

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

---

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Agriculture

---

BILL: SB 1576

INTRODUCER: Senator Steube

SUBJECT: Lost or Stray Dogs or Cats

DATE: January 31, 2018

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Akhavein</u>	<u>Becker</u>	<u>AG</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>CA</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	<u>RC</u>	_____

---

**I. Summary:**

SB 1576 requires animal shelters that take in stray dogs and cats to adopt written policies and procedures to ensure that every reasonable effort is made to quickly and reliably return the animals to their owners.

**II. Present Situation:**

In 2017, Hurricane Irma resulted in hundreds of lost or stray dogs and cats across Florida, putting an added strain on already beleaguered Florida families and overburdened animal shelters in the storm's aftermath.<sup>1</sup> During disasters and at other times, family pets have been euthanized before the shelter's hold period has ended, before the owners could be notified of the animal's location, or before the animal could be claimed.<sup>2</sup> In Escambia County, a woman has sued the county over claims that the county animal shelter euthanized her dog even though she had called the shelter to inform the staff that she would pick up the dog as soon as possible.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ryan, Patti. September 15, 2017. "As Irma Howled, Hundreds of Tampa Bay Area Cats and Dogs Got Lost." *Tampa Bay Times*. Accessed online January 17, 2018, at <http://www.tampabay.com/news/humaninterest/as-irma-howled-hundreds-of-tampa-bay-area-cats-and-dogs-got-lost/2337541>.

<sup>2</sup> Aronson, Claire. "His lost best friend was found and taken to animal shelter—and killed the same day." *Bradenton Herald*. Accessed online January 17, 2018, at <http://www.bradenton.com/news/local/article124559479.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, Kevin. August 17, 2015. "Woman Sues Escambia over Mistakenly Euthanized Dog." *Pensacola News Journal*, Accessed online January 17, 2018, at <http://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2015/08/17/woman-sues-escambia-mistakenly-euthanized-dog/31868803/>.

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

**Section 1** creates s. 823.151, F.S., to provide that the Legislature finds that natural disasters may result in an increase in owned dogs and cats becoming lost or stray. It also directs animal control agencies and humane organizations to adopt policies and procedures to help return lost cats or dogs to identified owners. This would include the following:

- Screening for identification;
- A process for matching pets coming into the shelter with reports of lost pets made by pet owners;
- Public notice of stray dogs and cats at a location in the shelter or on the Internet;
- Reasonable efforts to notify identified pet owners;
- Public notice of shelter location, hours, fees, and return-to-owner process;
- Access for owners to claim lost pets outside of normal business hours;
- Direct return-to-owner protocols that allow animal control officers to directly return lost dogs and cats to their owners when the owners have been identified;
- Procedural safeguards to minimize the euthanasia of owned dogs and cats; and
- Temporary extension of local stray hold periods when an emergency is declared, if deemed appropriate by a local government.

The bill requires records of animals lost after a disaster to be made available to the public pursuant to public records provisions in chapter 119, F.S.

**Section 2** provides that this act shall take effect July 1, 2018.

### IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

### V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

Pet owners would have more assurance that lost pets would be more quickly and reliably returned to their families.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

City and county animal shelters and animal control agencies may have an increase in costs to comply with the notice requirements and shelter of lost animals.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill creates section 823.151 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.