

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

## **2024 REGULAR SESSION**

**Introduced**

### **Senate Bill 314**

By Senator Chapman

[Introduced January 12, 2024; referred  
to the Committee on Agriculture and Natural  
Resources; and then to the Committee on the  
Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §61-8-19 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to  
 2 strengthening the definition of shelter for animals exposed to extreme weather; clarifying  
 3 the minimum requirements for what constitutes a shelter; and clarifying what does not  
 4 amount to a shelter.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

**ARTICLE 8. CRIMES AGAINST CHASTITY, MORALITY AND DECENCY.**

**§61-8-19. Cruelty to animals; penalties; exclusions.**

1 (a)(1) It is unlawful for any person to intentionally, knowingly or recklessly,  
 2 (A) Mistreat an animal in cruel manner;  
 3 (B) Abandon an animal;  
 4 (C) Withhold;  
 5 (i) Proper sustenance, including food or water;  
 6 (ii) Shelter ~~that protects from the elements of weather~~ for a tethered animal or an animal  
 7 roaming free shall consist of a four-sided structure, with a roof and one opening only wide enough  
 8 for the animal to enter into the structure unimpeded, and it shall be a suitable size to accommodate  
 9 the animal in both standing and lying positions. The shelter shall be moisture-proof, windproof, and  
 10 ventilated. The shelter shall promote the retention of body heat, and be made of solid, durable  
 11 material with a solid, moisture-proof floor raised at least two inches from the ground. The shelter  
 12 shall have a sufficient quantity of suitable clean bedding material consisting of hay, straw, cedar  
 13 shavings, or the equivalent to provide insulation and protection against cold and dampness.  
 14 Blankets that can retain moisture and freeze are not considered an acceptable bedding. The  
 15 structure and the surrounding area shall be free from excessive waste, dirt, and trash. Each  
 16 animal tethered or roaming free shall have their own individual shelter. For an animal in a  
 17 confinement area (including, but not limited to, outdoor pens or any other area used to house an  
 18 animal), the shelter shall be at least 100 square feet of floor space in such area for each animal  
 19 over four months of age kept in the area. The same requirements for shelter apply for tethered or

20 roaming free animals. Examples of inadequate shelters include, but are not limited to, lean-tos,  
21 metal drums, plastic drums, cardboard or other disposable boxes, vehicles, or the area on or  
22 beneath exposed porches or exposed decks. No animal shall be tethered, maintained, or kept  
23 outside for any longer than 30 minutes during any extreme weather events, including but not  
24 limited to "extreme heat," defined as 85 degrees Fahrenheit and above, "freezing temperatures,"  
25 defined as 32 degrees Fahrenheit or below, and/or during severe weather conditions, including but  
26 not limited to thunderstorms, hail, extreme wind, ice, snowstorms, tornados, or floods. This  
27 provision does not apply to working or agricultural animals; or

28 (iii) Medical treatment, necessary to sustain normal health and fitness or to end the  
29 suffering of any animal;

30 (D) Abandon an animal to die;

31 (E) Leave an animal unattended and confined in a motor vehicle when physical injury to or  
32 death of the animal is likely to result;

33 (F) Ride an animal when it is physically unfit;

34 (G) Bait or harass an animal for the purpose of making it perform for a person's  
35 amusement;

36 (H) Cruelly chain or tether an animal; or

37 (I) Use, train or possess a domesticated animal for the purpose of seizing, detaining or  
38 maltreating any other domesticated animal.

39 (2) Any person in violation of subdivision (1) of this subsection is guilty of a misdemeanor  
40 and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not less than \$300 nor more than \$2,000 or confined in  
41 jail not more than six months, or both.

42 (b) A person who intentionally tortures, or mutilates or maliciously kills an animal, or  
43 causes, procures or authorizes any other person to torture, mutilate or maliciously kill an animal, is  
44 guilty of a felony and, upon conviction thereof, shall be confined in a correctional facility not less  
45 than one nor more than five years and be fined not less than \$1,000 nor more than \$5,000. For the

46 purposes of this subsection, "torture" means an action taken for the primary purpose of inflicting  
47 pain.

48 (c) A person, other than a licensed veterinarian or a person acting under the direction or  
49 with the approval of a licensed veterinarian, who knowingly and willfully administers or causes to  
50 be administered to any animal participating in any contest any controlled substance or any other  
51 drug for the purpose of altering or otherwise affecting said animal's performance is guilty of a  
52 misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not less than \$500 nor more than  
53 \$2,000.

54 (d) Any person convicted of a violation of this section forfeits his or her interest in any  
55 animal and all interest in the animal vests in the humane society or county pound of the county in  
56 which the conviction was rendered and the person is, in addition to any fine imposed, liable for any  
57 costs incurred or to be incurred by the humane society or county pound as a result.

58 (e) For the purpose of this section, the term "controlled substance" has the same meaning  
59 ascribed to it by subsection (d), section one hundred one, article one, chapter sixty-a of this code.

60 (f) The provisions of this section do not apply to lawful acts of hunting, fishing, trapping or  
61 animal training or farm livestock, poultry, gaming fowl or wildlife kept in private or licensed game  
62 farms if kept and maintained according to usual and accepted standards of livestock, poultry,  
63 gaming fowl or wildlife or game farm production and management, nor to humane use of animals  
64 or activities regulated under and in conformity with the provisions of 7 U.S.C. §2131, *et seq.*, and  
65 the regulations promulgated thereunder, as both statutes and regulations are in effect on the  
66 effective date of this section.

67 (g) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, any person convicted  
68 of a second or subsequent violation of subsection (a) is guilty of a misdemeanor and, shall be  
69 confined in jail for a period of not less than 90 days nor more than one year, fined not less than  
70 \$500 nor more than \$3,000, or both. The incarceration set forth in this subsection is mandatory  
71 unless the provisions of subsection (h) of this section are complied with.

72 (h)(1) Notwithstanding any provision of this code to the contrary, no person who has been  
73 convicted of a violation of the provisions of subsection (a) or (b) of this section may be granted  
74 probation until the defendant has undergone a complete psychiatric or psychological evaluation  
75 and the court has reviewed the evaluation. Unless the defendant is determined by the court to be  
76 indigent, he or she is responsible for the cost of the evaluation.

77 (2) For any person convicted of a violation of subsection (a) or (b) of this section, the court  
78 may, in addition to the penalties provided in this section, impose a requirement that he or she  
79 complete a program of anger management intervention for perpetrators of animal cruelty. Unless  
80 the defendant is determined by the court to be indigent, he or she is responsible for the cost of the  
81 program.

82 (i) In addition to any other penalty which can be imposed for a violation of this section, a  
83 court shall prohibit any person so convicted from possessing, owning or residing with any animal  
84 or type of animal for a period of five years following entry of a misdemeanor conviction and 15  
85 years following entry of a felony conviction. A violation under this subsection is a misdemeanor  
86 punishable by a fine not exceeding \$2,000 and forfeiture of the animal.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to provide added protection for animals exposed to extreme weather.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.