

HB 1414 -- AGRICULTURAL DATA COLLECTION

SPONSOR: Houghton

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Agriculture Policy by a vote of 13 to 4. Voted "Do Pass" by the Select Committee on Agriculture by a vote of 8 to 3.

This bill specifies that any data collected by any state agency under the federal Animal Disease Traceability Program (ADTP) or any data collected for the purpose of animal health or environmental protection cannot be subject to the Sunshine Law.

The bill allows the director of any state agency or the State Veterinarian within the Department of Agriculture to release information otherwise closed when the information is useful in controlling or preventing a disease outbreak, or to show particular animals or herds are not involved in a disease outbreak.

Any unauthorized release of information is a violation of these provisions. Any entity or person alleging a violation may bring a civil action against a state agency in a court of competent jurisdiction. A court may order any appropriate relief including damages.

This bill is the same as HB 479 (2015).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill protects a farmer from unfounded accusations of wrongdoing or disease and harassment. If there is found to be an outbreak, the public will be protected because the executive branch will release the information necessary to protect residents.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Houghton; Missouri Federation Of Animal Owners; Missouri Farm Bureau; and Donald Hill, Missouri Deer Breeders' Association.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that much of this information is available from other sources and has no need to be held confidential. Without public access to the records there is no public scrutiny or accountability.

Testifying against the bill were Brian Smith, Missouri Rural Crisis Center; Missouri Alliance For Animal Legislation; American Society For The Prevention; and Missouri Press Association.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill said that many Missouri livestock owners are concerned about being victims of agriterrorism.

Testifying on the bill was MO Cattlemens' Association.