

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND  
Legislative Session 2026, Legislative Day No. 8

Bill No. 32-26

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Mr. Michael Ertel, Chair  
By Request of County Executive  
&  
Councilmembers Jones, Marks & Patoka

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By the County Council, April 6, 2026

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A BILL  
ENTITLED

AN ACT concerning

Animals – Owner Responsibilities – Repeal and Technical Changes

FOR the purpose of repealing sections of the Baltimore County Code that are being moved to another subtitle; renumbering certain sections; providing for a certain contingency; and generally relating to animals.

BY repealing

Sections 12-3-103, 12-3-108, and 12-3-111  
Article 12 – Animals  
Title 3 – Animal Welfare  
Subtitle 1 – Owner Responsibilities  
Baltimore County Code, 2015

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.  
[Brackets] indicate matter stricken from existing law.  
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from bill.  
Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

BY renumbering

Sections 12-3-104, 12-3-105, 12-3-106, 12-3-107, 12-3-109, and 12-3-110

To be

Sections 12-3-103, 12-3-104, 12-3-105, 12-3-106, 12-3-107, and 12-3-108, respectively

Article 12 – Animals

Title 3 – Animal Welfare

Subtitle 1 – Owner Responsibilities

Baltimore County Code, 2015

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments

Sections 12-3-101 and 12-3-102

Article 12– Animals

Title 3 – Animal Welfare

Subtitle 1 – Owner Responsibilities

Baltimore County Code, 2015

WHEREAS, the County Administration has prepared and introduced a package of bills to modernize, restructure, and update the article on animals in the Baltimore County Code; and

WHEREAS, the County Council is considering these three bills; and

WHEREAS, this bill is introduced as a companion bill to address subject matter that is to be enacted by the legislative package; and

WHEREAS, the content addressed by this bill is included for consideration alongside the three companion bills before the Council; and

WHEREAS, this bill contains a contingency clause and will have no force or effect if those two companion bills are not passed by the County Council; now therefore

1 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE

2 COUNTY, MARYLAND, that the Laws of Baltimore County read as follows

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1 ARTICLE 12 – ANIMALS

2 Title 3 – Animal Welfare

3 Subtitle 1 – Owner Responsibilities

4  
5 § 12-3-101. Food and water.

6 (a) An owner of an animal shall supply the animal with good and wholesome food and  
7 potable water.

8 (b) All food and water containers shall be clean and so placed that animals cannot readily  
9 tip them over.

10  
11 § 12-3-102. Manner of keeping animals generally.

12 (a) A person who keeps domestic animals or wild animals in a stable or outbuilding shall  
13 maintain the stable or outbuilding in a manner that will keep filth and stench from the stable or  
14 outbuilding from being offensive to a neighbor or other person.

15 (b) After notification by the Health Officer to correct the condition, a person who  
16 continues to violate subsection (a) of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor.

17  
18 [§ 12-3-103. Cruelty; prohibited acts.

19 (a) This section does not apply to customary and normal veterinary and animal  
20 husbandry practices including dehorning, castration, docking, and limited feeding for diet  
21 purposes.

22 (b) A person may not:

1 (1) Beat, cruelly treat, torment, overload, overwork, or otherwise abuse any  
2 animal; or

3 (2) Cause, instigate, or allow any dogfight, cockfight, bullfight, calf roping, or  
4 other combat between animals or between animals and humans.

5 (c) (1) This subsection does not apply to:

6 (i) A feral cat caregiver who returns a feral cat to the location where it  
7 was originally trapped; or

8 (ii) An Animal Control Officer who returns a feral cat to a location  
9 deemed suitable by the Health Officer or their designee.

10 (2) A person may not abandon an animal on public or private property.

11 (d) A person may not sell or offer for sale:

12 (1) Chickens, ducks, or other fowl, less than 3 weeks old;

13 (2) Rabbits less than 8 weeks old; or

14 (3) Except as provided by state law, puppies, or kittens less than 8 weeks old.]

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16 § [12-3-104.] 12-3-103. Owner's liability for damage.

17 If an animal damages the body, clothing, or other property of any person, the owner or  
18 keeper of the animal is liable for the damages, unless the damages to the body or clothing of the  
19 person were sustained while the person was:

20 (1) Committing a trespass or other tort; or

21 (2) Teasing, tormenting, or abusing the animal.

22

23 § [12-3-105.] 12-3-104. Certificate of health for transfer of ownership.

1 (a) The section does not apply to small rodents, including hamsters, gerbils, and guinea  
2 pigs.

3 (b) A person may not sell or give away a dog, cat, primate, including a monkey or ape,  
4 or other mammal without a health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian at the time of sale  
5 or transfer.

6 (c) The owner of the animal or the owner's representative shall provide with the required  
7 health certificate a written statement indicating:

8 (1) The date of sale or transfer;

9 (2) The name, address, and telephone number of the owner;

10 (3) The name, address, and telephone number of the purchaser or recipient;

11 (4) The breed and description of the animal; and

12 (5) Vaccinations and dates administered, showing that the animal is in a healthy  
13 condition.

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15 § [12-3-106.] 12-3-105. Animal waste.

16 The owner of an animal shall remove excreta deposited by the animal on public byways,  
17 recreational areas, or private property.

18

19 § [12-3-107.] 12-3-106. Disposal of dead animals.

20 (a) The owner or feral cat caregiver of a dead animal shall dispose of the animal at the  
21 owner's or feral cat caregiver's expense.

22 (b) A person may not:

1 (1) Place, leave, or cause another person to place or leave the carcass of a dead  
2 animal in a street, alley, or on public property; or

3 (2) Allow the carcass of a dead animal to remain on the person's property.  
4

5 [§ 12-3-108. Menacing animals.

6 (a) As an alternative to declaring an animal a dangerous animal, the Health Officer may  
7 declare an animal a menacing animal if the animal:

8 (1) Attacks or injures a domestic animal; or

9 (2) Exhibits aggressive or dangerous behavior and is not adequately confined or  
10 restrained.

11 (b) The declaration shall be based on:

12 (1) Personal observation;

13 (2) Observations of animal control officers;

14 (3) Citizen affidavits concerning the citizen's personal experience with the  
15 animal;

16 (4) Animal control records; or

17 (5) Other documented information.

18 (c) (1) If an animal is declared a menacing animal, the Health Officer shall issue a  
19 civil citation to the owner declaring the animal a menacing animal.

20 (2) The civil citation shall impose a civil monetary penalty of up to \$500.

21 (d) In accordance with the provisions of § 12-1-110 of this article, the owner of the  
22 menacing animal shall pay the civil monetary penalty or request a hearing before the Animal  
23 Hearing Board.]

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§ [12-3-109.] 12-3-107. Public nuisance animals.

(a) In this section, “public nuisance animal” means an animal that:

- (1) Damages the property of a person other than its owner;
- (2) Causes unsanitary conditions in or on public property;
- (3) Excessively makes disturbing noises;
- (4) Chases passing vehicles; or
- (5) Is an animal at large that is female dog or cat in heat.

(b) An owner of an animal may not allow it to be a public nuisance animal.

§ [12-3-110.] 12-3-108. Animal at large prohibited.

An owner of an animal may not allow the animal to be an animal at large.

[§ 12-3-111. Collars and shelters.

(a) The owner of an animal that is attached to a chain, rope, or leash shall provide a swivel device at each end of the chain, rope, or leash to prevent choking.

(b) Except when the animal is wearing a training collar during obedience training, a collar worn by an animal shall be leather, nylon, or plastic.

(c) (1) An owned animal shall be brought inside a home or building within 30 minutes of the onset of and during adverse environmental conditions, unless the animal has continuous access to suitable shelter.

1                   (2) The owner of an animal that is not kept within a home or building shall  
2 provide the animal with a suitable shelter to protect it from wind, snow, rain, cold, sunlight, and  
3 adverse environmental conditions.

4                   (3) The shelter shall have a floor, a roof, and four walls, one of which shall  
5 contain a doorway.

6                   (4) The space available to the animal in the shelter shall be maintained in a safe  
7 and healthful manner, free of standing water, accumulated waste and debris, protected from  
8 flooding, and provided with adequate ventilation to allow the animal to remain dry and maintain  
9 a normal body temperature and exposure to natural or artificial light.

10                  (5) The shelter provided to an animal may not include a crawl space under or  
11 inside of a building or part of a building, the space under or inside of a vehicle, any structure  
12 made from pressure-treated wood which contains the chemicals arsenic or chromium, or a floor  
13 consisting of wire or chain-link, or any structure made from cardboard or other materials that are  
14 easily degraded by the elements.

15                  (d) An animal control officer may direct an owner or feral cat caregiver to provide:

16                   (1) Veterinary examination and treatment; and

17                   (2) Remedies to abate shelter conditions that adversely affect the health and well-  
18 being of an animal including:

19                           (i) Protection from the elements;

20                           (ii) Hazardous conditions;

21                           (iii) Methods of restraint or confinement;

22                           (iv) Wholesome food and potable water; and

23                           (v) Sanitary conditions.]

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SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act, having been passed by the affirmative vote of five members of the County Council, shall take effect 14 days after its enactment, contingent on the taking effect of County Council Bills \_-26 (Animal Protection and Humane Care) and \_-26 (Public Safety – Designations); and if County Council Bills \_-26 and \_-26 do not become effective, this Act shall be null and void without the necessity of further action by the County Council.