

# Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

*Joshua Schauer 271-3077*

**SB 442**, relative to pet transfers.

**Hearing Date:** February 17, 2026

**Time Opened:** 11:13 a.m.

**Time Closed:** 11:48 a.m.

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Avard, Pearl, Watters and Rosenwald

**Members of the Committee Absent :** Senator McConkey

**Bill Analysis:** This bill removes certain requirements on animal shelter facilities relative to the transfer of animals.

This bill is a request of the department of agriculture, markets, and food.

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**Sponsors:**

Sen. Pearl

Sen. Watters

Sen. Avard

Sen. Lang

Sen. Gannon

Sen. Murphy

Sen. Innis

Rep. Bixby

Rep. J. Aron

Rep. C. McGuire

Rep. Moffett

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**Who supports the bill:** 31 Individuals signed in support of the bill. Please contact Joshua.Schauer@gc.nh.gov for a full list.

**Who opposes the bill:** 1436, Individuals signed in opposition of the bill. Please contact Joshua.Schauer@gc.nh.gov for a full list.

**Summary of testimony presented:**

**Senator Howard Pearl, District 17**

- Senator Pearl introduced the bill as the prime sponsor and explained it was a request by the Commissioner of Agriculture.
- The bill deals with health certificate transfers. It is meant to be a clean-up and to clarify the language currently in statute.
- He acknowledged that the bill needs work and addressed some concerns over the ability for rescues to correctly interpret and comply with the bill.
- He explained that they wanted the bill to be tailored for communities and rescuers, as well as the residential breeders while also serving the industry at

large.

**Senator Watters** asked about the strike out on line 27. Asked if the strikeout on “ferret” was a mistake.

**Senator Pearl** confirmed and said they will amend the bill to include ferrets.

**Senator Watters** said that there is a concern that this will affect the amount of pet transfers that occur, he asked if that was an issue and what his thoughts were.

**Senator Pearl** stated that he was aware of this concern. He spoke with the rescue organizations and DOA early to address this concern. He hoped that he could continue the conversation and bring a good bill forward.

### **Commissioner Shawn Jasper, Department of Agriculture**

- Mr. Jasper said that he would only be referencing the amendment to the bill as the original language was confusing. The amendment would change “health certificates” to read “official certificates of transfer”.
- He believed that any person that receives an animal from a pet vendor should have a certificate that verifies the animal is healthy and confirms that a transfer has taken place. This is the main point of this bill.
- He said that there would be a cost associated with the issuance of these certificates, sometimes up to \$40,000. This is not as big of a problem as it would seem as many animal shelters already do this before transferring an animal. He explained that donations should cover the costs of the administration.
- He stated that the length of time that the certificate is valid for could be extended. He does not have a specific number readily available.
- He felt strongly that animals should be inspected by a veterinarian before being sold or adopted.

**Senator Pearl** asked for confirmation that the certificate would last for 21 days after being issued.

**Senator Watters** asked if instate animals will need to be quarantined. Asked about the cost that this would push on animal shelters.

**Shawn Jasper** quarantine is for imported animals only. This would not change with this bill.

**Senator Watters** asked about the language “imported from outside the state” being struck out in the amendment on lines 7 and 8.

**Shawn Jasper** stated that the reason for the strikeout was to include all animals in the requirement not just imported animals. Quarantine requirements only apply to imported animals. Says he was not prepared to answer that question at the moment.

**Senator Rosenwald** asked about the strike out of the language “imported and out of state” in the quarantine requirements. Asked if they are expanding the quarantine requirement.

**Shawn Jasper** said they should reference RSA 437:8, V. He does not have it in front of him.

**Senator Pearl** stated that he does not like the way that this bill was drafted but the commissioner was correct. The language is intended to remove the exemption for the certificate of transfer for instate animals. Said that the way they drafted it is confusing.

**Senator Watters** said that for clarity's sake they should not strike out that language.

**Kurt Ehrenberg, Humane World for Animals**

- Mr. Ehrenberg is concerned with the administrative burden on non-profit shelters. He explained that the shortened health certificate windows will hinder the adoption process and strain limited rescue resources.

**Charles Stanton, NH Humane Society**

- Mr. Stanton is opposed to the legislation, and he stated it adds massive administrative and financial burdens to rescue facilities. It limits their ability to save lives and be an effective service for their municipal partners.
- If this bill passes, they will have to raise the fees to municipal partners or they will have to stop accepting animals from municipal partners and the state.
- He stated that 104 officers and chiefs have signed a petition and others have written letters emphasizing the importance of these services to the police departments.
- He stated that the Department of Agriculture does not have the resources to respond to the things they are already monitoring. He said that review of health certificates has at some point been two years behind. It does not make sense to increase the workload on the department nor the animal shelters.
- He emphasized the importance of a statewide master plan for animal welfare. This bill will force them to withdraw their services from the state.

**Senator Avard** asked if he felt the same way about the amendment as he did the bill.

**Charles Stanton** responded yes he opposed the bill even if it was amended.

**Michael Constance, Friends of the Manchester Animal Shelter**

- Mr. Constance opposed the legislation and explained that this bill removes long standing exemptions for in state animal health certificates. At the moment they only have to get certificates for animals arriving from out of state.
- He stated that shelters are not pet vendors, breeders or retail operations. They are non-profit organizations that provide a public service. They operate on donations and limited municipal support. They should not be treated as retail operations.
- He stated that if this bill passes it will put a financial and administrative

burden on shelters.

- Health certificates are only valid for 14 days. If the animal is not adopted in that window it will have to be reexamined. The average length of stay at shelters is 49 days. The average animal would need to be tested and issued a certificate a at least 3 times. This will add \$71,966 in additional testing costs.
- He was concerned that the bill is too vague. He was worried that the legislation will negatively impact cats that test positive for FIV. This bill will result in overly restrictive interpretations around infectious disease protections. It may unintendedly condemn adoptable FIV cats to euthanasia.
- He compared the bill to Massachusetts style over regulation. He stated that SB442 does not protect animal health or welfare.

**Senator Pearl** asked if it would help if the committee extended the window for certificates of transfer to 21 days.

**Michael Constance** stated that it depends on the situation. It would help a little but it would still be a burden on the shelters.

**Senator Pearl** asked if the current practice was that all the animals are checked by a veterinarian.

**Michael Constance** responded yes.

#### **Caryn Fugatt, Pope Memorial Humane Society Dover**

- Ms. Fugatt opposed the legislation, noting that in 2025, 88% of animals in the shelter were local.
- She stated that the bill would have been a burden to their staff and added unnecessary regulation, as they already conducted due diligence in animal inspections and health checks before animals were handed off to their new owners.

**Senator Avard** asked if the 21-day window was long enough for her standards.

**Caryn Fugatt** said that the average length of stay is 30 or more days and that they would still need to do multiple vet checks at 21 days.

**Senator Avard** asked about her perspective on the consumer protection aspect of the bill.

**Caryn Fugatt** said that they already have a 14-day window which allows adopters to bring an animal back if any health problems are discovered by a veterinarian.

#### **Savannah Alcerro, NHSPCA**

- Ms. Alcerro was opposed to the legislation and explained the current medical process that animals go through before being adopted. Animals that are from NH go through the same intake process and medical care as animals from out of

state. While local animals do not need an Official Certificate of Transfer (OCT) they are adopted with complete medical records. This already provides far more detail than what would be included in an OCT alone.

- She said that the resource cost would be exponential. In 2025 they took in 1600 animals from in state. If they were all required to have an OCT for all in-state animals it would add 530 hours of administrative work. This is not including the re-testing required if an animal is not adopted in 14 days.

**Sarah Proctor, Veterinarian at Pope Memorial Humane Society Dover**

- Ms. Proctor was opposed to the bill as amended and briefly spoke about the burden that this will place on shelters
- She stated that Massachusetts is the only state that requires OCTs for in-state animal transfers. Massachusetts OCTs last for 180 days.
- Animals imported from the south often have higher rates of disease. It's important to have OCTs for these imported animals. Local animals have a lower rate of disease so there is less need for an OCT. She says that they already do health checks on local animals and they don't need this additional step.
- She stated that the only time she doesn't see an animal is if they already have complete medical history from another local vet. Most shelters have centralized databases that track intake and outtake. She claimed that there are better ways to collect data than what has been proposed.

**Senator Pearl** asked if the data in the database is the same as what is recorded on the OCT.

**Sarah Proctor** stated that the data in the databases is broad. They do not have specific information on individual animals.

**Senator Avard** asked if OCTs track birth defects.

**Sarah Proctor** said that it is not legally required to report health conditions other than infections on an OCT. OCTs are limited in what they can do to protect the consumer.