

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
Governor

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



**SHARON HURD**  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

**DEXTER KISHIDA**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI  
1428 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512  
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON  
COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION  
AND  
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**MARCH 19, 2024  
9:30 AM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 229**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1527, HD1  
RELATING TO VETERINARY MEDICINE**

Chairs Keohokalole and Gabbard, Vice Chairs Fukunaga and Richards, and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1527, HD1. HB1527, HD1 amends HRS sections 471-2, 471-15, and 711-1008.5. Section 471-2 adds language provided that a person who is not licensed under this chapter shall not perform any surgical procedure on a pet animal, including but not limited to: cesarean section; ear cropping; tail docking; ventriculocordectomy also known as devocalization or debarking; onychectomy also known as declawing, or dewclaw removal; or elastration or castration via banding. Pet animal is defined as having the same meaning as defined in section 711-1100, HRS.

Language is added to section 471-15 where conviction of subsection 471-2(2) violation is subject to a fine not to exceed \$1,000 or imprisoned more than one year, or both. Section 711-1108.5, HRS is amended by adding language "when the practices are performed by a veterinarian licensed under chapter 471" after accepted veterinary practices.



The Department provides comments. The amendments of criminal penalties in HB1527 HD1 line 11, page 4 , section 471-15 “imprisoned more than one year, or both” appears greater than a misdemeanor, which is the violation established by this measure. In addition, proposed amendment to section 711-1008.5 (2) (a) adding “when the practices are performed by a veterinarian licensed under chapter 471” in reference to accepted veterinary practices could be too restrictive because veterinary technicians, veterinary assistants, animal health technicians and inspectors perform accepted veterinary practices that do not require a licensed veterinarian.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



March 19, 2024 930am

AEN-CPN Committees

**RE: HB1527; Relating to Veterinary Medicine, SUPPORT with one amendment**

Dear Chairs Gabbard and Keohokalole and Senate Committee Members,

The Animal Welfare Institute **strongly supports HB1527 HD1 with one important amendment**, noted below that was inadvertently missed in the prior Judiciary Committee but is present in the Senate bill (SB2562).

This bill has long been needed to close a loophole in our first degree animal cruelty law that has shockingly exempted non-veterinarians from performing painful surgical procedures on animals, without access to pain medication, antibiotics to prevent infection and other critical pre and post-operative care that can only be provided under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian. While numerous countries and municipalities across the US completely prohibit ear cropping, tail docking, de-clawing and other procedures, this bill would still allow for such procedures if performed by a licensed veterinarian. Further, the American Veterinary Medical Association opposes ear cropping and tail docking of dogs when done solely for cosmetic purposes, as that remains the primary justification for such unnecessary procedures and thus, the AVMA also encourages the elimination of ear cropping and tail docking from breed standards.

Locally, there have been countless cases of painful “home/backyard” ear cropping and tail cutting incidents done with scissors or garden shears and male dog “castration” being performed using rubber bands, which painfully restricts blood flow to the animals testicles and can result in death. Further, cases demonstrate that these incidents aren’t limited to a person doing this to their own animal, but performing these cruel and painful acts on animals belonging to others, falsely presenting themselves as veterinary medical experts and charging fees for these procedures.

Under existing law, if a person were to cut off or attempt to cut off any other part of an animal they would be rightfully charged with animal cruelty—whereas under current law there is no penalty for “customary” practices such as cropping or docking performed by any person. We ask the Committees to please amend the bill to ensure this gaping loophole is closed once and for all, that it is enforceable and holds those who victimize animals and their owners accountable.

Amendment: On page 5, line 6 strike and, (c) cropping or docking as customarily practiced:

(b) Activities carried on for scientific research  
governed by standards of accepted educational or  
medicinal practices; [~~or~~] and

~~(c) Cropping or docking as customarily practiced.~~

Thank you for your consideration and we urge your strong support.

Inga Gibson

On behalf of the Animal Welfare Institute



**Hawaiian Humane Society**  
People for animals. Animals for people.

2700 Waiālae Avenue Honolulu, Hawaii 96826  
808.356.2200 • HawaiianHumane.org

Date: March 15, 2024

To: Chairs Sens. Jarrett Keohokalole and Mike Gabbard  
Vice Chairs Sens. Carol Fukunaga and Tim Richards  
and Members of the Committees on Commerce and Consumer  
Protection, and Agriculture and Environment

Submitted By: Stephanie Kendrick, Director of Community Engagement  
Hawaiian Humane Society, 808-356-2217

RE: Testimony in support of HB 1527, HD1:  
Relating to Veterinary Medicine  
Tuesday, March 19, 2024, 9:30 a.m., Room 229

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On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our support for House Bill 1527, HD1, which prohibits animal owners and their employees from performing any surgical procedures on the owner's pet animal or animals; provides that a violation of the prohibition is a class C felony; clarifies that the offense of cruelty to animals in the first degree does not apply to accepted veterinary practices when the practices are performed by a licensed veterinarian; and takes effect 7/1/3000.

This measure closes loopholes in the veterinary licensing and animal cruelty statutes that owners have used to operate on their own pet animals, or hire unqualified people to do so, resulting in pets being harmed by backyard surgeries ranging from ear-flap removal to cesarean sections.

We request the following amendment to further clarify the intent of the bill:

*Page 5, Line 4-7, strike the exemption for cropping or docking as veterinary practices are already exempt and amend to read "Activities carried on for scientific research governed by standards of accepted educational or medicinal practices; ~~for} and~~*

*~~—(c) Cropping or docking as customarily practiced."~~*

We also request that the bill be amended to take effect upon approval.

The Hawaiian Humane Society opposes cosmetic surgery on animals, but we are pleased that this measure would at least require that such procedures must be performed by a licensed veterinarian. It is a good step.

Surgical birth certainly should never be performed by anyone but a licensed veterinarian.

Exxy, an approximately 3-year-old bulldog mix, was brought into our care with a large ventral abdominal hernia and sent out for specialized surgery. The

Hawaiian Humane Society veterinarian who examined her and the veterinary surgeon who operated on her concurred that the injury was the result of a backyard cesarean section.

Exxy was lucky enough to survive the mutilation and get the care she needed, but it is safe to expect that many animals in similar situations die without ever making into the care of a shelter or veterinary clinic.

Many of these backyard surgeries are performed for profit-driven breeders who would rather make more money on the animals they sell than go to a licensed veterinarian for either necessary or cosmetic care. Allowing animals to be bred and sold for profit without regard for their welfare is sadly the norm in our state, but this is one harm we can prevent.

We urge the committee to pass HB 1527, HD1, with the suggested amendments and stop this form of animal cruelty. Mahalo for your consideration.



Exxy before and after surgery for an abdominal hernia, suspected to be secondary to a backyard C-section. She also has very short, cropped ears, which are prone to infection and usually an indication of amateur surgery.

**Testimony of the Hawaii Board of Veterinary Medicine**

**Before the  
Senate Committee on Agriculture and the Environment  
and  
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection  
Tuesday, March 19, 2024  
9:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 229 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:  
H.B. 1527, H.D. 1, RELATING TO VETERINARY MEDICINE**

Chair Gabbard, Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Marcella Chock, and I am the Chairperson of the Hawaii Board of Veterinary Medicine (Board). The Board appreciates the intent of and offers comments on this bill.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) prohibit animal owners and their employees from performing any surgical procedures on the owner's animal or animals; (2) provide that a violation of the prohibitions is a class C felony; and (3) clarify that the offense of cruelty to animals in the first degree does not apply to accepted veterinary practices and cropping or docking as customarily practiced when the procedures are performed by a licensed veterinarian.

The Board recognizes that surgical procedures require proper training, knowledge of anatomy, and the ability to prescribe proper pain management therapeutics, which the typical pet owner or their employees would not have received or be able to access.

The Board requests that subsection (2)(C) "Tail docking" on page 2, line 6, either be removed in its entirety or amended to read: Tail docking or amputation of adult dogs. The Board makes this recommendation as it does not appear that complications appear in the tail docking of neo-natal puppies by owners. If subsection (2)(C) "Tail docking" is not removed from the list of on page 2, line 6, the Board recommends that line page 5, line 7, be changed to read: "(c) Cropping or docking as customarily practiced in livestock management."

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



**HAWAII VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**  
**P.O. Box 61309, Honolulu, Hawaii 96839-1309**

March 18, 2024

Committee on Agriculture and Environment  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
Senator Herbert Richards III, Vice Chair

Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

RE: HB1527, HD1, Relating to Veterinary Medicine

Dear Committees on Agriculture and Environment and Commerce and Consumer Protection,

Please note this letter represents the revised testimony from the Hawaii Veterinary Medical Association (HVMA).

The HVMA and local veterinary community are in favor of the intent of this bill, which closes the loophole currently allowing non-veterinarian owners from performing surgical procedures on their own pets. Veterinarians have extensive training in surgery, anesthesia, anesthetic monitoring, asepsis, and pain management; their expertise allows them to perform surgical procedures humanely and safely. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for local veterinarians to be asked to treat pets suffering from botched surgeries performed by non-veterinarians. We support ending the current legal practice of allowing pet owners and their employees from performing surgical procedures on their own pets.

We support HB1527, HD1's placement of the surgery restriction in Section 1(a)(2) as this specifically closes the loophole in question. This is more effective than the language in SB2562, SD3 which creates Section 1(b) for the surgery restriction without addressing the pet owner exemption language in 1(a) and perpetuates this loophole. Please retain the surgery restriction placement in Section 1(a)(2) which reads:

“(2) The owner of any animal or animals and the owner's full-time, regular employees from caring for and treating any animals belonging to the owner; provided that a person who is not licensed under this chapter shall not perform any surgical procedure on a pet animal, including but not limited to:

(A) Cesarean section;

(B) Ear cropping;

- (C) Tail docking;
- (D) Ventriculordecotomy, also known as devocalization or debarking;
- (E) Onychectomy, also known as declawing or dewclaw removal; or
- (F) Elastration, or castration via banding;”

We also request the following changes to Section 3(2) to protect the legality of currently acceptable livestock animal husbandry practices performed by non-veterinarians in the state:

Add to Section 3(2):

"(2) Subsection (1)(a) shall not apply to:

(a) Accepted veterinary practices;

(b) Activities carried on for scientific research governed by standards of accepted educational or medicinal practices;

(c) ~~Cropping or docking as customarily practiced.~~ Tail docking or dewclaw removal within 3 days of age; or

(d) Accepted livestock practices.”

Thank you for considering our testimony and recommendations for HB1527, HD1. With the above changes, the HVMA is in favor of passing this bill. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

On behalf of the Hawaii Veterinary Medical Association,



Jill Yoshicedo, DVM  
Executive Vice-President  
Hawaii Veterinary Medical Association  
contact@hawaiiivetmed.org



**HAWAII VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**  
**P.O. Box 61309, Honolulu, Hawaii 96839-1309**

March 16, 2024

Committee on Agriculture and Environment  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
Senator Herbert Richards III, Vice Chair

Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

RE: HB1527, HD1, Relating to Veterinary Medicine

Dear Committees on Agriculture and Environment and Commerce and Consumer Protection,

The Hawaii Veterinary Medical Association and local veterinary community are in favor of the intent of this bill, which closes the loophole currently allowing non-veterinarian owners from performing surgical procedures on their own pets. Veterinarians have extensive training in surgery, anesthesia, anesthetic monitoring, asepsis, and pain management; their expertise allows them to perform surgical procedures humanely and safely. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for local veterinarians to be asked to treat pets suffering from botched surgeries performed by non-veterinarians. We support ending the current legal practice of allowing pet owners and their employees from performing surgical procedures on their own pets.

We strongly prefer HB1527, HD1's placement of the surgery restriction in Section 1(a)(2) as this specifically closes the loophole in question. This is more effective than the language in SB2562, SD3 that creates Section 1(b) for the surgery restriction without addressing the pet owner exemption language in 1(a).

We request the following necessary changes to the bill to protect the legality of currently acceptable livestock animal husbandry practices performed by non-veterinarians in the state:

1. Add to Section 3(2):

"(2) Subsection (1)(a) shall not apply to:

(a) Accepted veterinary practices; or

(b) Activities carried on for scientific research governed by standards of accepted educational or medicinal practices; or

(c) Accepted livestock practices."

2. Correct definition of “pet animal” in Section 1(b) or section 711-1100 to align with that of the USDA Animal Welfare Act:

“For the purposes of this section, “pet animal” means any animal that has commonly been kept as a pet in family households in the United States, such as dogs, cats, guinea pigs, rabbits, hamsters, and birds.”

Finally, we request that the exemption for cropping and docking be removed from Section 3(2):

“(2) Subsection (1) (a) shall not apply to:

~~(c) Cropping or docking as customarily practiced.”~~

Thank you for considering our testimony and recommendations for HB1527, HD1. With the above changes, the HVMA is in favor of passing this bill. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

On behalf of the Hawaii Veterinary Medical Association,



Jill Yoshicedo, DVM  
Executive Vice-President  
Hawaii Veterinary Medical Association  
contact@hawaiiivetmed.org



**Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.**

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Senator Mike Gabbard, Chair  
Senator Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, Vice Chair

**HB1527 HD1**

VETERINARY MEDICINE

Tuesday, March 19, 2024, 9:30 AM  
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Chairs Keohokalole & Gabbard, Vice Chairs Fukunaga & Richards, and Members of the Committees,

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council **offers comments on HB1527 HD1** which prohibits animal owners and their employees from performing any surgical procedures on the owner's animal or animals, and prohibits the elastration, or castration via banding, of a pet animal.

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council was not supportive of the earlier language in this Bill, which prohibited certain practices on all animals including livestock. Surgical castration, castration by elastrator, and tail docking are normal and necessary practices carried out by livestock producers. Hawaii's ranchers and other livestock producers routinely perform and are very capable of safely performing these procedures on their livestock and must be able to continue these normal husbandry practices. They follow universally acceptable husbandry practices, and the health and well-being of their livestock are of utmost importance. Taking away this ability and deeming it a Class C felony would put an undue burden on farmers and ranchers who are able to competently perform these procedures.

This bill is acceptable in this version's language since it states that it refers to "pet animal" so that the restrictions do not apply to livestock. Please ensure that the law remains clear that it is referring to pet animals only.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the four county-level Cattlemen's Associations. Our member ranchers represent over 60,000 head of beef cows; more than 75% of all the beef cows in the State. Ranchers are the stewards of over 750 thousand acres of land in Hawaii, or 20% of the State's total land mass. We represent the interests of Hawaii's cattle producers.

Nicole Galase  
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council



**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2024 3:02:28 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Cathy Goeggel	Testifying for Animal Rights Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Animal Rights Hawai'i is in strong support of HB1527.

Mahalo!

**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 11:52:08 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susan Collins	Testifying for Bird and Bee Animal Sanctuary, Honokaa, Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is cruel and in humane for non veterinary individuals to perform surgery on animals without proper medical training.

**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2024 9:51:12 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marian Hussenbux	Testifying for Animal Interfaith Alliance in Britain	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We refer to this joint hearing of the Senate committees on Commerce and Consumer Protection, and Agriculture and Environment which will consider HB1527 HD1 Relating to Veterinary Medicine on Tuesday, March 19.

We understand that this measure closes loopholes in your veterinary medicine and animal cruelty statutes which allow non-veterinarians to perform certain painful surgical procedures on companion animals, and raises penalties.

We very much support the removal of a provision that exempts cropping and docking from the animal cruelty statute, as other language in the bill would permit those procedures as long as they are performed by a licensed veterinarian.

We join with the Hawaiian Humane Society in strongly opposing any surgery done on an animal for purely 'cosmetic' purposes; they would of course be safer if done by a licensed professional, but we consider them to be futile and indeed cruel. They are in fact mutilation.

With the removal of that provision, we beg to support the bill.

**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 10:18:46 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Sandie Wong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of HB1527, HD1. Thank you.

**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2024 6:06:12 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
joanna p milo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

in stand for the all animals..people should be punished

**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 11:53:13 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jane E Arnold	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB1527. Thank you.

Jane E Arnold

1763 Iwi Way, Apt D

Honolulu HI 96816

**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 3:31:02 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Eva Majerova	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the bill

**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 10:00:29 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Stephanie McLaughlin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important bill that will help animals in Hawaii who are suffering.

**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 2:53:49 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
lynne matusow	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This measure closes a loophole in the veterinary licensing statute that owners have used to operate on their own animals, or hire unqualified people to do so, resulting animals being harmed by backyard surgeries ranging from ear-flap removal to cesarean sections.  
Please move this bill forward.

**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 2:40:31 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carole R. Richelieu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Relating to Veterinary Medicine closes loopholes in our current veterinary licensing and animal cruelty statutes that allow non-veterinarians to perform certain painful surgical procedures on pet animals and raises penalties. This measure will protect pets from having to endure backyard surgeries that are performed in unsanitary conditions without anesthetic. Support HHS amendments.

Hawaii Kai

**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2024 10:30:22 AM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Renee Rabb	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for allowing me to express my support for HB1527 by Rep. Nishimoto which prohibits backyard surgery on animals. Surgical procedures should be performed by veterinarians for the safety of the pet animals.

Mahalo,

Renee Rabb

Hawaiian Paradise Park

Keaau, HI 96749

**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 9:01:45 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jennifer Chiwa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Keohokalole, Vice Chair Senator Fukunaga and Members of the Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection, and Chair Senator Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards III and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Environment.

Please support HB 1527 HD 1 that, to my understanding, would prohibit unqualified people from performing painful surgical procedures on animals.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

Makiki

**HB-1527-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/18/2024 12:56:06 PM

Testimony for AEN on 3/19/2024 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Natalie Graham-Wood	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1527 HD1. I live in Sunset Beach, Oahu.