



2017 U.S. Animal Protection Laws Rankings™

Comparing Overall Strength & Comprehensiveness

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| 2017 U.S. Rankings Map | 7 |
| 2017 U.S. Rankings..... | 8 |
| Table: “Best Five” States for Animals | 11 |
| Table: “Worst Five” States for Animals..... | 12 |
| Overview: “Best Five” States | |
| 1. Illinois | 13 |
| 2. Oregon..... | 13 |
| 3. California | 14 |
| 4. Maine..... | 15 |
| 5. Rhode Island..... | 15 |
| Overview: “Worst Five” States | |
| 1. North Dakota..... | 17 |
| 2. Utah..... | 17 |
| 3. Wyoming | 18 |
| 4. Iowa..... | 18 |
| 5. Kentucky..... | 19 |
| Methodology Summary | 20 |



2017 U.S. ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS RANKINGS™

Animal Legal Defense Fund Annual Study Ranks Laws Across the Country

*Pennsylvania is Most-Improved State with new comprehensive animal cruelty laws
Trends include new immunity for removing animal from a vehicle and bestiality laws*

January 2018

The Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) announces the publication of the 2017 U.S. ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS RANKINGS REPORT, ALDF's twelfth annual report that comprehensively surveys animal protection laws of all U.S. states and territories. The longest-running and most authoritative report of its kind, the RANKINGS REPORT assesses the strength of each jurisdiction's animal protection laws by examining over 4,000 pages of statutes.¹ Each jurisdiction receives a raw score based on fifteen different categories of animal protection; the REPORT then ranks all 56 jurisdictions by comparing their raw scores. The REPORT also highlights the top, middle, and bottom tiers of jurisdictions and notes the "Best Five" and "Worst Five" states overall.

Pennsylvania was the most-improved state in 2017, jumping twenty places in rank, in part, by passing a new felony provision for first-time offenders of aggravated animal cruelty, such as torturing an animal; strengthening its animal fighting laws; and adding civil immunity for veterinarians who report suspected animal abuse.

"Perpetrators of the most unthinkable violence against animals deserve more than a slap on the wrist, and now prosecutors in Pennsylvania have more important tools they need to tackle these horrific cases," says Lora Dunn, Director and Senior Staff Attorney for the Animal Legal Defense Fund's Criminal Justice Program. "Sadly, many cruelty cases go undetected, hidden from public view, and veterinarians might be the only witnesses to these animals' suffering. That's why it's so important to empower veterinarians who suspect animal cruelty to take action without fear of legal retribution by the abuser—just as Pennsylvania has done with this new immunity provision."

Nevada also made significant progress this year, jumping 16 places in rank, in part, by passing a comprehensive bestiality law. Ohio, New Hampshire, Texas, and Vermont also passed bestiality laws, with Texas making bestiality a registerable sex offense.

The 2017 RANKINGS REPORT also highlights legislation granting civil immunity for removing animals from hot vehicles. Arizona, California (contributing to its rise in rank, from fourth to third place),

¹ See page 20 of the report for a summary of the methodology used.

Colorado, Indiana, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Oregon all enacted these “reckless endangerment” provisions this year. More than twenty-five states now have some type of “hot cars” laws on the books.

“For many, it would be unconscionable to see an animal in distress and fail to act,” says Kathleen Wood, the Animal Legal Defense Fund’s Criminal Justice Program Fellow. “Immunity laws ensure that those who rescue animals from vehicles in certain emergency situations are not bombarded with lawsuits in response to their heroic actions.”

Other notable changes this year included Alaska’s new law to protect pets from domestic violence; Connecticut’s increased penalties for subsequent aggravated animal abuse; Delaware’s prohibition on breed-specific legislation; Kansas’s mandatory forfeiture of animals upon conviction; Kentucky’s new protection for service animals, which includes felony provisions and allows the court to order restitution, as well as Kentucky’s new forfeiture provisions for abuse of an equine; Maryland’s mandatory reporting and civil immunity for veterinarians who suspect animal abuse; Missouri’s increased penalties for various cruelty offenses; Rhode Island’s new hoarding prohibition; and statewide anti-tethering laws in Massachusetts, Vermont, and Washington.

In reviewing the results from ALDF’s RANKINGS REPORTS over the past five years, more than half of all states and territories experienced a significant improvement in their animal protection laws:

- ✓ **30%** of jurisdictions improved 2-10%
- ✓ **48%** of jurisdictions improved 11-50%
- ✓ **4%** of jurisdictions improved by greater than 50%

These improvements included, among others:

- Expanding the range of protections for animals
- Providing stiffer penalties for offenders
- Strengthening standards of care for animals
- Reporting of animal cruelty cases by veterinarians and other professionals
- Mitigating and recovering costs associated with the care of mistreated animals
- Requiring mental health evaluations and counseling for offenders
- Banning ownership of animals following convictions
- Including animals in domestic violence protective orders
- Including animal fighting as a RICO (racketeering) offense

One of the frequently used measures for gauging the state of animal protection laws in the U.S. has been the presence or absence of felony-level penalties for the most egregious types of abuse. Since ALDF released its first U.S. rankings report in 2006, there has been noticeable progress in this indicator:

- **Eleven jurisdictions** added—for the first time—felony penalties for cases involving extreme animal cruelty or torture: *Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Mississippi, North Dakota, Pennsylvania**, *South Dakota, and Utah*.
- **Thirteen jurisdictions** strengthened their existing felony animal cruelty laws: *Connecticut**, *Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, Puerto Rico, and Rhode Island, Texas**, *Vermont**.
- **Seventeen jurisdictions** added felonies for repeated or aggravated animal neglect: *Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania**, *Puerto Rico, Rhode Island and Tennessee*.
- **Nine jurisdictions** made repeated abandonment, or abandonment that results in the death or serious injury of an animal, a felony: *Arkansas, Connecticut, Idaho, Louisiana, Indiana, Michigan, Nebraska, Pennsylvania**, *and Puerto Rico*.
- **Seven jurisdictions** added felonies for the sexual assault of an animal: *Alaska, New Jersey, Nevada**, *Oregon, Puerto Rico, Tennessee, and Texas**.
- **Twenty-two jurisdictions** instituted statewide bans on breed-specific legislation (or “BSL”) by either prohibiting municipalities from regulating or outlawing certain dogs based on breed alone, or otherwise require proof of a dog’s supposed dangerous propensities beyond mere breed: *Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware**, *Florida, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Nevada, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington*.

Sizable majorities of all households now include at least one animal, and polls continue to show that the public cares deeply about animal welfare. ALDF’s goals in these ongoing reviews are to continue to shed light on the important issue of animal protection, to compare and contrast the differences and similarities in these jurisdictions, and to garner support for strengthening and enforcing animal protection laws throughout the country.

**denotes new changes in 2017*

ALDF encourages those who care about the welfare and protection of animals to contact their elected officials about the importance of having strong, comprehensive laws in this field, and to alert law enforcement should they ever witness animal abuse or neglect.

Please visit aldf.org for additional information, including the ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS OF THE USA & CANADA compendium, MODEL ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS collection, and more.



UNITED STATES ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS 2017 RANKINGS

- TOP TIER
- MIDDLE TIER
- BOTTOM TIER



2017 USA RANKINGS

| BEST FIVE FOR ANIMALS | WORST FIVE FOR ANIMALS |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Illinois 2. Oregon 3. California 4. Maine 5. Rhode Island | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 46. North Dakota 47. Utah 48. Wyoming 49. Iowa 50. Kentucky |

| | 2017 Rank | Jurisdiction |
|----------|-----------|---------------|
| Top Tier | 1 | Illinois |
| | 2 | Oregon |
| | 3 | California |
| | 4 | Maine |
| | 5 | Rhode Island |
| | 6 | Michigan |
| | 7 | West Virginia |
| | 8 | Nevada |
| | 9 | New Jersey |
| | 10 | Colorado |
| | 11 | Arizona |
| | 12 | Washington |
| | 13 | New Hampshire |
| | 14 | Massachusetts |
| | 15 | Delaware |
| | 16 | Florida |
| | 17 | Tennessee |
| | 18 | Indiana |
| | 19 | Kansas |

| Middle Tier | 2017 Rank | JURISDICTION |
|-------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| | 20 | Oklahoma |
| | 21 | Louisiana |
| | 22 | Minnesota |
| | 23 | Virginia |
| | 24 | Pennsylvania |
| | 25 | Nebraska |
| | 26 | Vermont |
| | 27 | Ohio |
| | 28 | <i>District of Columbia</i> |
| | 29 | Texas |
| | 30 | <i>Virgin Islands</i> |
| | 31 | Wisconsin |
| | 32 | Connecticut |
| | 33 | Missouri |
| | 34 | Georgia |
| | 35 | <i>Puerto Rico</i> |
| | 36 | North Carolina |
| | 37 | Arkansas |
| | 38 | <i>Guam</i> |

| Bottom Tier | 2017 Rank | JURISDICTION |
|-------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| | 39 | South Carolina |
| | 40 | Hawaii |
| | 41 | Alabama |
| | 42 | New York |
| | 43 | Montana |
| | 44 | Mississippi |
| | 45 | South Dakota |
| | 46 | Idaho |
| | 47 | Maryland |
| | 48 | Alaska |
| | 49 | New Mexico |
| | 50 | North Dakota |
| | 51 | Utah |
| | 52 | Wyoming |
| | 53 | Iowa |
| | 54 | Kentucky |
| 55 | <i>American Samoa</i> | |
| 56 | <i>Northern Mariana Islands</i> | |

EDITOR'S NOTE: The District of Columbia and U.S. territories are included in this report and are *italicized*. The "Best Five" and "Worst Five" lists are limited to states.

Table: “Best Five” States

| Select Provisions | 1. Illinois | 2. Oregon | 3. California | 4. Maine | 5. Rhode Island |
|---|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|-----------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Felony penalties available: Cruelty (C), Neglect (N), Fighting (F), Abandonment (A), Sexual Assault (S) | C, N, F, A, S | C, F, N, S | C, N, F* | C, N, F, A | C, N, F, A, S |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate definitions/ standards of basic care | ✓ | ✓ | -- | ✓ | ✓ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full range of statutory protections (cruelty, neglect, abandonment, sexual assault, fighting) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased penalties for repeat abusers and/or animal hoarders | ✓ | ✓ | -- | ✓ | -- |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased penalties when abuse is committed in the presence of a minor | ✓ | ✓ | -- | -- | -- |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courts may order forfeiture of abused animals | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory forfeiture of animals upon conviction | -- | -- | ✓ | -- | ✓ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory reporting of suspected cruelty by veterinarians and/or select non-animal-related agencies/professionals | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | -- |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police officers have an affirmative duty to enforce animal protection laws | -- | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humane officers have broad law enforcement authority | -- | ✓ | ✓ | -- | ✓ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad measures to mitigate and recover costs of care for abused pets seized by animal welfare agencies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Court may restrict ownership of animals after a conviction | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health evaluations and/or counseling for offenders | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animals may be included in domestic violence protective orders | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | -- |

*Limited to select species

Table: "Worst Five" States

| Select Provisions | 46. North Dakota** | 47. Utah** | 48. Wyoming | 49. Iowa** | 50. Kentucky |
|---|--------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Felony penalties available: Cruelty (C), Neglect (N), Fighting (F), Abandonment (A), Sexual Assault (S) | C, F | C*, F* | C, F* | C*, F | C*, F* |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate definitions/standards of basic care | ✓ | ✓ | -- | -- | -- |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full range of statutory protections (cruelty, neglect, abandonment, sexual assault, fighting) | ✓ | ✓ | -- | ✓ | -- |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased penalties for repeat abusers and/or animal hoarders | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased penalties when abuse is committed in the presence of a minor | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courts may order forfeiture of abused animals | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓* |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory forfeiture of animals upon conviction | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory reporting of suspected cruelty by veterinarians and/or select non-animal-related agencies/professionals | ✓ | -- | -- | -- | † |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police officers have an affirmative duty to enforce animal protection laws | -- | -- | -- | -- | ✓ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humane officers have broad law enforcement authority | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad measures to mitigate and recover costs of care for abused pets seized by animal welfare agencies | ✓ | -- | ✓ | ✓ | -- |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Court may restrict ownership of animals after a conviction | -- | ✓ | ✓ | -- | -- |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health evaluations and/or counseling for offenders | -- | ✓ | -- | ✓ | -- |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animals may be included in domestic violence protective orders | -- | -- | -- | ✓ | -- |

*Limited to select species

**Ag gag state

† Veterinarians are prohibited from reporting suspected cruelty or fighting.

Overview: Why These States Made the “Best Five” List

| STATE | Existing Strengths | Potential Improvements |
|--------------------|---|---|
| 1. Illinois | Felony penalties for cruelty, neglect, fighting, abandonment and sexual assault | More comprehensive definitions/standards of basic care |
| | Principal protections apply to most animals | Stronger felony provisions for neglect and abandonment |
| | Adequate definitions/standards of basic care | Increased penalties for offenders with prior domestic violence offenses |
| | Full range of statutory protections | Broader cost mitigation & recovery measures |
| | Increased penalties for repeat animal abusers and animal hoarders | Mandatory forfeiture of any type of animal upon conviction |
| | Mental health evaluations prior to sentencing | Mandatory restrictions on future ownership or possession of animals following a conviction |
| | Mandatory counseling / anger management for certain offenders | Broader law enforcement powers for humane agents and duty on peace officers to enforce animal protection laws |
| | Protective orders may include animals | Court-calendar priority when animals are in custody |
| | Some mandatory cost-recovery measures for impounded animals | Animal fighting as RICO predicate offense |
| | Pre-conviction forfeiture allowed | Animal abuser registry |
| | Court may order forfeiture of select animals on conviction | |
| | Court may order restrictions on future ownership or possession of animals upon conviction | |
| | Mandatory reporting of suspected animal cruelty by select non-animal-related agencies and veterinarians | |
| | Humane agents have some law enforcement authority | |
| 2. Oregon | Felony penalties for cruelty, neglect, and fighting | Felony penalties for abandonment |
| | Adequate definitions/standards of basic care | Mandatory terms of incarceration for certain offenders |
| | Principal protections apply to most animals | Broader pre-sentence mental health evaluations |
| | Full range of statutory protections | Mandatory restitution |
| | Increased penalties for repeat animal abusers | Mandatory cost mitigation & recovery measures for impounded animals |
| | Increased penalties for repeat domestic violence offenders | Mandatory forfeiture on conviction |
| | Increased penalties when abuse committed in the presence of a minor | Mandatory reporting of suspected animal cruelty by select non-animal-related agencies |
| | Increased penalties for cases involving multiple animals | Mandatory reporting of all suspected animal cruelty by veterinarians |

| STATE | Existing Strengths | Potential Improvements |
|---|---|---|
| 2. Oregon <i>Continued</i> | Limited pre-sentence mental health evaluations | Court-calendar priority when animals are in custody |
| | Permissive court order for counseling / anger management | Animal abuser registry |
| | Protective orders may include animals | |
| | Court may order cost mitigation & recovery measures for impounded animals | |
| | Pre-conviction forfeiture allowed | |
| | Court may order forfeiture of animals on conviction | |
| | Mandatory restrictions on future ownership or possession of animals upon conviction | |
| | Mandatory reporting of suspected aggravated animal cruelty by veterinarians | |
| | Peace officers have an affirmative duty to enforce animal protection laws | |
| | Humane agents have broad law enforcement authority | |
| | Animal fighting is a predicate offense under state RICO laws | |
| | Strong animal fighting provision | |
| | 3. California | |
| Principal protections apply to most animals | | Better statutory definitions/standards of basic care |
| Full range of statutory protections | | Increased penalties for cases involving multiple animals or repeat offenses |
| Mandatory court order for counseling / anger management | | Increased penalties when abuse committed in the presence of a minor |
| Protective orders may include animals | | Increased penalties for offenders with prior domestic violence offenses |
| Court must order restitution | | Mandatory terms of incarceration for certain offenders |
| Mandatory cost mitigation & recovery measures for impounded animals | | Pre-sentence mental health evaluations |
| Pre-conviction forfeiture allowed | | Mandatory post-conviction ownership and possession ban |
| Mandatory forfeiture of animals on conviction | | Stronger animal fighting provisions |
| Permissive post-conviction ownership and possession ban | | Mandatory reporting of suspected animal cruelty by select non-animal-related agencies |
| Select non-animal-related agencies may report suspected animal cruelty | | Court-calendar priority when animals are in custody |
| Mandatory reporting of animal cruelty by veterinarians | | Animal fighting as RICO predicate offense |
| Peace officers have an affirmative duty to enforce animal protection laws | | Animal abuser registry |
| Humane agents have broad law enforcement authority | | |

| STATE | Existing Strengths | Potential Improvements |
|---|---|--|
| 4. Maine | Felony penalties for cruelty, neglect, fighting, and abandonment | Stronger felony provisions for neglect |
| | Principal protections apply to most animals | Increased penalties for crimes involving multiple animals |
| | Adequate definitions/standards of basic care | Increased penalties for offenders with prior domestic violence offenses |
| | Full range of statutory protections | Increased penalties when abuse is committed in the presence of a minor |
| | Increased penalties for repeat animal abusers | Mandatory restitution |
| | Limited pre-sentence mental health evaluations | Mandatory cost mitigation & recovery measures for impounded animals |
| | Permissive court order for counseling / anger management | Mandatory forfeiture of an animal upon conviction |
| | Protective orders may include animals | Mandatory restrictions on future ownership or possession of animals following a conviction |
| | Court may order cost recovery measures on conviction | Mandatory reporting of suspected animal cruelty by select non-animal-related agencies |
| | Pre-conviction forfeiture allowed | Mandatory reporting of all suspected animal cruelty by veterinarians |
| | Court may order forfeiture on conviction | Broader law enforcement powers for humane agents |
| | Court may order restrictions on future ownership or possession of animals upon conviction | Court-calendar priority when animals are in custody |
| | Permissive reporting of animal cruelty by select non-animal related agencies | Felony penalty on first-offense sexual assault |
| | Mandatory reporting of suspected aggravated animal cruelty by veterinarians | Stronger animal fighting provisions |
| Peace officers have an affirmative duty to investigate animal protection law violations | Animal fighting as RICO predicate offense | |
| Humane agents have some law enforcement authority | Animal abuser registry | |
| 5. Rhode Island | Felony penalties for cruelty, neglect, abandonment, sexual assault and fighting | Increased penalties for cases involving multiple animals or repeat offenses |
| | Principal protections apply to most animals | Increased penalties when abuse committed in the presence of a minor |
| | Full range of statutory protections | Mandatory mental health evaluation and or counseling |
| | Mandatory forfeiture of animals upon conviction | Include pets in protective orders |
| | Peace officers have an affirmative duty to enforce animal protection laws | Permissive of costs of care pre-conviction |
| | Humane agents have broad law enforcement authority | Mandatory seizure of abused animals |
| | Permissive post-conviction ownership and possession ban | Mandatory post-conviction ownership and possession ban |
| | Mandatory restitution | Mandatory reporting of animal cruelty by veterinarians |
| | Permissive court order for counseling / anger management | Court-calendar priority when animals are in custody |

| STATE | Extra Strengths | Potential Improvements |
|--|---|---|
| 5. Rhode Island <i>continued</i> | Mandatory post-conviction cost of care | Animal fighting as RICO predicate offense |
| | Prohibits breed-specific legislation | Animal abuser registry |
| | Mandatory incarceration and fines available | |

Overview: Why These States Made the “Worst Five” List

| STATE | Major Areas Needing Improvement |
|-------------------------|--|
| 46. North Dakota | Ag gag law |
| | No felony neglect or abandonment provisions |
| | No increased penalties when abuse is committed in the presence of a minor or involves multiple animals |
| | No mental health evaluations or counseling for offenders |
| | No statutory authority to allow protective orders to include animals |
| | No mandatory forfeiture of animals upon conviction |
| | No restrictions on future possession of animals following a conviction |
| | No provisions for select non-animal-related agencies/professionals to report suspected animal abuse |
| | No duty for peace officers to enforce animal protection laws |
| | Humane officers lack broad law enforcement authority |
| | Inadequate sexual assault provisions |
| 47. Utah | Ag gag law |
| | Felony provisions available only for cruelty against select animals |
| | No felony provisions for neglect, abandonment, or fighting of animals |
| | No increased penalties when abuse is committed in the presence of a minor or involves multiple animals |
| | No statutory authority to allow protective orders to include animals |
| | No duty for peace officers to enforce animal protection laws |
| | Inadequate cost mitigation & recovery provisions for impounded animals |
| | No provisions for select non-animal-related agencies/professionals to report suspected animal abuse |
| | No mandatory forfeiture of animals upon conviction |
| | Inadequate sexual assault provisions |

| STATE | Major Areas Needing Improvement |
|--------------------|--|
| 48. Wyoming | Felony provisions available only for cruelty and fighting against select animals |
| | No felony neglect or abandonment provisions |
| | Inadequate definitions/standards of basic care |
| | No increased penalties when abuse is committed in the presence of a minor |
| | No mental health evaluations or counseling for offenders |
| | No statutory authority to allow protective orders to include animals |
| | No mandatory forfeiture of animals upon conviction |
| | No provisions for veterinarians or other select non-animal-related agencies/professionals to report suspected animal abuse |
| | No duty for peace officers to enforce animal protection laws |
| | Humane officers lack broad law enforcement authority |
| | No provisions for sexual assault |
| | Inadequate animal fighting provisions |
| 49. Iowa | Ag gag law |
| | Felony provisions available only for cruelty against select animals and fighting |
| | No felony neglect or abandonment provisions |
| | Inadequate definitions/standards of basic care |
| | No increased penalties when abuse is committed in the presence of a minor or involves multiple animals |
| | No statutory authority to allow protective orders to include animals |
| | No mandatory forfeiture of animals upon conviction |
| | No restrictions on future ownership or possession of animals following a conviction |
| | No provisions for veterinarians or other select non-animal-related agencies/professionals to report suspected animal abuse |
| | No duty for peace officers to enforce animal protection laws |
| | Humane officers lack broad law enforcement authority |
| | |

| STATE | Major Areas Needing Improvement |
|---------------------|--|
| 50. Kentucky | Felony provisions available only for cruelty and fighting, both against only select animals |
| | No felony provisions for neglect or abandonment |
| | Inadequate definitions/standards of basic care |
| | No increased penalties when abuse is committed in the presence of a minor or involves multiple animals |
| | No mental health evaluations or counseling for offenders |
| | No statutory authority to allow protective orders to include animals |
| | No cost mitigation or recovery provisions for impounded animals |
| | No restrictions on future ownership or possession of animals following a conviction |
| | No provisions for select non-animal-related agencies/professionals to report suspected animal abuse |
| | Veterinarians are prohibited from reporting suspected cruelty or fighting |
| | Humane officers lack broad law enforcement authority |
| | No provisions for sexual assault |
| | Inadequate animal fighting provisions |

Methodology summary

The 56 jurisdictions included in the 2017 U.S. ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS RANKINGS REPORT were numerically ranked based on their cumulative scores to 44 study questions covering 15 distinct animal protection laws categories. The report analyzed enacted laws only and did not review the separate issue of how these laws are enforced. Answers to the study questions were based primarily on the statutory data contained in the 4,000+ page compendium ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS OF THE USA & CANADA (TWELFTH EDITION).^{*} The study questions were close-ended and the choices exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The questions were limited to the following categories:

1. General prohibitions
2. Penalties
3. Exemptions
4. Mental health evaluations & counseling
5. Protective orders
6. Cost mitigation & recovery
7. Seizure/impoundment
8. Forfeiture and post-conviction possession
9. Non-animal agency reporting of suspected animal cruelty
10. Veterinarian reporting of suspected animal cruelty
11. Law enforcement policies
12. Sexual assault
13. Fighting
14. Offender registration
15. "Ag gag" legislation

^{*}Please visit aldf.org for the ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS OF THE USA & CANADA (TWELFTH EDITION). Contact comms@aldf.org for any report-related questions, comments, or additional information.