

HB 998 -- ANIMAL ABUSE

SPONSOR: Sommer

This bill changes the laws regarding animal abuse. In its main provisions, the bill:

(1) Specifies that upon the first conviction of animal abuse, the court may order the individual to undergo psychological or psychiatric evaluation and treatment at the expense of the convicted individual, unless the conviction involved torture or mutilation or is a second or subsequent conviction, in which case the court must order the evaluation;

(2) Specifies that if a child under 18 years of age is found to be a delinquent by a juvenile court based on animal abuse, the court may order the child to undergo psychological or psychiatric evaluation and treatment at the expense of the convicted person. Upon a second or subsequent conviction, the court must order the evaluation. If the evaluation determines the child needs counseling, the court must require the counseling take place and establish its frequency and duration. The court may order the parent, guardian or other person having care to pay for the evaluation, counseling, or both;

(3) Specifies that anyone who in good faith reports suspected animal abuse to a law enforcement agency or officer is immune from civil liability resulting from the report; and

(4) Allows the court to order that an animal be returned to or remain in the home of a child who has been found guilty of animal abuse if the court determines the animal is not at risk for future abuse or neglect.