## **Animal abuse**

## Senators try to toughen punishment

By Tim Richard Stapp Writer

People who torture, neglect or finaltreat an animal face tighter laws and stiffer penalties — in-icluding mental health treatment — under two bills before the state

under two bills before the state Senate.
"The thrust of my bill is an an-imal in a neglected state," said Sen. Michael Bouchard, R-Bir-mingham, sponsor of one mea-

sure.

"There is a correlation between extreme cases of animal abuse and human abuse," said an aide to Sen. Virgil Smith, Detroit, sponsor of the second. "Ownership (of an animal) is not a factor. Both (animal and human humans from the services of the second for the services of the ser

Both (animal and human abusers) come from dysfunctional families."

The Judiciary Committee last week sent both bills to the Senate floor after hearing heartbreaking testimony from humane society band county animal control offi-

"Leslie Williams is a striking example of what animal abusers are capable of," said Gary Tiscornia of the Michigan Humane Society. Tiscornia sold he is a resident of Milford, where Williams performed one of his four 1991-2 serial killings.

Tiscornia told of dogs and cats starved to death, with owners put on probation; pupples whose collars became embedded in their necks as they grew to adulthood; a neglected cocker spaniel whose leg rotted offs a dog shotgamed to death for "chewing up a few things" in a house; a cat named Chico set on fire whose owner escaped with a misdemeanor charge, and a German shepherd struck by 20 blows from a hatchet and thrown down a sewer whose ssailant got only 30 days in jeil.

Walter Rodabaugh, Lapeer County animal control office, told of a woman who was paid to care for six horses but neglected all and let two starve to death.

"We supplied \$5,000 of treatment at county expense. The woman got the horses back at no cest," he said.

Rodabaugh told of an owner who let an 88-pound Doberman pinscher waste away to 28 pounds. After the county spent \$1,000 restoring the dog to health, the owner was neither fined nor required to make restitution, Rodabaugh said.

A men who used a baseball bat on a 15-pound dog was later sent to prison for child abuse. "3B 605 would have let us give that man some treatment. That's what he needed," Rodabaugh said.

Bouchard's bill would amend the penal code to prohibit a person from wilfully and cruelly killing, maiming, mutilating or sexually assaulting an animal.

A violator could get a year in prison, be fined \$1,000, ordered to perform 240 hours of community service and be prohibited from owning an animal.

Bouchard noted his bill also covers transporting an animal with its feet tied together (except for taking it for medical care); failing to provide a rack so the animal could stand or lie down; abandoning an animal; and allowing an old, diseased or disabled animal to suffer unnecessary torture or pain.

A Senate Fiscal Agency analysis there was no way to determine how many more convictions, more jail time and more fine revenue would result from Bouchard's bill. In 1992 eight persons were convicted of felonlously destroy-

convicted of felonlously destroying an animal.

Smith's bill would expand the list of animal cruelty violations. Exposing an animal to poison would be covered. The bill would apply to "an animal" and owners. Current law covers "my horses, cattle, or other beasts of another." The bill would not apply to lawful hunting or forming.

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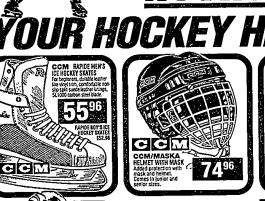
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