

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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SECOND REGULAR SESSION

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEENTH LEGISLATURE

Legislative Document

NO. 2055

H.P. 1505 House of Representatives, January 14, 1988  
Approved for introduction by a majority of the  
Legislative Council pursuant to Joint Rule 26.  
Reference to the Committee on Agriculture suggested and  
ordered printed.

EDWIN H. PERT, Clerk  
Presented by Representative ALLEN of Washington.  
Cosponsored by Representative TARDY of Palmyra and  
Senator MATTHEWS of Kennebec.

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD  
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-EIGHT

AN ACT to Amend the Animal Control Laws.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as  
follows:

7 MRSA c. 720 is enacted to read:

CHAPTER 720

FERRETS

1 §3919-A. Domesticated ferrets not to run at large

2 It is unlawful for any domesticated ferret to run  
3 at large.

4 §3919-B. Disposition of domesticated ferret at large

5 Any animal control officer or person acting in  
6 that capacity shall seize, impound or restrain any  
7 domesticated ferret found in violation of section  
8 3919-A and deliver it to any shelter, as provided for  
9 in section 3919-C, or shall take it to its owner if  
10 known. Such animals shall be handled as stray ferrets.

11 §3919-C. Shelters; claims; fees; ownership

12 1. Shelter. A shelter to which a stray ferret is  
13 taken, as a condition of approval by the board, shall  
14 accept the ferret for a period of 8 days, unless the  
15 shelter is in quarantine or has a bona fide lack of  
16 adequate space or unless the ferret has or is  
17 suspected of having a contagious disease. The  
18 acceptance entitles the shelter to receive from the  
19 board the sum of \$2.50 a day for the period for which  
20 food and shelter are furnished to the ferret.  
21 Shelters accepting ferrets from municipalities not  
22 contracting with them may seek assistance from the  
23 board. Shelters which are not approved by the board  
24 to receive state funds shall not be required to accept  
25 sick, stray, injured or abandoned ferrets.

26 2. Claims; fees. The procedure for filing claims  
27 and calculating fees shall be as follows.

28 A. On the business day next following the date of  
29 acceptance of the ferret, the shelter shall notify  
30 the clerk of the respective municipality of the  
31 acceptance of the ferret, its description and the  
32 circumstances of its finding.

33 B. A shelter which accepts a ferret under this  
34 section, within 45 days of acceptance of the  
35 ferret, shall submit a claim on a board-approved  
36 form to the clerk of the respective municipality

1 for fees incurred in providing food and shelter  
2 and, upon verification of proper notification and  
3 holding period by the clerk, the shelter shall  
4 forward the claim to the board.

5 C. If the owner claims the ferret within the  
6 8-day period, the owner may have and receive the  
7 ferret upon payment of all board-approved fees.

8 3. Ownership of ferret. Upon expiration of the  
9 8-day period, ownership of the ferret shall vest in  
10 the shelter. The shelter may then:

11 A. Sell or give away the ferret; or

12 B. Otherwise dispose of the ferret humanely in  
13 accordance with Title 32, section 4872.

14 None of the proceeds obtained from the sale,  
15 donation, adoption or other disposition of the  
16 ferret shall be deducted from the fee claimed.

17 Notwithstanding subsection 2, paragraph C, the  
18 previous owner may reacquire the ferret at any  
19 time prior to its sale, donation or disposal upon  
20 payment of the municipal impoundment fee and  
21 actual fees incurred for food, shelter, veterinary  
22 care and any other fees required by this chapter  
23 for each day that the ferret has been sheltered.  
24 In this case no fee may be allowed by the board.

25 §3919-D. Dangerous ferrets; rabies prevention

26 1. Costs. The owner of the domesticated ferret  
27 shall be liable for any costs incurred by the  
28 municipality or the State in carrying out their duties  
29 under this section.

30 2. Impoundment. Any animal control officer or  
31 person acting in that capacity shall impound any  
32 domesticated ferret which has bitten a person when  
33 that ferret was at large.

34 3. Rabies assessment. If the ferret has been  
35 effectively vaccinated against rabies, the ferret

1 shall be impounded in quarantine in accordance with  
2 section 3919-B for 10 days observation or if  
3 necessary, decapitated for laboratory tests, as  
4 determined by the local health officer.

5 For purposes of this section, if the board finds that  
6 an effective vaccination exists, the board shall  
7 promulgate rules for vaccination of domestic ferrets  
8 against rabies and documentation of that vaccination.  
9 If the board finds that an effective vaccination does  
10 not exist, the board shall promulgate rules for rabies  
11 determination, including the quarantine protocol and  
12 guidelines for decapitation and testing. Decapitation  
13 shall only be permitted when less extreme measures are  
14 insufficient to protect the health of a bitten person.

15

STATEMENT OF FACT

16 This bill prohibits domesticated ferrets from  
17 running at large, not under control of the owner or  
18 another person. It also permits the municipal  
19 officials to take the necessary steps including  
20 impoundment, quarantine or decapitation for protection  
21 against rabies, if the ferret bites a person.

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