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HOUSE BILL NO. 1396

Offered January 22, 2026

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 29.1-516.3, relating to Department of Wildlife Resources; permits; use of dogs in hunting game animals, fur-bearing animals, and nuisance species.

Patrons—Martinez and Clark

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 29.1-516.3 as follows:

§ 29.1-516.3. Permit required for the use of dogs in hunting game animals, fur-bearing animals, and nuisance species.

A. The Department shall establish a permit for persons and a permit for organizations that hunt game animals, fur-bearing animals, or nuisance species with the aid of dogs. Applications for new and renewed permits shall be on a form prescribed by the Department and shall include a fee of $19. The Department shall promulgate regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this section including (i) permit issuance procedures, (ii) criteria for permit revocation or suspension, (iii) standards for dog identification and marking of vehicles, (iv) conditions under which exemptions to the requirements of this subsection may be granted, and (v) the implementation of practices that reduce the likelihood of a hunting dog entering onto real property and for which the permit holder does not have written permission pursuant to subsection C.

B. Beginning July 1, 2027, it is unlawful for any person to (i) release a dog to hunt, pursue, or chase any game animal, fur-bearing animal, or nuisance species on any tract of real property or (ii) engage in hunting any game animal, fur-bearing animal, or nuisance species with the aid of any dog unless such person has been issued a permit to hunt with dogs by the Department.

C. No person shall release a dog that hunts, pursues, or chases any game animal, fur-bearing animal, or nuisance species onto or across, or otherwise allow such dog to remain on, private property without written permission from the landowner or lawful occupant of such property.

D. The provisions of subsection B shall not apply to any person or organization (i) engaged in mounted fox hunting; (ii) engaged in hunting waterfowl, (iii) using a tracking dog to retrieve a wounded or dead bear, turkey, or deer pursuant to § 29.1-516.1; or (iv) whose dog remains in the immediate visual presence and control of such person, regardless of the species of animal that is otherwise being lawfully pursued.

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