

CHAPTER 160
HB 1253 - FINAL VERSION

11Mar2026... 0930h
04/09/2026 1308s

2026 SESSION

26-2770
08/09

HOUSE BILL ***1253***

AN ACT exempting dogs guarding livestock or crops from nuisance dog statutes when engaged in such work.

SPONSORS: Rep. Comtois, Belk. 7; Rep. J. Aron, Sull. 4; Rep. Bixby, Straf. 13; Rep. Kenny, Hills. 13; Sen. Pearl, Dist 17

COMMITTEE: Environment and Agriculture

AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill exempts dogs engaged in guarding livestock or crops from nuisance statutes when engaged in such work.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.
Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struck through.]~~
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.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 exempting dogs guarding livestock or crops from nuisance dog statutes when engaged in such work.

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

1 160:1 Guardian Dogs; Livestock; Crops. Amend RSA 466:30-a, I to read as follows:

2 I. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter, it shall be unlawful for any dog to run at
3 large, except when accompanied by the owner or custodian, and when used for hunting, for guarding,
4 working, ***guarding agricultural crops, guarding livestock***, or herding livestock, as defined in RSA 21:34-a,
5 II(a)(4), for supervised competition and exhibition, or for training for such. For the purpose of this section,
6 "accompanied" means that the owner or custodian must be able to see or hear, or both, or have
7 reasonable knowledge of where the dog is hunting, where training is being conducted, where trials are
8 being held, or where the dog is guarding, working, ***guarding agricultural crops, guarding livestock***, or
9 herding livestock. Nothing herein provided shall mean that the dog must be within sight at all times.

10 160:2 New Sections; Guardian Dogs. Amend RSA 466 by inserting after section 30-b the following
11 new sections:

12 466:30-c Livestock Guardian Dogs.

13 I. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a dog may run at large while it is actively engaged
14 in the protection, herding or management of livestock, provided that such dog:

15 (a) Is actively used for guarding livestock and works primarily with the livestock herd or flock
16 in a pasture, range, field, active yard, or similar open agricultural environment, rather than primarily in a
17 residential home, yard, or urban/suburban setting;

18 (b) Exhibits behaviors consistent with its working role and is not exhibiting persistent
19 nuisance barking unrelated to guarding.

20 II. Any person who knowingly and willfully falsely claims livestock guardian dog status in
21 response to a nuisance complaint, enforcement action, or otherwise to evade application of nuisance or
22 at-large laws shall be guilty of a violation. Upon verified complaint, the local animal control authority or
23 law enforcement agency may issue:

24 (a) A written warning for a first violation.

25 (b) A civil penalty of \$150 for a second violation and the implementation of bark mitigation
26 measures.

27 (c) A civil penalty of \$500 or more for a third violation and subsequent violations.

28 466:30-d Crop Guardian Dogs.

29 I. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a dog may run at large while it is actively engaged
30 in the protection of farm crops, provided that such dog is:

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1 (a) Is actively used for guarding crops in a pasture, range, field, active yard, or similar open
2 agricultural environment, rather than primarily in a residential home, yard, or urban/suburban setting;

3 (b) Exhibits behaviors consistent with its working role and is not exhibiting persistent
4 nuisance barking unrelated to guarding.

5 II. A crop guardian dog shall not be deemed to be at large for the purposes of RSA 466:28,
6 provided that the crop guardian dog remains within the boundaries of property owned or operated by the
7 dog owner and does not trespass onto neighboring properties or public ways.

8 III. Any person who knowingly and willfully falsely claims crop guardian dog status in response to
9 a nuisance complaint, enforcement action, or otherwise to evade application of nuisance or at-large laws
10 shall be guilty of a violation. Upon verified complaint, the local animal control authority or law
11 enforcement agency may issue:

12 (a) A written warning for a first violation.

13 (b) A civil penalty of \$150 for a second violation and the implementation of bark mitigation
14 measures.

15 (c) A civil penalty of \$500 or more for a third violation and subsequent violations.

16 160:3 Crop Guardian Dogs; Livestock Guardian Dogs. Amend RSA 466:31, II(g) to read as follows:

17 (g) If, whether alone or in a pack with other dogs, it bites, attacks, or preys on game animals,
18 domestic animals, fowl, or human beings *when not on the owner's property*.

 160:4 Effective Date. This act shall take effect January 1, 2027.

Approved: June 19, 2026
Effective Date: January 01, 2027