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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Lord/Block LAST UPDATED _____
ORIGINAL DATE 2/14/2025
SHORT TITLE Quail as "Game Bird" & Raising Without Permit BILL NUMBER House Bill 319
ANALYST Gaussoin

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT* (dollars in thousands)

Agency/Program	FY25	FY26	FY27	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
DGF		\$125.0	\$125.0	\$250.0	Recurring	Other state funds

Parentheses () indicate expenditure decreases.

*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Sources of Information

LFC Files

Agency Analysis Received From

Department of Game and Fish (DGF)

New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of House Bill 319

House Bill 319 (HB319) would create an exception for domestic strains of quail from being considered protected game birds in New Mexico and adds a new section to allow domestic quail to be raised for meat or eggs without a permit.

This bill does not contain an effective date and, as a result, would go into effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns if enacted, or June 20, 2025.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The Department of Game and Fish (DGF) declines to provide an estimate of costs but reports the agency would be responsible for investigating whether individual quail are wild or domestic, for eradicating any escaped domestic or hybrid quail, and for managing diseases transmitted from domestic quail to wild quail. Assuming the agency would need at least one additional wildlife biologist and the office space, equipment, and other supports for the biologist, the estimated additional budget impact is set at \$125 thousand.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The department raises concerns about the possible escape of domestic quail and the impact on wild populations:

Domestic quail that escape or are intentionally released from the captive facility could have significant negative impacts to wild quail populations and to the ecosystem. Having a new species on the landscape will shift the ecosystem balance and impact other species in unknown ways. Domestic quail could establish resident feral populations, becoming an invasive species that could outcompete native quail, causing a decline in native quail populations both locally and statewide.

There is a high probability that escaped domestic quail will hybridize with native quail species, which could similarly harm the native populations. Domestic and hybrid species have repeatedly been shown to outcompete native species for food, habitat, and other resources, causing declines in native populations. Further, there is a risk of disease transmission from domestic to wild quail, which could have implications for wild quail die-offs. Declining wild quail populations could lead to a reduction in hunting opportunities.

It is unclear which agency would be responsible for regulating domestic quail products or facilities. While HB319 specifies a person can raise domestic quail for meat or eggs without a permit, it does not anticipate the sale of quail products to the public. In New Mexico, the Livestock Board regulates most livestock, including poultry, and has a meat inspection function, but egg vendors are regulated by the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA), and many local governments have specific rules about poultry within their borders. NMDA notes it has no regulations concerning quail products or facilities.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

DGF suggests the absence of regulatory authority could complicate the enforcement of hunting regulations because it would be difficult, and perhaps impossible, to determine if quail were shot in the wild or in a private facility.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

HB319 duplicates HB59 from the 2023 legislative session. That bill was found to be not germane to the budget-focused session.

HG/r1/SL2