



Vermont Humane Federation

PO Box 311, Waterbury, VT 05676

www.vermonthumane.org

Addison County Humane Society ♦ American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ♦ Best Friends Animal Society
Central Vermont Humane Society ♦ Feline & Friends Foundation ♦ Good Karma Rescue ♦ Green Mountain Animal Defenders
The Hooved Animal Sanctuary ♦ Humane Society of Chittenden County ♦ The Humane Society of the United States
Lucy Mackenzie Humane Society ♦ North Country Animal League ♦ PETS of the Kingdom ♦ Protect Our Wildlife ♦ Riverside Rescue, Inc.
Rutland County Humane Society ♦ Second Chance Animal Center ♦ Springfield Humane Society
Spay ASAP ♦ Vermont Companion Animal Neutering, Inc. ♦ Windham County Humane Society

April 30, 2017

Dear Senate and House Committees on Judiciary,

On behalf of the member organizations of the Vermont Humane Federation, I write to encourage your committees to hold a conference committee to complete consideration on S.12, important legislation that strengthens animal cruelty laws, before the end of this legislative session.

The VHF has been a leader in the fight against animal cruelty in Vermont since our inception, and our member agencies, representing local animal shelters and rescue groups throughout the state, often assume the vital responsibility of caring for seized animals on behalf of the state and local authorities. Our association has a vested interest in ensuring that animal cruelty laws and prosecution standards are strong and can effectively address all types of animal abuse.

Both versions of S.12, passed respectively by the Senate and House, contain changes that would ensure those who commit cruelty against animals are held accountable for their actions. The Senate-passed bill increases the maximum sentence for aggravated animal cruelty, placing appropriate penalties on those convicted of the most egregious forms of animal abuse. The House-passed bill includes additional improvements that allow for the prosecution of actions that constitute "a reckless course of conduct that results in the death of an animal," increase the misdemeanor-level maximum sentence for intentionally killing an animal, and strengthen how the law treats those who torture, administer poison to, cruelly beat, or mutilate an animal. The House-passed bill also adds the crime of animal sexual abuse to the cruelty statute, an abhorrent behavior that is illegal in all but eight states and is strongly correlated with other violent crimes, such as child sexual abuse.

Taken together, the thoughtful improvements included by the Senate and House in S.12 represent a substantial step forward for Vermont's animal cruelty statute. The Vermont Humane Federation respectfully urges you to combine these productive policies from each version of S.12 and enact comprehensive legislation that protects animals from cruelty and makes all Vermonters proud.

Sincerely,

Jessica Danyow

President, Vermont Humane Federation

Executive Director, Homeward Bound: Addison County Humane Society