

CHAPTER 143  
SB 619-FN - FINAL VERSION

03/05/2026 0848s  
23Apr2026... 1347h

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Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

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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            143:1 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 arresting  
5 officer or his or her agency, a status hearing shall be held by the court within 14 days of the confiscation of  
6 the animals.

7                                    *(A) A purpose of the hearing shall be to determine whether the confiscation of the*  
8 *animal or animals was lawful in accordance with paragraph IV-a. Upon such a showing, the court may*  
9 *make a determination of temporary custody that is in the best interest of the animal's health, safety, and*  
10 *wellbeing. If the confiscated animal is co-owned by the defendant, the court may transfer the custody of*  
11 *the animal to the remaining owner or co-owners equitably if the court determines that such is in the best*  
12 *interest of the animal's health, safety, and wellbeing. The court may also address any other matters*  
13 *before it as raised by either party or if it is in the interests of justice. Upon request from either party or by*  
14 *order of the court, this hearing may include the defendant's arraignment. Waiver of the arraignment by the*  
15 *defendant shall not waive the 14 day hearing set forth in this paragraph.*

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

19            143:2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect January 1, 2027.

Approved: June 12, 2026  
Effective Date: January 01, 2027

