



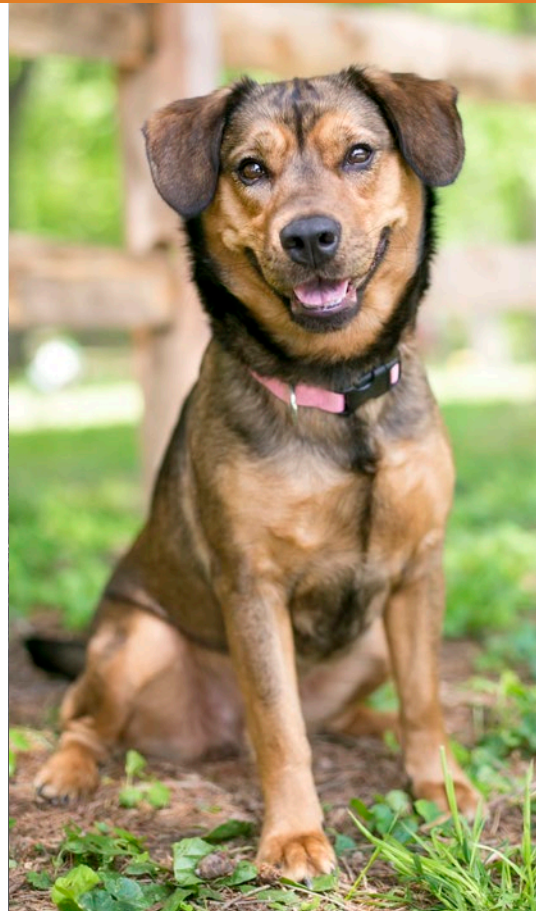
**ANIMAL LEGAL
DEFENSE FUND**

ANIMAL PROTECTION

U.S. STATE ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS RANKING REPORTSM

2024

COMPARING OVERALL
STRENGTH AND
COMPREHENSIVENESS





**ANIMAL LEGAL
DEFENSE FUND** EST
1979

ABOUT US

The Animal Legal Defense Fund is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the lives and advancing the interests of animals through the legal system. Our attorneys work with prosecutors, police, and animal control officers around the country on animal cruelty cases.



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INTRODUCTION

The Animal Legal Defense Fund’s Annual Animal Protection Laws Ranking Report is the longest-running and most authoritative metric of its kind, ranking each state and territory according to the relative strengths and weaknesses of their animal protection laws.

In 2024, the state with the strongest animal protection laws in the nation was Oregon, followed by Massachusetts (2), Maine (3), Illinois (4), and Colorado (5). The state with the weakest animal protection laws was North Dakota (50), followed by Alabama (49), Idaho (48), Kentucky (47), and Mississippi (46). The most improved state was South Carolina, which rose seven ranks from 47th to 40th place, thanks to its new “bond-or-forfeit” law, which requires that defendants either post a bond covering the costs of a seized animal’s care or forfeit the animal. A new trend was states incorporating animal cruelty into their definitions of “coercive control,” and a continuing trend was laws requiring post-conviction possession bans of animals.

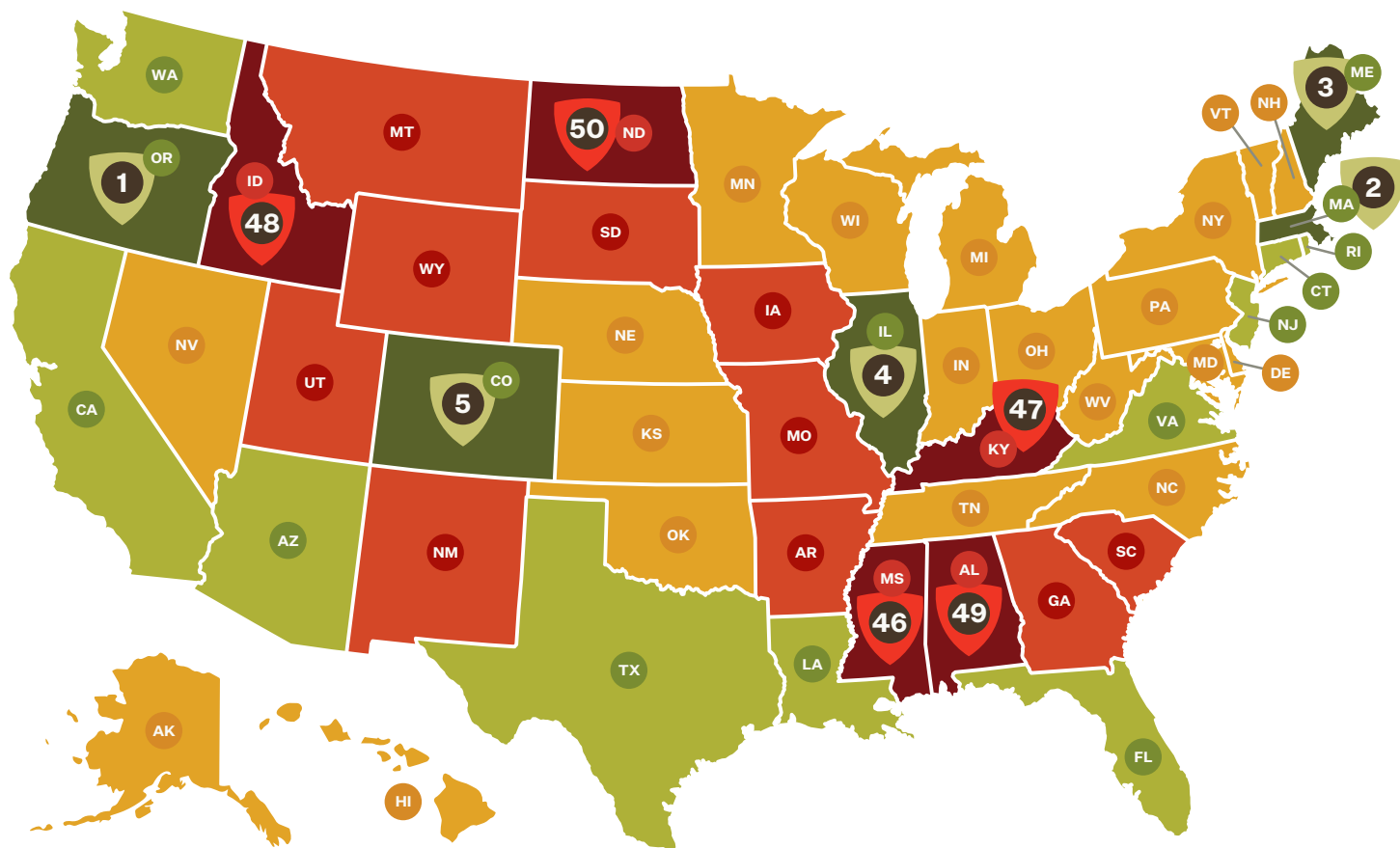
There is a large gap between the legal protections for animals that people think exist — or think should exist — and the laws that are actually on the books. Regardless of rank, every state and territory has room for improvement. Our Rankings Report highlights the ways each of these jurisdictions can strengthen their laws to ensure that all animals receive the protections they need and deserve.”

Kathleen Wood

Animal Legal Defense Fund
Senior Staff Attorney



ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS: 2024 STATE RANKINGS



RANKINGS BEST TO WORST:

1 OREGON	13 VIRGINIA	25 HAWAII	38 MONTANA
2 MASSACHUSETTS	14 NEW JERSEY	26 MINNESOTA	39 ARKANSAS
3 MAINE	15 TEXAS	27 NEBRASKA	40 SOUTH CAROLINA
4 ILLINOIS	16 MICHIGAN	28 NEW YORK	41 SOUTH DAKOTA
5 COLORADO	17 DELAWARE	29 WISCONSIN	42 NEW MEXICO
6 CALIFORNIA	18 VERMONT	30 KANSAS	43 IOWA
7 FLORIDA	19 OHIO	31 NEVADA	44 UTAH
8 WASHINGTON	20 WEST VIRGINIA	32 MARYLAND	45 GEORGIA
9 RHODE ISLAND	21 INDIANA	33 OKLAHOMA	46 MISSISSIPPI
10 LOUISIANA	22 PENNSYLVANIA	34 NORTH CAROLINA	47 KENTUCKY
11 CONNECTICUT	23 TENNESSEE	35 ALASKA	48 IDAHO
12 ARIZONA	24 NEW HAMPSHIRE	36 WYOMING	49 ALABAMA
		37 MISSOURI	50 NORTH DAKOTA

Territories **1** GUAM **3** U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS **5** NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
2 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA **4** PUERTO RICO **6** AMERICAN SAMOA

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METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

The 2024 U.S. Animal Protection Laws Ranking ReportSM focuses primarily on criminal animal cruelty laws. The Rankings Report is centered around the understanding that all animals — including companion animals, farmed animals, and wild animals — are individuals, and are sentient beings who deserve to be protected from cruel abuse and neglect. Because of this focus on the individual animal victim, the Rankings Report does not include certain laws (such as endangered species protections, or certain hunting or trapping limits), which are broadly concerned with preserving a species. Such laws are incontrovertibly important, but are outside the scope of the Rankings Report. The Rankings Report also only includes civil laws insofar as they relate to criminal animal cruelty laws. For example, the Rankings Report contains a section on “Civil Enforcement,” which includes laws allowing civilians to file suit in civil court to enjoin criminal animal cruelty. This focus on criminal animal cruelty laws allows the Rankings Report to accurately identify which states prioritize animal rights and wellness by making the experience of animal victims central to their justice systems.

Each year, our attorneys pore through and update over 3,600 pages of our compendiums for each of the 56 states and territories. These compendiums contain the full texts of animal protection statutes for each state and territory, divided into 20 different categories (listed on the next page).

SUBSTANTIVE PROHIBITIONS	REPORTING LAWS	CIVIL AND CIVILIAN INTERVENTION	CRIMINAL JUSTICE INTERVENTION
<i>Laws that prohibit certain cruel practices and acts</i>	<i>Laws that require, preclude, or grant immunity for reporting animal cruelty</i>	<i>Laws that provide avenues for those outside the criminal justice system to intervene in animal cruelty, i.e. by offering immunity for providing emergency care, by permitting courts to issue civil injunctions or orders of protection</i>	<i>Laws that facilitate the enforcement of substantive prohibitions and their sentencing</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Definition of “Animal” 2. General Cruelty 3. Animal Fighting 4. Sexual Assault 5. Cruelty to Working Animals 6. Laws Specific to Farmed Animals 7. Cruel Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Cross Reporting 9. Veterinary Reporting 10. “Ag-Gag” Law 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Emergency Rescue and Relief 12. Civil Enforcement 13. Domestic Violence and Protection Orders 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Maximum Penalties and Statute of Limitations 15. Law Enforcement Policies 16. Seizure 17. Courtroom Animal Advocate Program 18. Restitution and Reimbursement 19. Forfeiture and Possession Bans 20. Rehabilitative Sentencing

Our attorneys use the information in these compendiums to numerically rank each of the 56 jurisdictions based on their cumulative scores study questions. With the 77 questions for each of the 56 jurisdictions, we compare a total of 4,312 data points to compile our overall Rankings Report. All 77 questions are close ended, with choices that are exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The Rankings Report analyzes enacted laws only and does not review the separate issue of how these laws are enforced.





BEST FIVE STATES



OREGON



MASSACHUSETTS



MAINE



ILLINOIS



COLORADO

OREGON MAINTAINS TOP RANK

In 2024, Oregon maintained its top rank, being the state with the strongest animal protection laws in the nation.

Oregon buttressed its lead over all other states by passing House Bill 4034, a piece of legislation further strengthening the state's animal protection laws. This bill creates a new crime of “interfering with an investigation for offense against an animal,” which prohibits a person from concealing or transporting an animal in an effort to hide evidence of their animal cruelty crimes from investigators. The same bill also expands Oregon's first-degree animal abuse law; previously the law only applied to animals who sustained serious physical injury or who were “cruelly” killed as a result of the abuse. Now, the statute has been updated to prohibit any act resulting in an animal's death (assuming, of course, that the act does not fall within pre-existing exemptions for euthanasia, slaughter, hunting, etc.) Finally, this new piece of legislation also strengthened Oregon's possession ban law. Previously, those convicted of misdemeanor animal cruelty in Oregon were prohibited from possessing certain species of animals for five years following their conviction, and those convicted of felony animal cruelty were prohibited from possessing or *residing with* certain species for 15 years. This in effect meant that those who had been convicted

of misdemeanor animal cruelty were permitted to reside alongside animals, so long as they did not “possess” the animal themselves. This updated legislation not only closed that loophole, but also established a comprehensive process by which certain qualifying offenders may petition the court to reduce or remove a possession ban upon a showing that they are no longer a risk to animals.



Additionally, in 2024 Oregon passed a law which prohibits soliciting, financing, consuming, and distributing recordings of animal torture as “entertainment.” Unfortunately, this law is not limited to recordings that meet the legal threshold for “obscenity.” Therefore, as gruesome as the subject matter of such recordings may be, it is possible that the recordings may qualify as protected speech under the United States Constitution’s First Amendment, which may pose issues with this law’s enforcement.

Despite their rank, Oregon, like all other states, still has room to improve. For example, veterinarians are not required to report animal cruelty unless it rises to the level of “aggravated cruelty.” Additionally, although Oregon did just expand its possession ban law, this ban still only applies to domestic animals and animals who are the same genus as the animal who was the subject of the animal cruelty conviction. Finally, Oregon does not yet have a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program (CAAP), which would allow attorneys or supervised law students to act as third-party advocates and represent the interests of animal victims in cruelty cases.





MASSACHUSETTS RISES TO SECOND PLACE

In 2024, Massachusetts passed a law including animal cruelty and threats of cruelty in its definition of “coercive control.” As described in the “trends” section of this report, several states have updated their definitions of “domestic violence” to include “coercive control,” which, in turn, includes threats or harm to animals. Approximately one-third of women in domestic violence shelters report that they delayed their escape out of fear for their companion animals. It is therefore vital that laws recognize threats to animals as a form of coercive control and provide domestic violence survivors with the resources they need to ensure their safety. This change to Massachusetts’ law propelled the state forward two ranks, making it the state with the second-strongest animal protection laws in the nation.

Like all other jurisdictions, Massachusetts still has room to improve. For example, Massachusetts is the only state that does not have a misdemeanor animal cruelty law;

instead, animal abuse and neglect can only be charged as a felony. This poses issues with enforcement. Often, when animal cruelty is the result of negligence or ignorance and does not result in severe harm to the animal, a felony-level penalty is simply not a just or proportional response. Without the option of a misdemeanor charge, law enforcement is severely limited in the way they can intervene, and too often the issue is simply left unresolved. Another way Massachusetts could improve their animal protection laws is by clearly and explicitly requiring animals to be provided with veterinary care to address unnecessary suffering. This issue was made particularly evident in a recent case, *Massachusetts v. Russo*. There, the Massachusetts Supreme Court held that a defendant who allowed her terminally ill dog to suffer without proper pain management did not act “willfully,” and therefore could not be prosecuted for animal cruelty.



WORST FIVE STATES



MISSISSIPPI



KENTUCKY



IDAHO



ALABAMA



NORTH DAKOTA

NORTH DAKOTA REMAINS AT LOWEST RANK

In 2024, North Dakota remained at the bottom of the rankings, as the state with the weakest animal protection laws. While other states have continued to strengthen their animal protection laws, North Dakota has not made any significant improvements to its animal cruelty laws in over a decade. This stagnation finally led to North Dakota sinking to the bottom of the rankings in 2023, where they still stand.

North Dakota lacks several fundamental animal protection laws. For example, North Dakota does not have any laws explicitly permitting courts to order psychological evaluations and necessary treatment in animal cruelty cases. Animal cruelty is often tied to underlying psychological disorders or issues. Mandating (or, at minimum, explicitly permitting) psychological evaluations in such cases can help to identify and address those underlying issues, and may prevent recidivism and protect animals in the future. Additionally, North Dakota is one of just nine states that does not explicitly permit animals to be included in domestic violence protection orders. Finally, North Dakota is one of just eight states without a possession ban law that would prohibit convicted abusers from owning or residing with an animal for a set period of time.

In addition to these gaps, many of the laws which North Dakota does possess have

overbroad exemptions which render the protections ineffective. For example, stray animals are entirely exempted from animal cruelty laws, meaning the abuse or even torture of a stray animal cannot be prosecuted. Furthermore, most states have built-in exemptions for things like lawful hunting and fishing, accepted veterinary practices by a licensed veterinarian, or accepted pest control practices. North Dakota's exemptions, contrastingly, are stated as absolutes. The law exempts all hunting and fishing, any act by a licensed veterinarian, and any form of pest control. These overbroad exemptions mean that a wide range of cruel acts and omissions are simply not criminalized under North Dakota law.



MOST IMPROVED

SOUTH CAROLINA RISES SEVEN RANKS

In 2024, South Carolina rose seven ranks from 47th to 40th place, making it the most improved state that year. South Carolina's rise is due to its new "bond-or-forfeit" law. Bond-or-forfeit laws were a trend in 2023, with three states and the District of Columbia enacting or revising their bond-or-forfeit laws. Now, South Carolina has become the 40th state to adopt this legal mechanism.

Bond-or-forfeit laws are a pre-conviction measure which limits localities' financial risk when caring for large numbers of animals who have been seized pursuant to an animal cruelty

investigation. When animals are seized in a cruelty case, they are still legally the property of the defendant. The shelter or agency holding the animal, meanwhile, is responsible for all the costs to house and feed the animal, and to restore the animal to a good state of health while the criminal case is ongoing. Predictably, these costs can add up quickly. Bond-or-forfeit laws provide a solution. They require that the owner of the animal either post a bond to cover the animal's costs of care or forfeit the animal — in which case the community will shoulder the animal's care, but also be able to place the animal in a new, healthy home.



This is a remedial measure, not a punitive one. When someone decides to own an animal, they are agreeing to provide for that animal's minimum needs. That responsibility remains as long as the person legally owns that animal — even if they no longer have physical custody. Bond-or-forfeit laws are therefore intended to shift the financial burden of caring for a seized animal back to where it rightfully belongs — with the animal's owner.

Prior to 2024, South Carolina's law only required defendants to reimburse the caregiving agency for these costs after conviction. This posed several challenges. First, if the case was dismissed, the charges dropped, or the defendant found not guilty, the caregiving agency would simply be out the money. Second, criminal cases can drag on for months, even years. During that time, the caregiving agencies were forced to use their own money to cover all of the animals' needs upfront. Third, even if the defendant was ordered to reimburse the caregiving agency for the costs of care, the defendant might be unable to do so. If the caregiving agency is not guaranteed to recoup their costs, that uncertainty can disincentivize law enforcement from seizing cruelly treated animals, for fear of the costs of care overwhelming their local shelters.

South Carolina is still ranked in the bottom tier of states and has a long way to go before animals receive necessary protections. For example, South Carolina's definition of "animal" excludes invertebrates, and the primary animal cruelty law excludes protections for all fowl. Additionally, veterinarians are not required to report suspected animal cruelty, and do not have immunity for doing so. Finally, South Carolina does not have any laws explicitly permitting animals to be included in domestic violence protection orders.

By adopting a bond-or-forfeit statute, South Carolina has dramatically modernized its ability to address the important interests that converge when animal victims are taken into state custody: respecting the constitutional rights of animal owners, addressing the economic 'free rider' problem caused when people choose to own animals but then shift the cost of caring for them onto the community, and — critically — the animal victim's need to receive care."

David Rosengard

Animal Legal Defense Fund
Managing Attorney



MAJOR TRENDS

NEW TREND: ANIMAL CRUELTY INCLUDED IN DEFINITION OF “COERCIVE CONTROL”

In 2024, four states — Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Vermont — enacted laws adding animal cruelty to their definitions of “coercive control.”

Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Vermont’s definitions of “coercive control” exist within their states’ codes for domestic violence protection orders. In each of these states, the term “domestic violence” is defined slightly differently, but generally tends to include things like acts and threats of physical harm, sexual abuse, and coercive control. “Coercive control” is in turn defined to include patterns of behavior intended to intimidate, harass, or control a family or household member, such as by isolating the victim, depriving the victim of basic needs, or controlling the victim’s communications and movements. Each of these three states also included threats of harm to animals to intimidate or control a household member. Massachusetts and Vermont’s laws apply to any animal with whom a household member is connected, while New Jersey’s law is limited to the individual’s “pet.”

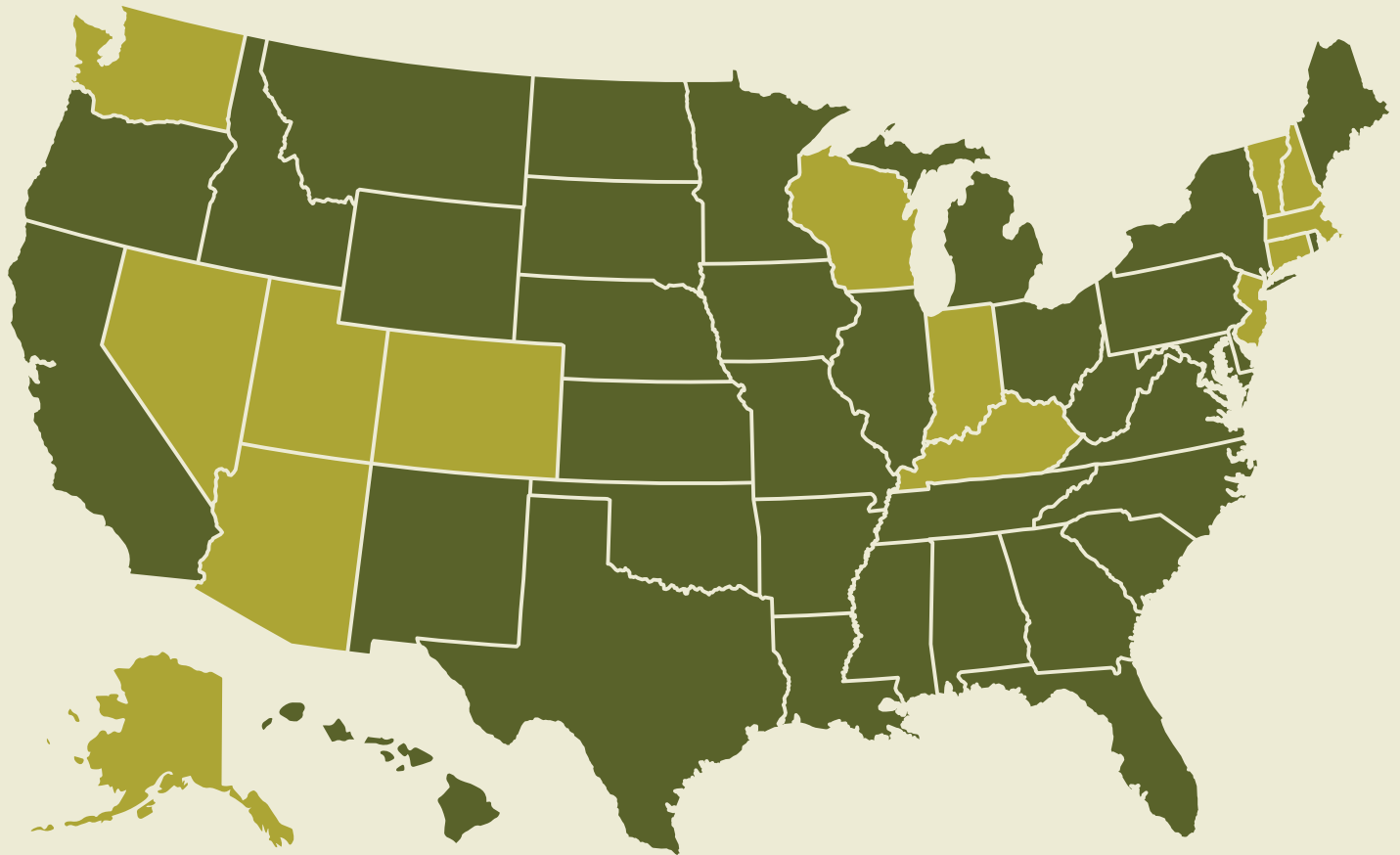
“Domestic violence abusers know how much a companion animal means to their human victims — and too often exploit this bond, often threatening or even harming those animals as a means of control,” says Animal Legal Defense Fund Criminal Justice Program Director Lora Dunn. “It is vital that the law recognize this coercive control as a form of domestic violence, for a very practical reason: so that human victims can obtain a protection order and remove themselves and their animals to safety.”

Colorado’s inclusion of animal cruelty as “coercive control” is in a slightly different context. Since 2007, Colorado has included animal cruelty in its definition of “domestic violence.” In 2024, Colorado adopted a definition of “coercive control” including animal cruelty within the context of child custody. This new law provides that a court may consider any instances of coercive control — including threats or harm to a companion animal with whom the child shares an emotional bond — when deciding child custody disputes. Social services workers also have a duty to report evidence of coercive control.

Pennsylvania similarly enacted two pieces of legislation in 2024 which touched on similar issues. First, Pennsylvania became the 41st state to explicitly include animals in domestic violence protection orders. Second, Pennsylvania amended its child custody statutes, permitting courts to consider prior animal cruelty convictions when making child custody rulings. In the legislative findings for that bill (which are not actually incorporated into statute, but are still part of the legislative record), the legislature declared that “Domestic abuse is a pattern of abuse within the family or household and can include abuse of a partner, spouse, child or pet.”



ANIMAL CRUELTY INCLUDED IN DEFINITIONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



KEY:

- INCLUDES ANIMAL CRUELTY IN THEIR STATUTORY DEFINITION OF "DOMESTIC VIOLENCE"
- DOES NOT INCLUDE ANIMAL CRUELTY IN THEIR STATUTORY DEFINITION OF "DOMESTIC VIOLENCE"

Territories

- DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
- AMERICAN SAMOA ISLANDS
- GUAM
- NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
- PUERTO RICO
- U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

CONTINUING TREND: POSSESSION BANS

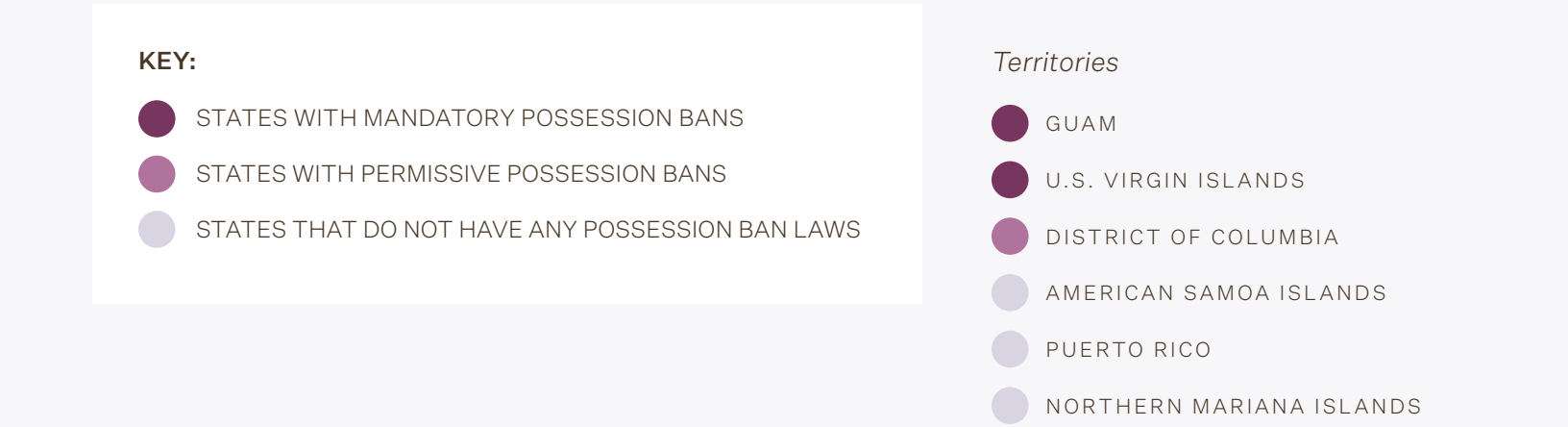
A continuing trend in 2024 was the expansion of laws which require or authorize courts to impose possession bans. After a person is convicted of animal cruelty, one of the most common sentencing measures is a possession ban, which prohibits the defendant from owning, residing with, or possessing an animal for a specific period of time. 42 states have laws which require or explicitly permit courts to impose these bans in sentencing. In 2024, Louisiana, Oregon, and Virginia all strengthened their possession bans laws.

As previously discussed, Oregon strengthened its possession ban law by ensuring that those who are convicted of misdemeanor animal cruelty are not permitted to reside with an animal for five years. Oregon also created a thorough process by which certain qualifying convicted offenders can petition the court to reduce or remove their possession ban if they comply with various conditions and are no longer a threat to animals.

In 2024, both Louisiana and Virginia passed laws which added greater specificity to their possession ban statutes. Previously, both

states left the length of possession bans entirely up to the court's discretion. Louisiana now permits — but no longer requires — courts to impose possession bans of up to one year upon a first conviction of misdemeanor animal cruelty, and up to five years following a second or subsequent conviction for misdemeanor cruelty. Louisiana also now permits courts to order possession bans of up to 10 years following a felony conviction. Similarly, Virginia now permits courts to order possession bans up to five years following a misdemeanor animal cruelty conviction, and up to a lifetime ban following a felony cruelty conviction. This added specificity helps courts to be more consistent when making sentencing decisions. When a possession ban law does not contain specific language authorizing lengthy bans, sentencing judges may feel as though they are limited by the length of probation, when in fact possession bans often extend far beyond that period. By adding specificity in the statutes, judges will be more likely to impose longer possession bans when needed to assure the offender's rehabilitation and protect potential victims.





- STATES WITH MANDATORY POSSESSION BANS
- STATES WITH PERMISSIVE POSSESSION BANS
- STATES THAT DO NOT HAVE ANY POSSESSION BAN LAWS

- GUAM
- U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
- DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
- AMERICAN SAMOA ISLANDS
- PUERTO RICO
- NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

ONE-OF-A-KIND



OREGON

Oregon is the only state which formally recognizes that animals are sentient beings capable of experiencing pain, stress, and fear in their statutes.



WEST VIRGINIA

West Virginia is the only state that still does not criminalize sexual assault of animals.



GUAM

Guam is the only state or territory to include emotional and mental distress in its definition of “suffering” in its animal cruelty laws.



GEORGIA

Georgia is the only state that does not specifically criminalize cockfighting at the state level (although the injuries suffered by chickens can still be charged as animal cruelty).



CALIFORNIA

California is the only state to ban all commercial and recreational trapping of “fur-bearing and nongame” mammals.



KENTUCKY

Kentucky is the only state that excludes all cold-blooded animals from their definition of “animal.”



AMERICAN SAMOA

American Samoa is the only state or territory without any general animal cruelty laws.



ARKANSAS

Arkansas is the only state to require all persons convicted of general animal cruelty to undergo a psychological evaluation and necessary treatment, without exceptions.



FLORIDA

Florida is the only state that requires veterinarians to notify animal guardians of their intention to report suspected animal cruelty to farmed animals before actually doing so (potentially endangering the veterinarian).



COLORADO

Colorado is the only state to include animal cruelty in their definition of elder abuse.



UTAH

Utah is the only state which excludes all animals “kept or owned for agricultural, zoological, hunting, circus, rodeo or wildlife purposes” from their definition of “animal.”



AT-A-GLANCE — BEST FIVE STATES

1 | OREGON



EXISTING STRENGTHS

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Definition of “animal”	Definition of “animal” includes mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, and amphibians	Definition of “animal” excludes invertebrates such as octopuses
General Cruelty	Standards of minimum care that all guardians must provide to animals in their care are clear and thorough	Requirements for “adequate shelter” do not apply to farmed animals
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians have civil immunity for good-faith reporting of suspected cruelty Veterinarians are required to report suspected aggravated cruelty	Veterinarians are not required to report suspected abuse or neglect that does not rise to the level of aggravated cruelty.
Civil Enforcement	Animal cruelty is an abatable nuisance, and private civilians may sue to enjoin ongoing cruelty.	N/A
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Companion animals may be included in domestic violence protection orders	Farmed animals or other animals kept for economic purposes may not be included in protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	N/A	Does not have a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Possession bans are mandatory after conviction: five years following a misdemeanor, 15 years following a felony	Possession bans do not include all species, only domestic animals and animals of the same genus as the animal victim
Rehabilitative Sentencing	The court may order psychological evaluations and treatment for any person convicted of animal cruelty	Psychological evaluations and treatment are not mandatory

Note: These tables are merely snapshot overviews of some of the issues considered in the Rankings Report, and do not provide a complete overview of all topics measured.

AT-A-GLANCE — BEST FIVE STATES

2 | MASSACHUSETTS



EXISTING STRENGTHS

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Definition of “animal”	Definition of “animal” is inclusive	N/A
General Cruelty	Requirements for shelter, sanitary environment, and protection from the elements applies generally to all species	Does not explicitly require guardians to provide veterinary care to injured or suffering animals
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are required to report suspected animal cruelty and have immunity for doing so in good faith	N/A
Civil Enforcement	N/A	No civil enforcement mechanism
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animal cruelty included in definition of “domestic violence”	Animals are not explicitly permitted to be included in protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	N/A	Does not have a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Abused animals must be forfeited after conviction, mandatory five year possession ban following conviction for sexual assault of an animal	No mandatory possession bans following convictions for animal cruelty offenses other than sexual assault or devocalization
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Mandatory humane education class following devocalization of a cat or dog	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order a pre-sentence psychological evaluation and necessary treatment in animal cruelty cases

AT-A-GLANCE — BEST FIVE STATES

3 | MAINE



EXISTING STRENGTHS

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Definition of “animal”	Definition of “animal” is inclusive	N/A
General Cruelty	Standards of minimum care that all guardians must provide to animals in their care are extremely clear and thorough	N/A
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are permitted to report suspected cruelty and have immunity for doing so	Veterinarians are not required to report suspected animal cruelty
Civil Enforcement	N/A	No civil enforcement mechanism
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animals may be included in domestic violence protection orders	Animal cruelty is not included in the definition of “domestic violence”
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	Has a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	Advocates represent the interests of justice rather than the interests of the animal
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Mandatory five year possession ban after conviction for Class C animal cruelty crimes	Possession bans following Class D animal cruelty crimes are up to the court’s discretion
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Upon conviction, the court may order a psychological evaluation	Pre-sentence psychological evaluations are not mandatory for any animal cruelty crimes

AT-A-GLANCE — BEST FIVE STATES

4 | ILLINOIS



EXISTING STRENGTHS

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Definition of “animal”	Definition of “animal” is inclusive	N/A
General Cruelty	Most standards of minimum care that all guardians must provide to animals in their care are clear and thorough	Requirements for the type of shelter guardians must provide to their animals are vague
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are required to report suspected aggravated animal cruelty and animal fighting, and have immunity for reporting in good faith	Veterinarians are not required to report other forms of suspected animal cruelty
Civil Enforcement	N/A	No civil enforcement mechanism
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animals may be included in domestic violence protection orders	Animal cruelty is not included in the definition of “domestic violence”
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	N/A	Does not have a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	The court may order post-conviction possession bans up to lifelong bans	Courts are not required to order post-conviction possession bans after any cruelty convictions
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Psychological evaluations are mandatory for juveniles and animal hoarders.	Psychological evaluations are not mandatory for other animal cruelty offenders

AT-A-GLANCE — BEST FIVE STATES

5 | COLORADO



EXISTING STRENGTHS

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Definition of “animal”	Definition of “animal” is inclusive	N/A
General Cruelty	Most standards of minimum care that all guardians must provide to animals in their care are adequately defined	Standards of minimum care that all guardians must provide could be more thorough and detailed
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are required to report suspected animal cruelty and have immunity for doing so in good faith	N/A
Civil Enforcement	N/A	No civil enforcement mechanism
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animals may be included in domestic violence protection orders, and animal cruelty is included in the definition of “domestic violence”	N/A
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	N/A	Does not have a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Mandatory three to five year possession bans following a felony level animal cruelty conviction	Possession bans are not mandatory following a misdemeanor animal cruelty conviction
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Mandatory pre-sentence psychological evaluations to determine underlying causes of cruelty violations and inform sentencing	Psychological evaluations are not mandatory upon first animal cruelty violations committed by juveniles

AT-A-GLANCE — WORST FIVE STATES

46 | MISSISSIPPI



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Definition of “animal”	Definition of “animal” in seizure statute only applies to “feline, exotic animal, canine, horse, mule, jack or jennet”
General Cruelty	No explicit requirement that animals be provided with veterinary care to alleviate injury or suffering
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are not required to report suspected animal cruelty
Civil Enforcement	No civil enforcement mechanism for animal cruelty laws
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Only pet animals may be included in domestic violence protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	No Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Possession ban provisions are only applicable following convictions for cruelty to dogs or cats
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Courts are not required to order psychological evaluations and treatment following convictions for animal cruelty. Provision explicitly permitting courts to order a psychological evaluation and treatment is only applicable following a conviction for cruelty to dogs or cats

Note: These tables are merely snapshot overviews of some of the issues considered in the Rankings Report, and do not provide a complete overview of all topics measured.

AT-A-GLANCE — WORST FIVE STATES

47 | KENTUCKY



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Definition of “animal”	Definition of “animal” excludes all cold-blooded animals
General Cruelty	Standards for levels of minimum care that guardians must provide for animals in their care are not well-defined
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are not required to report suspected animal cruelty
Civil Enforcement	No civil enforcement mechanism for animal cruelty laws
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Only household pets, not farmed animals, may be included in protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	No Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	No provisions for post-conviction forfeiture of cruelly-treated animals other than equines and animals who have been sexually abused No possession bans required except following convictions for sexual assault of animals
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order psychological evaluations and treatment following convictions for animal cruelty other than sexual assault of animals

AT-A-GLANCE — WORST FIVE STATES

48 | IDAHO



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Definition of “animal”	Definition of “animal” excludes invertebrates
General Cruelty	Standards for levels of minimum care that guardians must provide for animals in their care are not well-defined
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians are not required to report suspected animal cruelty
Civil Enforcement	No civil enforcement mechanism for animal cruelty laws
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animals are not explicitly permitted to be included in domestic violence protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	No Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order post-conviction possession bans of animals
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Courts are not required to order psychological evaluations and treatment following convictions for animal cruelty, except for animal torture

AT-A-GLANCE — WORST FIVE STATES

49 | ALABAMA



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Definition of “animal”	N/A
General Cruelty	Standards for levels of minimum care that guardians must provide for animals in their care are not well-defined
Veterinary Reporting	Although veterinarians are required by regulations to report suspected cruelty, they are not required by statute
Civil Enforcement	No civil enforcement mechanism for animal cruelty laws
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animals are not explicitly permitted to be included in domestic violence protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	No Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Possession bans only explicitly permitted to be ordered at post-seizure hearings for cruelty to dogs and cats
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order psychological evaluations and treatment following convictions for animal cruelty

AT-A-GLANCE — WORST FIVE STATES

50 | NORTH DAKOTA



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Definition of “animal”	N/A
General Cruelty	No restrictions on tethering of animals
Veterinary Reporting	Veterinarians do not have immunity for reporting animal cruelty in good faith
Civil Enforcement	No civil enforcement mechanism for animal cruelty laws
Domestic Violence and Protection Orders	Animals are not explicitly permitted to be included in domestic violence protection orders
Courtroom Animal Advocate Program	No Courtroom Animal Advocate Program
Forfeiture and Possession Bans	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order post-conviction possession bans of animals
Rehabilitative Sentencing	Courts are not required or explicitly permitted to order psychological evaluations and treatment following convictions for animal cruelty





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