



A MESSAGE FROM ANTHONY A. SCARPINO, JR.
Westchester County District Attorney

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As District Attorney and chief law enforcement officer in Westchester County, I am concerned with the safety and security of all of Westchester's residents - including our furry friends. For many of us with pets, a dog or cat is lovingly treated as a member of our family. For some, an animal is seen as a target for maltreatment or physical abuse. Abusive behavior toward any animal is not only cruel and disturbing - it is illegal.

Animal cruelty is injury or harm inflicted on an animal. It may consist of deliberate physical abuse or simply failing to take care of an animal's direct needs, which is neglect. A criminal who abuses animals exhibits disdain for life and a willingness to target and abuse the most defenseless of creatures.

As District Attorney, I pay close attention to cases of animal cruelty not only because the behavior is inherently cruel and repulsive, but because these cases raise important public safety concerns. Research tells us that a person's mistreatment of an animal is associated with a likelihood of his or her committing further violence or criminal acts against humans. We also know from research that a child who abuses an animal may have either witnessed or experienced violence at home. For these reasons, I consider it extremely important to identify, thoroughly investigate and appropriately prosecute animal cruelty cases that occur here in our county.

The Animal Abuse Unit in the District Attorney's office is staffed by a specially trained prosecutor, who is committed to the prevention of cruelty to animals and the prosecution of abusers.

Our work in the area of animal cruelty is an important priority for us. If you see an animal being mistreated, or you are aware of a case involving animal cruelty, please help by contacting your local police department.

ANIMAL CRUELTY

Your Civic Responsibility



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The Legal Consequences of Animal Cruelty

In response to the seriousness of animal abuse, laws have been enacted to provide for the prosecution of persons who abuse animals. Acts of cruelty against animals are now prosecuted alongside felony crimes such as burglary, assault, and homicide.

The law criminalizes the following behavior directed at an “animal” legally defined as every living creature except a human being:

Animal Fighting: (§351) Direct or indirect involvement in animal fighting, including spectators, trainers and possessors of an animal trained for fighting.

Animal Cruelty: (§353) Overdriving, torturing and injuring animals and failure to provide food, water or proper sustenance.

Aggravated Animal Cruelty: (§353-a) Intentionally kills or intentionally causes serious physical injury to a companion animal with aggravated cruelty; conduct which is intended to cause extreme physical pain or is done or carried out in an especially depraved or sadistic manner.

Animal Abandonment: (§355) Abandoning an animal or leaving a dying or disabled animal in a public place.

Throwing Substance Injurious to Animals in Public Place: (§362) Throwing, dropping or placing any substance including glass, nails, metal, or poison which might wound, disable or injure any animal.

... there is a direct correlation between animal cruelty & violence perpetrated against humans.

The Link between Animal Cruelty and Human Violence

Acts of animal cruelty contribute to a cycle violence and are effective predictors of future violence. Many dangerous criminals have had a history of animal abuse often starting at childhood, this is also connected to bullying among children. According to the New York State Humane Society, animal cruelty behavior is an indicator of either a bullying personality or a victim displaying anger. Moreover, animal cruelty is also associated with family violence in addition to gang violence.

For Additional Information

Animal Cruelty Unit
Westchester County District Attorney's Office
(914) 995-3420

To Report Animal Abuse

Call your local police department or the
SPCA of Westchester Confidential
Animal Cruelty Hotline
(914) 941-7797

