

SB 619-FN - AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE

03/05/2026 0848s

2026 SESSION

26-2164

08/06

SENATE BILL

***619-FN***

AN ACT

establishing procedures for expedited court hearings and disposition of confiscated animals.

SPONSORS:

Sen. Abbas, Dist 22; Sen. Avar, Dist 12; Sen. Sullivan, Dist 18; Sen. McGough, Dist 11; Sen. Watters, Dist 4; Sen. Murphy, Dist 16; Sen. Innis, Dist 7; Sen. Birdsell, Dist 19; Rep. Alexander Jr., Hills. 29; Rep. C. Harvey, Ches. 6

COMMITTEE:

Judiciary

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ANALYSIS

This bill establishes procedures for expedited court hearings and disposition of animals confiscated due to allegations of animal cruelty.

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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Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

## STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

*In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Six*

AN ACT                    establishing procedures for expedited court hearings and disposition of confiscated animals.

*Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:*

1            1 Cruelty to Animals; Court Hearing Upon Confiscation of Animals. Amend RSA 644:8, IV(a)(3)  
2 to read as follows:

3                    (3) Courts shall give cases in which animals have been confiscated by an arresting  
4 officer priority on the court calendar. In cases in which animals have been confiscated by an  
5 arresting officer or his or her agency, a status hearing shall be held by the court within 14 days of  
6 the confiscation of the animals.

7                    ***(A) A purpose of the hearing shall be to determine whether the***  
8 ***confiscation of the animal or animals was legal. Upon such a showing, the court may***  
9 ***require the defendant or appellant to post a bond or other security in an amount not***  
10 ***exceeding \$1,000 for each animal in custody and/or make a determination of custody that***  
11 ***is in the best interest of the animal's health, safety, and wellbeing. If the confiscated***  
12 ***animal is co-owned by the defendant, the court may transfer the custody of the animal to***  
13 ***the remaining owner or co-owners equitably if the court determines that such is in the best***  
14 ***interest of the animal's health, safety, and wellbeing. The court may also address any***  
15 ***other matters before it as raised by either party or if it is in the interests of justice. Upon***  
16 ***request from either party or by order of the court, this hearing may include the defendant's***  
17 ***arraignment. Waiver of the arraignment by the defendant shall not waive the 14 day***  
18 ***hearing set forth in this paragraph.***

19                    ***(B) Such bond or security shall be posted to the court within 30 days. If***  
20 ***such bond or security is not paid within 30 days after the court orders the bond or security***  
21 ***to be posted, the animals shall be forfeited to the arresting officer, the arresting officer's***  
22 ***agency, or the arresting officer's agency's designee. The court may, for good cause, extend***  
23 ***the deadline by no more than 15 days. A court shall order the return of any bond or***  
24 ***security upon a court approved agreement of the parties or a finding of not guilty. Nothing***  
25 ***in subparagraph (3) shall negate any requirement for payment resulting from provisions***  
26 ***in RSA 435:16.***

27                    ***(C) If the accused fails to appear in court without giving prior notice***  
28 ***within 3 days of the hearing date, or, if less than 3 days notice, without evidence of***  
29 ***emergent circumstances, the hearing shall take place as scheduled and the court may rule***  
30 ***on any matters before it.***

**SB 619-FN - AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE**

**- Page 2 -**

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

LBA  
26-2164  
03/10/2026

**SB 619-FN- FISCAL NOTE**  
AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE (AMENDMENT # 2026-0848s)

AN ACT                    establishing procedures for expedited court hearings and disposition of confiscated animals.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The Legislative Budget Assistant has determined that this legislation has a total fiscal impact of less than \$10,000 in each of the fiscal years 2027 through 2029.

**AGENCIES CONTACTED:**

Judicial Branch