



Legal Update

August 28, 2014

An Act protecting animal welfare and safety

Chapter 293 of the Acts of 2014

On August 20, 2014, Governor Patrick signed into law *“An Act protecting animal welfare and safety”* (the “PAWS Act”). Key portions of the law are listed below:

- Increases the penalties for animal cruelty under G.L. c. 266, § 112 and c. 272, § 77 from imprisonment in state prison for not more than 5 years or in the house of correction for not more than 2 ½ years, a fine of not more than \$2,500, or both, to imprisonment in state prison for not more than 7 years or in the house of correction for not more than 2 ½ years, a fine of not more than \$5,000, or both.
- Establishes a penalty for a second or subsequent offense of animal cruelty under G.L. c. 266, § 112 or c. 272, § 77: imprisonment in state prison for not more than 10 years, fine of not more than \$10,000, or both.
- Grants the District Courts and Boston Municipal Court concurrent jurisdiction over the offense of animal cruelty (G.L. c. 272, § 77).
- Requires veterinarians who, in the normal course of business, observe an animal which they know or suspect to have been a victim of animal cruelty prohibited under G.L. c. 272, §§ 77 or 94, to report the known or suspected animal cruelty to a police officer or a special State Police officer. Failure by a veterinarian to report such animal cruelty shall be reported to the board of registration in veterinary medicine.
- Creates a task force to complete a systematic review of animal cruelty and protection laws.
- This legislation becomes effective 90 days after passage of this Act.

A copy of Chapter 293 of the Acts of 2014 is attached.