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HOUSE BILL NO. 9

Offered January 10, 2024

Prefiled December 4, 2023

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 3.2-6556 of the Code of Virginia, relating to animal control officers; additional training.*

Patrons—Ennis, Clark and Green; Senator: Jordan

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 3.2-6556 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 3.2-6556. Training of animal control officers.

A. Every locality employing animal control officers shall require that every animal control officer and deputy animal control officer completes the following training:

1. A basic animal control course that has been approved by the State Veterinarian. The basic animal control course shall include training in recognizing suspected child abuse and neglect and information on how complaints may be filed and shall be approved and implemented. Any animal control officer hired on or after July 1, 1998, and before July 1, 2017, shall complete the basic animal control course within two years from the date of hire. Any animal control officer hired on or after July 1, 2017, shall complete the basic animal control course within one year from the date of hire or within two years if the officer is attending a law-enforcement academy; and

2. Every three years, additional training approved by the State Veterinarian, ~~45~~ 24 hours of which shall be training in animal control and protection.

The State Veterinarian shall develop criteria to be used in approving training courses and shall provide an opportunity for public comment on proposed criteria before the final criteria are adopted.

Subdivision 1 shall not apply to animal control officers or deputy animal control officers hired before July 1, 1998. The State Veterinarian may grant exemptions from the requirements of subdivision 1 to animal control officers hired on or after July 1, 1998, based on the animal control officer's previous training.

The State Veterinarian shall work to ensure the availability of these training courses through regional criminal justice training academies or other entities as approved by him. Based on information provided by authorized training entities, the State Veterinarian shall maintain the training records for all animal control officers for the purpose of documenting and ensuring that they are in compliance with this subsection.

B. Upon cause shown by a locality, the State Veterinarian may grant additional time during which the training required by subsection A may be completed by an animal control officer for the locality.

C. Any animal control officer ~~that~~ *who* fails to complete the training required by subsection A shall be removed from office; unless the State Veterinarian has granted additional time as provided in subsection B.

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