



**State Representatives
Jay P. Goyal & Jeff McClain**

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State Reps. Goyal and McClain Introduce Legislation Making Bestiality Felony
Ohio does not currently prohibit this repulsive act

COLUMBUS - State Representatives Jay P. Goyal (D-Mansfield) and Jeff McClain (R-Marion) today introduced legislation that would make bestiality a fifth degree felony. The legislation follows weeks of outrage by many Ohioans who were shocked to learn recently that the state does not currently prohibit the act.

“Like many of my fellow Ohioans, I was appalled that such an act is currently legal in our state,” said Rep. Goyal. “This is something I find repulsive and has the potential to be seriously damaging to animals that are violated. I am urging all of my colleagues in the House to move swiftly to enact this important ban.”

The proposed legislation would define an animal as any creature, dead or alive, that is nonhuman. And anyone caught engaging in sexual conduct or sexual contact with an animal would be guilty of bestiality. For repeat offenders, the penalty would be increased to a fourth degree felony.

An organization called Hands4Paws has collected 1,606 signatures for a petition that will be sent to the judge and prosecutor in the Richland County animal cruelty case of Peter Bower. Bower is accused of having sex with three dogs and one horse. The petition calls on the judge and prosecutor to prohibit Bower from ever owning animals again. Under current Ohio law, Bower could potentially be returned his dog and have the legal right to purchase or adopt new pets.

To ease those concerns, the legislation says that the court may order the seizure of all animals involved in bestiality cases and prohibit the offender from ever having pets again. Additionally, the bill calls for first-time offenders to receive 6 to 12 months in prison with a fine of up to \$2,500. Second and subsequent offenders would face the same prison time; however, the fine is increased up to \$5,000.

“Some have argued that time in prison and the paying of fines will not fix the problem, and that some type of psychological help is needed for those who are convicted of bestiality,” Rep. McClain said. “To address that

concern, we have included a provision that allows a judge to order an offender to participate in appropriate counseling at the offender's expense.”

The House will likely take up the legislation upon their return from summer recess.