

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HB 221

Virginia House Bill 221 is the product of a multi-year, multi-stakeholder workgroup created by a Chairman's Letter issued in 2021 by Delegate Kenneth Plum, then chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake, and Natural Resources. That letter directed state agencies to "convene a workgroup to develop legislation to reduce and control the population of free-roaming cats and mitigate the impact of free-roaming cats on the Commonwealth's native wildlife, natural resources, and public health."



HB 221 creates an impartial and transparent process for empowering localities and is the Commonwealth's best hope of addressing the chronic free-roaming cat population crisis.

Members of the workgroup, including animal care and control, public health, veterinary, and wildlife conservation stakeholders, "agreed unanimously that they all cared about the welfare of free-roaming cats and that **the reduction of free-roaming cats is necessary.**"

In January 2023, following years of open discussion, a majority of the workgroup presented a report to and notified legislators that they intended to offer legislation in the 2024 session, consistent with Chairman Plum's initial directive. HB 221 is that legislation.

WHAT DOES HB 221 DO?

- **Authorizes** localities, if they so choose, to adopt free-roaming cat management plans by ordinance
- **Directs** the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to create a model Free-Roaming Cat Management Plan to reduce and control the population of free-roaming cats and the abandonment of cats for the purpose of reducing negative impacts on public health, wildlife, and the welfare of the cats
- **Directs** VDACS to establish minimum standards for a Free-roaming Cat Management Plan
- **Requires** VDACS to consult with relevant stakeholders in fulfilling these duties

AT A GLANCE

VA HOUSE BILL 221

HB 221 is an impartial and process-driven **solution** to the Commonwealth's chronic **free-roaming cat population crisis.**

This bill neither prescribes nor prohibits any specific cat management strategy and ensures a transparent process enabling stakeholder oversight and input at all levels.

SUPPORTERS

Please join the following organizations and their hundreds of thousands of members in **SUPPORTING** HB 221:

American Bird Conservancy

Association of Avian Veterinarians

Audubon Society of Northern Virginia

Bat Conservation & Rescue of VA

Blue Ridge Wildlife Center

Bristol Humane Society

Cape Henry Audubon Society

Capital Naturalist, Alonso Abugattas

Center for Conservation Biology

Danville Area Humane Society

Ernesto Dominguez, DVM,

DACVPM, CWR

Margaret B. Mitchell Spay Neuter Clinic

Nature Forward

Northern Virginia Bird Club

People for the Ethical Treatment of

Animals (PETA)

Piedmont Virginia Bird Club

Southwest Virginia Wildlife Center

The Wildlife Center of Virginia

Virginia Alliance for Animal Shelters
(VAAS)

VA Chapter of The Wildlife Society
Virginia Animal Control Association
(VACA)

Virginia Conservation Network
Virginia Ornithological Society
Virginia Veterinary Medical Association
(VVMA)

Virginia Zoo