the violation occurs on or  
22 near a highway, a mandatory sum of \$1,000;

23 For a violation of subsection d., h., j., k., aa., bb., or cc. of this  
24 section or of paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section, a sum of  
25 not less than \$250 nor more than \$1,000; and

26 For a violation of subsection i., m., n., o., p., q., r., or s. of this  
27 section, a sum of not less than \$250 nor more than \$500.

28 (cf: P.L.2017, c.331, s.13)

29  
30 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

### 31 32 33 STATEMENT

34  
35 This bill would prohibit a person from performing, or causing to  
36 be performed, an onychectomy (declawing) or flexor tendonectiony  
37 procedure by any means on a cat or other animal, unless the  
38 procedure is deemed necessary for a therapeutic purpose by a  
39 licensed veterinarian. Any person who violates this provision  
40 would be guilty of a disorderly persons offense, which is punishable  
41 by a fine of up to \$1,000, a term of imprisonment of up to six  
42 months, or both. A violator would also be subject to a civil penalty  
43 of between \$500 and \$2,000.

44 For purposes of the bill, the term “therapeutic purpose” means  
45 for purpose of necessity to address the medical condition of the  
46 animal, such as an existing or recurring illness, infection, disease,  
47 injury, or abnormal condition in a claw that compromises the  
48 animal’s health. “Therapeutic purpose” would not include cosmetic

1 or aesthetic reasons or reasons of convenience in keeping or  
2 handling the animal. Under the bill, whenever a licensed  
3 veterinarian determines that an onychectomy or flexor  
4 tendonectionomy is necessary for a therapeutic purpose, the  
5 veterinarian would be required to file a written statement with the  
6 Department of Health, and provide a copy of that statement to the  
7 owner or keeper of the animal. A veterinarian who fails to comply  
8 with this provision would be subject to disciplinary action by the  
9 State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners.

10 Declawing is seen by many as a quick fix for unwanted  
11 scratching by cats. However, these invasive procedures are, in most  
12 instances, medically unnecessary, and can cause lasting physical  
13 problems and other consequences for cats. The most popular  
14 method of declawing, onychectomy, involves amputating the last  
15 bone of each toe on a cat's paw with a scalpel, guillotine, or laser.  
16 A second procedure, flexor tendonectionomy, involves severing the  
17 tendon that controls the claw in each toe, so that the cat keeps its  
18 claws, but cannot flex or extend them. These procedures can cause  
19 pain in the cat's paw, bleeding, lameness, infection, and other  
20 painful physical symptoms. These symptoms, in turn, can make a  
21 cat less likely to use its litter box and more likely to bite. In  
22 addition, there are humane ways to train a cat to stop scratching.  
23 Consequently, declawing should not be used except in rare cases  
24 when it is necessary for therapeutic purposes, such as the removal  
25 of cancerous tumors.