

- Thank you, Chairwoman Partridge, and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today. I am Jessica Danyow, the current chair of the Animal Cruelty Investigations Advisory Board, the Executive Director of the Addison County Humane Society in Middlebury, and the current president of the Vermont Humane Federation. I have been involved in the animal welfare and sheltering field in Vermont for almost 19 years.
- I understand that the committee was interested in the Advisory Board's view of H. 254, the livestock sheltering bill, and since we have not, as a Board, considered that bill, I can't speak on behalf of the board but I can speak from my years of personal experience to say that I very much support a bill that clarifies language surrounding what constitutes adequate shelter and adequate natural shelter. It is hard to ask for compliance with laws when the terms are vague. For example, a large deciduous tree may be perfectly adequate to provide shade for a horse in the summer but completely inadequate to provide protection from the elements in the winter. Same tree, different interpretations!
- To turn back to the work of the Advisory Board please know that I am very grateful for this opportunity to speak to our work. We were tasked in 2016 with examining how Vermont responds to animal cruelty cases and to make recommendations on improving this response. It is a broad mandate and in the course of our three years of work it has become apparent that there are a couple of fundamental things that need to change in order to effectively address animal cruelty. These necessary changes make up the bulk of our 2019 recommendations, which I have also provided.

- First, the language and definitions used in Title 13 and Title 20 are in need of overhaul to bring them into the 21st century. The growth of the pet rescue industry in the past decade has been phenomenal and our laws and language have not kept up with it. The state of Colorado's Department of Agriculture's "Pet Animal Care and Facilities Act" provides a very nice example of modernized, comprehensive language.
- In addition to our statutory language being out of date, Vermont is also currently without any framework for regulating the work and practices of rescues, shelters, home-based rescues, and pet transporters. Pet rescues, transporters, and animal shelters are able to work without any checks and balances in place.
- The fact that pet rescue is not regulated or in any way overseen in the state is directly related to investigating animal cruelty because all good animal cruelty investigations begin with an effort to educate and bring the pet owner into compliance with current animal welfare regulations and laws. All investigators would rather support, educate and hopefully, resolve, minor issues without invoking violations of the criminal code. Currently, the lack of ability to oversee the work of pet rescues means there is no mechanism, short of criminal prosecution, to address deficiencies in care. Animals suffer and public and private agencies expend enormous resources to come in and clean up after minor issues have escalated.
- I have provided written documentation for your website of several cases where rescues have gotten out of control and animals and humans have been hurt because of it. In addition, I would like to share photographs from one of these cases. I warn you that they are graphic. The first photo is of a dog who got into a fight and whose wounds were either untreated or treated with home remedies. I

believe this dog ultimately had to be euthanized. The second photo is of a person's inner forearm after they sustained a bite wound by a dog at one of these rescues.

- I am very pleased to see that H. 497 has been introduced as a means to improve definitions and to assess how the pet rescue industry should be regulated. The Advisory Board looks forward to supporting the development of this bill.
- Thank you. I, and my fellow members of the Advisory Board, Mary McFaun and Erika Holm, are happy to answer any questions you may have.