

CHAPTER 717

INJURY TO LIVESTOCK

Referred to in [§169C.1](#), [169C.5](#), [331.307](#), [331.308](#), [364.22](#), [364.22A](#), [459.501](#), [701.1](#), [717F.4](#)

Mistreatment of animals, see [chapter 717B](#)

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717.1 Definitions.

As used in [this chapter](#), unless the context otherwise requires:

1. “*Department*” means the department of agriculture and land stewardship.
2. “*Electronic mail*” means any message transmitted through the internet including but not limited to messages transmitted from or to any address affiliated with an internet site.
3. “*Law enforcement officer*” means a regularly employed member of a police force of a city or county, including a sheriff, who is responsible for the prevention and detection of crime and the enforcement of the criminal laws of this state.
4. “*Livestock*” means an animal belonging to the bovine, caprine, equine, ovine, or porcine species, ostriches, rheas, emus; farm deer as defined in [section 170.1](#); or poultry.
5. “*Livestock care provider*” means a person designated by a local authority to provide care to livestock which is rescued by the local authority pursuant to [section 717.2A](#).
6. “*Local authority*” means a city as defined in [section 362.2](#) or a county as provided in [chapter 331](#).
7. “*Maintenance*” means to provide on-site or off-site care to neglected livestock.
8. “*Sustenance*” means food, water, or a nutritional formulation customarily used in the production of livestock.

[C51, §2678; R60, §4318; C73, §3977; C97, §4818; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §13132; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §717.1]

[94 Acts, ch 1103, §7](#); [95 Acts, ch 43, §14](#); [95 Acts, ch 134, §6](#); [2003 Acts, ch 149, §21, 23](#); [2011 Acts, ch 81, §5](#)

Referred to in [§15E.202](#), [159.5](#), [162.1](#), [169.3](#), [172E.1](#), [236.3](#), [236.4](#), [236.5](#), [267.1](#), [422.7\(13\)\(a\)](#), [422.7\(14\)\(f\)](#), [484B.1](#), [501A.102](#), [562.1A](#), [717B.1](#), [717D.1](#), [911.5](#)

717.1A Livestock abuse.

A person is guilty of livestock abuse if the person intentionally injures or destroys livestock owned by another person, in any manner, including, but not limited to, intentionally doing any of the following: administering drugs or poisons to the livestock, or disabling the livestock by using a firearm or trap. A person guilty of livestock abuse commits an aggravated misdemeanor. [This section](#) shall not apply to any of the following:

1. A person acting with the consent of the person owning the livestock, unless the action constitutes livestock neglect as provided in [section 717.2](#).
2. A person acting to carry out an order issued by a court.
3. A licensed veterinarian practicing veterinary medicine as provided in [chapter 169](#).
4. A person acting in order to carry out another provision of law which allows the conduct.
5. A person reasonably acting to protect the person’s property from damage caused by estray livestock.
6. A person reasonably acting to protect a person from injury or death caused by estray livestock.
7. A research facility, as defined in [section 162.2](#), provided that the research facility performs functions within the scope of accepted practices and disciplines associated with the research facility.

[94 Acts, ch 1103, §8](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1058, §17](#)

717.2 Livestock neglect.

1. A person who impounds or confines livestock, in any place, and does any of the following commits the offense of livestock neglect:

- a. Fails to provide livestock with care consistent with customary animal husbandry practices.
- b. Deprives livestock of necessary sustenance.
- c. Injures or destroys livestock by any means which causes pain or suffering in a manner inconsistent with customary animal husbandry practices.

2. A person who commits the offense of livestock neglect is guilty of a simple misdemeanor. A person who intentionally commits the offense of livestock neglect which results in serious injury to or the death of livestock is guilty of a serious misdemeanor. However, a person shall not be guilty of more than one offense of livestock neglect punishable as a serious misdemeanor, when care or sustenance is not provided to multiple head of livestock during any period of uninterrupted neglect.

3. [This section](#) does not apply to a research facility, as defined in [section 162.2](#), provided that the research facility performs functions within the scope of accepted practices and disciplines associated with the research facility.

[C51, §2716; R60, §4358; C73, §4031, 4034; C97, §4969, 4972; S13, §4969; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §13133, 13134; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §717.2, 717.3; C79, 81, §717.2]

[86 Acts, ch 1121, §3](#); [87 Acts, ch 179, §1](#); [94 Acts, ch 1103, §9](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1058, §18](#)

Referred to in [§717.1A](#), [717.2A](#), [717.5](#)

717.2A Rescue of neglected livestock.

1. a. A law enforcement officer may rescue livestock neglected as provided in [section 717.2](#) on public or private property, as provided in [this subsection](#).

b. The officer may enter onto property of a person to rescue neglected livestock if the officer obtains a search warrant issued by a court, or enters onto the premises in a manner consistent with the laws of this state and the United States, including [Article I, section 8, of the Constitution of the State of Iowa](#), or the fourth amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

c. Livestock neglected as provided in [section 717.2](#) may be rescued pursuant to the following conditions:

(1) If a criminal proceeding has not been commenced against the person owning or caring for the livestock, the following shall apply:

(a) The local authority shall receive a written statement from a veterinarian licensed pursuant to [chapter 169](#), providing that, in the veterinarian's opinion, the livestock is neglected.

(b) The local authority shall provide written notice to the person owning or caring for the livestock by delivery at the last known address of the person. The local authority shall deliver the notice by certified mail or make a good faith effort to personally deliver the notice to the person owning or caring for the livestock. The notice shall include all of the following:

(i) The name and address of the local authority.

(ii) A description of the livestock subject to rescue.

(iii) A statement informing the person that the livestock may be rescued pursuant to [this chapter](#) within one day following receipt of the notice by the person. The statement must specify a date, time, and a location for delivery of the response designated by the local authority, as provided in [this subsection](#).

(iv) A statement informing the person that in order to avoid rescue of the livestock, the person must respond to the notice in writing signed by a veterinarian licensed pursuant to [chapter 169](#). The veterinarian must state that, in the opinion of the veterinarian, the livestock is not neglected, or the person is taking immediate measures required to rehabilitate the livestock.

(c) A law enforcement officer may rescue the livestock, if the local authority fails to receive a written response by the person owning or caring for the livestock by the end of normal office hours of the next day that the local authority is available to receive the response at the offices of the local authority. However, if the local authority is not available to receive a response

at its offices, the local authority may designate another location in the county to receive the response.

(2) If a criminal proceeding has been commenced against the person owning or caring for the livestock, the local authority must receive a written statement from a veterinarian licensed pursuant to [chapter 169](#), providing that, in the veterinarian's opinion, the livestock is neglected.

(3) Regardless of whether a criminal proceeding has commenced, the local authority may immediately rescue livestock without providing notice as otherwise required in [this section](#). However, the local authority must receive a written statement from a veterinarian licensed pursuant to [chapter 169](#), providing that in the veterinarian's opinion, the livestock is neglected. In order to rescue the livestock, the local authority must determine that the livestock has been abandoned or that no person is able or willing to care for the livestock, and the livestock is permanently distressed by disease or injury to a degree that would result in severe and prolonged suffering.

2. If livestock is rescued pursuant to [this section](#), the local authority shall post a notice in a conspicuous place at the location where the livestock was rescued. The notice shall state that the livestock has been rescued by the local authority pursuant to [this section](#). The local authority shall provide for the maintenance of the neglected livestock. The local authority may contract with a livestock care provider for the maintenance of the neglected livestock. The local authority shall pay the livestock care provider for the livestock's maintenance regardless of proceeds received from the sale of the livestock or any reimbursement ordered by a court, pursuant to [section 717.5](#).

3. The livestock shall be subject to disposition pursuant to [section 717.5](#).

[94 Acts, ch 1103, §10](#)

Referred to in [§670.4](#), [717.1](#), [717.5](#)

717.3 Livestock in immediate need of sustenance — court order.

1. [This section](#) applies only to livestock which are cattle, sheep, swine, or poultry.

2. For purposes of [this section](#), "*interested person*" means all of the following:

- a. An owner of the livestock.
- b. A person caring for the livestock, if different from the owner of the livestock.
- c. A person holding a perfected agricultural lien or security interest in the livestock under [chapter 554](#).

3. The department may determine that some or all of the livestock kept by a person are in immediate need of sustenance. Upon making the determination the department may file a petition with a district court in a county where some or all of the livestock are kept requesting the court to issue an order to provide sustenance of the livestock. The petition may be made separately or with a petition filed pursuant to [section 717.5](#). The petition must at least include all of the following:

- a. A statement signed by a veterinarian licensed pursuant to [chapter 169](#) stating that the livestock are in immediate need of sustenance.
- b. The address of each location where the livestock are kept.
- c. A brief description of the livestock.
- d. The name and address of each interested person, if known.
- e. The name and address of each qualified person appointed by the department to provide sustenance to the livestock.

4. Upon receiving the petition, the court may do any of the following:

a. Notify any interested person that the petition has been filed with the court. The notification must be made in writing and may be delivered by ordinary, certified, or restricted certified mail by United States postal service; delivered by a common carrier; or transmitted by electronic mail.

b. Hold a hearing to determine whether the livestock are in immediate need of sustenance.

5. If the court determines that the livestock are in immediate need of sustenance, the court shall issue an order which at least declares all of the following:

- a. That the livestock are in immediate need of sustenance.

b. That the department shall assume supervision of and provide for the sustenance of the livestock as provided in [section 717.4](#).

c. That a lien is created attaching to the livestock and associated proceeds and products as provided in [section 717.4](#).

6. The department shall assume supervision of the livestock as provided in the court order. The department may directly provide for the sustenance of the livestock or appoint a qualified person to provide for such sustenance.

[2011 Acts, ch 81, §6; 2011 Acts, ch 131, §74, 158](#)

Referred to in [§717.4](#), [717.4A](#), [717.5](#), [717.6](#)

717.4 Livestock in immediate need of sustenance — lien.

1. [This section](#) applies to a lien created by a court order entered pursuant to [section 717.3](#) or [717.5](#). The court-ordered lien is an agricultural lien subject to [chapter 554](#) except as otherwise provided in [this section](#).

2. The court-ordered lien shall be for the benefit of the department. The amount of the lien shall not be more than for expenses incurred in providing sustenance to the livestock pursuant to [section 717.3](#) and providing for the disposition of the livestock pursuant to [section 717.5](#).

3. The court-ordered lien shall attach to the livestock, identifiable proceeds from the disposition of the livestock, and products from the livestock in the products' unmanufactured states.

4. The court-ordered lien becomes effective on the date that the court order is entered. To perfect the lien, the department must file a financing statement in the office of the secretary of state as provided in [sections 554.9308](#) and [554.9310](#) on or after but not later than twenty days after the effective date of the lien. For purposes of [chapter 554, article 9](#), the department is a secured party; the owner of the livestock is a debtor; and the livestock and associated proceeds and products as provided in [subsection 3](#) are the collateral.

5. The court-ordered lien that is perfected under [this section](#) is superior to and shall have priority over a conflicting lien or security interest in the livestock and associated proceeds and products as provided in [subsection 3](#), including a lien or security interest that was perfected prior to the perfection of the court-ordered lien.

[2011 Acts, ch 81, §7; 2011 Acts, ch 131, §75, 158](#)

Referred to in [§579A.2](#), [579B.4](#), [581.2](#), [717.3](#), [717.4A](#), [717.5](#), [717.6](#)

717.4A Livestock in immediate need of sustenance — livestock remediation fund.

The department may utilize the moneys deposited into the livestock remediation fund pursuant to [section 459.501](#) to pay for any expenses associated with providing sustenance to or the disposition of the livestock pursuant to a court order entered pursuant to [section 717.3](#) or [717.5](#). The department shall utilize moneys from the fund only to the extent that the department determines that expenses cannot be timely paid by utilizing the available provisions of [sections 717.4](#) and [717.5](#). The department shall deposit any unexpended and unobligated moneys in the fund. If there are proceeds remaining after the disposition of the livestock or associated products and satisfaction of the department's expenses, and the department has utilized moneys from the livestock remediation fund, the department shall repay the fund from the proceeds.

[2011 Acts, ch 81, §8; 2011 Acts, ch 131, §76, 158; 2025 Acts, ch 134, §36](#)

Referred to in [§717.6](#)

Section amended

717.5 Disposition of neglected livestock.

1. a. A court shall order the disposition of livestock neglected as provided in [section 717.2](#) or livestock in immediate need of sustenance and associated products as provided in [sections 717.3](#) and [717.4](#) in accordance with [this section](#).

(1) A petition may be filed by a local authority or a person owning or caring for the livestock pursuant to [section 717.2](#).

(2) A petition may be filed by the department. The court shall notify interested persons in

the same manner as provided in [section 717.3](#). The petition may be filed separately or with a petition filed pursuant to [section 717.3](#).

b. The matter shall be heard by the court within ten days from the filing of the petition.

(1) For livestock alleged to be neglected under [section 717.2](#), the court may continue the hearing for up to forty days upon petition by the person. However, the person shall post a bond or other security with the local authority in an amount determined by the court, which shall not be more than the amount sufficient to provide for the maintenance of the livestock for forty days. The court may grant a subsequent continuance by the person for the same length of time if the person submits a new bond or security.

(2) For livestock alleged to be in immediate need of sustenance under [section 717.3](#), the court may continue the hearing for up to forty days upon petition by the department. The department may file and the court may grant one or more subsequent continuances each for up to forty days. The department is not required to post a bond or other security.

c. Notwithstanding paragraph “b”, the court shall order the immediate disposition of livestock if the livestock is permanently distressed by disease or injury to a degree that would result in severe or prolonged suffering.

d. If the court orders the disposition of the livestock that involves the livestock’s sale or transfer, the order shall be deemed as occurring by a receiver appointed pursuant to [section 680.4](#).

2. The hearing to determine if livestock has been neglected under [section 717.2](#) for purposes of disposition shall be a civil proceeding. If the case is related to a criminal proceeding under [section 717.2](#), the disposition shall not be part of that proceeding and shall not be considered a criminal penalty imposed on a person found in violation of [section 717.2](#).

3. A court may order a person owning the livestock neglected under [section 717.2](#) or in immediate need of sustenance under [section 717.3](#) to pay an amount associated with expenses associated with the livestock as follows:

a. (1) For livestock neglected under [section 717.2](#), the amount shall not be more than for expenses incurred by the local authority in maintaining and disposing of the neglected livestock rescued pursuant to [section 717.2A](#), and reasonable attorney fees and expenses related to the investigation of the case. The remaining amount of a bond or other security posted pursuant to [subsection 1](#) shall be used to reimburse the local authority.

(2) For livestock in immediate need of sustenance under [section 717.3](#), the amount shall not be more than for expenses incurred by the department in providing sustenance to and disposing of the neglected livestock as provided in [section 717.3](#) and [this section](#). The amount paid to the department shall be sufficient to allow the department to repay the livestock remediation fund as provided in [section 459.501](#).

b. If more than one person has a divisible ownership interest in the livestock, the amount required to be paid shall be prorated based on the percentage of interest in the livestock owned by each person. The moneys shall be paid to the local authority or department incurring the expense as provided in paragraph “a”. The amount shall be subtracted from proceeds owed to the owner or owners of the livestock, which are received from the sale of the livestock ordered by the court.

c. (1) Moneys owed to the local authority from the sale of neglected livestock that have been rescued by a local authority pursuant to [section 717.2A](#) shall be paid to the local authority before satisfying indebtedness secured by any security interest in or lien on the livestock. Moneys owed to the department from the sale of livestock in immediate need of sustenance and associated products shall be paid to the department according to its priority status as a lienholder as provided in [section 717.4](#).

(2) If an owner of the livestock is a landowner, the local authority may submit an amount of the moneys owed to the clerk of the county board of supervisors who shall report the amount to the county treasurer. The amount shall equal the balance remaining after the sale of the livestock. If the livestock owner owns a percentage of the livestock, the reported amount shall equal the remaining balance owed by all landowners who own a percentage of the livestock. That amount shall be prorated among the landowners based on the percentage of interest in the livestock attributable to each landowner. The amount shall be placed upon the tax books, and collected with interest and penalties after due, in the same manner as

other unpaid property taxes. The county shall reimburse a city within thirty days from the collection of the property taxes.

d. If any moneys remain after satisfying the costs of the local authority or department, such moneys shall be distributed pursuant to the process and priorities contained in [chapter 680](#).

4. Neglected livestock ordered to be destroyed shall be destroyed only by a humane method, including euthanasia as defined in [section 162.2](#).

[86 Acts, ch 1121, §4](#); [94 Acts, ch 1103, §11](#); [2011 Acts, ch 81, §9](#); [2012 Acts, ch 1023, §86](#); [2025 Acts, ch 134, §37, 38](#)

Referred to in [§602.6405](#), [717.2A](#), [717.3](#), [717.4](#), [717.4A](#), [717.6](#), [717D.5](#)

Subsection 1, NEW paragraph d

Subsection 3, NEW paragraph d

717.6 Rulemaking.

The department may adopt rules pursuant to [chapter 17A](#) as required to implement and administer [sections 717.3 through 717.5](#).

[2011 Acts, ch 81, §10](#)