

**By Mark Christensen**

*44th District, Neb. Legislature*

Well, the Legislature didn't get to the budget last week, but we were assured by Speaker Adams that the budget would be the primary goal on the agenda this week.

Last week the Legislature also passed several bills on Final Reading.

Of those, Legislative Bill 423, a bill introduced by the Agriculture Committee, passed with a 41-0 vote.

LB423 will put in place new procedures and interventions for law enforcement officials to avoid seizure of neglected animals.

Agreements would be made between law enforcement and animal owners or custodians outlining specific interventions, allowing seized animals to remain on the premise of the owner or custodian.

Procedures for determining if animals experiencing extreme suffering should be euthanized, are part of the changes in LB423.

Within seven days of seizing the animals, law enforcement will be required to petition the district court for a hearing.

The court will then have 10 days to schedule the hearing.

The district court may choose from three different action plans if they find that neglect or cruelty has happened at the hands of the animal owner or custodian.

The court may order an immediate forfeiture of the animals and give permission for euthanasia; it may list certain steps to be taken by the owner for custody of the animals to be restored; or, the court may order a bond to take care of the cost to the agency that seized the animals.

On the other hand, if the district court makes a determination of not guilty, all the associated costs of the seizure and care of the animals will be refunded to the owner.

Sen. Tom Hansen amended LB423 with a provision from LB544. This prohibits the selling or transportation of any beef or dairy breeding bulls infected with bovine trichomoniasis, except for transporting them for slaughter.

In addition, notice provisions from LB544 were included in the amendment requiring the notification of the Department of Agriculture within five business days from the diagnosis of the disease and the notification of neighbors within 14 days.

If you have any questions or comments, contact my office below.

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