

## West Virginia Considers Stray Cat Legislation

**Bill would enable counties to pass ordinances to corral loose felines.**

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A bill has been proposed in the West Virginia House of Delegates that could enable county commissions throughout the state to enact ordinances to limit the number of stray cats in their areas.

The bill, HB 2096, was introduced by Delegate Richard Browning, D-Wyoming on Jan. 12. It would permit commissioners to “enact ordinances prohibiting cats from running at large.”

Currently, there’s no statewide law allowing animal control authorities to round up stray and feral cats, but if HB 2096 is approved and enacted by county commissioners, animal control officers would be able to pick up cats as they now pick up stray dogs.

The bill would authorize county dog wardens or others to seize and impound cats and require notice to owners of impounded cats and make owners of cats causing damage while running loose liable for the damage.

If the bill becomes law, it could mean financial and other challenges for animal control officials in some counties, which would be responsible for not only collecting, but housing the animals.

It’s possible that in some counties, more animal control officers would have to be hired, and extra facilities would need to be built to contain the animals. Also, the felines might have to be contained in a separate area from dogs in cat-specific kennels.

The full bill can be read at the West Virginia state legislature website.