



AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB<sup>SM</sup>

**Stacey Ober, J.D.**  
Legislative Analyst  
Community Outreach  
New England Region

February 14, 2019

The Honorable Carolyn W. Partridge, Chairwoman  
House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, Room 31  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

**RE: American Kennel Club Concerned with HB 158; Requests Amendments**

Dear Chair Partridge and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1884, the American Kennel Club (AKC) is a recognized and trusted expert in health, breeding, training and responsible dog ownership. We represent over 5,100 dog clubs nationally, including seven in Vermont. The American Kennel Club strongly supports and actively promotes a wide range of programs to educate the public about responsible breeding practices and dog ownership to ensure that all dogs receive the care, love and attention they deserve. The AKC abhors animal neglect and cruelty and strongly supports reasonable laws that protect the health and welfare of dogs. The AKC expects responsible dog owners and breeders to know, understand, and obey laws that apply to them.

The intent of HB 158 in holding owners responsible for their care is a principle the AKC supports. Clearly of great importance is the ability to provide care and treatment of any animal suspected of neglect, abandonment or abuse. We respectfully write to express concerns, however, with HB 158, an act relating to standards for the care of domestic pets, as filed.

The legislation uses the word “custody” instead of “possession” or “keeper” of animals, which could blur the line between an animal and a person, and thus between property and a person, especially when it comes to dogs. The AKC believes that using legal terms like “custody” or “guardian” may in fact reduce the legal status and value of dogs as property and thereby restrict the rights of owners, veterinarians and government agencies to protect and care for dogs. It may also subject them to frivolous and expensive litigation while doing nothing to promote more responsible treatment of dogs. ***Please consider striking the word “custody” throughout the draft and refer only to “possession” of an animal.*** Using both terms is confusing and unnecessary.

In addition, shortening the period a municipality is required to post notice, from one week to three days, when a pet is found but the owner is not known is of real concern. This section applies to an animal running at large that has been impounded. There are any number of reasons

why an owner may not be available to immediately respond to such short notice. *Therefore, the AKC respectfully requests the current notice period of one week not be changed.*

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. If I can be of assistance to the committee, kindly contact me. I can be reached at (919) 816-3348 or Stacey.Ober@akc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stacey A. Ober". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the first name.

Stacey Ober, JD  
Legislative Analyst and Community Outreach Coordinator, New England  
AKC Government Relations

CC: Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry  
The Honorable Tommy Walz, Bill Sponsor HB 158  
Mary McFaun, President, Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs