

Help the ASPCA speak out for mistreated animals. Legislation, enforcement, education, awareness and public action all work toward the prevention of cruelty to animals.

Founded in 1866 by Henry Bergh, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was the first humane organization in the Western Hemisphere. Today, the ASPCA has more than 685,000 members and donors, who support and take part in our work to prevent cruelty and alleviate the pain, fear and suffering of animals through nationwide education, awareness, legal and legislative programs.

Led by ASPCA efforts in New York State, some of the first state animal welfare laws were enacted to protect horses and cattle. Today, each state has some form of anti-cruelty law, and protection extends to many other species. But there is much more to be done through federal, state and local efforts to strengthen these laws.

Animal abuse can take many forms. Beating an animal is just one of them. The failure of a human caregiver to provide a companion animal with food, water, veterinary care or, in some locations, shelter, constitutes neglect. Leaving an animal locked in a car or tied outside in very hot or cold weather is unlawful. Abandoning a pet is a crime. Individual animals also suffer in factory farms, puppy mills, fur farms, research laboratories and cruel traps.

ASPCA Humane Law Enforcement peace officers are empowered to safeguard animals across New York State through inspections, seizures and arrests. They respond to animal cruelty complaints, which can involve pet shops, animal shelters, individuals who have more animals than they can care for properly, and illegal cockfights and dog-fights. They also inspect carriage horses, stables, movie sets, rodeos, circuses, and zoos on a regular basis. HLE officers as well as ASPCA Humane Education and Public Information staff seek to educate people about necessary care and compassion for animals, not only to prevent animal abuse, but also to remedy questionable situations.

Animal cruelty is a felony in slightly more than a majority of states at this time, and the ASPCA and other animal protection

organizations around the country continue to lobby in state capitals for stronger anti-cruelty measures. It has been established that many notorious mass murderers and other dangerous criminals have had a history of animal abuse, but many judges and prosecutors still must be educated to the seriousness of animal abuse.

The Animal Cruelty Prosecution Task Force, an organization made up of prosecutors, attorneys and law enforcement officials, has been created to examine and track animal cruelty cases and promote effective prosecution. In addition, an intervention program has been launched by the ASPCA in which convicted abusers meet with our Director of Counseling Services.

Key goals of the program are:

- Cross-training among human service and animal welfare agencies
- Cross-reporting
- Information-sharing among agencies and effective public education
- Psycho-educational intervention for abusers
- Foster care for animals at risk

How You Can Help

• Cruelty investigators throughout the United States—be they sheriffs, police officers or local animal shelter or control personnel—are prepared to assist citizens by serving cruelty summonses and/or arresting violators. If you witness or hear about animal cruelty, report it to your local humane organization, police or sheriff.

• Currently, a witness to an abusive act may be required to testify in court to support the charge, which hopefully will result in the removal of the animal from the threatening environment, sometimes permanently.

• To report suspected animal abuse or neglect within New York City, call ASPCA Humane Law Enforcement at (212) 876-7700, ext. 4450.

• The ASPCA Legal department should be notified about acts of cruelty wherever they

occur, so that we may encourage local officials to prosecute. Call (212) 876-7700, ext. 4551, or send e-mail to legal@aspc.org.

• In many states, animal cruelty crimes are classified only as misdemeanors. However, lobbying is taking place in many states to make intentional cruelty to animals a felony. Contact the ASPCA Government Affairs and Public Policy department, which can advise you on ways you can help, including writing to your lawmakers.

• Become a member of the ASPCA Advocacy Brigade. Call (212) 876-7700, ext. 4550; fax to (212) 360-6875; send e-mail to government@aspc.org, or send your name, mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address to ASPCA Government Affairs and Public Policy, 424 East 92nd Street, New York, NY 10128-6804.

• Make sure schools in your town include humane education as part of their curriculum or lesson plans. To order information about the ASPCA's Extend the Web program, call (212) 876-7700, ext. 4410.

• Volunteer at a local animal shelter, foster a shelter animal or adopt a companion animal. Support your local animal rescue organization or shelter with money, food or supplies.

• If you have a companion animal, be responsible and provide him or her with annual veterinary check-ups. Spay or neuter your cat or dog to reduce the pet population. License your dog and obey the leash laws to ensure his or her safety.



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