

SUPPORT THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF ANIMAL PROTECTION BILL

March 2025

TO: Minnesota Senate and House of Representatives

RE: Support of the Office of Animal Protection: SF 1163 / HF 1816

We, the undersigned, respectfully ask you to support the Office of Animal Protection (OAP) bill (authors: Sen. John Marty / Rep. Matt Norris).

The Office of Animal Protection bill will create a state office under the Department of Public Safety to provide the structure and oversight needed to assist authorities in the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of animal cruelty, which will protect both animals and people.

Animal cruelty is a public safety issue

Animal cruelty is an ongoing occurrence in Minnesota. It is a public safety issue. Cruelty against animals, including intentional animal abuse, organized animal abuse, sexual animal abuse, and animal neglect, is documented throughout the state.

Animal cruelty is also linked to human violence, including child abuse, elder abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and other property and human-related crimes. The FBI recognizes this fact as does the United Nations. In August 2023, the United Nations, in efforts to protect children, adopted a policy decreeing that:

“children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals.”

The problem

Due to lack of standards, training, and resources, the current “system” has failed to support authorities in the enforcement of animal cruelty laws. Enforcement efforts throughout Minnesota are inconsistent.

Benefits of the Office of Animal Protection

The OAP bill will promote public safety and protect animals and people by providing a comprehensive and measurable approach for the enforcement of animal cruelty laws. This office will:

- Be housed in the Department of Public Safety under the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension;
- Create an Advisory Council with subject experts in the crime of animal cruelty;
- Hire a director with knowledge and expertise in animal cruelty and criminal law and authority to hire additional staff to execute duties;
- Build services, including training, to assist authorities in enforcement efforts across disciplines, to include: investigation, prosecution, veterinary forensics, animal care, and human welfare.
- Protect animals and people through enhanced, coordinated enforcement efforts.

Your support is needed

Please support the Office of Animal Protection. As with any system reform, these efforts are incremental. The office must be established so the work may begin. Additional information at: www.mnoap.org.

Sincerely,

The following people have been instrumental in their support of the Office of Animal Protection bill and their understanding of animal cruelty in Minnesota and the link to human violence.

County Attorneys, Prosecutors, Attorneys, the Courts

Honorable Gordon Shumaker, retired MN Court of Appeals Judge

Reese Frederickson, Pine County Attorney

James C. Backstrom, retired Dakota County Attorney

John Choi, Ramsey County Attorney

Kathy Keena, Dakota County Attorney

Brad Johnson, Anoka County Attorney

Beth Beaman, prosecuting attorney

Marc Berris, prosecuting attorney

John Kingrey, former executive director, MN County Attorneys Association

Marianne Settano-Shumaker, attorney (ret.)

Karen Lundquist, attorney

Stacy Bettison, attorney

Kristen Rice, attorney

Law Enforcement

Chief Michael Goldstein (ret.)

Sheriff Tim Leslie, (ret.) Dakota County

Sheriff Brad Wise, Anoka County

Danielle Forsman, peace officer

Criminal Justice Partners / Community Leaders

Phil Arkow, executive director, National Link Coalition

Jenny Edwards, criminal justice consultant, sexual animal abuse

Megan Helling, animal protection consultant

Cheryl Bricker Ciampa and Keith Ciampa

Cynthia and Steven Erickson

Kris Erickson

Pat Ormston

Rebecca Pohlad

Kathleen Zurcher, systems thinking consultant

Veterinarians

Lisa Roberts, DVM

Suzy Ahrens, DVM

Emily Aslesen, DVM

Arno Wuenschmann, DVM

Human Welfare: Victim Advocacy and Social Services

Christy Shannon, chief executive director, CornerHouse

Rose Surma, human services, nonprofit executive director

Colleen Crockford, MSW, LICSW, clinical social work director

Animal Protection and Animal Welfare Organizations

Ann Olson, executive director, Animal Folks

Linda Challeen, executive director, Minnesota Humane Society

Azure Davis, executive director, Ruff Start Rescue

Paula Flom, executive director, Minnesota Horse Welfare Coalition

Rachel Mairose, executive director, The Bond Between

Marit Ortega, executive director, Tri-County Humane Society

Andrew Willman, board secretary, Ruff Start Rescue