Massachusetts is considering a number of significant animal protection bills this legislative session (2019-20). The Animal Legal Defense Fund is supporting several priority bills, including legislation to prevent convicted animal abusers from accessing animals, protect elephants and other wild animals from being exploited in circuses, prevent convicted wildlife poachers from hunting in Massachusetts, and more.

**PREVENT CONVICTED ANIMAL ABUSERS FROM ACCESSING ANIMALS**

Filed by State Representative Tram Nguyen, An Act Relative to Protecting Animals from Abusers, would prevent a person convicted of animal cruelty (including torture, mutilation, and dogfighting) from possessing, adopting, or fostering an animal for at least five years after their release from custody. Courts would have the discretion to consider each case individually and extend the possession ban for any greater length of time deemed reasonable to protect animals.

Possession Ban Bills are one of the most effective ways to ensure a person convicted of animal cruelty does not reoffend. Bills with similar intent were filed by State Senator Dean Tran and State Representative Brad Hill.

**PROTECT ELEPHANTS, BIG CATS, PRIMATES, AND BEARS FROM CRUEL CIRCUS EXPLOITATION**

Filed by State Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr with State Senator Jason Welch as lead petitioner and jointly by State Representative Lori Ehrlich and State Representative Bradley Jones, An Act Relative to the Use of Elephants, Big Cats, Primates, and Bears in Traveling Exhibits, would prohibit the use of certain wild animals in circuses and traveling shows in Massachusetts. The recent tragic deaths of elephants Beulah and Karen, exploited for years by the Commerford Zoo, a Connecticut-based traveling circus that regularly frequented Massachusetts’ fairs and other venues, underscores the need for passing the Circus Bill.

Elephants, big cats, primates, and bears are subjected to neglect, abusive training, prolonged confinement, and their use in circuses puts the public at risk. Many wild animal exhibitors that perform in Massachusetts have histories of federal Animal Welfare Act violations and dangerous public safety incidents.

Wild animals in circuses spend most of their days in cramped, barren cages, deprived of the ability to engage in their natural behaviors. Forced to perform frightening and sometimes painful tricks, they endure a lifetime of misery.

**PREVENT CONVICTED WILDLIFE POACHERS FROM HUNTING IN MASSACHUSETTS**

Filed by State Senator Mike Moore and, jointly by State Representatives Lori Ehrlich and Ann-Margaret Ferrante, An Act Further Regulating the Enforcement of Illegal Hunting Practices, would protect native species important to Massachusetts ecosystems.

The Poaching Bill would (1) modernize penalties for illegal hunting, some of which are out of date by about a century, and (2) enter Massachusetts in the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact, which already benefits every other state wildlife law enforcement agency in the continental United States. If enacted, this would end Massachusetts’ status as a safe-haven for convicted poachers whose hunting, trapping, or recreational fishing license has been suspended in any of the 48 member states.
An Act Protecting Research Animals (known as the Beagle Bill) would require that dogs and cats, no longer exploited for research purposes at research institutions or product testing facilities, be offered for adoption through a non-profit animal shelter or rescue or private placement, once the research ends, if a necropsy is not mandated.

An Act Preventing Trafficking in Ivory and Rhino Horns would restrict the sale of ivory and rhino horn in the Commonwealth, ending Massachusetts’ role in the global poaching crisis. It would more closely align Massachusetts commerce laws with federal interstate commerce regulations and establish a fund, with penalties assessed under the proposed law, to promote conservation and education.

An Act Banning the Retail Sale of Cats and Dogs in Pet Shops would close the puppy-mill-to-pet-shop pipeline by prohibiting the sale of puppies, kittens, and rabbits in pet shops unless made available in partnership with an animal shelter or rescue organization.

An Act Concerning the Use Of Animals In Product Testing would require the use of test methods that replace, reduce, or refine the use of animals in the testing of products and ingredients when alternatives are available and provide information of equivalent or better scientific quality and relevance for the intended purpose.

An Act Enhancing the Issuance of Citations for Cruel Conditions for Animals would allow law enforcement officers to issue citations for all domestic animals, including farmed animals, kept in “cruel conditions,” expanding the current law that only applies to dogs. It also updates and clarifies the current tethering law.

An Act Protecting Consumers When Purchasing a Pet would update the puppy and kitten “Lemon Law” to enhance consumer protections for families who purchase puppies and kittens who later become ill, including the option for reimbursement of some medical expenses.

An Act Protecting the Health and Safety of Puppies and Kittens in Cities and Towns would protect consumers and animals in four ways: (1) prohibit the sale of puppies and kittens under eight-weeks-old; (2) require the promulgation of rules and regulations for business-related kennels used for boarding and “doggie daycare” as well as breeding kennels; (3) update laws regarding kennel licensing; and (4) end the roadside sale of puppies and kittens.

An Act Concerning the Use of Certain Insurance Underwriting Guidelines Pertaining to Dogs Harbored Upon the Insured Property would prevent insurance companies from denying, canceling, failing to renew, or charging an increased premium for homeowners or renters insurance based on the breed of their dog.

An Act to Create A Special Commission to Study the Effects of Rat Poison on Wildlife would establish a commission to study conflicts with rodents and recommend options for controlling rodent populations, including alternatives to rodenticides (rat poisons) such as Integrative Pest Management (IPM) and increased sanitation.

An Act Prohibiting Inhumane Feline Declawing would prohibit cat declawing except as a medical necessity to address an existing or recurring infection, disease, injury, or abnormal condition in the claw that jeopardizes the cat’s health.

An Act Protecting Dogs at Boarding Kennels and Daycare Facilities would establish minimum standards for dog daycare facilities and boarding kennels including staff to dog ratios, housing and care requirements, and indoor and outdoor facility requirements.

OPPOSE: Seven bills have been filed that would legalize unusually cruel methods of killing wildlife, including the use of indiscriminate traps and snares, bait (rotting piles of garbage) that lures bears in for an easy shot, and artificial lights that “spotlight” animals to give hunters an unfair advantage. These practices are not even endorsed by most wildlife managers who otherwise support lethal wildlife management tools.