

FYI, I am a retired veterinarian and lawyer who works with the police on animal abuse cases here in Vermont. I am a good witness for you.

1). Page 3, line 16 "except livestock" is unacceptable because many of the cases I work with the police on involve livestock. One case (Hinesburg) involved 150 head of low line Angus that were starving and in mud up to their bellies. 20 calves had died. This was his 4th offense over a period of 6 years. Another (Northfield case) involved 17 starving horses, one of which died soon after rescue. Another is the Brandon case, their 3rd offense, which included hogs and poultry. Then there was the Brownington case in which several cows died and the rest were in bad condition. Livestock need to be included in these cruelty to animal bills as they are often involved.

2). The court system often does little to stop these hoarders/abusers from getting animals repeatedly. The Eden case involving 86 dogs and cats was dismissed with no penalties. The woman in the Hardwick case has animals again. The woman in the Bakersfield case has animals again. The courts need to apply the laws and see that they are enforced. Hoarders must never have animals again because their mental condition will drive them to continue to hoard animals. The hoarding cases I have worked on have been nightmares with trash piled 3 feet deep in the house, cat feces in the frying pan, filth everywhere and animals that are struggling to survive.

3). If the owner refused to relinquish ownership, then the animals have to be held as evidence. This can get very costly to the people who have volunteered to take the animals. It is also costly when the person is a repeat offender and usually the same humane groups take the animals again and again. There needs to be a way to ensure that the people who take these animals get reimbursed for the expenses they incur.

4). A technicality: Page 4 line 19. "the court may impose". Yet page 5 line 7 says the court "shall". The paragraph using "shall" should precede the statement that the court "may" impose. Otherwise "shall" is negated by "may".

Otherwise, this is a pretty decent bill. It is time to end these repeated investigations like the one in Brandon.

Best,

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