

As Introduced

136th General Assembly

Regular Session

2025-2026

H. B. No. 992

Representative Robb Blasdel

To amend sections 959.132 and 959.99 and to enact
section 959.135 of the Revised Code to prohibit
a person from committing acts of cruelty against
certain horses that interact with humans.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:

Section 1. That sections 959.132 and 959.99 be amended and
section 959.135 of the Revised Code be enacted to read as
follows:

Sec. 959.132. (A) As used in this section:

"Companion animal" has the same meaning as in section
959.131 of the Revised Code.

"Equine" has the same meaning as in section 959.135 of the
Revised Code.

"Impounding agency" means a county humane society
organized under section 1717.05 of the Revised Code, an animal
shelter, or a law enforcement agency that has impounded a
companion animal in accordance with this section.

"Offense" means a violation of Chapter 959. of the Revised
Code or an attempt, in violation of section 2923.02 of the
Revised Code, to violate Chapter 959. of the Revised Code.

"Officer" means any law enforcement officer, humane society agent, or other person appointed to act as an animal control officer for a municipal corporation or township in accordance with state law, an ordinance, or a resolution.

(B) An officer may seize and cause to be impounded at an impounding agency an animal that the officer has probable cause to believe is the subject of an offense. No officer or impounding agency shall impound an animal that is the subject of an offense in a shelter owned, operated, or controlled by a board of county commissioners pursuant to Chapter 955. of the Revised Code unless the board, by resolution, authorizes the impoundment of such an animal in a shelter owned, operated, or controlled by that board and has executed, in the case when the officer is other than a dog warden or assistant dog warden, a contract specifying the terms and conditions of the impoundment.

(C) The officer shall give written notice of the seizure and impoundment to the owner, keeper, or harborer of the animal not later than twenty-four hours after the animal was seized and impounded. If the officer is unable to give the notice to the owner, keeper, or harborer of the animal, the officer shall post the notice on the door of the residence or in another conspicuous place on the premises at which the animal was seized. The notice shall include a statement that a hearing will be held not later than ten days after the notice is provided or at the next available court date to determine whether the officer had probable cause to seize the animal and, if applicable, to determine the amount of a bond or cash deposit that is needed to provide for the animal's care and keeping for not less than thirty days beginning on the date on which the animal was impounded.

(D) An animal that is seized under this section may be 50
humanely destroyed immediately or at any time during impoundment 51
if a licensed veterinarian determines it to be necessary because 52
the animal is suffering. 53

(E) (1) Not later than ten days after notice is provided or 54
at the next available court date, the court shall hold a hearing 55
to determine whether the officer impounding an animal had 56
probable cause to seize the animal. If the court determines that 57
probable cause exists, the court shall determine the amount of a 58
bond or cash deposit that is necessary and reasonable to provide 59
for the animal's care and keeping for not less than thirty days 60
beginning on the date on which the animal was impounded. 61

(2) If the court determines that probable cause does not 62
exist, the court immediately shall order the impounding agency 63
to return the animal to its owner if possible. If the animal 64
cannot be returned because it has died as a result of neglect or 65
other misconduct by the impounding agency or if the animal is 66
injured as a result of neglect or other misconduct by the 67
impounding agency, the court shall order the impounding agency 68
to pay the owner an amount determined by the court to be equal 69
to the reasonable market value of the animal at the time that it 70
was impounded plus statutory interest as defined in section 71
1343.03 of the Revised Code from the date of the impoundment or 72
an amount determined by the court to be equal to the reasonable 73
cost of treatment of the injury to the animal, as applicable. 74
The requirement established in division (E) (2) of this section 75
regarding the payment of the reasonable market value of the 76
animal shall not apply in the case of a dog that, in violation 77
of section 955.01 of the Revised Code, was not registered at the 78
time it was seized and impounded. 79

(3) If the court determines that probable cause exists and
determines the amount of a bond or cash deposit, the case shall
continue and the owner shall post a bond or cash deposit to
provide for the animal's care and keeping for not less than
thirty days beginning on the date on which the animal was
impounded. The owner may renew a bond or cash deposit by
posting, not later than ten days following the expiration of the
period for which a previous bond or cash deposit was posted, a
new bond or cash deposit in an amount that the court, in
consultation with the impounding agency, determines is necessary
and reasonable to provide for the animal's care and keeping for
not less than thirty days beginning on the date on which the
previous period expired. If no bond or cash deposit is posted or
if a bond or cash deposit expires and is not renewed, the
impounding agency may determine the disposition of the animal
unless the court issues an order that specifies otherwise.

(F) If a person is convicted of committing an offense, the
court may impose the following additional penalties against the
person:

(1) A requirement that the person pay for the costs
incurred by the impounding agency in caring for an animal
involved in the applicable offense, provided that the costs were
incurred during the animal's impoundment. A bond or cash deposit
posted under this section may be applied to the costs.

(2) An order permanently terminating the person's right to
possession, title, custody, or care of the animal that was
involved in the offense. If the court issues such an order, the
court shall order the disposition of the animal.

(G) If a person is found not guilty of committing an
offense, the court immediately shall order the impounding agency

to return the animal to its owner if possible and to return the
entire amount of any bond or cash deposit posted under division
(E) of this section. If the animal cannot be returned because it
has died as a result of neglect or other misconduct by the
impounding agency or if the animal is injured as a result of
neglect or other misconduct by the impounding agency, the court
shall order the impounding agency to pay the owner an amount
determined by the court to be equal to the reasonable market
value of the animal at the time that it was impounded plus
statutory interest as defined in section 1343.03 of the Revised
Code from the date of the impoundment or an amount determined by
the court to be equal to the reasonable cost of treatment of the
injury to the animal, as applicable. The requirements
established in this division regarding the return of a bond or
cash deposit and the payment of the reasonable market value of
the animal shall not apply in the case of a dog that, in
violation of section 955.01 of the Revised Code, was not
registered at the time it was seized and impounded.

~~(H)~~ (H) (1) If charges are filed under section 959.131 of
the Revised Code against the custodian or caretaker of a
companion animal, but the companion animal that is the subject
of the charges is not impounded, the court in which the charges
are pending may order the owner or person having custody of the
companion animal to provide to the companion animal the
necessities described in division (D) (2), (D) (3), ~~(E) (2), (E) (3)~~
(E), (F) (2), or (F) (3), ~~(F) (3)~~, (G) (2), or (G) (3) of section 959.131 of
the Revised Code until the final disposition of the charges. If
the court issues an order of that nature, the court also may
authorize an officer or another person to visit the place where
the companion animal is being kept, at the times and under the
conditions that the court may set, to determine whether the

companion animal is receiving those necessities and to remove 141
and impound the companion animal if the companion animal is not 142
receiving those necessities. 143

(2) (a) If charges are filed under section 959.135 of the 144
Revised Code against the custodian or caretaker of an equine, 145
but the equine that is the subject of the charges is not 146
impounded, the court in which the charges are pending may order 147
the owner or person having custody of the equine to provide to 148
the equine the necessities described in division (D) (2), (D) (3), 149
or (D) (4) of section 959.135 of the Revised Code until the final 150
disposition of the charges. If the court issues an order of that 151
nature, the court also may authorize an officer or another 152
person to visit the place where the equine is being kept, at the 153
times and under the conditions that the court may set, to 154
determine whether the equine is receiving those necessities and 155
to remove and impound the equine if the equine is not receiving 156
those necessities. 157

(b) If an equine is impounded in accordance with this 158
section, the impounding agency may obtain emergency veterinary 159
care for the equine when, in good faith, the impounding agency 160
determines such care is necessary to prevent suffering. The 161
impounding agency and its agents are immune from civil liability 162
for reasonable, good faith actions taken to secure such care. 163

Sec. 959.135. (A) As used in this section: 164

(1) "Equine" means any equine used or intended for use in 165
human-equine interaction, regardless of the existence of formal 166
documentation of such interaction. 167

(2) "Human-equine interaction" means interaction between 168
an equine and one or more humans, including for sport, 169

recreation, lessons, therapy, instruction, or racing. 170

(3) "Custodian," "caretaker," "confine," cruelty," 171
"torment," "torture," and "practice of veterinary medicine" have 172
the same meanings as in section 959.131 of the Revised Code. 173

(4) "Serious physical harm" means physical harm that 174
carries a substantial risk of death, causes permanent 175
incapacity, or results in prolonged or intractable pain. 176

(B) No person shall knowingly torture, torment, needlessly 177
mutilate or maim, cruelly beat, poison, needlessly kill, or 178
commit an act of cruelty against an equine. 179

(C) No person shall knowingly cause serious physical harm 180
to an equine. 181

(D) No person who confines or is the custodian or 182
caretaker of an equine shall negligently do any of the 183
following: 184

(1) Torture, torment, or commit an act of cruelty against 185
the equine; 186

(2) Deprive the equine of necessary sustenance; 187

(3) Impound or confine the equine without affording it 188
access to shelter appropriate for the species, size, and health 189
of the equine, including protection from heat, cold, wind, rain, 190
snow, or excessive direct sunlight, and including access to dry 191
resting areas and safe footing, or otherwise expose it to 192
adverse environmental conditions likely to cause sickness or 193
suffering; 194

(4) Fail to provide necessary and timely veterinary care 195
when the person knew or reasonably should have known the equine 196
was ill, injured, or in pain; 197

(5) Transport the equine in a manner likely to cause 198
injury or suffering, including confinement in extreme 199
temperatures, the deprivation of water, overcrowding, or unsafe 200
handling conditions. 201

(E) Divisions (B), (C), and (D) of this section do not 202
apply to any of the following: 203

(1) An equine used in scientific research conducted by an 204
institution in accordance with federal law; 205

(2) The lawful practice of veterinary medicine by a person 206
who has been issued a license, temporary permit, or registration 207
certificate to do so under Chapter 4741. of the Revised Code; 208

(3) Equines being used exclusively in bona fide 209
agricultural production or farm work; 210

(4) The administering of medicine to an equine that was 211
properly prescribed by a person who has been issued a license, 212
temporary permit, or registration certificate under Chapter 213
4741. of the Revised Code. 214

(F) The director of agriculture, in consultation with the 215
Ohio livestock care standards board and recognized equine 216
organizations identified by the director, shall adopt rules 217
under Chapter 119. of the Revised Code that are necessary to 218
implement and enforce this section. The rules shall include 219
species-appropriate shelter standards, minimum care 220
requirements, veterinary care guidelines, transportation 221
standards, seizure procedures, and recordkeeping requirements. 222

Sec. 959.99. (A) Whoever violates section 959.18 or 959.19 223
of the Revised Code is guilty of a minor misdemeanor. 224

(B) Except as otherwise provided in this division, whoever 225

violates section 959.02 of the Revised Code is guilty of a 226
misdemeanor of the second degree. If the value of the animal 227
killed or the injury done amounts to three hundred dollars or 228
more, whoever violates section 959.02 of the Revised Code is 229
guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree. 230

(C) Whoever violates section 959.03, 959.06, division (C) 231
of section 959.09, 959.12, or 959.17 or division (A) of section 232
959.15 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the 233
fourth degree. 234

(D) Whoever violates division (A) of section 959.13 or 235
section 959.21 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of 236
the second degree. In addition, the court may order the offender 237
to forfeit the animal or livestock and may provide for its 238
disposition, including, but not limited to, the sale of the 239
animal or livestock. If an animal or livestock is forfeited and 240
sold pursuant to this division, the proceeds from the sale first 241
shall be applied to pay the expenses incurred with regard to the 242
care of the animal from the time it was taken from the custody 243
of the former owner. The balance of the proceeds from the sale, 244
if any, shall be paid to the former owner of the animal. 245

(E) (1) Whoever violates division (B) or (E) of section 246
959.131 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the 247
first degree on a first offense and a felony of the fifth degree 248
on each subsequent offense. 249

(2) Whoever violates division (C) of section 959.131 of 250
the Revised Code is guilty of a felony of the fifth degree. 251

(3) Whoever violates section 959.01 of the Revised Code or 252
division (D) of section 959.131 of the Revised Code is guilty of 253
a misdemeanor of the second degree on a first offense and a 254

misdemeanor of the first degree on each subsequent offense. 255

(4) Whoever violates division (F) of section 959.131 of 256
the Revised Code is guilty of a felony of the fifth degree. 257

(5) Whoever violates division (G) of section 959.131 of 258
the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree. 259

(6) (a) A court may order a person who is convicted of or 260
pleads guilty to a violation of section 959.131 of the Revised 261
Code to forfeit to an impounding agency, as defined in section 262
959.132 of the Revised Code, any or all of the companion animals 263
in that person's ownership or care. The court also may prohibit 264
or place limitations on the person's ability to own or care for 265
any companion animals for a specified or indefinite period of 266
time. 267

(b) A court may order a person who is convicted of or 268
pleads guilty to a violation of division (A) of section 959.13 269
or section 959.131 of the Revised Code to reimburse an 270
impounding agency for the reasonable and necessary costs 271
incurred by the agency for the care of an animal or livestock 272
that the agency impounded as a result of the investigation or 273
prosecution of the violation, provided that the costs were not 274
otherwise paid under section 959.132 of the Revised Code. 275

(7) If a court has reason to believe that a person who is 276
convicted of or pleads guilty to a violation of section 959.131 277
or 959.21 of the Revised Code has a mental or emotional disorder 278
that contributed to the violation, the court may impose as a 279
community control sanction or as a condition of probation a 280
requirement that the offender undergo psychological evaluation 281
or counseling. The court shall order the offender to pay the 282
costs of the evaluation or counseling. 283

~~(F)~~—(F) (1) Whoever violates division (B) of section 959.135 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree on a first offense and a felony of the fifth degree on each subsequent offense. However, if an offender is convicted of or pleads guilty to two or more violations of section 959.135 of the Revised Code involving the same equine within a two-year period, any subsequent violation is a felony of the fourth degree.

(2) Whoever violates division (C) of section 959.135 of the Revised Code is guilty of one of the following:

(a) A felony of the third degree if the violation results in the permanent loss of use of a limb, loss of an eye, severe lameness, or the death of an equine;

(b) A felony of the fourth degree on a first offense and a felony of the third degree on each subsequent offense if division (F) (2) (a) of this section does not apply.

(3) Whoever violates division (D) (1) or (D) (2) of section 959.135 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree on a first offense and a felony of the fifth degree on each subsequent offense. However, if an offender is convicted of or pleads guilty to two or more violations of section 959.135 of the Revised Code involving the same equine within a two-year period, any subsequent violation is a felony of the fourth degree.

(4) Whoever violates division (D) (3), (D) (4), or (D) (5) of section 959.135 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree on a first offense and a misdemeanor of the first degree on each subsequent offense. However, if an offender is convicted of or pleads guilty to two or more violations of

section 959.135 of the Revised Code involving the same equine 313
within a two-year period, any subsequent violation is a felony 314
of the fourth degree. 315

(5) (a) A court may order a person who is convicted of or 316
pleads guilty to a violation of section 959.135 of the Revised 317
Code to forfeit to an impounding agency, as defined in section 318
959.132 of the Revised Code, any or all of the equines in that 319
person's ownership or care. The court also may prohibit or place 320
limitations on the person's ability to own or care for any 321
equines for a specified or indefinite period of time. 322

(b) A court may order a person who is convicted of or 323
pleads guilty to a violation of section 959.135 of the Revised 324
Code to reimburse an impounding agency for the reasonable and 325
necessary costs incurred by the agency for the care of an equine 326
that the agency impounded as a result of the investigation or 327
prosecution of the violation, provided that the costs were not 328
otherwise paid under section 959.132 of the Revised Code. 329

(6) If a court has reason to believe that a person who is 330
convicted of or pleads guilty to a violation of section 959.135 331
of the Revised Code has a mental or emotional disorder that 332
contributed to the violation, the court may impose as a 333
community control sanction or as a condition of probation a 334
requirement that the offender undergo psychological evaluation 335
or counseling. The court shall order the offender to pay the 336
costs of the evaluation or counseling. 337

(G) Whoever violates section 959.14 of the Revised Code is 338
guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree on a first offense 339
and a misdemeanor of the first degree on each subsequent 340
offense. 341

~~(G)~~ (H) Whoever violates section 959.05 or 959.20 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree.

~~(H)~~ (I) Whoever violates section 959.16 of the Revised Code is guilty of a felony of the fourth degree for a first offense and a felony of the third degree on each subsequent offense.

~~(I)~~ (J) Whoever violates division (B) or (C) of section 959.15 of the Revised Code is guilty of a felony and shall be fined not more than ten thousand dollars.

Section 2. That existing sections 959.132 and 959.99 of the Revised Code are hereby repealed.

Section 3. Section 959.99 of the Revised Code is presented in this act as a composite of the section as amended by both H.B. 281 and S.B. 164 of the 134th General Assembly. The General Assembly, applying the principle stated in division (B) of section 1.52 of the Revised Code that amendments are to be harmonized if reasonably capable of simultaneous operation, finds that the composite is the resulting version of the section in effect prior to the effective date of the section as presented in this act.