

Hovey Introduces Bill to Provide Immunity to those Assisting Animals in an Emergency

by: Michael Downes Friday, March 11th, 2011

State Representative DebraLee Hovey (R-112) has introduced legislation which would provide immunity to persons who voluntarily render assistance to animals during an emergency. In local emergency situations such as barn fires, loose large animals on the road or trailer accidents, volunteers, such as those with the Connecticut Horse Council who are often called upon by local police or animal control officers are sometime reticent to assist due to questions of liability.

Provisions of the bill state that any individual or animal-advocacy organization that voluntarily and gratuitously renders assistance to animals during an emergency shall be held harmless for any injury to an animal, damage to private or public property or injury to any person if the assistance was rendered voluntarily and at the request of a state or local official, including a police department or fire department or any animal control officer, municipal or regional animal control officer.

“Most towns are not equipped to deal with large animals during emergency situations,” said Rep. Hovey, who introduced the measure at the request of the Connecticut Horse Council. “Those towns generally turn to knowledgeable volunteers to assist them. This measure would relieve them of the concern of liability when they are acting in good faith to lend public assistance.”

“Our members are happy to help,” said Amy Stegall, president of the Connecticut Horse Council. “But the question of liability frequently comes up, which makes many people hesitate. Protecting volunteers from liability during an emergency will benefit local officials when these issues arise.”

The bill has been referred to the legislature’s Judiciary Committee. This session of the Connecticut General Assembly adjourns at midnight on June 8th.