



Senate Bill 22: ENDANGERED PET RESCUE FROM UNATTENDED, PARKED CARS

The temperature inside a vehicle can become dangerously hot in a matter of minutes, even with the windows cracked. Pets left unattended in vehicles in these conditions can suffer from heat exhaustion and death very quickly. In 2014, Delaware Animal Care and Control received over 200 calls for assistance concerning pets confined in vehicles under dangerous conditions yet because Delaware law does not address this issue, officers are sometimes unclear about the action they can take. Sixteen other states, including the neighboring states of New Jersey and Maryland, have enacted legislation to allow a pet to be rescued from a vehicle when the animal is at risk.

GOAL OF SENATE BILL (SB) 22:

SB 22 clarifies the action first responders -- including law enforcement officers, animal control officers, and firefighters -- can take when they encounter a pet that is trapped in a parked car and left unattended when the temperature is either so high or so low as to endanger the health and safety of the animal.

KEY PROVISIONS:

- If an animal is confined in a parked vehicle under dangerous conditions, an authorized person may use reasonable force to remove the animal.
- An authorized person rescuing the animal must take action to contact the owner. If the person is unable to contact the owner, the animal may be taken to an animal shelter and the rescuer must leave written notice on the vehicle to alert the owner of the location where the animal can be claimed.
- The bill does not apply to the legal transportation of livestock, transportation of dogs in the bed of a truck, or animals in parked vehicles attended by a person.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Does this bill mandate new enforcement activity by animal control or law enforcement officers? No, SB 22 clarifies the action that can be taken if an animal is confined in a parked motor vehicle, unattended, in a manner that endangers the health and safety of the animal.

What are the penalties for violating this law? The first offense would result in a fine of no more than \$1,000.

Will this bill prohibit the legal transport of livestock or dogs in the bed of a truck? No, SB 22 does not apply to the legal transportation of livestock, transportation of dogs in the bed of a truck, or animals in parked vehicles attended by a person.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact the Office of Animal Welfare at 302-255-4620, fax 302-255-4621, or email: DHSS_OAW@state.de.us.