

Pets of Abused People May Receive Protection

A bill would include protection for pets in Illinois.

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A proposed bill in Illinois would include protection for pets in domestic violence cases, if passed. (Stock photo) The Illinois state Senate is considering a bill that would help people seeking court protection from abusive spouses or others get the same protection for their pets.

Currently, orders of protection are used to bar potentially violent people from having contact only with people they have threatened. The proposed new law, HB-9, would include protection for pets that can become targets in family disputes.

Aggravated animal cruelty and animal torture are already felonies in Illinois, and protection for pets can be included in court orders by listing them as property. The inclusion of protection for pets in court orders could deter retaliatory abusive behavior from occurring, officials hope.

The bill would grant people who file restraining orders "the exclusive care, custody, or control of any animal owned, possessed, leased, kept or held" by the petitioner or a designee. It would also forbid the subject of the restraining order "from taking, transferring, encumbering, concealing, harming or otherwise disposing of the animal."

Maine, New York and Vermont passed comparable laws in 2006, and Connecticut, New Jersey and Rhode Island are also currently considering legislation.

One of the impetuses for the proposed Illinois law was the case of a man who last July mutilated his girlfriend's kitten and left it in her yard after an argument. The man, Jacob Thornton, eventually was convicted of felony animal cruelty and is currently serving a two-year prison sentence.