

SB 446-FN - AS INTRODUCED

2026 SESSION

26-2013  
08/09

SENATE BILL        **446-FN**

AN ACT            requiring animal care center operators to notify dog owners when a dog will be left unattended and to report injuries to animals or people which occur on the premises of the animal care center.

SPONSORS:        Sen. Ward, Dist 8; Sen. Innis, Dist 7; Sen. Avard, Dist 12; Sen. Birdsell, Dist 19

COMMITTEE:      Commerce

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ANALYSIS

This bill:

I. Requires that animal care centers notify dog owners when a dog will be left unattended and if the center is not equipped with a functioning fire protection sprinkler system.

II. Requires that animal care centers report injuries that occur to people or animals on the animal care center's property.

III. Enables local law enforcement to annually inspect animal care centers and provides a penalty for not maintaining proper care of the animal care center.

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Explanation:      Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.  
Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~  
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.



1           II. An animal care center owner or operator who is boarding or providing services to 5 or  
2 more dogs at the center shall provide to the owner of the dog written notice that he or she does not  
3 carry liability insurance.

4           437:25 Required; Report of Injuries; Inspection.

5           I. Animal care centers shall report to local law enforcement injuries to animals or people  
6 that occur on their premises. Local law enforcement shall investigate all reports. In consultation  
7 with the New Hampshire Police Association and the New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police,  
8 a form shall be developed for such reporting and a time frame for submitting a report after an injury.  
9 The form shall be available on the local law enforcement's website for the public to report such  
10 injuries.

11           II. The law enforcement of the municipality in which the animal care center is located shall  
12 make investigative reports of injuries publicly available on its website if the investigation results in  
13 the department bringing enforcement action against the animal care center.

14           III. To ensure an animal care center is clean and proper care is being provided, a police  
15 officer or an inspector authorized by local law enforcement or select board shall make an annual  
16 unannounced inspection on a day between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. unless an alternate  
17 time is mutually agreed upon. An authorized inspector may include, but shall not be limited to, an  
18 animal control officer, the mayor of a city, the select board of a town, the town manager of a town,  
19 the chief of police, or another designated official. The animal care center owner or operator shall be  
20 present during the inspection. Only the areas of the residence that are used for animal care  
21 purposes or for the maintenance of animal care center records shall be required to be available for  
22 inspection.

23           IV. If, in the judgment of the local law enforcement officer or an authorized inspector, an  
24 animal care center is not being maintained in a sanitary and safe manner, the local law enforcement  
25 officer or authorized inspector shall, depending on the severity of the offense, issue a written  
26 citation. If a facility is determined to be noncompliant, local law enforcement shall close the center  
27 for up to 5 days. Upon a third infraction, a center may be closed by local law enforcement.  
28 Enforcement under this section by a law enforcement officer or an authorized inspector may be  
29 appealed within 21 days to the circuit court in the judicial district in which the animal care center is  
30 maintained.

31           437:26 Animal Care Center Certification.

32           No person shall operate an animal care center in the state without first obtaining a certification  
33 from the commissioner of the department of agriculture, markets, and food. Certification shall be  
34 valid for a period of 2 years from the date of issuance and shall be renewed biennially. The fee for  
35 certification shall be \$100, payable to the department of agriculture, markets, and food at the time of  
36 application or renewal. The commissioner shall issue certification upon determination that the  
37 applicant meets the requirements established under this chapter and any rules adopted pursuant

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1 thereto. Certification issued under this section may only be revoked or suspended upon a finding  
2 that the certificate holder has violated the provisions of RSA 437:25, IV. The commissioner may  
3 adopt rules, pursuant to RSA 541-A, relative to the application process, renewal procedures, and  
4 standards for certification under this subdivision.

5 437:27 Penalty. An animal care center owner or operator who violates this subdivision shall be  
6 subject to a fine equal to \$500 for each animal subject to the violation and for each day the violation  
7 continues.

8 2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect January 1, 2027.

**SB 446-FN- FISCAL NOTE**  
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AN ACT requiring animal care center operators to notify dog owners when a dog will be left unattended and to report injuries to animals or people which occur on the premises of the animal care center.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** This bill does not provide funding, nor does it authorize new positions.

| <b>Estimated State Impact</b> |                |                |                |                |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                               | <b>FY 2026</b> | <b>FY 2027</b> | <b>FY 2028</b> | <b>FY 2029</b> |
| <b>Revenue</b>                | \$0            | \$28,500       | \$28,693       | \$28,836       |
| <i>Revenue Fund(s)</i>        | General Fund   |                |                |                |
| <b>Expenditures*</b>          | \$0            | \$237,000      | \$258,000      | \$261,000      |
| <i>Funding Source(s)</i>      | General Fund   |                |                |                |
| <b>Appropriations*</b>        | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            |
| <i>Funding Source(s)</i>      | None           |                |                |                |

\*Expenditure = Cost of bill

\*Appropriation = Authorized funding to cover cost of bill

| <b>Estimated Political Subdivision Impact</b> |                |                            |                            |                            |
|---|----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|   | <b>FY 2026</b> | <b>FY 2027</b>             | <b>FY 2028</b>             | <b>FY 2029</b>             |
| <b>County Revenue</b>                         | \$0            | \$0                        | \$0                        | \$0                        |
| <b>County Expenditures</b>                    | \$0            | \$0                        | \$0                        | \$0                        |
| <b>Local Revenue</b>                          | \$0            | \$0                        | \$0                        | \$0                        |
| <b>Local Expenditures</b>                     | \$0            | Indeterminable<br>Increase | Indeterminable<br>Increase | Indeterminable<br>Increase |

**METHODOLOGY:**

This bill requires animal care centers to notify dog owners when dogs will be left unattended, report injuries to animals or people occurring on their premises, and make investigative reports available if enforcement action results. The bill also requires annual unannounced inspections by local law enforcement or authorized inspectors and establishes a biennial certification requirement for animal care centers, issued by the Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food. Certification must be renewed every two years and requires a \$100 fee.

The Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food (DAMF) states that the definition of “animal care center” is assumed to remain unchanged. Certification will involve a level of work similar to the current pet vendor licensing program. The number of facilities requiring certification is based on online data available as of November 18, 2025, which identified 571 facilities, including

shelters, veterinary hospitals, groomers, kennels, dog daycares, and pet stores that handle more than five dogs. Based on the \$100 certification fee, the Department assumes state revenue of \$57,100 from certification fees. Because this \$100 certificate shall be valid for a period of 2 years. The Department assumes the following revenue based on when certificates will be issued: \$28,500 for FY 2027, \$28,693 for FY 2029 and \$28,836 for FY 2029

The Department states that it will require a two-year implementation period to manage workload and equipment deployment consistent with the biennial certification cycle. To administer the program, DAMF assumes it will require three new Agricultural Technician positions (19-4010 AGRI TECHS-1 SOC19-04) beginning January 1, 2027. These positions would perform scheduling, drive time, on-site assessments, communication with law enforcement and facilities, report writing, and follow-up, including additional visits when needed. The Department notes that certifications typically require an average of two full days of staff time based on existing experience with pet vending inspections. The Department also assumes that neither the state veterinarian nor DAMF's existing staff can shift or reduce other program responsibilities to absorb this workload. The estimated cost for the three new technicians, including operating costs and a vehicle for each position, is \$237,000 in FY 2027 (partial year due to the January 1 start date), \$258,000 in FY 2028, and \$261,000 in FY 2029.

The New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA) states this bill will result in increased municipal administrative and enforcement costs. Annual unannounced inspections must be performed by local law enforcement or other authorized inspectors. Municipalities must also investigate all injury reports submitted by animal care centers and must publish investigative reports online when enforcement action results. NHMA indicates these requirements will increase local government workload and legal exposure, with costs dependent on the number of animal care centers in each municipality and the volume of injury reports.

NHMA estimates that smaller municipalities may experience added costs of less than \$10,000 per year, while larger municipalities with more animal care centers may see annual costs between \$10,000 and \$100,000. These impacts are indeterminable because the number of facilities and volume of investigations varies by municipality. Some municipalities that already conduct optional inspections may experience lower increases.

**AGENCIES CONTACTED:**

Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food and New Hampshire Municipal Association