

**SENATE . . . . . No. 409**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

*Anne M. Gobi*

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

**An Act to protect children and adults from wildlife.**

PETITION OF:

| NAME:                   | DISTRICT/ADDRESS:                                  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <i>Anne M. Gobi</i>     | <i>Worcester, Hampden, Hampshire and Middlesex</i> |
| <i>Michael O. Moore</i> | <i>Second Worcester</i>                            |

**SENATE . . . . . No. 409**

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By Ms. Gobi, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 409) of Anne M. Gobi for legislation to protect children and adults from wildlife. Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture.

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[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE HOUSE, NO. 1976 OF 2013-2014.]

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court  
(2015-2016)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act to protect children and adults from wildlife.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 131 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after  
2 section 80A the following section:-

3 Section 80B. (a) In this section, the following words shall have the following meanings,  
4 unless the context requires otherwise:-

5 “Applicant” shall mean the applicant or the applicant’s duly authorized agent.

6 “Commissioner”, the commissioner of the department of public health.

7 “Department of public health” or “department”, the department of public health  
8 established pursuant to section 1 of chapter 17.

9           “Municipal board of health”, “board of health” or “board”, the board of health or health  
10 department, in a city or town and its authorized officers; or, other board, district or officer having  
11 like powers of a board of health, including without limitation a health officer of a district formed  
12 by 2 or more municipalities, regional health district consisting of a regional board of health of 2  
13 or more municipalities.

14           “Person” an individual, association, organization, corporation; the commonwealth, its  
15 divisions, agencies, public or quasi-public, or political subdivisions; other legal entity or  
16 respective agents.

17           (b) Notwithstanding section 80A or any other provision of this chapter, no person shall  
18 use, set, place or maintain any trap device for the purpose to capture a coyote, fox or fisher cat  
19 animal that poses an immediate threat to public health and safety, except as permitted under this  
20 section.

21           The department of public health and municipal boards of health shall be authorized to  
22 issue emergency permits to others in accordance with this section, to allow for the trapping of  
23 said animals for the immediate protection of public health and safety. Such threats to public  
24 health and safety from a coyote, fisher cat or fox animal may include without limitation:

25           (1)     aggressive or hostile behavior exhibited by the animal toward humans;

26           (2)     an animal that is known or suspected to have rabies or such other disease capable  
27 of being harmful to humans;

28           (3)     an animal that enters or inhabits, a building or enclosed structure; or

29           (4)     an animal that exhibits an unsafe presence to humans: (i) on the grounds of a  
30 school, child day care center, facility licensed by the department of early education and care,  
31 community center, playground, municipal park, public or semi-public swimming beach or pool;  
32 or (ii) within 500 feet of any other building or enclosed structure utilized as a dwelling or for  
33 human occupancy.

34           (c) A board of health shall be authorized to issue an emergency permit to immediately  
35 alleviate a threat to public health and safety posed by a coyote, fox or fisher cat. A person  
36 requesting a permit shall apply in writing to the board of health of the local jurisdiction where  
37 the animal control problem is located. Upon receipt of an application, the board shall make a  
38 determination within 5 days whether to grant or deny the requested permit. If the board  
39 determines that such threat exists, it shall immediately issue said permit, for a period not  
40 exceeding 10 days. If the permit is denied, the board shall immediately send to the applicant a  
41 written notice of the reason for the denial with information on the procedure to appeal the  
42 adverse determination.

43           (d) If a permit is denied or no determination is rendered within the prescribed period by  
44 said board under subsection (c), the applicant may appeal to the department of public health;  
45 provided, a completed appeal application is filed with the department within 12 days from the  
46 date the applicant applied to the board for such permit. Upon receipt of the application, the  
47 department shall within 10 days, review and decide the appeal. If the department determines that  
48 such threat exists, it shall immediately, issue an emergency permit to the applicant for a period  
49 not exceeding 10 days; or alternatively, direct the board to issue said permit for such period,  
50 which the board as directed shall immediately issue. If the appeal is denied, the department shall

51 immediately send to the applicant a written notice of the reason of the denial with information on  
52 the procedure to request a hearing and reconsideration by the department.

53           Within 10 days after such denial notice issued an applicant may make a written request to  
54 the department for a hearing and reconsideration. The department upon receipt of the request,  
55 shall within 14 days conduct a hearing and within 5 days thereafter, issue a determination. Such  
56 determination with any emergency permit shall be issued in the same manner as set forth in the  
57 prior paragraph; except, no further administrative appeal shall be permitted.

58           (e) An emergency permit issued by a board or the department under this section, shall  
59 authorize the applicant to utilize 1 or more trap devices, as determined by the issuing authority,  
60 which shall be limited to: nets; box or cage-type traps that are designed to confine the whole  
61 animal without gripping any part of the animal's body; and, other non-lethal trap devices that are  
62 designed to capture and hold an animal by gripping its body or body part without intended  
63 injury, such as certain cable restraints and snares. Notwithstanding, catch restraint type poles  
64 shall not be regulated by this section. Each permit issued shall specify the trap device so  
65 authorized. Said authority upon issuing a permit shall transmit a copy of the permit to the  
66 division.

67           A threat to public health and safety posed by coyote, fisher cat or fox shall be deemed to  
68 exist, if the animal exhibits or has exhibited recently, a behavior or activity identified specifically  
69 in subsection (b); notwithstanding, an issuing authority in making a determination shall consider  
70 the public safety including the type of device, duration and location of any such requested  
71 trapping. If such threat is unabated under a prior issued permit, a person may apply to the board  
72 for another permit under the procedure set forth in subsection (c); except, a board before issuing

73 another permit may require the applicant to file a trapping report for the prior permit under  
74 subsection (f). Trapping under a permit issued under this section shall be performed only by a  
75 person who holds a valid trapping license; and, subject to applicable regulations of the division  
76 related to trapping that are not inconsistent with the provisions of this section.

77 Permit applicants shall require an applicant to specify the: (i) type and nature of the  
78 animal problem, (ii) trap devices requested to alleviate the animal problem, (iii) property and  
79 approximate location listing where each trap device will be placed and set, (iv) owner or tenant  
80 of the land where the trap devices will be placed and set; and (v) name and license number of the  
81 person who will perform the trapping. All applications shall be signed by the applicant under  
82 oath. Each application shall have attached a written authorization signed by the owner or tenant  
83 of land allowing the named license trapper to place and set specified traps on such land for  
84 particular dates; notwithstanding, no such authorization shall be required to be submitted by a  
85 municipal animal control officer for trapping on municipal owned or leased property. The  
86 provisions of section 37, shall not apply to a permit issued under this section.

87 In the event a board issues a permit but denies in part, the application for the requested  
88 trapping, the applicant may appeal such denial under the procedure set forth in subsection (d).  
89 The filing of an appeal shall not invalidate an issued permit by the board. If the department  
90 renders a favorable determination for the applicant on any part of the appeal, it shall immediately  
91 issue an amended permit for a period not exceeding 10 days; or alternatively, direct the board to  
92 issue said permit for such period, which a board as directed shall immediately issue. If the appeal  
93 in any part is denied, the department shall immediately send written notice to the applicant with  
94 the reason for the adverse determination with information on the procedure to request a hearing.

95           Within 5 days after such denial an applicant may request in writing a hearing and  
96   reconsideration by the department. Upon receipt of such request, the department shall within 10  
97   days conduct a hearing and thereafter, issue a determination in the same manner and procedure  
98   as set forth in the previous paragraph; except no further administrative appeal shall be permitted.

99           A permit issued under this section shall be conditional and may, without prior hearing be  
100   revoked, suspended, reduced in duration of time, or modified in the trapping method or  
101   technique permitted subject to the provisions of this section, whenever in the opinion of the  
102   department or board issuing the permit, such action is necessary for the public safety, or when  
103   such threat has been abated; provided, proper notice is given to the applicant. A person issued a  
104   permit, if aggrieved, within 10 days of such action may, make a written request for a hearing by  
105   the authority so acting; or alternatively, if the authority acting is a board, appeal such action  
106   directly to the department. The board or department, as the case may be, shall without undue  
107   delay conduct a hearing, if so requested and render a determination. The authority making the  
108   determination shall be authorized to reinstate or reissue the permit subject to the provisions of  
109   this section. Said authority upon rendering a determination, shall immediately provide the  
110   applicant with written notification of the decision together with any reinstated or reissued permit.

111           Notwithstanding any other provision to the contrary, an environmental police officer in  
112   the performance of his official duties shall have the authority to utilize any trapping method or  
113   device, to abate a threat to human health and safety posed by coyote, fisher cat or fox; and,  
114   unless required by the director, shall not be subject to the permitting or reporting provisions  
115   under this section; provided, the board having jurisdiction where the traps will be located is  
116   given prior notice of such trapping.

117 (f) An applicant issued a permit under this section, shall no later than 10 days after the  
118 expiration of such permit, unless an earlier period is established by other law or regulation, make  
119 a written trapping report to the authority issuing such permit. Such report shall be in a form and  
120 contain the information as prescribed by the department to include, the type of permit issued;  
121 permit dates; authority issuing the permit; animal problem; property location for which the  
122 permit issued; alleviation techniques or methods utilized at each location; species and number of  
123 animals, if any, captured or taken at each location and any other information as may be required  
124 by the department. Notwithstanding, an authority issuing a permit under this section, may impose  
125 reasonable reporting requirements of a different time or interval, which shall be conspicuously  
126 stated on the issued permit; provided, such date is no later than 10 days after the expiration of the  
127 permit or other applicable date as required under other law or applicable regulation.

128 The commissioner shall by regulation establish procedures for trapping report  
129 information to be transmitted by a board to the department. The commissioner and the director,  
130 in consultation with each other, shall periodically review and analyze such reported data together  
131 with any additional information relating to permits that were requested or issued, to identify  
132 animal control problems in geographical areas that pose a recurrent threat to public health and  
133 safety.

134 (g) The commissioner in consultation with the director shall by regulation establish a  
135 uniform permitting process requiring the use of standardized forms for applications, appeals,  
136 notices, permits, reports and other regulations for the administration of this section. Such  
137 uniform forms to be used by permit applicants shall be displayed on the department's public  
138 internet website in a user printable format.



139 (h) The department shall have the supplemental authority to issue a permit when in the  
140 determination of the commissioner, such action to protect public health and safety is necessary or  
141 required to accomplish the purpose of this section.

142 (i) Any person who is aggrieved by a determination by a board or division under this  
143 section, if having proper standing, where no further administrative appeal under this section is  
144 available, may obtain judicial review under section 14 of chapter 30A; notwithstanding, the lack  
145 of any formal record of the prior administrative proceedings shall not bar such relief. Cases heard  
146 by a court shall be de novo and a court shall issue appropriate orders to protect public health and  
147 safety as it deems proper.

148 (j) This section shall not prohibit the trapping of coyotes, fisher cat or fox, during an open  
149 season declared by the director, for wildlife management by the division, by special permit  
150 issued by the director under section 80A, or as allowed under other law or regulation of the  
151 division; provided, such trapping shall not be for the purpose to abate an immediate threat to  
152 public health and safety posed by such animals.

153 (k) Whoever violates any provisions of this section, or any rule or regulation made under  
154 the authority thereof, shall be punished as provided under the last paragraph of section 80A. An  
155 environmental police officer shall have the authority to enforce the provisions of this section or  
156 regulation adopted pursuant to this section.