

**Chapter 16.52 RCW**  
**PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

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*Cruelty to stock in transit: RCW 81.48.070.*

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**RCW 16.52.011 Definitions—Principles of liability. (1)**

Principles of liability as defined in chapter 9A.08 RCW apply to this chapter.

(2) The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Abandons" means the knowing or reckless desertion of an animal by its owner, or by a person who has taken control, custody, or possession of an animal that was involved in animal fighting as described in RCW 16.52.117, or the causing of the animal to be deserted by its owner, in any place, without making provisions for the animal's adequate care.

(b) "Animal" means any nonhuman mammal, bird, reptile, or amphibian.

(c) "Animal care and control agency" means any city or county animal control agency or authority authorized to enforce city or county municipal ordinances regulating the care, control, licensing, or treatment of animals within the city or county, and any corporation organized under RCW 16.52.020 that contracts with a city or county to enforce the city or county ordinances governing animal care and control.

(d) "Animal control officer" means any individual employed, contracted, or appointed pursuant to RCW 16.52.025 by an animal care and control agency or humane society to aid in the enforcement of ordinances or laws regulating the care and control of animals. For purposes of this chapter, the term "animal control officer" shall be interpreted to include "humane officer" as defined in (h) of this subsection and RCW 16.52.025.

(e) "Dog" means an animal of the species *Canis lupus familiaris*.

(f) "Euthanasia" means the humane destruction of an animal accomplished by a method that involves instantaneous unconsciousness and immediate death, or by a method that causes painless loss of consciousness, and death during the loss of consciousness.

(g) "Food" means food or feed appropriate to the species for which it is intended.

(h) "Humane officer" means any individual employed, contracted, or appointed by an animal care and control agency or humane society as authorized under RCW 16.52.025.

(i) "Law enforcement agency" means a general authority Washington law enforcement agency as defined in RCW 10.93.020.

(j) "Livestock" includes, but is not limited to, horses, mules, cattle, sheep, swine, goats, and bison.

(k) "Malice" has the same meaning as provided in RCW 9A.04.110, but applied to acts against animals.

(l) "Necessary food" means the provision at suitable intervals of wholesome foodstuff suitable for the animal's age, species, and condition, and that is sufficient to provide a reasonable level of nutrition for the animal and is easily accessible to the animal or as directed by a veterinarian for medical reasons.

(m) "Necessary shelter" means a structure sufficient to protect a dog from wind, rain, snow, cold, heat, or sun that has bedding to permit a dog to remain dry and reasonably clean and maintain a normal body temperature.

(n) "Necessary water" means water that is in sufficient quantity and of appropriate quality for the species for which it is intended and that is accessible to the animal or as directed by a veterinarian for medical reasons.

(o) "Owner" means a person who has a right, claim, title, legal share, or right of possession to an animal or a person having lawful control, custody, or possession of an animal.

(p) "Person" means individuals, corporations, partnerships, associations, or other legal entities, and agents of those entities.

(q) "Substantial bodily harm" means substantial bodily harm as defined in RCW 9A.04.110.

(r) "Tether" means: (i) To restrain an animal by tying or securing the animal to any object or structure; and (ii) a device including, but not limited to, a chain, rope, cable, cord, tie-out, pulley, or trolley system for restraining an animal. [2020 c 158 § 2; 2019 c 174 § 3; 2017 c 65 § 2. Prior: 2015 c 235 § 2; prior: 2011 c 172 § 1; 2011 c 67 § 3; 2009 c 287 § 1; 2007 c 376 § 2; 1994 c 261 § 2.]

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** "The legislature finds there is a need to modernize the law on animal cruelty to more appropriately address the nature of the offense. It is not the intent of this act to remove or decrease any of the exemptions from the statutes on animal cruelty that now apply to customary animal husbandry practices, state game or fish laws, rodeos, fairs under chapter 15.76 RCW, or medical research otherwise authorized under federal or state law. It is the intent of this act to require the enforcement of chapter 16.52 RCW by persons who are accountable to elected officials at the local and state level." [1994 c 261 § 1.]

**RCW 16.52.015 Enforcement—Law enforcement agencies and animal care and control agencies.** (1) Law enforcement agencies and animal care and control agencies may enforce the provisions of this chapter. Animal care and control agencies may enforce the provisions of this chapter in a county or city only if the county or city legislative authority has entered into a contract with the agency to enforce the provisions of this chapter.

(2) Animal control officers enforcing this chapter shall comply with the same constitutional and statutory restrictions concerning the execution of police powers imposed on law enforcement officers who enforce this chapter and other criminal laws of the state of Washington.

(3) Animal control officers have the following enforcement powers when enforcing this chapter:

(a) The power to issue citations based on probable cause to offenders for civil infractions and misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor violations of this chapter or RCW 9.08.070 through 9.08.078 or 81.48.070;

(b) The power to cause a law enforcement officer to arrest and take into custody any person the animal control officer has probable cause to believe has committed or is committing a violation of this chapter or RCW 9.08.070 or 81.48.070. Animal control officers may make an oral complaint to a prosecuting attorney or a law enforcement officer to initiate arrest. The animal control officer causing the arrest shall file with the arresting agency a written complaint within twenty-four hours of the arrest, excluding Sundays and legal holidays, stating the alleged act or acts constituting a violation;

(c) The power to carry nonfirearm protective devices for personal protection;

(d) The power to prepare affidavits in support of search warrants and to execute search warrants when accompanied by law enforcement officers to investigate violations of this chapter or RCW 9.08.070 or 81.48.070, and to seize evidence of those violations.

(4) Upon request of an animal control officer who has probable cause to believe that a person has violated this chapter or RCW 9.08.070 or 81.48.070, a law enforcement agency officer may arrest the alleged offender. [2011 c 172 § 2; 2003 c 53 § 110; 1994 c 261 § 3.]

**Intent—Effective date—2003 c 53:** See notes following RCW 2.48.180.

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**RCW 16.52.020 Humane societies—Enforcement authority.** Any citizens of the state of Washington incorporated under the laws of this state as a humane society or as a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals may enforce the provisions of this chapter through its animal control officers subject to the limitations in RCW 16.52.015 and 16.52.025. The legislative authority in each county may grant exclusive authority to exercise the privileges and authority granted by this section to one or more qualified corporations for a period of up to three years based upon ability to fulfill the purposes of this chapter. [1994 c 261 § 4; 1973 1st ex.s. c 125 § 1; 1901 c 146 § 1; RRS § 3184.]

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**RCW 16.52.025 Humane societies—Animal control officers.** Trustees of humane societies incorporated pursuant to RCW 16.52.020 may appoint society members to act as animal control officers. The trustee appointments shall be in writing. The appointment shall be effective in a particular superior county only if an appointee obtains written authorization from the superior court of the county in which the appointee seeks to enforce this chapter. To obtain judicial authorization, an appointee seeking judicial authorization on or after June 9, 1994, shall provide evidence satisfactory to the judge that the appointee has successfully completed training which has prepared the appointee to assume the powers granted to animal control officers pursuant to RCW 16.52.015. The trustees shall review appointments every three years and may revoke an appointment at any time by filing a certified revocation with the superior court that approved the appointment. Authorizations shall not exceed three years or trustee termination, whichever occurs first. To qualify for reappointment when a term expires on or after June 9, 1994, the officer shall obtain training or satisfy the court that the officer has sufficient experience to exercise the powers granted to animal control officers pursuant to RCW 16.52.015. [1994 c 261 § 5.]

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**RCW 16.52.080 Transporting or confining in unsafe manner—Penalty.** Any person who wilfully transports or confines or causes to

be transported or confined any domestic animal or animals in a manner, posture or confinement that will jeopardize the safety of the animal or the public shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. And whenever any such person shall be taken into custody or be subject to arrest pursuant to a valid warrant therefor by any officer or authorized person, such officer or person may take charge of the animal or animals; and any necessary expense thereof shall be a lien thereon to be paid before the animal or animals may be recovered; and if the expense is not paid, it may be recovered from the owner of the animal or the person guilty. [1982 c 114 § 5; 1974 ex.s. c 12 § 1; 1901 c 146 § 5; RRS § 3188. Prior: 1893 c 27 § 2, part; Code 1881 § 930, part.]

*Cruelty to stock in transit: RCW 81.48.070.*

**RCW 16.52.085 Removal of animals for feeding and care—**

**Examination—Notice—Euthanasia.** (1) If a law enforcement officer or animal control officer has probable cause to believe that an owner of a domestic animal has violated this chapter or a person owns, cares for, or resides with an animal in violation of an order issued under RCW 16.52.200(4) and no responsible person can be found to assume the animal's care, the officer may authorize, with a warrant, the removal of the animal to a suitable place for feeding and care, or may place the animal under the custody of an animal care and control agency. In determining what is a suitable place, the officer shall consider the animal's needs, including its size and behavioral characteristics. An officer may remove an animal under this subsection without a warrant only if the animal is in an immediate life-threatening condition.

(2) If a law enforcement officer or an animal control officer has probable cause to believe a violation of this chapter has occurred, the officer may authorize an examination of a domestic animal allegedly neglected or abused in violation of this chapter by a veterinarian to determine whether the level of neglect or abuse in violation of this chapter is sufficient to require removal of the animal. This section does not condone illegal entry onto private property.

(3) Any owner whose domestic animal is removed pursuant to this chapter shall be given written notice of the circumstances of the removal and notice of legal remedies available to the owner. The notice shall be given by posting at the place of seizure, by delivery to a person residing at the place of seizure, or by registered mail if the owner is known. In making the decision to remove an animal pursuant to this chapter, the officer shall make a good faith effort to contact the animal's owner before removal.

(4) The agency having custody of the animal may euthanize the animal or may find a responsible person to adopt the animal not less than fifteen business days after the animal is taken into custody. A custodial agency may euthanize severely injured, diseased, or suffering animals at any time. An owner may prevent the animal's destruction or adoption by: (a) Petitioning the district court of the county where the animal was seized for the animal's immediate return subject to court-imposed conditions, or (b) posting a bond or security in an amount sufficient to provide for the animal's care for a minimum of thirty days from the seizure date. If the custodial agency still has custody of the animal when the bond or security expires, the animal shall become the agency's property unless the court orders an

alternative disposition. If a court order prevents the agency from assuming ownership and the agency continues to care for the animal, the court shall order the owner to post or renew a bond or security for the agency's continuing costs for the animal's care. When a court has prohibited the owner from owning, caring for, or residing with animals under RCW 16.52.200(4), the agency having custody of the animal may assume ownership upon seizure and the owner may not prevent the animal's destruction or adoption by petitioning the court or posting a bond.

(5) If no criminal case is filed within fourteen business days of the animal's removal, the owner may petition the district court of the county where the animal was removed for the animal's return. The petition shall be filed with the court. Copies of the petition must be served on the law enforcement or animal care and control agency responsible for removing the animal and to the prosecuting attorney. If the court grants the petition, the agency which seized the animal must surrender the animal to the owner at no cost to the owner. If a criminal action is filed after the petition is filed but before the hearing on the petition, then the petition shall be joined with the criminal matter.

(6) In a motion or petition for the animal's return before a trial, the burden is on the owner to prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the animal will not suffer future neglect or abuse and is not in need of being restored to health.

(7) Any authorized person treating or attempting to restore an animal to health under this chapter shall not be civilly or criminally liable for such action. [2020 c 158 § 3; 2016 c 181 § 1; 2011 c 172 § 3; 2009 c 287 § 2; 1994 c 261 § 6; 1987 c 335 § 1; 1974 ex.s. c 12 § 2.]

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**Construction—1987 c 335:** "Nothing in this act shall be construed as expanding or diminishing, in any manner whatsoever, any authority granted officers under RCW 16.52.020 or 16.52.030." [1987 c 335 § 6.]

**Severability—1987 c 335:** "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1987 c 335 § 7.]

**RCW 16.52.090 Docking horses—Misdemeanor.** Every person who shall cut or cause to be cut, or assist in cutting the solid part of the tail of any horse in the operation known as "docking," or in any other operation for the purpose of shortening the tail or changing the carriage thereof, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. [1901 c 146 § 6; RRS § 3189. FORMER PART OF SECTION: Code 1881 § 840; 1871 p 103 § 1; RRS § 3206, now codified as RCW 16.52.095.]

**RCW 16.52.095 Certain veterinary procedures—Misdemeanor.** (1)  
Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, it is a misdemeanor:

(a) For any person to cut off more than one-half of the ear or ears of any domestic animal such as an ox, cow, bull, calf, sheep, goat, or hog; or

(b) For any person to:

- (i) Devocalize a dog;
- (ii) Crop or cut off any part of the ear of a dog; or
- (iii) Crop or cut off any part of the tail of a dog that is seven days old or older, or has opened its eyes, whichever occurs sooner.

(2) This section does not apply if the person performing the procedure is a licensed veterinarian utilizing accepted veterinary surgical protocols that may include local anesthesia, general anesthesia, or perioperative pain management. [2020 c 158 § 4; 1994 c 261 § 7; Code 1881 § 840; 1871 p 103 § 1; RRS § 3206. Formerly RCW 16.52.090, part.]

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**RCW 16.52.100 Confinement without food and water—Intervention by others.** If any domestic animal is impounded or confined without necessary food and water for more than thirty-six consecutive hours, any person may, from time to time, as is necessary, enter into and open any pound or place of confinement in which any domestic animal is confined, and supply it with necessary food and water so long as it is confined. The person shall not be liable to action for the entry, and may collect from the animal's owner the reasonable cost of the food and water. The animal shall be subject to attachment for the costs and shall not be exempt from levy and sale upon execution issued upon a judgment. If an investigating officer finds it extremely difficult to supply confined animals with food and water, the officer may remove the animals to protective custody for that purpose. [1994 c 261 § 10; 1982 c 114 § 6; 1901 c 146 § 12; RRS § 3195.]

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**RCW 16.52.117 Animal fighting—Prohibited behavior—Penalty—Exceptions.** (1) A person commits the crime of animal fighting if the person knowingly does any of the following or causes a minor to do any of the following:

- (a) Owns, possesses, keeps, breeds, trains, buys, sells, or advertises or offers for sale any animal with the intent that the animal shall be engaged in an exhibition of fighting with another animal;
- (b) Promotes, organizes, conducts, participates in, is a spectator of, advertises, prepares, or performs any service in the furtherance of, an exhibition of animal fighting, transports spectators to an animal fight, or provides or serves as a stakeholder for any money wagered on an animal fight;
- (c) Keeps or uses any place for the purpose of animal fighting, or manages or accepts payment of admission to any place kept or used for the purpose of animal fighting;
- (d) Suffers or permits any place over which the person has possession or control to be occupied, kept, or used for the purpose of an exhibition of animal fighting;

(e) Steals, takes, leads away, possesses, confines, sells, transfers, or receives an animal with the intent of using the animal for animal fighting, or for training or baiting for the purpose of animal fighting; or

(f) Owns, possesses, buys, sells, transfers, or manufactures animal fighting paraphernalia for the purpose of engaging in, promoting, or facilitating animal fighting, or for baiting a live animal for the purpose of animal fighting.

(2) (a) Except as provided in (b) of this subsection, a person who violates this section is guilty of a class C felony punishable under RCW 9A.20.021;

(b) A person who intentionally mutilates an animal in furtherance of an animal fighting offense as described in subsection (1) of this section is guilty of a class B felony punishable under RCW 9A.20.021.

(3) Nothing in this section prohibits the following:

(a) The use of dogs in the management of livestock, as defined by chapter 16.57 RCW, by the owner of the livestock or the owner's employees or agents or other persons in lawful custody of the livestock;

(b) The use of dogs in hunting as permitted by law; or

(c) The training of animals or the use of equipment in the training of animals for any purpose not prohibited by law.

(4) For the purposes of this section, "animal fighting paraphernalia" includes equipment, products, implements, or materials of any kind that are used, intended for use, or designed for use in the training, preparation, conditioning, or furtherance of animal fighting, and includes, but is not limited to: Cat mills; fighting pits; springpoles; unprescribed veterinary medicine; treatment supplies; and gaffs, slashers, heels, and any other sharp implement designed to be attached in place of the natural spur of a cock or game fowl. [2019 c 174 § 1; 2015 c 235 § 3; 2006 c 287 § 1; 2005 c 481 § 3; 1994 c 261 § 11; 1982 c 114 § 9.]

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**RCW 16.52.180 Limitations on application of chapter.** No part of this chapter shall be deemed to interfere with any of the laws of this state known as the "game laws," nor be deemed to interfere with the right to destroy any venomous reptile or any known as dangerous to life, limb or property, or to interfere with the right to kill animals to be used for food or with any properly conducted scientific experiments or investigations, which experiments or investigations shall be performed only under the authority of the faculty of some regularly incorporated college or university of the state of Washington or a research facility registered with the United States department of agriculture and regulated by 7 U.S.C. Sec. 2131 et seq. [1994 c 261 § 12; 1901 c 146 § 18; RRS § 3201.]

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**RCW 16.52.185 Exclusions from chapter.** Nothing in this chapter applies to accepted husbandry practices used in the commercial raising or slaughtering of livestock or poultry, or products thereof or to the use of animals in the normal and usual course of rodeo events or to



the customary use or exhibiting of animals in normal and usual events at fairs as defined in RCW 15.76.120. [1994 c 261 § 22; 1982 c 114 § 10.]

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**RCW 16.52.190 Poisoning animals—Penalty.** (1) Except as provided in subsections (2) and (3) of this section, a person is guilty of the crime of poisoning animals if the person intentionally or knowingly poisons an animal under circumstances which do not constitute animal cruelty in the first degree.

(2) Subsection (1) of this section shall not apply to euthanizing by poison an animal in a lawful and humane manner by the animal's owner, or by a duly authorized servant or agent of the owner, or by a person acting pursuant to instructions from a duly constituted public authority.

(3) Subsection (1) of this section shall not apply to the reasonable use of rodent or pest poison, insecticides, fungicides, or slug bait for their intended purposes. As used in this section, the term "rodent" includes but is not limited to Columbia ground squirrels, other ground squirrels, rats, mice, gophers, rabbits, and any other rodent designated as injurious to the agricultural interests of the state as provided in \*chapter 17.16 RCW. The term "pest" as used in this section includes any pest as defined in RCW 17.21.020.

(4) A person violating this section is guilty of a gross misdemeanor. [2003 c 53 § 111; 1994 c 261 § 13; 1941 c 105 § 1; RRS § 3207-1. Formerly RCW 16.52.150, part.]

**\*Reviser's note:** Chapter 17.16 RCW was repealed by 1994 c 11 § 1.

**Intent—Effective date—2003 c 53:** See notes following RCW 2.48.180.

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**RCW 16.52.193 Poisoning animals—Strychnine sales—Records—Report on suspected purchases.** (1) It is unlawful for any person other than a registered pharmacist to sell at retail or furnish to any person any strychnine: PROVIDED, That nothing herein prohibits county, state, or federal agents, in the course of their duties, from furnishing strychnine to any person. Every such registered pharmacist selling or furnishing such strychnine shall, before delivering the same, record the transaction as provided in RCW 69.38.030. If any such registered pharmacist suspects that any person desiring to purchase strychnine intends to use the same for the purpose of poisoning unlawfully any domestic animal or domestic bird, he or she may refuse to sell to such person, but whether or not he or she makes such sale, he or she shall if he or she so suspects an intention to use the strychnine unlawfully, immediately notify the nearest peace officer, giving such officer a complete description of the person purchasing, or attempting to purchase, such strychnine.

(2) A person violating this section is guilty of a gross misdemeanor. [2003 c 53 § 112; 1987 c 34 § 7; 1941 c 105 § 2; Rem. Supp. 1941 § 3207-2. Formerly RCW 18.67.110.]

~~Intent—Effective date—2003 c 53~~: See notes following RCW 2.48.180.

**RCW 16.52.200 Sentences—Forfeiture of animals—Liability for costs—Penalty—Education, counseling.** (1) The sentence imposed for a misdemeanor or gross misdemeanor violation of this chapter may be deferred or suspended in accordance with RCW 3.66.067 and 3.66.068, however the probationary period shall be two years.

(2) In case of multiple misdemeanor or gross misdemeanor convictions, the sentences shall be consecutive, however the probationary period shall remain two years.

(3) In addition to the penalties imposed by the court, the court shall order the forfeiture of all animals held by law enforcement or animal care and control authorities under the provisions of this chapter if any one of the animals involved dies as a result of a violation of this chapter or if the defendant has a prior conviction under this chapter. In other cases the court may enter an order requiring the owner to forfeit the animal if the court deems the animal's treatment to have been severe and likely to reoccur.

(4) Any person convicted of animal cruelty shall be prohibited from owning, caring for, possessing, or residing with any animals for a period of time as follows:

(a) Two years for a first conviction of animal cruelty in the second degree under RCW 16.52.207;

(b) Permanently for a first conviction of animal cruelty in the first degree under RCW 16.52.205;

(c) Permanently for a second or subsequent conviction of animal cruelty, except as provided in subsection (5) of this section.

(5) If a person has no more than two convictions of animal cruelty and each conviction is for animal cruelty in the second degree, the person may petition the sentencing court in which the most recent animal cruelty conviction occurred, for a restoration of the right to own, care for, possess, or reside with animals five years after the date of the second conviction. In determining whether to grant the petition, the court shall consider, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) The person's prior animal cruelty in the second degree convictions;

(b) The type of harm or violence inflicted upon the animals;

(c) Whether the person has completed the conditions imposed by the court as a result of the underlying convictions;

(d) Whether the person complied with the prohibition on owning, caring for, possessing, or residing with animals; and

(e) Any other matters the court finds reasonable and material to consider in determining whether the person is likely to abuse another animal.

The court may delay its decision on forfeiture under subsection (3) of this section until the end of the probationary period.

(6) In addition to fines and court costs, the defendant, only if convicted or in agreement, shall be liable for reasonable costs incurred pursuant to this chapter by law enforcement agencies, animal care and control agencies, or authorized private or public entities involved with the care of the animals. Reasonable costs include expenses of the investigation, and the animal's care, euthanization, or adoption.

(7) If convicted, the defendant shall also pay a civil penalty of one thousand dollars to the county to prevent cruelty to animals. These funds shall be used to prosecute offenses under this chapter and to care for forfeited animals pending trial.

(8) If a person violates the prohibition on owning, caring for, possessing, or residing with animals under subsection (4) of this section, that person:

(a) Shall pay a civil penalty of one thousand dollars for the first violation;

(b) Shall pay a civil penalty of two thousand five hundred dollars for the second violation; and

(c) Is guilty of a gross misdemeanor for the third and each subsequent violation.

(9) As a condition of the sentence imposed under this chapter or RCW 9.08.070 through 9.08.078, the court may also order the defendant to participate in an available animal cruelty prevention or education program or obtain available psychological counseling to treat mental health problems contributing to the violation's commission. The defendant shall bear the costs of the program or treatment.

(10) Nothing in this section limits the authority of a law enforcement officer, animal control officer, custodial agency, or court to remove, adopt, euthanize, or require forfeiture of an animal under RCW 16.52.085. [2020 c 158 § 5; 2016 c 181 § 2; 2011 c 172 § 4; 2009 c 287 § 3; 2003 c 53 § 113; 1994 c 261 § 14; 1987 c 335 § 2.]

**Intent—Effective date—2003 c 53:** See notes following RCW 2.48.180.

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**Construction—Severability—1987 c 335:** See notes following RCW 16.52.085.

**RCW 16.52.205 Animal cruelty in the first degree.** (1) A person is guilty of animal cruelty in the first degree when, except as authorized in law, he or she intentionally (a) inflicts substantial pain on, (b) causes physical injury to, or (c) kills an animal by a means causing undue suffering or while manifesting an extreme indifference to life, or forces a minor to inflict unnecessary pain, injury, or death on an animal.

(2) (a) A person is guilty of animal cruelty in the first degree when, except as authorized by law or as provided in (c) of this subsection, he or she, with criminal negligence, starves, dehydrates, or suffocates an animal, or exposes an animal to excessive heat or cold and as a result causes: (i) Substantial and unjustifiable physical pain that extends for a period sufficient to cause considerable suffering; or (ii) death.

(b) In determining whether an animal has experienced the condition described in (a) (i) of this subsection due to exposure to excessive heat or cold, the trier of fact shall consider any evidence as to: (i) Whether the animal's particular species and breed is physiologically adaptable to the conditions to which the animal was exposed; and (ii) the animal's age, health, medical conditions, and any other physical characteristics of the animal or factor that may affect its susceptibility to excessive heat or cold.

(c) A person is not guilty of animal cruelty in the first degree by means of exposing an animal to excessive heat or cold if the exposure is due to an unforeseen or unpreventable accident or event caused exclusively by an extraordinary force of nature.

(3) A person is guilty of animal cruelty in the first degree when he or she:

(a) Knowingly engages in any sexual conduct or sexual contact with an animal;

(b) Knowingly causes, aids, or abets another person to engage in any sexual conduct or sexual contact with an animal;

(c) Knowingly permits any sexual conduct or sexual contact with an animal to be conducted on any premises under his or her charge or control;

(d) Knowingly engages in, organizes, promotes, conducts, advertises, aids, abets, participates in as an observer, or performs any service in the furtherance of an act involving any sexual conduct or sexual contact with an animal for a commercial or recreational purpose; or

(e) Knowingly photographs or films, for purposes of sexual gratification, a person engaged in a sexual act or sexual contact with an animal.

(4) Animal cruelty in the first degree is a class C felony.

(5) In addition to the penalty imposed in subsection (4) of this section, the court must order that the convicted person not own, care for, possess, or reside in any household where an animal is present, in accordance with RCW 16.52.200.

(6) In addition to the penalties imposed in subsections (4) and (5) of this section, the court may order that the convicted person:

(a) Participate in appropriate counseling at the defendant's expense;

(b) Reimburse the animal shelter or humane society for any reasonable costs incurred for the care and maintenance of any animals taken to the animal shelter or humane society as a result of conduct proscribed in this section.

(7) Nothing in this section prohibits accepted animal husbandry practices or prohibits a licensed veterinarian or certified veterinary technician from performing procedures on an animal that are accepted veterinary medical practices.

(8) If the court has reasonable grounds to believe that a violation of this section has occurred, the court may order the seizure of all animals involved in the alleged violation as a condition of bond of a person charged with a violation.

(9) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Animal" means every creature, either alive or dead, other than a human being.

(b) "Sexual conduct" means any touching by a person of, fondling by a person of, transfer of saliva by a person to, or use of a foreign object by a person on, the sex organs or anus of an animal, either directly or through clothing, or any transfer or transmission of semen by the person upon any part of the animal.

(c) "Sexual contact" means: (i) Any contact, however slight, between the mouth, sex organ, or anus of a person and the sex organ or anus of an animal, or between the sex organ or anus of a person and the mouth of an animal; or (ii) any intrusion, however slight, of any part of the body of the person or foreign object into the sex organ or anus of an animal.

(d) "Photographs" or "films" means the making of a photograph, motion picture film, videotape, digital image, or any other recording, sale, or transmission of the image. [2020 c 158 § 6; 2015 c 235 § 6; 2006 c 191 § 1; 2005 c 481 § 1; 1994 c 261 § 8.]

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**RCW 16.52.207 Animal cruelty in the second degree—Penalty.** (1) A person is guilty of animal cruelty in the second degree if, under circumstances not amounting to first degree animal cruelty:

- (a) The person knowingly, recklessly, or with criminal negligence inflicts unnecessary suffering or pain upon an animal; or
- (b) The person takes control, custody, or possession of an animal that was involved in animal fighting as described in RCW 16.52.117 and knowingly, recklessly, or with criminal negligence abandons the animal.

(2) An owner of an animal is guilty of animal cruelty in the second degree if, under circumstances not amounting to first degree animal cruelty, the owner knowingly, recklessly, or with criminal negligence:

- (a) Fails to provide the animal with necessary shelter, rest, sanitation, space, or medical attention and the animal suffers unnecessary or unjustifiable physical pain as a result of the failure; or
- (b) Abandons the animal.

(3) Animal cruelty in the second degree is a gross misdemeanor. [2020 c 158 § 7; 2019 c 174 § 2; 2011 c 172 § 5; 2007 c 376 § 1; 2005 c 481 § 2; 1994 c 261 § 9.]

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**RCW 16.52.210 Destruction of animal by law enforcement officer—Immunity from liability.** This chapter shall not limit the right of a law enforcement officer to destroy an animal that has been seriously injured and would otherwise continue to suffer. Such action shall be undertaken with reasonable prudence and, whenever possible, in consultation with a licensed veterinarian and the owner of the animal. Law enforcement officers and licensed veterinarians shall be immune from civil and criminal liability for actions taken under this chapter if reasonable prudence is exercised in carrying out the provisions of this chapter. [1987 c 335 § 3.]

**Construction—Severability—1987 c 335:** See notes following RCW 16.52.085.

**RCW 16.52.220 Transfers of mammals for research—Certification requirements—Pet animals.** (1) All transfers of mammals, other than rats and mice bred for use in research and livestock, to research institutions in this state, whether by sale or otherwise, shall conform with federal laws and, except as to those animals obtained from a source outside the United States, shall be accompanied by one of the following written certifications, dated and signed under penalty of perjury:

(a) Breeder certification: A written statement certifying that the person signing the certification is a United States department of agriculture-licensed class A dealer whose business license in the state of Washington includes only those animals that the dealer breeds and raises as a closed or stable colony and those animals that the dealer acquires for the sole purpose of maintaining or enhancing the dealer's breeding colony, that the animal being sold is one of those animals, and that the person signing the certification is authorized to do so. The certification shall also include an identifying number for the dealer, such as a business license number.

(b) True owner certification: A written statement certifying that the animal being transferred is owned by the person signing the certification, and that the person signing the certification either (i) has no personal knowledge or reason to believe that the animal is a pet animal, or (ii) consents to having the animal used for research at a research institution. The certification shall also state the date that the owner obtained the animal, and the person or other source from whom it was obtained. The certification shall also include an identifying number for the person signing the certification, such as a drivers' license number or business license number. The certifications signed by or on behalf of a humane society, animal control agency, or animal shelter need not contain a statement that the society, agency, or shelter owns the animal, but shall state that the animal has been in the possession of the society, agency, or shelter for the minimum period required by law that entitles it to legally dispose of the animal.

(2) In addition to the foregoing certification, all research institutions in this state shall open at the time a dog or cat is transferred to it a file that contains the following information for each dog or cat transferred to the institution:

- (a) All information required by federal law;
- (b) The certification required by this section; and
- (c) A brief description of the dog or cat (e.g. breed, color, sex, any identifying characteristics), and a photograph of the dog or cat.

The brief description may be contained in the written certification.

These files shall be maintained and open for public inspection for a period of at least two years from the date of acquisition of the animal.

(3) All research institutions in this state shall, within one hundred eighty days of May 12, 1989, adopt and operate under written policies governing the acquisition of animals to be used in biomedical or product research at that institution. The written policies shall be binding on all employees, agents, or contractors of the institution. These policies must contain, at a minimum, the following provisions:

(a) Animals shall be acquired in accordance with the federal animal welfare act, public health service policy, and other applicable statutes and regulations;

(b) No research may be conducted on a pet animal without the written permission of the pet animal's owner;

(c) Any animal acquired by the institution that is determined to be a pet animal shall be returned to its legal owner, unless the institution has the owner's written permission to retain the animal; and

(d) A person at the institution shall be designated to have the responsibility for investigating any facts supporting the possibility

that an animal in the institution's possession may be a pet animal, including any inquiries from citizens regarding their pets. This person shall devise and insure implementation of procedures to inform inquiring citizens of their right to prompt review of the relevant files required to be kept by the institution for animals obtained under subsection (2) of this section, and shall be responsible for facilitating the rapid return of any animal determined to be a pet animal to the legal owner who has not given the institution permission to have the animal or transferred ownership of it to the institution.

(4) For the purposes of this section, "research institution" means any facility licensed by the United States department of agriculture to use animals in biomedical or product research. [1989 c 359 § 3.]

*Application of consumer protection act: RCW 19.86.145.*

**RCW 16.52.225 Nonambulatory livestock—Transporting or accepting delivery—Gross misdemeanor—Definition.** (1) Unless otherwise cited for a civil infraction by the department of agriculture under RCW 16.36.116(2), a person is guilty of a gross misdemeanor punishable as provided in RCW 9A.20.021 if he or she knowingly transports or accepts delivery of live nonambulatory livestock to, from, or between any livestock market, feedlot, slaughtering facility, or similar facility that trades in livestock. The transport or acceptance of each nonambulatory livestock animal is considered a separate and distinct violation.

(2) Nonambulatory livestock must be humanely euthanized before transport to, from, or between locations listed in subsection (1) of this section.

(3) Livestock that was ambulatory prior to transport to a feedlot and becomes nonambulatory because of an injury sustained during transport may be unloaded and placed in a separate pen for rehabilitation at the feedlot.

(4) For the purposes of this section, "nonambulatory livestock" means cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, mules, or other equine that cannot rise from a recumbent position or cannot walk, including but not limited to those with broken appendages, severed tendons or ligaments, nerve paralysis, a fractured vertebral column, or metabolic conditions. [2009 c 347 § 2; 2004 c 234 § 1.]

**Effective date—2004 c 234:** "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [March 31, 2004]." [2004 c 234 § 2.]

**RCW 16.52.230 Remedies not impaired.** No provision of RCW 9.08.070 through 9.08.078 or 16.52.220 shall in any way interfere with or impair the operation of any other provision of this chapter or Title 28B RCW, relating to higher education or biomedical research. The provisions of RCW 9.08.070 through 9.08.078 and 16.52.220 are cumulative and nonexclusive and shall not affect any other remedy. [2003 c 53 § 114; 1989 c 359 § 5.]

**Intent—Effective date—2003 c 53:** See notes following RCW 2.48.180.

**RCW 16.52.300 Dogs or cats used as bait—Seizure—Limitation.**

(1) If any person commits the crime of animal cruelty in the first or second degree by using or trapping to use domestic dogs or cats as bait, prey, or targets for the purpose of training dogs or other animals to track, fight, or hunt, law enforcement officers or animal control officers shall seize and hold the animals being trained. The seized animals shall be disposed of by the court pursuant to the provisions of RCW 16.52.200(3).

(2) This section shall not in any way interfere with or impair the operation of any provision of Title 28B RCW, relating to higher education or biomedical research. [1994 c 261 § 15; 1990 c 226 § 1.]

**Finding—Intent—1994 c 261:** See note following RCW 16.52.011.

**RCW 16.52.305 Unlawful use of hook—Gross misdemeanor.** (1) A person is guilty of the unlawful use of a hook if the person utilizes, or attempts to use, a hook with the intent to pierce the flesh or mouth of a bird or mammal.

(2) Unlawful use of a hook is a gross misdemeanor. [2004 c 220 § 1.]

**Effective date—2004 c 220:** "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [March 29, 2004]." [2004 c 220 § 2.]

**RCW 16.52.310 Dog breeding—Limit on the number of dogs—Required conditions—Penalty—Limitation of section—Definitions.**

(1) A person may not own, possess, control, or otherwise have charge or custody of more than fifty dogs with intact sexual organs over the age of six months at any time.

(2) Any person who owns, possesses, controls, or otherwise has charge or custody of more than ten dogs with intact sexual organs over the age of six months and keeps the dogs in an enclosure for the majority of the day must at a minimum:

(a) Provide space to allow each dog to turn about freely, to stand, sit, and lie down. The dog must be able to lie down while fully extended without the dog's head, tail, legs, face, or feet touching any side of an enclosure and without touching any other dog in the enclosure when all dogs are lying down simultaneously. The interior height of the enclosure must be at least six inches higher than the head of the tallest dog in the enclosure when it is in a normal standing position. Each enclosure must be at least three times the length and width of the longest dog in the enclosure, from tip of nose to base of tail and shoulder blade to shoulder blade.

(b) Provide each dog that is over the age of four months with a minimum of one exercise period during each day for a total of not less than one hour of exercise during such day. Such exercise must include either leash walking or giving the dog access to an enclosure at least four times the size of the minimum allowable enclosure specified in



(a) of this subsection allowing the dog free mobility for the entire exercise period, but may not include use of a cat mill, jenny mill, slat mill, or similar device, unless prescribed by a doctor of veterinary medicine. The exercise requirements in this subsection do not apply to a dog certified by a doctor of veterinary medicine as being medically precluded from exercise.

(c) Maintain adequate housing facilities and primary enclosures that meet the following requirements at a minimum:

(i) Housing facilities and primary enclosures must be kept in a sanitary condition. Housing facilities where dogs are kept must be sufficiently ventilated at all times to minimize odors, drafts, ammonia levels, and to prevent moisture condensation. Housing facilities must have a means of fire suppression, such as functioning fire extinguishers, on the premises and must have sufficient lighting to allow for observation of the dogs at any time of day or night;

(ii) Housing facilities must enable all dogs to remain dry and clean;

(iii) Housing facilities must provide shelter and protection from extreme temperatures and weather conditions that may be uncomfortable or hazardous to the dogs;

(iv) Housing facilities must provide sufficient shade to shelter all the dogs housed in the primary enclosure at one time;

(v) A primary enclosure must have floors that are constructed in a manner that protects the dogs' feet and legs from injury;

(vi) Primary enclosures must be placed no higher than forty-two inches above the floor and may not be placed over or stacked on top of another cage or primary enclosure;

(vii) Feces, hair, dirt, debris, and food waste must be removed from primary enclosures at least daily or more often if necessary to prevent accumulation and to reduce disease hazards, insects, pests, and odors; and

(viii) All dogs in the same enclosure at the same time must be compatible, as determined by observation. Animals with a vicious or aggressive disposition must never be placed in an enclosure with another animal, except for breeding purposes. Breeding females in heat may not be in the same enclosure at the same time with sexually mature males, except for breeding purposes. Breeding females and their litters may not be in the same enclosure at the same time with other adult dogs. Puppies under twelve weeks may not be in the same enclosure at the same time with other adult dogs, other than the dam or foster dam unless under immediate supervision.

(d) Provide dogs with easy and convenient access to adequate amounts of clean food and water. Food and water receptacles must be regularly cleaned and sanitized. All enclosures must contain potable water that is not frozen, is substantially free from debris, and is readily accessible to all dogs in the enclosure at all times.

(e) Provide veterinary care without delay when necessary. A dog may not be bred if a veterinarian determines that the animal is unfit for breeding purposes. Only dogs between the ages of twelve months and eight years of age may be used for breeding. Animals requiring euthanasia must be euthanized only by a licensed veterinarian.

(3) A person who violates subsection (1) or (2) of this section is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

(4) This section does not apply to the following:

(a) A publicly operated animal control facility or animal shelter;

- (b) A private, charitable not-for-profit humane society or animal adoption organization;
- (c) A veterinary facility;
- (d) A retail pet store;
- (e) A research institution;
- (f) A boarding facility; or
- (g) A grooming facility.

(5) Subsection (1) of this section does not apply to a commercial dog breeder licensed, before January 1, 2010, by the United States department of agriculture pursuant to the federal animal welfare act (Title 7 U.S.C. Sec. 2131 et seq.).

(6) For the purposes of this section, the following definitions apply, unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

- (a) "Dog" means any member of *Canis lupus familiaris*; and
- (b) "Retail pet store" means a commercial establishment that engages in a for-profit business of selling at retail cats, dogs, or other animals to be kept as household pets and is regulated by the United States department of agriculture. [2009 c 286 § 2.]

**Findings—2009 c 286:** "The legislature finds that:

(1) Dogs are neither a commercial crop nor commodity and should not be indiscriminately or irresponsibly mass produced;

(2) Large-scale dog breeding increases the likelihood that the dogs will be denied their most basic needs including but not limited to: Sanitary living conditions, proper and timely medical care, the ability to move freely at least once per day, and adequate shelter from the elements;

(3) Without proper oversight, large-scale breeding facilities can easily fall below even the most basic standards of humane housing and husbandry;

(4) Current Washington state laws are inadequate regarding the care and husbandry of dogs in large-scale breeding facilities;

(5) No Washington state agency currently regulates large-scale breeding facilities;

(6) The United States department of agriculture does not regulate large-scale breeding facilities that sell dogs directly to the public and thus, such direct-sales breeders are currently exempt from even the minimum care and housing standards outlined in the federal animal welfare act;

(7) Documented conditions at large-scale breeding facilities include unsanitary conditions, potential for soil and groundwater contamination, the spread of zoonotic parasites and infectious diseases, and the sale of sick and dying animals to the public; and

(8) An unfair fiscal burden is placed on city, county, and state taxpayers as well as government agencies and nongovernmental organizations, which are required to care for discarded or abused and neglected dogs from large-scale breeding facilities." [2009 c 286 § 1.]

**Effective date—2009 c 286:** "This act takes effect January 1, 2010." [2009 c 286 § 3.]

**RCW 16.52.320 Maliciously killing or causing substantial bodily harm to livestock belonging to another—Penalty.** (1) It is unlawful

for a person to, with malice, kill or cause substantial bodily harm to livestock belonging to another person.

(2) A violation of this section constitutes a class C felony.  
[2015 c 235 § 4; 2011 c 67 § 1.]

**RCW 16.52.330 Veterinarians—Animal cruelty—Liability immunity.**

A veterinarian lawfully licensed in this state to practice veterinary medicine, surgery, and dentistry who reports, in good faith and in the normal course of business, a suspected incident of animal cruelty that is punishable under this chapter to the proper authorities is immune from liability in any civil or criminal action brought against such veterinarian for reporting the suspected incident. The immunity provided in this section applies only if the veterinarian receives no financial benefit from the suspected incident of animal cruelty beyond charges for services rendered prior to the veterinarian making the initial report. [2013 c 245 § 1.]

**RCW 16.52.340 Leave or confine any animal in unattended motor vehicle or enclosed space—Class 2 civil infraction—Officers' authority to reasonably remove animal.**

(1) It is a class 2 civil infraction under RCW 7.80.120 to leave or confine any animal unattended in a motor vehicle or enclosed space if the animal could be harmed or killed by exposure to excessive heat, cold, lack of ventilation, or lack of necessary water.

(2) To protect the health and safety of an animal, an animal control officer or law enforcement officer who reasonably believes that an animal is suffering or is likely to suffer harm from exposure to excessive heat, cold, lack of ventilation, or lack of necessary water is authorized to enter a vehicle or enclosed space to remove an animal by any means reasonable under the circumstances if no other person is present in the immediate area who has access to the vehicle or enclosed space and who will immediately remove the animal. An animal control officer, law enforcement officer, or the department or agency employing such an officer is not liable for any damage to property resulting from actions taken under this section.

(3) Nothing in this section prevents the person who has confined the animal in the vehicle or enclosed space from being convicted of separate offenses for animal cruelty under RCW 16.52.205 or 16.52.207.  
[2015 c 235 § 1.]

**RCW 16.52.350 Dog tethering—Penalties.** (1) Any dog that is restrained outside by a tether must only be restrained for a period of time that is not reckless and in compliance with this section.

(a) The dog shall not be tethered in a manner that results, or could reasonably result, in the dog becoming frequently entangled on the restraint or another object.

(b) If there are multiple dogs tethered, each dog must be on a separate tether and not secured to the same fixed point.

(c) The tether must allow the dog to sit, lie down, and stand comfortably without the restraint becoming taut and allow the dog a range of movement.

(d) A dog shall not be tethered if it is ill, suffering from a debilitating disease, injured, in distress, in the advanced stages of pregnancy, or under six months of age.

(e) A tethered dog must have access to clean water and necessary shelter that is safe and protective while tethered. The shelter and water vessel must be constructed or attached in such a way that the dog cannot knock over the shelter or water vessel.

(f) A dog shall not be tethered in a manner that results in the dog being left in unsafe or unsanitary conditions or that forces the dog to stand, sit, or lie down in its own excrement or urine.

(g) A dog shall not be tethered by means of a choke, pinch, slip, halter, or prong-type collar, or by any means other than with a properly fitted buckle-type collar or harness that provides enough room between the collar or harness and the dog's throat to allow normal breathing and swallowing.

(h) The weight of the tether shall not unreasonably inhibit the free movement of the dog within the area allowed by the length of the tether.

(i) The dog shall not be tethered in a manner that causes the dog injury or pain.

(2) The provisions of subsection (1)(a) through (d) of this section do not apply to a dog that is:

(a) Tethered while it is receiving medical care or treatment under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian or is being groomed;

(b) Participating temporarily in an exhibition, show, contest, or other event in which the skill, breeding, or stamina of the dog is judged or examined;

(c) Being kept temporarily at a camping or recreation area;

(d) Being cared for temporarily after having been picked up as a stray or as part of a rescue operation;

(e) Being transported in a motor vehicle or temporarily restrained or tied after being unloaded from a motor vehicle;

(f) Being trained or used by a federal, state, or local law enforcement agency or military or national guard unit; or

(g) In the physical presence of the person who owns, keeps, or controls the dog.

(3) Each incident involving a violation of this section is a separate offense. A person who violates this section is subject to the following penalties:

(a) A first offense shall result in a correction warning being issued requiring the offense to be corrected by the person who owns, keeps, or controls the dog within seven days after the date of the warning being issued in lieu of an infraction unless the offense poses an imminent risk to the health or safety of the dog or the dog has been injured as a result of the offense.

(b) A second offense is a class 2 civil infraction under RCW 7.80.120(1)(b).

(c) A third or subsequent offense is a class 1 civil infraction under RCW 7.80.120(1)(a). [2017 c 65 § 1.]

**RCW 16.52.360 Retail pet store—Sale of dog or cat.** (1) Except as provided in this section, a retail pet store may not sell or offer for sale any dog or cat.

(2) A retail pet store that sold or offered for sale any dog prior to July 25, 2021, may sell or offer for sale a dog. [2021 c 76 § 1.]