

We, the undersigned, endorse the following petition:

## **SUPPORT FOR ADDING AN ANIMAL LAW COURSE TO THE LAW SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

We, the undersigned, encourage your support for the addition of an animal law course to the law school curriculum. Animal law is the combination of statutory and case law that relates to or has an impact on nonhuman animals. It encompasses companion animals, wildlife, farmed animals, and animals used in entertainment and research.

As you may know, animal law is being taught at some of the most reputable and respected law schools throughout the country. Along with this petition, please find a [list of law schools](#) that are currently offering animal law to their students. This list includes highly ranked law schools such as Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Stanford, and the University of Chicago. Additionally, a growing number of student animal law organizations have appeared across the country and around the world. At last count, more than 200 Student Animal Legal Defense Fund (SALDF) chapters had been established in the US and Canada.

The increased interest in animal law is to be expected considering animals permeate every sector of our society from food to family. The number of households with at least one dog or cat has quadrupled since the 1960s, and surveys show that the majority of Americans view their companion animals more as family than property. Growing recognition of the human-animal bond, and concern for the welfare of animals raised for food and used in other industries, has informed the ongoing conversation about legal issues involving animals and ignited interest in the field.

As a society, we form strong attachments with our companion animals. Surveys have shown that “more than half of companion animal guardians would prefer a dog or cat to a human if they were stranded on a deserted island.” Another statistic reveals, “fifty percent of pet owners would be ‘very likely’ to risk their lives to save their pets, and another thirty-three percent indicated they would be ‘somewhat likely’ to put their own lives in danger.”<sup>1</sup>

In light of the above statistics, it is no surprise animal law is no longer considered a fringe area of the law. To the contrary, animal law increasingly permeates and affects most traditional areas of the law – including tort, criminal, constitutional, family, environmental, and trust law. Some examples of this intersection include:

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<sup>1</sup> William C. Root, *Man’s Best Friend: Property or Family Member? An Examination of the Legal Classification of Companion Animals and its Impact on Damages Recoverable for their Wrongful Death or Injury*, 47 Vill. L. Rev. 423, 423 (2002).

- *Environmental Law*: Animal agriculture and water/air pollution.
- *Constitutional Law*: First Amendment, animal activism, and “Ag-Gag” laws.
- *Criminal Law*: Anti-cruelty laws; link between domestic violence and animal abuse.
- *Trust Law*: Enforceable trusts for companion animals under UTC provisions that have recently been adopted by all 50 states.
- *Tort Law*: Damages cases involving wrongful death or injury to a companion animal; veterinary malpractice.
- *Family Law*: Animal custody disputes in divorces and separations.
- *Landlord & Tenant Law*: Housing disputes involving “no pets” policies and anti-discrimination laws.
- *Consumer Protection Law*: Food safety; puppy “lemon laws;” false advertising.

According to a recent Harvard Magazine article<sup>2</sup> on the rise of animal law: “As the role of animals in society and the economy has evolved, and more recently, as scientific research has revealed more about animals’ cognitive abilities and social development, public sensibility has changed dramatically, often leaving outmoded law behind.”

The rapidly emerging field of animal law can no longer be ignored, as it is becoming an accepted and practiced field within society and our legal system. We are hopeful you will consider providing students with a thought-provoking forum to discuss this developing and dynamic area of the law. As animal law continues to grow and intersect with traditional areas of the law, the law school and law students – including animal activists, animal lovers, the curious, the indifferent and the dissenters – would greatly benefit from such a course offering. For these reasons, your consideration of the addition of animal law to the law school’s curriculum is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and attention regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned.

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<sup>2</sup> Cara Feinberg. “Are Animals ‘Things?’ The Law Evolves.” *Harvard Magazine*. March-April 2016.