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ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

SPONSOR STATEMENT

HB 147

“An Act relating to cruelty to animals complaints; relating to the seizure of animals; relating to the destruction of animals; relating to the costs of care for animals that have been seized; relating to the inclusion of animals in protective orders and crimes and arrests for violating those protective orders; and relating to ownership of animals upon divorce or dissolution of marriage.”

This bill, HB 147, accomplishes three things: it holds an owner responsible for the reasonable third-party costs of caring for animals lawfully seized due to cruelty or neglect; it provides statutory protection for pets in domestic violence protective orders, granting exclusive temporary custody of pets to victims; and it permits courts to award ownership of animals in divorce and dissolution proceedings and consider their well-being when deciding these issues.

1. Cost of Care

Amends state animal statutes to require owners’ of animals lawfully seized for neglect or cruelty to pay their cost of care through bond or other security. This will shift the burden from governmental agencies, or independent shelters and rescue agencies, to the animals’ owners – saving tax dollars and animals’ lives. The bill also allows the adoption and rehoming and, if necessary, euthanasia of seized animals if the owners surrender them or fail to pay the costs of care ordered or post court-ordered security.

2. Domestic Violence

Amends domestic violence statutes to allow courts to enter domestic violence protective orders for pets, including for temporary care, and adds cruelty to animals as a crime involving domestic violence if the animal is a pet.

3. Divorce and Dissolution

Amends divorce and marriage dissolution statutes to require consideration of animals’ well-being when adjudicating their ownership or joint ownership.