

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to animal cruelty; amending s.
3 474.214, F.S.; providing that failure to report
4 suspected animal cruelty is grounds for certain
5 disciplinary actions; amending s. 474.2165, F.S.;
6 clarifying that the authorization to furnish medical
7 records related to veterinary medical services to
8 certain parties under certain circumstances includes,
9 but is not limited to, instances where a veterinarian
10 suspects animal cruelty; creating s. 828.124, F.S.;
11 defining terms; requiring certain individuals to
12 report incidents of animal cruelty to certain
13 officials; requiring that a veterinarian, veterinary
14 technician, or other animal treatment provider
15 employee who makes a good faith report of animal
16 cruelty to certain officials be held harmless from
17 certain liability, disciplinary action, and
18 retaliation; providing penalties for certain
19 veterinarians, veterinary technicians, or animal
20 treatment provider employees or volunteers who
21 knowingly alter or destroy a medical record for the
22 purpose of concealing animal cruelty; providing
23 construction; providing an effective date.

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25 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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27 **Section 1. Paragraph (qq) is added to subsection (1) of**
28 **section 474.214, Florida Statutes, to read:**

29 474.214 Disciplinary proceedings.—

30 (1) The following acts shall constitute grounds for which
31 the disciplinary actions in subsection (2) may be taken:

32 (qq) Failing to report suspected animal cruelty to the
33 proper authorities pursuant to s. 828.124.

34 **Section 2. Paragraph (d) of subsection (4) of section**
35 **474.2165, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:**

36 474.2165 Ownership and control of veterinary medical
37 patient records; report or copies of records to be furnished.—

38 (4) Except as otherwise provided in this section, such
39 records may not be furnished to, and the medical condition of a
40 patient may not be discussed with, any person other than the
41 client or the client's legal representative or other
42 veterinarians involved in the care or treatment of the patient,
43 except upon written authorization of the client. However, such
44 records may be furnished without written authorization under the
45 following circumstances:

46 (d) In any criminal action or situation where a
47 veterinarian suspects a criminal violation, including, but not
48 limited to, animal cruelty. If a criminal violation, including
49 but not limited to animal cruelty as defined in s. 828.124, is
50 suspected, a veterinarian may, without notice to or

51 authorization from the client, report the violation to a law
52 enforcement officer, an animal control officer who is certified
53 pursuant to s. 828.27(4)(a), or an agent appointed under s.
54 828.03. However, if a suspected violation occurs at a commercial
55 food-producing animal operation on land classified as
56 agricultural under s. 193.461, the veterinarian must provide
57 notice to the client or the client's legal representative before
58 reporting the suspected violation to an officer or agent under
59 this paragraph. The report may not include written medical
60 records except upon the issuance of an order from a court of
61 competent jurisdiction.

62 **Section 3. Section 828.124, Florida Statutes, is created**
63 **to read:**

64 828.124 Reporting animal cruelty; medical records.—

65 (1) As used in this section, the term:

66 (a) "Animal cruelty" means any act or omission that
67 constitutes a violation of s. 828.12, s. 828.122, s. 828.126, or
68 s. 828.13.

69 (b) "Animal treatment provider" includes:

70 1. Any animal care facility, hospital, mobile service or
71 clinic, or shelter;

72 2. A private veterinary practice;

73 3. A college of veterinary medicine or veterinary
74 technology program;

75 4. A specialized veterinary hospital; or

76 5. Any place dogs or cats are seen for any kind of
77 treatment.

78 (c) "Good faith report" means a report of animal cruelty
79 which is made by a person without malice or consideration of
80 personal benefit who has probable cause to believe such a report
81 is true.

82 (2) All of the following individuals must report
83 suspected, both past or ongoing, incidents of animal cruelty to
84 a local law enforcement officer, an animal control officer
85 certified pursuant to s. 828.27(4)(a), or an agent appointed
86 under s. 828.03:

87 (a) A veterinarian, if he or she has a
88 veterinarian/client/patient relationship with the animal.

89 (b) A veterinary technician employed by an animal
90 treatment provider or any other employee of the animal treatment
91 provider, if the animal is a past or current patient of the
92 animal treatment provider with whom the technician or employee
93 is employed.

94 (3) A veterinarian, veterinary technician, or other animal
95 treatment provider employee who makes a good faith report of
96 animal cruelty pursuant to this section to a local law
97 enforcement officer, an animal control officer, or an agent
98 appointed pursuant to subsection (2) shall be held harmless from
99 criminal liability, civil liability, professional disciplinary
100 action, and employer retaliation.

101 (4) A veterinarian, excluding veterinarians subject to
102 chapter 474, a veterinary technician, or an animal treatment
103 provider employee or volunteer, who knowingly alters or destroys
104 a medical record for the purpose of concealing or attempting to
105 conceal animal cruelty or who causes the same to be done,
106 commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as
107 provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

108 (5) This section may not be construed to prohibit any
109 person from making a good faith report of suspected animal
110 cruelty to any national, state, or local law enforcement
111 authority or any animal control agency.

112 **Section 4.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.