
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 260

AN ACT CONCERNING ROAMING DOGS.

SUMMARY

This bill increases the penalty for dog owners or keepers who allow their dogs to roam at large on another's land or on a public highway when not under their control. The bill also adds two exemptions from the roaming restriction.

Under current law, this is an infraction (see BACKGROUND). The bill instead generally makes it punishable by a fine of up to (1) \$350 for a first violation and (2) \$500 for a subsequent violation. People fined for these violations must follow the law's procedure for infractions. For example, they can pay the fine by mail without making a court appearance.

Under the bill, a third or subsequent violation occurring within one year after the immediate prior violation is a class C misdemeanor, which is punishable by a fine of up to \$500, up to three months in prison, or both.

The bill exempts from the roaming ban dogs that are (1) handling and controlling livestock or (2) participating in a search or rescue operation. Currently, only hunting dogs during the open hunting or training season are exempt.

By law, the unauthorized presence of a dog on another's land or a public highway when not under its owner's or keeper's control is prima facie evidence of a violation.

Lastly, the bill makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

BACKGROUND

Infractions

Infractions are punishable by fines, usually set by Superior Court judges, of between \$35 and \$90, plus a \$20 or \$35 surcharge and an additional fee based on the fine's amount. There may be other added charges depending upon the type of infraction. For example, certain motor vehicle infractions trigger a Special Transportation Fund surcharge of 50% of the fine. An infraction is not a crime, and violators can generally pay the fine by mail without making a court appearance.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 41 Nay 0 (03/30/2026)