



State of Vermont
Department of Public Safety



**2024 Report to the House and Senate
Committees on Judiciary, House Committee on
Agriculture and Forest Products, and Senate
Committee on Agriculture
Act No. 155 of 2016**

Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board

January 15, 2025

Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board

Erika Holm, Central Vermont Humane Society – Chair

Sally Adams, Esq., State’s Attorneys and Sheriffs Association – Vice Chair

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Kelly Price, Vermont Police Association

JoAnn Nichols, Humane Society of Chittenden County

Vacant, Agency of Agriculture

2016 Act No. 155, Section 1943 ([24 V.S.A. §1943](#)) tasked the creation of an Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board (ACIAB) for the purpose of reviewing Vermont’s existing systems for investigating and responding to animal cruelty complaints, and making recommendations to the Legislature regarding a streamlined, collaborative process that provides the best services to Vermont’s animals statewide.

Since 2017, the ACIAB has reported to the Legislature per its statutory mandate. The ACIAB’s past reports can be found [here](#). The ACIAB has consistently recommended a comprehensive plan to bring together the fragmented investigation functions throughout the state, to create consistency, equity, and find efficiencies, starting with creating a State department responsible for this oversight.

In 2023 and 2024, the ACIAB worked tirelessly on the writing and passage of H.626, along with many animal welfare organizations and advocates. With its passage, effective July 1, 2024, we are now focused on where we currently stand considering the creation of a Division of Animal Welfare within the Department of Public Safety, and the roles and responsibilities of the Director. Many of the responsibilities designated to the Director of the Division of Animal Welfare were previously under the purview of the ACIAB, and we are prepared to assist the new Director with implementing these tasks.

The Board is grateful for the attention given to our and others’ recommendations on how to improve the oversight and execution of animal welfare responsibilities within the state. We are heartened by the passage of H.626 and the creation of a Division of

Animal Welfare. However, it is our strong belief that that many of the provisions of H.626 which were not part of the final Act 167 are essential to the continued work of protecting people and animals in the State of Vermont. H.626 as proposed, was a road map for how to best address animal cruelty investigations in the State of Vermont and how to best address the changing landscape of animal rescue and shelter operations.

Specifically, the proposal to add Chapter 190 to Title 20 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated, specifically section 3203, which was to create an “Animal Welfare Advisory Council” to advise the Director of Animal Welfare on matters pertaining to animal welfare, was an essential piece of the proposed legislation and without it, any newly hired Director of Animal Welfare will be at a disadvantage in fulfilling their obligations under the legislative directive. As proposed, the council was charged to consult with and advise the Director on proposed revisions to animal welfare laws and rules; assist the Director in implementing and evaluating of animal welfare laws and rules; review training programs for law enforcement officers and municipal animal control officers and make recommendations for training; research sources of funding that the Director could pursue for deposit to the Animal Welfare Fund; periodically evaluate the adequacy of existing funding for administration and enforcement of the State’s animal welfare laws and make recommendations to the Director for increased funding if necessary; and advise the Director on other matters related to animal welfare laws. Currently, the Director of Animal Welfare is not obligated to review or even consult with the myriad of experts who have been addressing these issues and consulting with the Legislature over the past decade. Given the work that the ACIAB has done over many years, we recommend that the Legislature require the Director of Animal Welfare to review all submitted reports of the ACIAB to consult with and obtain recommendations from the ACIAB prior to submitting their required report to the Legislature eight months after hire.

We also recommend that further legislation is passed to implement the full provisions of H.626 as proposed, including the creation of an Animal Welfare Advisory Council. There are many Board members who have the experience, expertise, and credentials who could fill a gubernatorial appointment to this council and would be willing to serve in that capacity and to further assist the Legislature, the Director of Animal Welfare, and the citizens of the State of Vermont in adequately addressing animal welfare in the state. We will continue to support work on new legislation to achieve this end.