Ohio Animal Abuse Recognition & Reporting

Ohio House Bill 33
❖ Dr. Allison Lash, OVMA AARR Task Force Chair
❖ Jack Advent, OVMA Executive Director
Mandatory Reporting & Resources

- HB 33 Background
- HB 33 Provisions
- Existing Animal Cruelty Statute
- To Report or Not
- Common Scenarios
- Building Relationships with Humane Agents
- OVMA Resources to Help
- Questions ????
Why HB 33?

Pathway to Law

- Introduced February 2, 2019
- Passed House 89-2 June 2020
- Passed Senate 31-0 Dec 2020
- Governor signs January 6, 2021
- Becomes law April 6, 2021

- Early version problematic
- The ethical responsibility

- Correlation human - animal violence
- Includes social services & dog wardens
- Most other states address
HB 33 Key Provisions

- Immediately report suspected animal abuse [ORC 959]
- Applies to companion animals
- Report to an officer as defined ORC 959.132 (A)(4)- a human agent, law enforcement, animal control
- Report can be orally or in writing [ORC 959.01 (A)(1)]
- Description of animal, owner contact info, nature of suspected abuse, other relevant info

- Report made in “good faith” extends civil and criminal liability immunity to DVM who reports [ORC 959.09 (B)]
- Failure to report reviewed by OVMLB
- First violation a confidential warning, second $100 fine and subsequent $500 fine [ORC 4741.22 (C ) (D)]
- Obligation is to report in good faith on your direct medical observation and not to prove.
Animal Cruelty Statute ORC 959

- ORC 959.01 Abandon an animal
- ORC 959.02 Maliciously kill or injure
- ORC 959.03 Willfully poison
- ORC 959.13 All animals: Torture, starve, cruelly beat, mutilate, kill, impound without food/water/shelter
- ORC 959.131 Companion animals: Torture, torment, mutilate, serious physical harm, other acts of cruelty, deprive food/water/shelter - cause sickness or suffering. Allowances for research, veterinary medicine, hunting/filed trial purposes and common training devices
Animal Cruelty Statute ORC 959

- ORC 959.15 Animal fighting in general
- ORC 959.16 Dog fighting
- ORC 959.21 Sexual conduct with an animal
I’m a veterinarian - what does this mean for me?
ALLISON LASH, DVM

- Medical Director, Cleveland Animal Protective League
- 10+ years Shelter Medicine
- Private Practice, Emergency Relief Work
- At home: 2 kids, 5 cats, 1 guinea pig, fish, chickens, bees
• My work at the Cleveland APL
  • Shelter Veterinarian (individual health, herd health)
  • Administrative Duties
  • Outpatient, income-qualified, community pet care (project CARE)
  • Surgery
  • Forensics
HB 33

- [https://search-prod.lis.state.oh.us/solarapi/v1/general_assembly_133/bills/hb33/EN/05? format=pdf](https://search-prod.lis.state.oh.us/solarapi/v1/general_assembly_133/bills/hb33/EN/05? format=pdf)

**Expands cross-reporting of abuse of both animals and people**

- Prohibits veterinarians and specified social service/counseling professionals from failing to report abuse of a companion animal (a dog, cat, or animal other than livestock/wildlife that is kept in a residential dwelling)

- Similarly prohibits a law enforcement officer, humane society agent, animal control officer, dog warden, or deputy dog warden from failing to report abuse of a companion animal to an appropriate social service professional under specified circumstances

- Specifies that a person required to make a report is immune from civil or criminal liability in connection with making the report when the report is made in good faith

- Adds dog wardens/animal control officers to the list of professionals who must immediately report child abuse
OHIO REVISED CODE 959

Offenses relating to domestic animals

- 959.01 Abandon an animal
- 959.02 Maliciously kill or injure
- 959.03 Willfully poison
- 959.13 All animals: cruelty/neglect
- 959.131 Companion animals: cruelty/neglect
- 959.15 Animal fighting in general
- 959.16 Dog fighting
- 959.21 Sexual contact with an animal
• (B) No person shall knowingly torture, torment, needlessly mutilate or maim, cruelly beat, poison, needlessly kill, or commit an act of cruelty against a companion animal.
• (C) No person shall knowingly cause serious physical harm to a companion animal.
• (D) No person who confines or who is the custodian or caretaker of a companion animal shall negligently do any of the following:
  • (1) Torture, torment, or commit an act of cruelty against the companion animal;
  • (2) Deprive the companion animal of necessary sustenance or confine the companion animal without supplying it during the confinement with sufficient quantities of good, wholesome food and water if it can reasonably be expected that the companion animal would become sick or suffer in any other way as a result of or due to the deprivation or confinement;
  • (3) Impound or confine the companion animal without affording it during the impoundment or confinement, with access to shelter from heat, cold, wind, rain, snow, or excessive direct sunlight if it can reasonably be expected that the companion animal would become sick or suffer in any other way as a result of or due to the lack of adequate shelter.
OVMA ANIMAL ABUSE REPORTING TASK FORCE

• Committee of one Social Worker and DVMs from various backgrounds (shelter, ER, academia, consulting)
• Work preceded passing of HB 33
• Documents include recognizing and reporting equine, large animal abuse
Today:

• Recognize, Record, Report suspected animal abuse

• Case Studies

• Expert Report Examples
• The terms animal cruelty and animal abuse will be used interchangeably in this presentation.

• Animal cruelty is a legal, not a medical, determination.

• By reporting suspicions to law enforcement, the veterinarian has the ability to protect both animals and humans.
  • https://nationallinkcoalition.org/
Questions to keep in mind during suspected cases of animal cruelty:

• Is there unnecessary discomfort or suffering?

• Would a reasonable person have been able to tell there was a problem?

• Is there reasonable remedy or relief?

• Are the owners/caretakers following agreed upon plan?
ANIMAL ABUSE RECOGNITION & REPORTING

https://www.ohiovma.org/veterinarians/resources/abuse.html
CLASSIFICATIONS OF ANIMAL ABUSE

1. Simple or Gross Neglect
   - The most common form of abuse encountered by veterinarians.
   - Typically results from failure to provide for basic needs such as
     appropriate diet, shelter, or sanitation.
   - Examples: Failure to provide necessary medical care, starvation, animal
     boarding, embalming, or extreme neglect.

2. Intentional Physical Abuse & Torture
   - Non-accidental harm perceived in anger for personal enjoyment,
     or to inflict pain.
   - Examples: Abusive behavior, poisoning, shooting, stabbing, burning,
     or electrocuting animals.

3. Organized Animal Abuse
   - Animals are intentionally killed, dissected, burned, or used in competitive
     activities or events.
   - Examples: Hunting, cockfighting.

4. Sexual Abuse, Bestiality, & Zoophilia
   - Contact of the sexual machinery with the animal, which may result
     in physical injury to the animal.
   - Examples: Forcing, feeding, manipulation, penetration.

5. Ritualistic Abuse
   - Killing and/ or mutilating an animal as part of a religious ceremony,
     often related to animal sacrifice.
   - Examples: Ritualistic killing, dismembering, burning.

6. Emotional Abuse
   - Deliberate actions or emotions intended to inflict emotional distress.
   - Examples: Severe isolation, unpredictable/ excessive violence
     or treatment that do not result in physical harm.
   - Examples: Constantly scaring, yelling, ignoring, or rejecting.

A case management model of animal neglect and abuse supports the requirement of the appropriate animal agency to determine if a case is neglect or abuse.
Many forms of animal abuse:
• Veterinarians encounter many forms of animal abuse, from minor neglect to malicious harm

Educate or Report:
• When education fails or when intentional abuse is suspected, report
• When there is reasonable belief the animal will go without care, report
Some injuries and illnesses presenting to a veterinarian may raise suspicion of abuse, especially if they are inconsistent with the animal’s history. Veterinarians should report them when they have a reasonable suspicion, so that the proper authorities can investigate, rather than waiting until they feel they can prove a case. The investigation is greatly improved when veterinarians are aware of what to look for and what to document when abuse is suspected.

**Common Presentations**

- Abrasions or Wounds
- Asphyxiation by ligature
- Burns
- Bleeding
- Bruising

**Injuries**

- Crush Injuries
- Fractured Bones
- Eye Injuries
- Foot Injuries
- Gunshot Wounds

**Types of Abuse**

- Lead Poisoning
- Internal Injuries
- Knife Wounds
- Repetitive Injuries
- Starvation

A list of additional diseases and injuries may be found in the American Veterinary Medical Association’s “Veterinary Diseases of Abused Animals” guide.
## Non-Accidental Injury

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework</th>
<th>Findings (Characteristics)</th>
<th>Transmission</th>
<th>Timing/Biology/Pathobiology</th>
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- **Framework**: Various frameworks for analyzing non-accidental injury, focusing on key characteristics and their implications for transmission and timing.

- **Findings (Characteristics)**: Specific observations and criteria used to identify non-accidental injury, including biological and pathological aspects.

- **Transmission**: Mechanisms by which injuries are transmitted, often linked to specific types of abuse.

- **Timing/Biology/Pathobiology**: Analysis of when injuries are most likely to occur, along with their biological and pathological implications.
Injured/sick animal

First Question: What Happened?

My dog/cat was HBC
My dog/cat was attacked by a raccoon
My neighbor poisoned my dog/cat

Our job:
Figure out what really happened

http://pghspayvac.com/feeding-feral-cats-racoons/
DOCUMENTING ANIMAL ABUSE

In addition to your typical medical recordkeeping, consider adding the following details to your documentation when you suspect animal abuse.

Note: See pages 14 to 17 for sample reporting forms.

1. Identify the person(s) bringing in the animal.
   - Determine their relationship to the animal.
   - Document where the animal was obtained and with whom.
   - Record their contact information (first and last name, address, phone number, etc.).

2. Describe the animal.
   - Include sex, age, breed, color, microchip, etc.
   - Unless known, avoid stating the animal's exact age and breed.
   - Include any injuries or abnormalities (e.g., "5-year-old female cat with a 3" collar injury").
   - Note any other pertinent information.

3. Record the owner's account of what happened.
   - Where possible, record the account in their words.
   - Note any of the following:
     - Changes in the animal's normal behavior.
     - Differences between the pet's present and past behavior.
     - Note if the story changes as the medical findings.

4. Describe unusual behavior or observations.
   - These could occur between the pet and present or between the animal and the person present.
   - Note the signs of fear or distress.

5. Be thorough in the description of examination and diagnostic findings.
   - Don't just focus on the answer as only.
   - Look for and record all abnormalities, as well as relevant findings that are within normal limits.
   - Include any other pertinent information.

6. Any other information that may be relevant to the animal's condition.
1. Photograph injuries as thoroughly as possible in the situation.
   - Assess and record movements and positions for reference.
   - Use photography as a visual aid to document injuries for validation of supportive response to treatment, as it can be part of your medical recordkeeping procedure.

2. Look for and record evidence of chronicity and/or repetitive injuries.
   - For example, evidence of chronicity may include an embedded foreign object.
   - Examples of repetitive injuries include fractures that are healed or in a resting stage of healing.

3. Have physical evidence.
   - This may include things like an embedded foreign object, bullets that were surgically removed, a stick and stone used to split a finger, or hard food from around a burn.
   - Paper, bagels, and bones for example.

4. Based on your medical recommendations, including any other instructions.
   - Refill prescriptions as needed.
   - Retail pharmacies may be able to exert instructions that the pharmacist needs to follow.

5. Document all follow-up.
   -包括与医疗、社会支持、或其他患者相关的任何后续步骤。
   - Maintenance of any appointments that were missed or cancelled.

Note: The above information is a general guideline. It is advisable to consult with your healthcare provider for specific instructions.
SECTION 1  Fundamentals

Five Key Considerations

Remember: Animal cruelty is a legal, not a medical, determination. As you move forward in developing protocols for reporting animal cruelty, keep the following considerations in mind:

1. Safety first
   Never compromise the safety of humans or animals. If you are concerned and there is a feeling of risk or harm, call 911.

2. Treat the animal
   If the animal is neglected or abused, you need to collect and document the evidence — but do not compromise the timely treatment of the animal (Balkin, 2007).

3. You are not the judge or jury
   Veterinarians are health professionals, and what is required of you (professionally, ethically, and legally) is to report suspected or known animal maltreatment. Do not determine if a case is neglect, cruelty, or abuse — that is for law enforcement to investigate, the prosecutor to prove, and the jury or judge to decide. Reporting does not mean the person is going to be thrown in jail or even charged. Reporting allows other authorities to investigate the incident further to make sure the animal in question — and other animals and humans — are not at risk of harm.

4. Avoid bias; be impartial
   It is the veterinarian's responsibility to make an accurate and truthful determination of the animal's health (Raisman, 2012). Avoid any bias, and document the medical facts. Industry standards, or a client's economic status, age, ignorance, or other factors may be used by the defendant as excuses for his or her behavior, but these factors should not be used by a veterinarian in assessing an animal’s health.

5. This is not an exact science
   Identifying and recognizing animal cruelty may not be an exact science, but it is a science. This is why a veterinarian's medical expertise is critical. A standard approach of “what to do and look for” in all cases is helpful, but each case will be unique.
Do what you are already trained to do!

You are the animal medical expert!
RED FLAGS OF ANIMAL ABUSE

The following red flags may raise the level of suspicion that abuse is occurring, and warrant further inquiry or reporting to the proper authorities. However, none of these alone constitutes proof of abuse.

**small animal**

**History & Clinical Information**
- The medical history is unique, changes during the visit, and differs between family members.
- The history does not usually include what you consider the physical symptoms; it is usually taken from the pet owner or referring veterinarian.
- Employed practices that need to be recorded in the medical file will be taken on the following day.
- Clients who say their pets are “sick” compared to other cats will be referred to a veterinarian.
- The veterinary record should be maintained in a medical record file.

**Evaluation & Diagnostics**
- Chronic signs of dermatitis, anemia, weight loss, muscle wasting.
- Recent history of trauma with new lesions in various stages of healing.
- Evidence of multiple lesions: scabs, ulcers, etc.
- Poor body condition, muscle wasting, chronic anemia.

In addition to the above, additional red flags to consider:
- A history of violence or abuse within the household.
- A history of violence or abuse within the household.
Non-accidental Injury Suspected

Case:
- 4-month-old Pitbull x puppy
- Routine bath 2 days ago
Neglect Suspected

Case:
- Adult Pitbull x
- Left in a hot car
FIGHTING
Dog Fighting:

**History & Client Interactions**
- Pays for services in cash.
- Boasts of veterinary medical knowledge and/or states they self-vaccinate dogs.
- Requests wound care medicines and/or antibiotics.
- Evades questions and/or is reluctant to provide specific details.
- Behavior may be passive.
- Owns several pit bull terriers.

**Evaluation & Diagnostics**

**Appearance**
- Possibly cropped ears.
- Blunt, broken, or missing teeth.
- Dogs may be thin (RCS 3-4/9) yet well muscled.
- Pit bull terrier breed, typically smaller and agile.
- Heavy leather or logging chain collar.

**Common Injuries**
- Significant wounds and/or scarring to front legs, torso, neck, face, and ears.
- Wounds are typically puncture wounds or “ring lesions” (circumscirbining wounds typically seen on the limbs).
- Wounds and/or fractures in various stages of healing, indicating dog may have been fought more than once.
- Abrasions on paw pads.

**Other Signs**
- Animal may test positive for Babesiosis
- Animal’s behavior may be aggressive while the human is passive.
Dog Fighting:

Skin (Wounds and Scars), Hair coat

Veterinarian: ___________________________ Date: __________

Law Enforcement Agency: ___________________________ Case #: __________

Dog ID #: __________ Distinguishing Marks/Comments: __________

[Diagram of dog with various types of wounds and scars]

[ASPCA logo]
ACCIDENT OR ABUSE?
Non-accidental Injury Suspected

Case:
• 2.5mo old Boston Terrier
• Reported HBC
Non-accidental Injury Suspected

Case:
• Adult cat
• Reported physical abuse
REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE

sample standard operating procedure

The veterinarian’s legal responsibility to report suspicion of animal cruelty and neglect varies by state. While one may not be legally mandated to report abuse, the veterinarian’s ethical and moral responsibility is different. Based on the following, the CVMA encourages the reporting of suspected animal abuse.

POSITIONS ON REPORTING

American Veterinary Medical Association

“The AVMA recognizes that veterinarians may observe cases of animal abuse or neglect as defined by legislative statutes, or societal standards. The AVMA considers it the responsibility of veterinarians to report such cases to appropriate authorities, whether or not reporting is mandated by the law. Disclosure of abuse is necessary to protect the health and welfare of animals and people. Veterinarians should be aware that accurate, timely record keeping, and documentation of these cases are essential. The AVMA considers in the responsibility of the veterinary profession to educate clients regarding humane care and treatment of animals.”

American Animal Hospital Association

AAHA “supports reporting of cases of animal abuse to the appropriate authorities.”

“Being admitted to the profession of veterinary medicine, I solemnly swear to use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal health and welfare, the prevention and relief of animal suffering, the conservation of animal resources, the promotion of public health, and the advancement of medical knowledge.” — The Veterinarian’s Oath
REPORTING
Animal Hoarding Suspected

Case:
- 2 yr old M DSH
- Presented for URI

Cat
- URI
- BCS 2/9
- Filthy fur
- Odor of urine/excrement

Owner
- Odor of cat urine
- Filthy carrier
- Rarely brings the same cat
- Unknown number of cats
Animal Hoarding Suspected

• We are not the animal numbers police

• Is the owner capable of caring for the animals they have?
Animal Hoarding

- Accumulates a large number of animals
- Fails to provide even minimal standards of husbandry and veterinary care
- Fails to act on the deteriorating conditions of the animals or environment, even if the animals are starving, diseased, or dying
- Fails to act on the negative impact of the hoarding on his or her own health and well-being and that of other household members.

Definition from Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium
Do I report these?
Do I report these?
Do I report these?
REPORTING

REPORTING ABUSE

Situations where reporting is warranted after consideration.

Client refuses to authorize or declines against medical advice (AMA).
- Refusal to authorize alone is not grounds for a report of medical neglect. Many owners choose not to authorize for a variety of reasons (cultural, moral, religious).
- If the client does not wish the animal to receive treatment, it is considered non-compliance.
- Providing palliative care is still within the scope of the veterinarian.
- Client refuses to authorize while the animal is at risk of suffering.
- Potential welfare includes providing adequate management or palliative care suffering may be a reason to report medical neglect.
- REFUSING: A refusal to authorize veterinary care is an indication of neglect and is not acceptable.

Owner admits that they caused harm to the animal, but is seeking medical services.
- An owner admits that a report is not required because the owner has taken responsibility to seek veterinary care.
- Owner admits that they caused harm to the animal but is seeking medical services after the harm has been caused.
- owner does not seek the animal's medical care, and is seeking medical care after the harm has been caused.
- Owners, especially ill owners, may be indicative of a larger abuse problem (e.g., domestic violence occurring in the home).
- REFUSING: A refusal by the owner to seek medical care for the animal, regardless of ownership, is an indicator of neglect.

Client is uneducated about proper animal care.
- A lack of education reporting people's animal care as a serious issue may cause neglect.
- Inadequate knowledge, it is appropriate to educate the clients about the animal's care and the emotional needs.
- Clearly document the discussion and your recommendations in the patient record.
- BOTTOM LINE: A refusal to authorize veterinary care is refusal.
- The owner refuses to authorize treatment, and has disregarded your recommendations.
- The owner refuses to authorize treatment, even when you are permitted to call the animal's owner to report a refusal to authorize treatment.

Cultural differences.
- There may be cultural differences that a client may use to explain or excuse neglect or refusal to authorize treatment.
- While it is important to be aware and respect other cultures, the priority is the health and safety of the animal.
- Bottom line: if you suspect neglect, it is necessary to report to the humane agency.
Leaving against medical advice (AMA)  

...and/or unable to pay for care 

...or refusal to euthanize 

• May leave without care, and AMA, for a variety of reasons  
  • Can’t/won’t afford treatment  
  • Don’t agree there is a problem  
  • Doesn’t agree with treatment plan  
  • Cultural or religious differences regarding treatment plan
Leaving against medical advice (AMA)

...and/or unable to pay for care

The money issue...

• Present a variety of treatment options
• Know local resources
  • Assistance programs, low cost options, shelters
• Check to see if they went where they said they were going
• See if your practice can offer financing for cases where care can’t wait (pyometra, parvo, fractures)

You have done what you can and still have reasonable belief the owner will not seek care resulting in the animal experiencing unnecessary pain or suffering, report.
Leaving against medical advice (AMA)

...and/or unable to pay for care

...or refusal to euthanize

The euthanasia issue...

- Refusal to euthanize alone is not grounds for a report of medical neglect.
- Many owners choose not to euthanize for a variety of reasons (cultural, moral, religious).
- If an owner does not wish to euthanize, they need to provide a level of care that ensures the animal is not experiencing pain or suffering.
- However, refusal or inability to provide appropriate management of pain and/or suffering may be a reason to report medical neglect.

You have done what you can and still have reasonable belief the owner will not seek care resulting in the animal experiencing unnecessary pain or suffering, report.
REPORTING
REPORTING

https://nationallinkcoalition.org/how-do-i-report-suspected-abuse/
**FORMS**

**SUSPECTED ANIMAL CRUELTY REPORT**

**SMALL ANIMAL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Security Info</th>
<th>Intergroup</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
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**Physical Exam**

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<th>General</th>
<th>Young</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Poor</td>
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**Veterinary**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
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<td>12/01/21</td>
<td>Urinary Infection</td>
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**Nutritional**

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<tr>
<th>Diet</th>
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**Behavioral**

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<th>Solution</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Training</td>
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**Communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person giving communication</th>
<th>Person receiving communication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Smith</td>
<td>Jane Doe</td>
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**Reporting**

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<tr>
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<th>Person taking report</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>John Smith</td>
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**Signature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner notification</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner notified</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**

- The form includes sections for medical history, physical exam, nutritional status, behavioral issues, and communication details. It is designed to capture comprehensive information about suspected animal cruelty cases.
# SUSPECTED ANIMAL CRUELTY REPORT

**LARGE ANIMAL**

## FORMS

### ANIMAL INFORMATION
- Name/Identification:
- Species/Breed:
- Markings, tattoos, brands:
- Sex: Male/Female
- Age:

### OWNER INFORMATION
- Name (Last, First):
- Address:
- Phone:
- Email:

### PERSON SUSPECTED OF CRUELTY
- Name (Last, First):
- Address:
- Phone:
- Email:

### INCIDENT DETAILS
- Date/Time:

### REASON FOR REPORT
- [ ] Abuse or mistreatment of animal(s):
- [ ] Neglect:
- [ ] Malnourishment:
- [ ] Disease/Injury:
- [ ] Aversion to animal with apparent mental or physical reason:
- [ ] Abandonment (i.e., a pet that the owner may have more a result than an adequate care):
- [ ] Unnatural or repeatable behavior (e.g., morning wakening):
- [ ] Interference with various stages of breeding:
- [ ] Intoxication:
- [ ] Definition of abuse:

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE FORMS
- Provide as much detail as possible:
- Include all relevant information:
- **Note:** This form is for the reporting of suspected animal cruelty.

---

Please see the full documentation at www.doesyourdog.com.

[www.doesyourdog.com](http://www.doesyourdog.com)
FAQS

FREQUENTLY Asked QUESTIONS

Are I legally bound or mandated to report animal abuse or neglect?

As a professional in Ohio, you are required by law to report suspected animal abuse or neglect. Under Ohio Revised Code 195.331, uninsured veterinarians will be mandated to report suspected animal abuse or neglect to law enforcement.

I was not trained in veterinary school on how to identify animal abuse. How do I get training?

You may not have had training in veterinary school, but by the nature of your work, you are an expert in animal health. The most important thing to remember is that you do not need to prove a case when it comes to abuse or neglect, you simply need to recognize when an animal is in trouble.

I am a veterinarian. How do I report animal abuse?

If you suspect animal abuse or neglect, you should report it to the appropriate law enforcement agency. If you are unsure, contact the Ohio Attorney General's Office for guidance.

Am I required to report suspected animal abuse or neglect?

As a veterinarian, you are legally bound to report any suspected animal abuse or neglect to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Are veterinary reports confidential?

Veterinarians are legally required to report suspected animal abuse or neglect to law enforcement agencies.

How do I report animal abuse or neglect?

If you suspect animal abuse or neglect, you should report it to the appropriate law enforcement agency. If you are unsure, contact the Ohio Attorney General's Office for guidance.
FAQS

What if I am not sure whether a case to actually animal abuse? Do I need to know for sure before I report?

Yes, you should not need to be certain or have definite proof it is animal abuse. If you have a reasonable suspicion, do not hesitate to contact your county human agent, who will conduct the investigation in your name. This includes for non-cases documented on the county level. In appropriate cases, I'm willing to assist and can communicate with the human agent or any other relevant agency or individual.

Will I anger clients, lose clients, or get sued because I report?

While there is no evidence of any adverse effect on veterinary medicine, we are at the forefront of research and treatment in animal medicine. There is evidence that physician nears reach out to clients for reporting illegal acts (see our notes on the subject of illegal activity). It is important to be aware of your clients' rights and responsibilities regarding illegal activity.

We encourage veterinary professionals to report suspected animal cruelty by contacting the relevant authorities or organizations.

What happens if a staff member wants to report a case?

In the event of an allegation, the staff member is required to report the incident to the appropriate authority. The staff member should also document the incident for future reference. If the staff member is not satisfied with the handling of the incident, they should seek external advice and support.

If reports suggest animal abuse, will I lose my job or be penalized?

It is not uncommon for veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse. In such cases, it is important to document the incident and provide clear evidence to support the report.

If a client seeks veterinary care for their injured pet, does that mean it is probably not abuse?

Not necessarily. It is essential to document the incident and provide clear evidence to support the report. It is important to work with the client to determine the best course of action.

Resources:
- National Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
- Humane Society of the United States
- Animal Welfare Institute

For more information, please visit the following websites:
- www.animalwelfare.gov
- www.humanhealth.org
- www.animalscience.org
I reported it. Now what?

* Few reports actually proceed to court
  
  • Resolution
    • Education, compliance agreement
  
  • Charges filed
    • Plea agreement
    • Case to court
      • Trial
SECTION 3  SOP: Consultation & Reporting

13. Write Forensic Report

Veterinary Statement of Findings

In an animal cruelty case, you will be asked to write a forensic report known as a “Veterinary Statement of Findings.”

This report is different from your medical records of the patient and from any initial or preliminary statement or report you may have already made. It is comprehensive; it includes your summary and conclusions.

The report will pull together all of your medical findings, along with attachments (i.e., examination findings, diagnostic tests, radiographs, photographs). Based on these findings and your assessment, you then will draw a conclusion if, in your medical opinion, the animal(s) experienced pain, suffering or death because of neglect or neglectful treatment.

NOTE: The headings to the right and on the next page are suggested based on evidence collected. Sample forensic veterinary statements and reports vary with what is appropriate.
• This is in addition to medical records and diagnostics
• Keep it concise
• You are the expert
• Make sure non-medically trained people can understand it
EXPERT REPORT

On November 15th, 2020, the Animal Services Division of the Humane Society of the United States was notified of a dog that had been injured in a road accident. The dog was brought to the Animal Hospital of Sheboygan for evaluation.

A veterinary examination was performed, and the dog was found to have a fracture in the right hind leg. The fracture was confirmed radiographically, and the dog was placed in a cast to allow for proper healing.

Without veterinary care immediately after the injury (pain medication, surgery), the dog would not have been able to walk on its own. The dog was then treated with pain medication and physical therapy, and it was allowed to begin walking on its own.

The dog was discharged from the hospital on December 1st, 2020, and it was recommended that the dog continue to be treated as an indoor pet to prevent further injury.

The fracture in the right hind leg was confirmed to be a tibial fracture, and it was estimated that the dog would be able to return to normal activity within six to eight weeks.

The dog was then placed in a foster home, and it was monitored for any signs of discomfort.

The dog was treated with pain medication and physical therapy, and it was allowed to begin walking on its own.

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EXPERT REPORT

Animal ID: [Redacted]
Cat: [Redacted]

I examined two animals from the above referenced case. One, a young Labrador, a male, in March 2018, and the other, a young female cat, in July 2018.

The dog presented with an infection around the neck from an embedded collar and was very uncomfortable. It was placed on antibiotics and pain medication. It took 8 days to get the infection under control and the dog was released on antibiotics for an additional 2 weeks. The dog was severely overweight and suffered from a Body Condition Score of 2/9 and gained 8 lbs in less than 30 days due to anandesminal feeding program. He went on to make a full recovery.

The cat presented with a proliferative urticaria. The cat had red papules, but with no民间, the cat's fur. There was no sign of the cat's fur being red. The cat was treated with an antihistamine, and after 7 days, the infection was gone. The cat was likely caused by the cat's previous treatment. The cat maintained a good condition and the cat's fur was good. The cat gained 3 lbs in less than 30 days due to anandesminal feeding program. The cat went on to make a full recovery.

The above animals were markedly overweight, they both responded significantly to basic feeding of fish meal, and there is no evidence that they were not being fed adequately.

The condition of these animals was suffering from some degree of malnourishment that would be consistent with a pet owner. The owner had been in contact with the owner of the dog's owner, who had a diagnosis of a severe medical condition. The cat was alert, and the owner was able to see the cat's eyes. The cat was not consuming from the kibble. An anti-inflammatory was prescribed. These conditions were left uncontrolled and unattended for a significant amount of time, causing a severe and likely to threaten the health and comfort of these animals.

Andrew J. Fox
Board of Veterinary Medicine
Chase and APL
EXPERT REPORT

An animal examination revealed a young, black and white, male, domestic puppy. The vet reported that the puppy was healthy and free from abnormalities.

A post-mortem examination revealed a young puppy in a transparent body condition. The heart area revealed a swelling of the aorta and the left ventricle. There was blood oozing onto the left atrium and chest. There was an enlarged aorta with whitish material on the inner surface. The lungs showed minimal congestion, and blood accumulated in the lung tissue and the pericardium (tissue around the heart) was filled with blood. No other abnormalities were found in the examination.

The post-mortem examination revealed no signs of injury, bleeding, or other fractures of the bone structure. Collapsed blood vessels were noted in the left atrium and right ventricle. The heart was noted as a right-sided heart.

This case death as a result of trauma that led to heart failure of the left and right ventricle. Death from the injury was due to lack of respiratory and circulatory functions. The heart failure may have been associated with the trauma. The time of death was estimated at around 10 PM.

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Testifying

Remember, you are the veterinary medical expert

- Have an updated resume handy
- Answer questions, take your time
- It is ok to say, ‘I don’t know’
- Ask for clarification if needed
- Bring a copy of the medical records and report to refer to (make sure they are the same that were submitted as evidence)- ask before referring to notes
THANK YOU

• Questions?
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