



**ANIMAL LEGAL
DEFENSE FUND**

ANIMAL PROTECTION

U.S. STATE ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS RANKING REPORTSM

2023

COMPARING OVERALL
STRENGTH AND
COMPREHENSIVENESS





**ANIMAL LEGAL
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1979

ABOUT US

The Animal Legal Defense Fund is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the lives and advancing the interests of animals through the legal system. Our attorneys work with prosecutors, police, and animal control officers around the country on animal cruelty cases.



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INTRODUCTION

The Animal Legal Defense Fund’s Annual Animal Protection Laws Rankings Report is the longest-running and most authoritative metric of its kind, ranking each state and territory according to the relative strengths and weaknesses of their animal protection laws. In 2023, we took our mission a step further by expanding the scope of our rankings to highlight crimes committed against farmed animals and wildlife. We have also dramatically enhanced our scoring system, adding more detail and nuance than ever before, to assess each state and territory’s laws more accurately.

In 2023, the state with the strongest animal protection laws in the nation was Oregon, followed by Maine (2), Illinois (3), Massachusetts (4), and Colorado (5). The state with the weakest animal protection laws was North Dakota (50), followed by Alabama (49), Idaho (48), South Carolina (47), and Kentucky (46). The most improved state was Connecticut, which jumped 20 ranks from 31st to 11th place, thanks to its new laws requiring veterinarians to report suspected cruelty, prohibiting sexual assault of animals, and prohibiting convicted animal abusers from possessing an animal for five years following their conviction. A new trend this year was

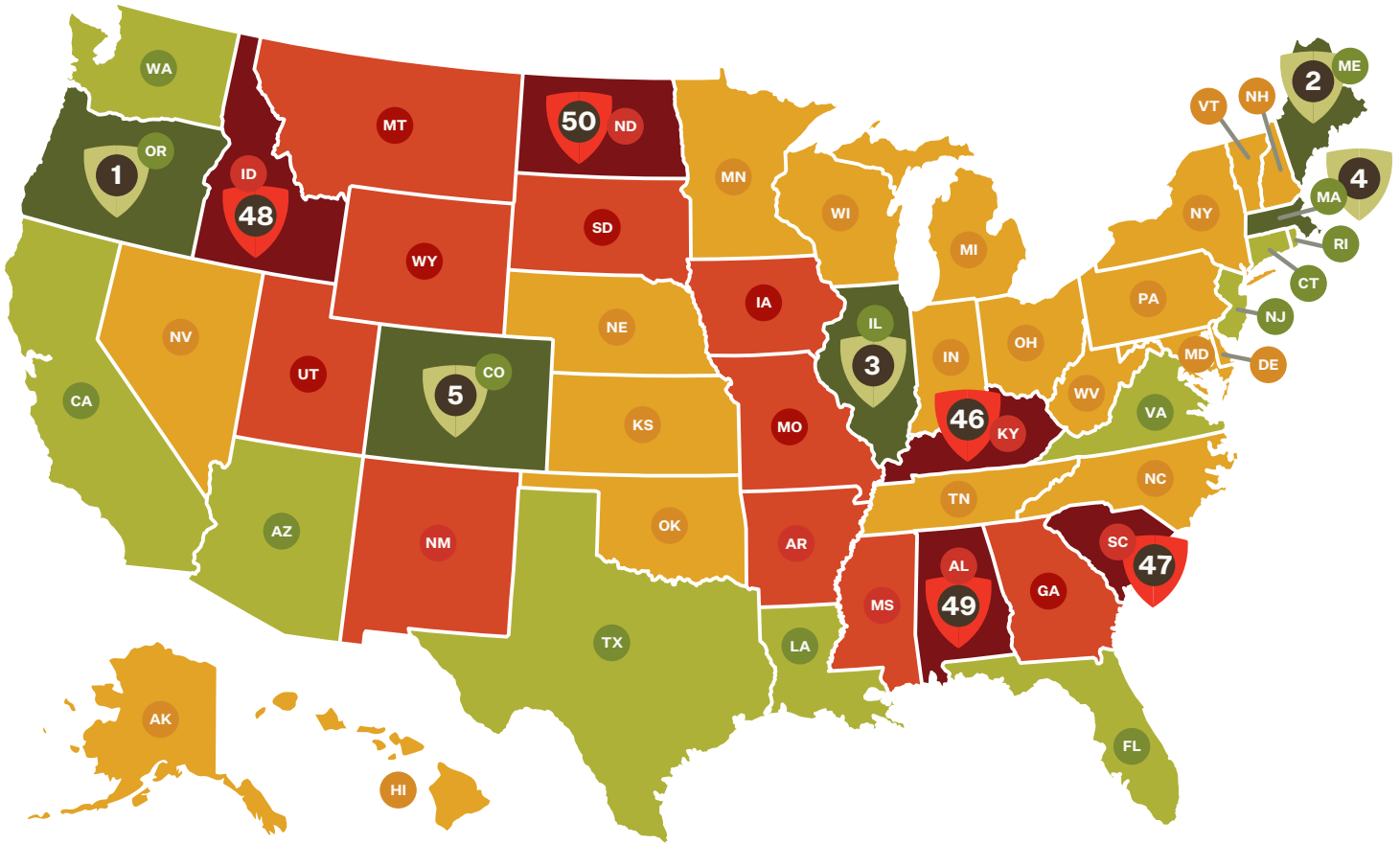
“bond-or-forfeit” laws, which require that defendants either post a bond covering the costs of a seized animal’s care or forfeit the animal. A continuing trend was laws prohibiting sexual assault of animals.

“Each year, the Animal Legal Defense Fund is encouraged to see so many jurisdictions strengthening their animal protection laws. However, every state and territory — regardless of rank — has room to improve: our Annual Animal Protection Laws Rankings Report shows that legislative protections for animals still vary greatly throughout the country, and improvements are still needed nationwide to ensure that animals are afforded the full protections they deserve as living, sentient beings.”

Lora Dunn

Animal Legal Defense Fund
Criminal Justice Program Director

ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS: 2023 STATE RANKINGS



RANKINGS BEST TO WORST:

- | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 OREGON | 13 ARIZONA | 25 HAWAII | 38 MONTANA |
| 2 MAINE | 14 NEW JERSEY | 26 MINNESOTA | 39 ARKANSAS |
| 3 ILLINOIS | 15 VIRGINIA | 27 NEBRASKA | 40 SOUTH DAKOTA |
| 4 MASSACHUSETTS | 16 MICHIGAN | 28 NEW YORK | 41 NEW MEXICO |
| 5 COLORADO | 17 DELAWARE | 29 WISCONSIN | 42 UTAH |
| 6 CALIFORNIA | 18 OHIO | 30 NEVADA | 43 GEORGIA |
| 7 FLORIDA | 19 VERMONT | 31 KANSAS | 44 IOWA |
| 8 WASHINGTON | 20 WEST VIRGINIA | 32 MARYLAND | 45 MISSISSIPPI |
| 9 RHODE ISLAND | 21 INDIANA | 33 OKLAHOMA | 46 KENTUCKY |
| 10 LOUISIANA | 22 NEW HAMPSHIRE | 34 NORTH CAROLINA | 47 SOUTH CAROLINA |
| 11 CONNECTICUT | 23 PENNSYLVANIA | 35 ALASKA | 48 IDAHO |
| 12 TEXAS | 24 TENNESSEE | 36 WYOMING | 49 ALABAMA |
| | | 37 MISSOURI | 50 NORTH DAKOTA |

- Territories*
- | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 GUAM | 3 U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS | 5 NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS |
| 2 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA | 4 PUERTO RICO | 6 AMERICAN SAMOA |

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NEW METHODOLOGY

The primary focus of our Rankings Report has always been, and continues to be, criminal animal cruelty laws. Since the Rankings Report was first established in 2006, the Animal Legal Defense Fund has consistently worked to expand the scope and depth of the Rankings Report, adding new types of laws as the field of animal law has developed, and adding additional nuance to account for slight variations between laws in each jurisdiction. At the same time, we endeavor to keep the Rankings Report consistent from year to year, so as to provide a reliable benchmark to clearly showcase changes and improvements in the law. In 2018, we undertook a major overhaul of the Rankings Report, and five years later, in 2023 we embarked on another major expansion.



NEW CATEGORIES

The data for the Rankings Report comes from our compendiums; documents of each state and territory's animal protection laws organized by category. Those categories are as follows:

SUBSTANTIVE PROHIBITIONS

1. Definition of "Animal"
2. General Cruelty
3. Animal Fighting
4. Sexual Assault
5. Cruelty to Working Animals
6. Laws Specific to Farmed Animals
7. Cruel Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing

REPORTING LAWS

8. Cross Reporting
9. Veterinary Reporting
10. "Ag-Gag" Laws

CIVIL AND CIVILIAN INTERVENTION

11. Emergency Rescue and Relief
12. Civil Enforcement
13. Domestic Violence and Protection Orders

CRIMINAL JUSTICE INTERVENTION

14. Maximum Penalties and Statute of Limitations
15. Law Enforcement Policies
16. Seizure
17. Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
18. Restitution
19. Forfeiture and Possession Bans
20. Rehabilitative Sentencing

In 2023, we modified and reorganized the preexisting categories, and added three new categories: Laws Specific to Farmed Animals; Cruel Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing; and Emergency Rescue and Relief.

The first new category, Laws Specific to Farmed Animals, contains laws which we had previously listed under the “General Cruelty” section. We decided to separate these laws out into their own category because they are often separate from, and supplementary to, general animal cruelty laws. Most states (approximately 40 out of 50), have an exemption in their animal cruelty laws for “accepted husbandry practices.” This results in many cruel acts towards farmed animals being legally permissible, simply because they are “accepted” by the agriculture industry. In order to begin chipping away at some of these overbroad exemptions, advocates and organizations like the Animal Legal Defense Fund have pushed for and defended laws which target some of the worst of the worst “accepted husbandry practices.” This includes laws like California’s Prop 12, which prohibits the use of certain forms of cruel confinement, such as battery cages for egg-laying hens, gestation crates for sows, and veal crates for young calves. This category also includes laws which are common throughout the country prohibiting other cruel acts against farmed animals, including docking horses tails and feeding garbage to pigs.



The second new category added in 2023 was Cruel Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing. The Rankings Report has always included laws prohibiting cruelty to wild animals, in that most states and territories general animal cruelty laws apply equally to all animals, both captive and wild. However, most states include an exemption for “lawful hunting, fishing, and trapping practices.” This means that unnecessarily cruel methods of hunting, fishing, and trapping are often explicitly permitted in jurisdictions’ Fish and Game Code laws. We, therefore, decided to add this category in recognition of those jurisdictions which instead explicitly prohibit these cruel practices. For example, nine states prohibit or substantially limit the use of conibear or leghold traps — traps which clamp down upon the limb or body of an animal, causing immense physical pain, often resulting in the animal slowly dying of dehydration or exposure to the elements, or in the animal gnawing off their limb to escape. This category is therefore intended to feature those laws that are enacted to prevent individual wild animals from suffering, as opposed to other Fish and Game laws that are enacted to protect ecosystems as a whole.

The final new category added in 2023 was Emergency Rescue and Relief — laws that specifically empower civilians to rescue or provide care to abused and neglected animals. Our Rankings Report previously featured a similar category, “Dogs in Hot Cars,” which included “Good Samaritan” laws permitting civilians to rescue dogs and other animals who are left unattended in vehicles and are in imminent danger. This new category, Emergency Rescue and Relief, contains those Good Samaritan laws, as well as other similar laws permitting civilians to render emergency care to animals in disasters or to enter onto private property to provide care to a neglected animal.



NEW SCORING METRICS

Each year, our attorneys pore through and update over 3,600 pages of our compendiums for each state and territory. We then use that information to numerically rank each of the 56 jurisdictions based on their cumulative scores study questions. In previous years, our metrics were limited to 49 questions. This year, we expanded those questions to 76 in order to cover our new categories, and to add additional levels of nuance. This additional nuance is necessary because each state and territory's laws are different, and often it is not possible to make a one-to-one comparison. We therefore have incorporated more questions and more choices in order to make our scoring as precise as possible.

For example, one of the issues our Rankings Report considers is whether guardians of animals are required to provide shelter and protection from the elements for the animals in their care. Shelter laws vary dramatically from state to state. Some do not require any shelter at all; some merely require that animals be provided with "necessary shelter;" and still others go into extensive detail about the type and quality of shelter, with elevated standards for inclement weather. Some states

only require that shelter be provided to dogs or companion animals, whereas others require shelter for all animals in a person's custody or control. Therefore, our scoring metrics for this particular issue are weighted to award different point values based upon the extent of the shelter requirements, and the number of species included in that protection.

With the 76 questions for each of the 56 jurisdictions, we compared a total of 4,256 data points to compile our overall Rankings Report. All 76 questions were close ended, with choices that were exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The Rankings Report analyzed enacted laws only and did not review the separate issue of how these laws are enforced.





BEST FIVE STATES



OREGON



MAINE



ILLINOIS



MASSACHUSETTS



COLORADO

OREGON CLAIMS TOP RANK

In 2023, Oregon had the strongest animal protection laws in the nation. Oregon has, for the last decade, consistently ranked in second or third place in the Rankings Report, ranking behind Illinois or Maine by razor-thin margins. With our expanded methodology ensuring a more comprehensive and accurate ranking than ever before, along with a few key pieces of 2023 legislation, Oregon has finally overtaken all other states and claimed the top rank.

Oregon has always had strong animal cruelty protections. For example, Oregon explicitly permits courts to include animals in domestic violence protection orders, ensuring that victims of domestic violence can retain custody of their beloved companion animals when fleeing abusive situations. Also in recognition of the link between domestic violence and animal cruelty, Oregon's laws provide sentence enhancements for animal abusers who have previously been convicted of domestic violence or child abuse. Oregon also requires veterinarians to report aggravated cruelty to animals and grants them immunity for doing so. The state also has a strong and clear bond-or-forfeit law, which ensures that localities are not unduly burdened by the costs of caring for animals who have been seized pursuant to an animal cruelty investigation. Finally, Oregon has a mandatory post-conviction possession ban law, which prohibits anyone who has been

convicted of an animal cruelty offense from owning or possessing certain species of animals for a set period of time: five years following a misdemeanor conviction, and 15 years following a felony animal cruelty conviction.

Over the years, Oregon has pioneered some of the most groundbreaking animal protection actions in the country, from recognizing the sentience of animals to being first in the nation to utilize a statewide special prosecutor for animal crimes. Ensuring the comprehensive protections that Oregon affords its resident animals requires collaboration, compromise, and long-term commitment; time and time again Oregonians have demonstrated their dedication to making the state a safe place for animals. We commend the State of Oregon for attaining this well-deserved recognition of those efforts."

Emily Lewis

Animal Legal Defense Fund
Managing Attorney

In 2023, Oregon enacted two pieces of legislation further strengthening their laws. First, Oregon became the ninth state to prohibit coyote-killing contests; derbies in which entrants compete to hunt and kill the most or largest coyotes within a set time frame and area. These contests are often justified in the name of population control of predators, despite extensive evidence showing that such large-scale killings actually result in more attacks on domestic animals. Secondly, Oregon passed a law providing state funding for its statewide Animal Cruelty Deputy District Attorney position. Oregon is one of four states with a statewide prosecutor dedicated to pursuing justice on behalf of animal crime victims, ensuring those cases are tried by experts in animal law, and are given the resources and attention they require.

Despite their rank, Oregon, like all other states, still has room to improve. For example, although veterinarians are required to report aggravated animal cruelty, they are not yet required to report other, lesser forms of animal abuse and neglect. Additionally, although Oregon does have mandatory post-conviction possession bans, those bans only apply to domestic animals and animals who are the same genus as the animal who was the subject of the animal cruelty conviction, instead of applying generally to all species of animals. Finally, Oregon does not yet have a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program (CAAP), which would allow lawyers or authorized law students to act as third-party advocates and represent the interests of animal victims in cruelty cases.





NEW TO THE TOP FIVE: MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts joined the Top five ranked states in 2023, thanks to its robust protections of farmed animals and wildlife. As explained in the Methodology section of this report, in 2023 the Animal Legal Defense Fund expanded the scope of its rankings to include a greater emphasis on laws protecting farmed animals and wild animals. Massachusetts has long since been a luminary in these areas, being one of the few states to have adopted bans of battery cages, gestation crates, veal crates, coyote-killing contests, leghold traps, and more. Because of these and other protections Massachusetts maintains for all animals, it rose from eighth to fourth place in 2023.





WORST FIVE STATES



NORTH DAKOTA SINKS TO LOWEST RANK

In 2023, North Dakota replaced New Mexico as the state with the weakest animal protection laws. New Mexico rose nine ranks to 41st place by enacting a law criminalizing the sexual assault of animals for the first time. After years of sitting in the bottom tier of states, North Dakota has now sunk to the lowest rank, having the weakest animal protection laws out of all fifty states.

North Dakota lacks several fundamental protections for animals. For example, North Dakota does not require that a person convicted of animal cruelty forfeit their animal, regardless of the extent of the cruelty. It also does not have any possession ban law that would prohibit convicted abusers from possessing or residing with an animal for a set period of time. Additionally, North Dakota also does not have a law explicitly allowing animals to be included in domestic violence protection orders, nor does it have any laws requiring or explicitly permitting social services workers to report suspected animal cruelty. Both these types of laws are essentially due to the well-documented overlap between animal cruelty, domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse. Finally, North Dakota does not require or even explicitly permit the court to order psychological evaluations and treatment for those convicted of animal cruelty. Animal cruelty is often tied to underlying psychological

disorders or issues, and identification and treatment of those issues is the best way to prevent recidivism and protect animals in the future.

Furthermore, many of the laws North Dakota does have on the books are lacking or problematic. North Dakota's law prohibiting sexual assault of animals is antiquated and vague, prohibiting "deviant sexual acts," making the law difficult to apply and enforce. North Dakota also has an "Ag-Gag" law, which prohibits would-be whistleblowers from reporting animal cruelty they have witnessed at agricultural operations.





MOST IMPROVED

CONNECTICUT RISES 20 RANKS

In 2023, Connecticut vaulted 20 ranks from 31st to 11th place by enacting a single, comprehensive piece of legislation which accomplished three aims: fixing Connecticut’s sexual assault of animals law, establishing a mandatory five-year possession ban, and requiring veterinarians to report suspected cruelty.

Several years ago, a case involving a dog who had been sexually assaulted exposed a major flaw within Connecticut’s law. At the time, Connecticut prohibited “sexual contact” with an animal, but defined sexual contact as contact between two people. As a result, the court refused to apply the law. Several other similar cases were similarly dismissed. A coalition of advocates, including the Animal Legal Defense Fund, immediately began working on a legislative fix. That law finally passed in 2023, providing a clear and thorough definition of sexual assault of animals. The law also addresses other related issues, such as prohibiting the creation and distribution of recordings of animal sexual assault.

The same law also created mandatory five year possession bans following any animal cruelty conviction. Possession bans are a post-conviction measure, and they prohibit an offender from owning, possessing, or residing

with an animal for a specified period of time. Possession bans are an important sentencing component in animal cruelty cases because they reduce recidivism by restricting an offender’s access to potential animal victims. Previously, Connecticut did not have any law explicitly authorizing courts to order possession bans.

Finally, the same law also contains a provision requiring veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty. When an animal is abused or neglected, veterinarians are uniquely situated to be one of the few people to witness the signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect, and to have the experience and education to differentiate between accidental injury and criminal cruelty. It is therefore essential that veterinarians be empowered to report suspected animal cruelty when they encounter it in their practice. This law also protects veterinarians from retaliatory lawsuits by granting civil immunity for any reports made in good faith.

Although Connecticut has been a pioneer in animal law, being the first state to enact a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program in 2016, the state still had significant gaps in its laws addressing animal cruelty. In 2023, Connecticut took several major steps forward in ensuring that animals have the protections they need and deserve.”

Kathleen Wood

Animal Legal Defense Fund
Senior Staff Attorney





HONORABLE MENTION: DELAWARE

In 2023, Delaware also made significant improvements to their animal protection laws, rising six ranks from 23rd to 17th place. Delaware enacted three pieces of new legislation allowing animals to be included in protection orders, ordering courts to consider the best interests of animals in divorce proceedings, and requiring social services officers to report suspected animal cruelty.



MAJOR TRENDS

NEW TREND: “BOND-OR-FORFEIT” LAWS

A new trend in 2023 was the enactment and clarification of “bond-or-forfeit” laws. When an animal is seized pursuant to an animal cruelty investigation, the owner still retains ownership, or their property interest, in the animal despite losing physical custody of the animal. Owners can always voluntarily surrender that property interest, but if they choose not to, the animal is put into legal limbo. They cannot — and should not — be returned to the owner until the animal cruelty charges are fully adjudicated or dismissed. But they also cannot be adopted out into new homes, because the defendant still technically owns them.

Criminal cruelty cases can drag on for months or even years, meanwhile, the animal is languishing in a shelter. Keeping animals for long periods of time in a shelter — even the

best, most well-resourced shelters — is harmful for animals’ psychological well-being and can cause them to be re-traumatized. This can lead to behavioral problems, making animals even harder to adopt out when the criminal case eventually concludes.

Caring for seized animals is also a huge financial burden on cities and counties, or other organizations that house seized animals. In addition to the ordinary costs of providing food and shelter to animals in their care, shelters also have to provide veterinary care. Depending on the extent of the abuse or neglect, the animal may require significant rehabilitative care. Animal hoarding cases involving dozens or hundreds of animals, or cases involving large animals like horses or cows, can exacerbate these costs even further.



The most common legislative solution to these issues is bond-or-forfeit laws. Thirty-nine states plus the District of Columbia and Guam all have some form of bond-or-forfeit laws. These laws require that the defendant either post a bond with the court covering the costs of caring for the seized animals, or forfeit the animals, allowing them to be adopted out into new homes. The bonds typically cover the costs of caring for a seized animal for 30 days and are renewed when they expire.

The legal proceedings around bond-or-forfeit laws are complex and can be difficult for all parties to navigate. They are civil hearings, running in conjunction with a criminal

prosecution. In order to protect the defendant's civil rights and property interests, they must be afforded due process. It is therefore vital that bond-or-forfeit statutes be written clearly, so that all parties are well aware of the legal processes in place and have the opportunity to be heard.

In 2023, Indiana and Washington overhauled their pre-existing bond-or-forfeit laws to clarify the procedures and ensure defendants are being given proper notice of their legal duties and rights. Delaware slightly tweaked their preexisting bond-or-forfeit law, and New Jersey and the District of Columbia enacted bond-or-forfeit laws for the first time.



Bond-or-forfeit statutes are a practical way to address multiple needs: respecting the constitutional rights of animal owners, addressing the economic ‘free rider’ problem caused when people choose to own animals but then shift the cost of caring for them onto the community, and — critically — the animal victim’s need to receive care. When someone chooses to own an animal, they are also agreeing to meet that animal’s minimum needs. Bond-or-forfeit statutes give owners a choice: either continue owning the animal while living up to that agreement, or stop owning the animal — in which case the community will shoulder the animal’s care, but also be able to place the animal in a healthy home.”

David Rosengard

Animal Legal Defense Fund
Managing Attorney



CONTINUING TREND: LAWS BANNING SEXUAL ASSAULT OF ANIMALS

A continuing trend in 2023 was the enactment of laws prohibiting the sexual assault of animals. Currently, every state except West Virginia has some law banning sexual assault of animals, with New Mexico and the District of Columbia enacting such laws for the first time in 2023, and Connecticut enacting a law enabling successful prosecutions for those who sexually assault animals. This trend has been continuing strongly for the past six years, with 17 states plus D.C. and Guam revising their laws or enacting brand new laws prohibiting the sexual assault of animals during that time.

Connecticut, New Mexico, and D.C.'s new laws not only thoroughly define sexual assault of animals, but they also prohibit other related acts. For example, Connecticut and D.C. both now prohibit the creation and distribution of any recordings of an animal being sexually assaulted, and New Mexico prohibits selling or transferring an animal for the purpose of sexual assault. Additionally, both Connecticut and New Mexico's laws include mandatory possession bans after conviction, prohibiting any offender from owning or residing with an animal for several years.

Even with the vast improvements that have been made over the past six years, there is still more work to be done. West Virginia, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands have yet to enact laws prohibiting sexual assault of animals. Additionally, 10 states, plus Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have antiquated or otherwise insufficient laws addressing this issue, prohibiting things like "crimes against nature." Such laws are vague, and therefore difficult to enforce. Maryland repealed its archaic law prohibiting "unnatural or perverted practices" in 2023, after having enacted a much more comprehensive law in 2019.



AT-A-GLANCE — BEST FIVE STATES

1 | OREGON



EXISTING STRENGTHS

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

	EXISTING STRENGTHS	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS
Definition of “Animal”	Definition of “animal” includes mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, and amphibians	Definition of “animal” excludes invertebrates such as octopi
General Cruelty	Standards of minimum care that all guardians must provide to animals in their care are clear and thorough	Requirements for “adequate shelter” do not apply to farmed animals
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians have civil immunity for good faith reporting of suspected cruelty Veterinarians are required to report suspected aggravated cruelty	Veterinarians are not required to report suspected abuse or neglect that does not rise to the level of aggravated cruelty
Civil Enforcement	Animal cruelty is an abatable nuisance, and private civilians may sue to enjoin ongoing cruelty	N/A
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Companion animals may be included in domestic violence protection orders	Farmed animals or other animals kept for economic purposes may not be included in protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	N/A	Does not have a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Possession bans are mandatory after conviction: five years following misdemeanor, 15 years following a felony	Possession bans do not include all species, only domestic animals and animals of the same genus as the animal victim
Rehabilitative Sentencing	The court may order psychological evaluations and treatment for any person convicted of animal cruelty.	Psychological evaluations and treatment are not mandatory

Note: These tables are merely snapshot overviews of some of the issues considered in the Rankings Report, and do not provide a complete overview of all topics measured.

AT-A-GLANCE — BEST FIVE STATES

2 | MAINE



EXISTING STRENGTHS

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

	EXISTING STRENGTHS	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS
Definition of “Animal”	Definition of “animal” is inclusive	N/A
General Cruelty	Standards of minimum care that all guardians must provide to animals in their care are extremely clear and thorough	N/A
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are permitted to report suspected cruelty and have immunity for doing so	Veterinarians are not required to report suspected animal cruelty
Civil Enforcement	N/A	No civil enforcement mechanism
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animals may be included in domestic violence protection orders	Animal cruelty is not included in the definition of “domestic violence”
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	Has a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	Advocates represent the interests of justice rather than the interests of the animal
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Mandatory five year possession ban after conviction for Class C animal cruelty crimes	Possession bans following a Class D animal cruelty crime are up to the court’s discretion
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Upon conviction, the court may order a psychological evaluation	Pre-sentence psychological evaluations are not mandatory for any animal cruelty crimes

AT-A-GLANCE — BEST FIVE STATES

3 | ILLINOIS



EXISTING STRENGTHS

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

	EXISTING STRENGTHS	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS
Definition of “Animal”	Definition of “animal” is inclusive	N/A
General Cruelty	Most standards of minimum care that all guardians must provide to animals in their care are clear and thorough	Requirements for the type of shelter guardians must provide to their animals are vague
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are required to report suspected aggravated animal cruelty and animal fighting, and have immunity for reporting in good faith	Veterinarians are not required to report other forms of suspected animal cruelty
Civil Enforcement	N/A	No civil enforcement mechanism
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animals may be included in domestic violence protection orders	Animal cruelty is not included in the definition of “domestic violence”
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	N/A	Does not have a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	The court may order post-conviction possession bans up to lifelong bans	Courts are not required to order post-conviction possession bans after any cruelty convictions
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Psychological evaluations are mandatory for juveniles and animal hoarders	Psychological evaluations are not mandatory for other animal cruelty offenders

AT-A-GLANCE — BEST FIVE STATES

4 | MASSACHUSETTS



EXISTING STRENGTHS

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

	EXISTING STRENGTHS	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS
Definition of “Animal”	Definition of “animal” is inclusive	N/A
General Cruelty	Requirements for shelter, sanitary environment, and protection from the elements applies generally to all species	Does not explicitly require guardians to provide veterinary care to injured or suffering animals
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are required to report suspected animal cruelty and have immunity for doing so in good faith	N/A
Civil Enforcement	N/A	No civil enforcement mechanism
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	N/A	Animals are not explicitly permitted to be included in protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	N/A	Does not have a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Abused animals must be forfeited after conviction, mandatory five year possession ban following conviction for sexual assault of an animal	No mandatory possession bans following convictions for animal cruelty offenses other than sexual assault or devocalization
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Mandatory humane education class following devocalization of a cat or dog	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order a pre-sentence psychological evaluation and necessary treatment in animal cruelty cases

AT-A-GLANCE — BEST FIVE STATES

5 | COLORADO



EXISTING STRENGTHS

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

	EXISTING STRENGTHS	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS
Definition of “Animal”	Definition of “animal” is inclusive	N/A
General Cruelty	Most standards of minimum care that all guardians must provide to animals in their care are adequately defined	Standards of minimum care that all guardians must provide could be more thorough and detailed
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are required to report suspected animal cruelty and have immunity for doing so in good faith	N/A
Civil Enforcement	N/A	No civil enforcement mechanism
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animals may be included in domestic violence protection orders, and animal cruelty is included in the definition of “domestic violence”	Animal cruelty is not included in the definition of “domestic violence”
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	N/A	Does not have a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Mandatory possession three to five year possession bans following a felony level animal cruelty conviction	Possession bans are not mandatory following a misdemeanor animal cruelty conviction
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Mandatory pre-sentence psychological evaluations to determine underlying causes of cruelty violations and inform sentencing	Psychological evaluations are not mandatory upon first animal cruelty violations committed by juveniles



AT-A-GLANCE — WORST FIVE STATES

46 | KENTUCKY



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Definition of “Animal”	Definition of “animal” excludes all cold-blooded animals
General Cruelty	Standards for levels of minimum care that guardians must provide for animals in their care are not well-defined
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are not required to report suspected animal cruelty
Civil Enforcement	No civil enforcement mechanism for animal cruelty laws
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Only household pets, not farmed animals, may be included in protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	No Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	No provisions for post-conviction forfeiture of cruelly treated animals other than equines and animals who have been sexually abused No possession bans required except following convictions for sexual assault of animals
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order psychological evaluations and treatment following convictions for animal cruelty other than sexual assault of animals

Note: These tables are merely snapshot overviews of some of the issues considered in the Rankings Report, and do not provide a complete overview of all topics measured.

AT-A-GLANCE — WORST FIVE STATES

47 | SOUTH CAROLINA



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Definition of “Animal”	Definition of “animal” excludes invertebrates, and primary animal cruelty law exempts fowl
General Cruelty	No explicit requirement that animals be provided with veterinary care to alleviate injury or suffering
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are not required to report suspected animal cruelty and do not have immunity for doing so
Civil Enforcement	No civil enforcement mechanism for animal cruelty laws
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Only pet animals may be included in domestic violence protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	No Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order post-conviction possession bans of animals
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order psychological evaluations and treatment following convictions for animal cruelty

AT-A-GLANCE — WORST FIVE STATES

48 | IDAHO



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Definition of “Animal”	Definition of “animal” excludes invertebrates
General Cruelty	Standards for levels of minimum care that guardians must provide for animals in their care are not well-defined
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are not required to report suspected animal cruelty
Civil Enforcement	No civil enforcement mechanism for animal cruelty laws
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animals are not explicitly permitted to be included in domestic violence protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	No Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order post-conviction possession bans of animals
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Courts are not required to order psychological evaluations and treatment following convictions for animal cruelty, except for animal torture

Note: These tables are merely snapshot overviews of some of the issues considered in the Rankings Report, and do not provide a complete overview of all topics measured.

AT-A-GLANCE — WORST FIVE STATES

49 | ALABAMA



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Definition of “Animal”	N/A
General Cruelty	Standards for levels of minimum care that guardians must provide for animals in their care are not well-defined
Veterinary Reporting	Although veterinarians are required by regulations to report suspected cruelty, they are not required by statute
Civil Enforcement	No civil enforcement mechanism for animal cruelty laws
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animals are not explicitly permitted to be included in domestic violence protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	No Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Possession bans only explicitly permitted to be ordered at post-seizure hearings for cruelty to dogs and cats
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order psychological evaluations and treatment following convictions for animal cruelty

AT-A-GLANCE — WORST FIVE STATES

50 | NORTH DAKOTA

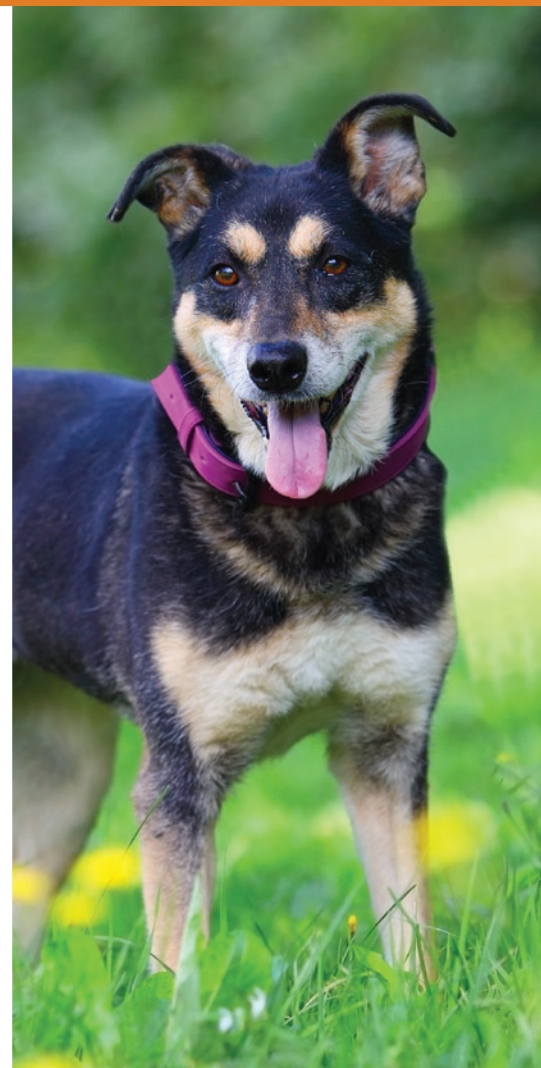


AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Definition of “Animal”	N/A
General Cruelty	No restrictions on tethering of animals
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians do not have immunity for reporting animal cruelty in good faith
Civil Enforcement	No civil enforcement mechanism for animal cruelty laws
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animals are not explicitly permitted to be included in domestic violence protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	No Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order post-conviction possession bans of animals
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order psychological evaluations and treatment following convictions for animal cruelty

Note: These tables are merely snapshot overviews of some of the issues considered in the Rankings Report, and do not provide a complete overview of all topics measured.





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