

## **PROSECUTORS & LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES BELIEVED TO HAVE ANIMAL CRUELTY TASK FORCES**

**Updated Jan. 25, 2022**

### **ARIZONA**

Phoenix Police Department Animal Investigations Unit

Det. Heather Krimm & Det. Jemima Schmidt

Maricopa County Attorney's Office Animal Cruelty Diversion Program

The program began in 2019 and is available to those eligible individuals charged with specific felony or misdemeanor charges related to abusing or neglecting an animal. Based upon an assessment and individual needs, the participant will be placed in an education class and/or group and/or individual counseling sessions. The education class covers minimum standards of care, knowledge of companion animals' basic needs, and explores perspectives and ways to build empathy. Group and individual counseling sessions address accountability and factors that motivated the abuse or neglect, including attitudes, beliefs, and other risk factors or co-occurring issues. Participants who successfully complete the program can have filed charges dismissed to avoid a conviction.

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Animal Crimes Investigations Unit

### **CALIFORNIA**

Alameda County District Attorney's Animal Cruelty Task Force

Created in 2017 "to focus on the "link" between animal abuse and human violence, and to ensure that cruelty to animals is not quarantined from the broader issue of violence in our homes and society." Its current status is unknown.

Fresno County District Attorney's Animal Cruelty Unit

Formed in 2015 in recognizing that "animal cruelty can be a precursor to violent crimes against people." One goal of the Unit is "to break this connection between animal abuse and human violence."

Los Angeles City Attorney's Office Animal Protection Unit

The highly specialized Animal Protection Unit prosecutes animal cruelty and neglect cases throughout the City of Los Angeles. It works in partnership with the Department of Animal Services, spcaLA, and the LAPD. "Animal Protection is instrumental in advancing legislation to further safeguard our animals. As such, the LA City Attorney's Office is behind some of the toughest animal welfare laws in the nation, which include as punishment mandatory jail, fines of more than \$40,000 for each offense and counseling. Consistent with these laws, Animal Protection has developed a policy of enforcement which strictly forbids convicted animal abusers from having any such contact. Animal Protection also works with the LA Department of Animal Services to identify neighborhood-specific animal problems, such as feral cats and ongoing neglect. In coordination with other city and county agencies, and animal welfare organizations, comprehensive solutions to these problems are developed and implemented. In partnership with the Department of Animal Services, Animal Protection is developing a series of innovative programs to animal adoptions, spay and neuter and responsible care for companion animals throughout Los Angeles."

Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office Animal Cruelty Unit

Kim Abourezk is in charge of Animal Cruelty prosecutions in the Target Crimes division, which includes arson & explosives, child abduction, and the stalking and threat

assessment team. The Target Crimes division falls under the purview of Specialized Prosecutions, which include juvenile, crimes against peace officers, family violence, community violence reduction, major crimes, major narcotics, and sex crimes.

Los Angeles Police Dept. Animal Cruelty Task Force (*disbanded 2020 due to fiscal crunch*)  
Sacramento County District Attorney's Office Animal Cruelty Prosecution Unit and Animal Cruelty Task Force

"The Animal Cruelty Prosecution Unit and regional Sacramento Animal Cruelty Task Force were formed to address animal abuse throughout Sacramento County. Recognizing a link between animal abuse and violent crimes against people (particularly child abuse and domestic violence), the District Attorney's office believes a specialized unit will result in consistent and skilled vertical prosecution of these offenders and that the task force will unite partners in law enforcement and community organizations to improve training, communication and awareness concerning issues of animal cruelty. The Animal Cruelty Prosecution Unit was created in January 2018 and is headed by veteran prosecutor Hilary Bagley-Franzoia, who has been recognized nationally and locally for her long commitment to animal abuse cases. Ms. Bagley-Franzoia will also chair the Sacramento Animal Cruelty Task Force, which will include members from numerous county and city law enforcement and animal control agencies."

San Bernardino County District Attorney's Animal Cruelty Unit

In recognition of the Link between animal cruelty and family violence, the Animal Cruelty Prosecution Unit is part of the Family Violence Unit and will consist of a chief deputy DA; a supervising deputy DA; a lead deputy DA; two regional deputy DAs; two regional Juvenile Division deputy DAs; a senior investigator from the Bureau of Investigation.

San Diego County District Attorney's Office Animal Cruelty Prosecution Unit

San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office Quality of Life Division

The division is comprised of animal cruelty cases as well as the Environmental Protection Unit, Consumer Fraud, Insurance Fraud, Identity Theft, the regional auto theft task force, the Homicide Unit, agricultural crimes, code enforcement, and gambling. Chief Deputy DA Jeff Derman heads the unit.

## **COLORADO**

Colorado Springs – 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney's Office Animal Care Unit

A specialty unit in County Court misdemeanor prosecutions.

## **FLORIDA**

Lee County Sheriff's Office Animal Cruelty Task Force

Sheriff Carmine Marceno initiated the unit in May, 2020, in collaboration with Lee County Domestic Animal Services and their veterinarians, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission and SW Fla. Crimestoppers. A billboard features Marceno's picture and reads "Abuse an animal in Lee County and you WILL go to jail." Detectives are assigned to the unit to investigate misdemeanors and felonies.

Orange-Osceola State Attorney's Office Animal Cruelty Unit

State Attorney Jeff Ashton created the specialized unit in July 2016. 13 attorneys in both counties volunteered to take on the extra caseload. National Link Coalition statistics were cited in announcing the unit; the ASPCA recognized prosecutors who worked on an extensive case.

## **GEORGIA**

DeKalb County Office of Public Safety – has an Animal Services and Enforcement division  
Coordinator Tamica Pack 404-294-2091

Fulton County District Attorney's Office Animal cruelty & Elder Abuse Unit  
Deputy District Attorney Jill Hollander heads this unit within the Special Victims division.  
She has been chief of the Crimes Against Animals Division since 2010

Towaliga Judicial Circuit Office of the District Attorney – Butts County  
Jessica Rock is an Assistant District Attorney specializing in prosecuting animal cruelty cases. She is also the Georgia Statewide Animal Crimes Prosecutor and Trainer

## **ILLINOIS**

Kankakee County State's Attorney's Office Animal Abuse & Neglect Crimes Division  
State's Attorney Jim Rowe takes cases involving violence against animals seriously and refers animal cruelty cases to one of two trained prosecutors. The office held an Animal Care & Cruelty Prevention Conference in 2019.

Will County State's Attorney's Office Animal Protection Unit  
Will County State's Attorney James W. Glasgow established a specialized Animal Protection Unit to prosecute cases of animal abuse and neglect. He also created the county-wide League of Extraordinary Canines & Friends, an initiative to combat animal cruelty and abuse through advocacy, communication and cooperative efforts with humane and rescue organizations, the Unit, law enforcement, and all local units of government. His office also has extensive focuses on fighting domestic violence, safeguarding children and protecting senior citizens.

## **KENTUCKY**

Jefferson County Attorney's Office has at least one animal welfare prosecutor.

## **MARYLAND**

Baltimore County State's Attorney's office Animal Abuse Unit  
The Animal Abuse Unit collaborates with the Baltimore County Police Department and Animal Services to investigate cases of animal abuse, neglect and cruelty. The Unit also works with the Department of Social Services when there is a co-occurrence of crimes against people and animals. Charges can be initiated by an officer, but are typically initiated after communication between all agencies, as well as a veterinarian.

## **MASSACHUSETTS**

Norfolk County District Attorney's Office Animal Cruelty Unit  
District Attorney Michael Morrissey is committed to the rigorous enforcement of laws prohibiting cruelty to animals and has specially assigned prosecutors to deal with allegations in this specialized unit.

## **MICHIGAN**

Macomb County Prosecuting Attorney's Animal Protection Unit (APU) – PAWS (Protecting Animal Welfare & Safety)

Chief: Jacqueline Gartin. Assigned prosecutor: Nattalie Macomber

## **NEVADA**

#### Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Animal Cruelty Section

Since 2015, a small unit of “pet detectives” has been investigating felony cases of people who abuse animals as an important way to stop other violent crimes in Las Vegas. The unit is under Metro’s homicide and sex crimes bureau

#### **NEW JERSEY\***

##### Bergen County Prosecutor’s Office Animal Cruelty Task Force

“The core function of the Animal Cruelty Task Force is the proactive investigation and prosecution of alleged cases of animal neglect and cruelty. The task force works in cooperation with local law enforcement in the investigation of all complaints.

Community education is one component of the task force’s work. The Animal Cruelty Task Force is comprised of dedicated volunteers. Members attend continuing education classes on evenings and weekends to hone their skills as Animal Cruelty Investigators. All members are required to complete a rigorous curriculum and basic firearms qualification at the Bergen County Law & Public Safety Institute.”

##### Cape May County Office of the Prosecutor Animal Cruelty Task Force

The Legal Division oversees litigation and investigation. Assignments include the Animal Cruelty Task Force.

##### Ocean County Prosecutors’ Office Animal Cruelty Unit

The Animal Cruelty Unit is within the Special Victims section of the Criminal Investigations division.

##### Passaic County Prosecutor’s Office Animal Cruelty Unit

The Animal Cruelty Unit oversees the enforcement of animal cruelty laws in Passaic County. There is a designated Animal Cruelty Prosecutor (ACP) as well as designated Chief Humane Law Enforcement Officers (CHLEO) who work closely with Municipal Humane Law Enforcement Officers (MHLEO) in each municipality.

##### Union County Prosecutor’s office Animal Cruelty Unit

Housed within the Investigative Division’s Special Prosecutions Unit, a dedicated assistant prosecutor and member of the investigative staff work with task force members to rescue animals from unsafe conditions and to investigate and prosecute potential violations of animal cruelty laws.

**\* NOTE:** State law enacted in 2019 eliminated the NJ SPCA and replaced humane law enforcement with requiring each of the state’s 21 county prosecutors to form an animal cruelty task force. Each of New Jersey’s 600+ townships and boroughs is required to appoint a municipal humane law enforcement officer.

#### **NEW MEXICO**

Albuquerque: Bernalillo County Sheriff’s Office Animal Cruelty Task Force (*current status unknown*)

#### **NEW YORK**

##### Albany County District Attorney’s Office Animal Cruelty Taskforce

Created in 2013 to utilize a multi-agency response to animal abuse, neglect, and hoarding cases, as well as combine law enforcement prevention efforts and public education outreach. A felony level Assistant District Attorney from the Special Victims Unit oversees all animal related crimes. Taskforce members include local veterinarians, law enforcement officers, delegates from the New York State Attorney General’s Office, members of animal rescue shelters such as the Mohawk & Hudson River Humane

Society, the ASPCA, the New York State Animal Protection Federation, and representatives from Cornell Cooperative Extension to aid in the rural components of the taskforce goals.

#### Erie County District Attorney's Office Animal Cruelty Unit

The Animal Cruelty Unit is responsible for the prosecution of all crimes committed against animals including cruelty to animals, neglect of pets, animal hoarding, and training and fighting of dogs and other animals. The prosecutor assigned to this unit, Assistant District Attorney Meghan E. Mahoney, works closely with Erie County SPCA peace officers, city and town animal control officers, forensically trained veterinarians and experts in the study of animal fighting employed by the ASPCA. These cases require special training and increased devotion of time because the vast majority of crimes committed against animals must be proven entirely through circumstantial evidence as the victims, the animals, cannot speak for themselves. The prosecution of these cases in a court of law requires specialized knowledge and expertise in order to educate the judge or jury regarding the meaning and understanding of the evidence presented.

#### Essex County Animal Cruelty Taskforce

Animal cruelty reporting hotline established by District Attorney and North Country SPCA

#### Manhattan (NYC) District Attorney's Office – Animal Cruelty Program

Formed in 2017 to streamline the investigation and prosecution of cases involving crimes against animals, including cruelty, neglect, hoarding, and organized animal fighting cases, and ensure that each case is overseen by an expert in the field.

#### Nassau County District Attorney's Office Animal Crimes Unit

"The Animal Crimes Unit investigates and prosecutes criminal offenses perpetrated against animals, including dogfighting, cockfighting, severe torture, criminal neglect, hoarding, illegal possession of wildlife, and competitive animal abuse." There is a dedicated telephone extension to reach the unit.

#### Otsego County Animal Cruelty Task Force – PETS (Prevention, Education, Training & Systems) –

formed in February 2019 as partnership between the Susquehanna SPCA, Otsego County Sheriff's Department, the District Attorney's office, Leatherstocking Veterinary Group, and Oneonta Veterinary Hospital.

#### Queens County – District Attorney's Office Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit

Nicoletta J. Caferri, Chief of the Unit.

#### Richmond County (Staten Island, NYC) – District Attorney's Animal Cruelty Prosecution Unit

Created in April 2016. Headed by A.D.A. Jane Grinberg. Also collaborates with area veterinarians in the Animal Neglect Prevention Program.

#### Syracuse – CNY Animal Cruelty Task Force

Formed in 2013 as an advisory body to the Parks & Recreation Committee of the Syracuse Common Council. It is composed of City of Syracuse advisors, local animal advocacy group members, staff from Veterinary Medical Center of CNY, mental health professionals, animal behavior experts and members of the Onondaga County Bar Association.

#### Syracuse -- Police Department

The Syracuse Police Department has an assigned Animal Cruelty Investigator who is a police officer whose job is to investigate animal cruelty and neglect. There are currently two officers holding the position who are overseen by a Sergeant as their supervisor.

#### Westchester County District Attorney's Office Animal Crimes Unit

Mary Ann Liebowitz, Assistant D.A., supervises it

## **NORTH CAROLINA**

New Hanover County Sheriff's Office Animal Services Unit

## **OREGON**

Statewide Oregon Animal Cruelty Deputy District Attorney

Jake Kamins holds this position with statewide powers. He is employed by the Benton County District Attorney's Office. The position is funded by the Animal Legal Defense Fund.

## **PENNSYLVANIA**

Allegheny County District Attorney's Office Animal Cruelty Unit

"The District Attorney's Office vigorously prosecutes cases involving suspected animal cruelty. Cases prosecuted range from summary charges where suspected animal abuse has occurred to felony dog fighting cases. District Attorney Stephen A. Zappala, Jr. and Allegheny County Treasurer John Weinstein created the Allegheny Abused Animal Relief Fund (AAARF) which has raised funds to provide humane care for animals that have suffered from cruelty. The Fund serves as a model for other counties that have started similar programs in their jurisdictions."

Bucks County District Attorney's Office

Robert James, Chief of the Crash Investigation Unit and coordinator of the Veterans' Treatment Diversion Program, also serves as the county Animal Cruelty prosecutor.

Lancaster County Office of the District Attorney

The District Attorney's Investigative Division maintains an email Animal Cruelty Tip Line.

Lawrence County District Attorney's Office Humane Department

The District Attorney's Criminal Investigation Division, along with local law enforcement agencies, is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of any act of abuse and/or cruelty towards animals of any kind. In furtherance of this mission, the Criminal Investigation Division is charged with the duty to review all Humane Tip Line Complaints and assist with the investigation and prosecution of all individuals responsible for the commission of crimes against animals. District Attorney Joshua Lamancusa said, "I believe that we have a duty and a responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Animal abuse and/or cruelty should never be permitted nor tolerated within a community, and I will do all I can to hold those individuals who are responsible for crimes committed against animals."

## **TEXAS**

Austin Police Dept. Animal Cruelty Unit

Dallas County District Attorney's Animal Cruelty Unit

Felicia Kerney, Chief of the Community Prosecution Unit, heads this division as its Chief Prosecutor.

Dallas Police Department Animal Cruelty Detectives

Two detectives in 2018 were assigned to focus solely on animal cruelty cases. The new assignments followed calls from the community for the department to devote more resources to fighting animal cruelty and to help streamline and coordinate cases among multiple agencies in the Metroplex. The Animal Cruelty Investigations Unit of the SPCA

of Texas, which rescued 1,459 animals from cruelty in 2020, will continue to work with Dallas police.

El Paso Police Department Animal Cruelty Unit

Harris County District Attorney's Office Animal Cruelty Task Force

Formed following Hurricane Harvey to consolidate investigations and reports among: District Attorney's office; Harris County Sheriff's Office; Houston Police Dept.; Houston Animal Control; BARC; Crime Stoppers; Harris County Veterinary Public Health; Houston Humane Society; Houston PetSet; Harris County Constable Precinct 5

Laredo Anti-Animal Cruelty Partner Council Task Force

Established March 2020; partnership of Crime Stoppers, Animal Care Services and others

Montgomery County Constable Precinct 2 Animal Cruelty Investigation Unit

## **VIRGINIA**

Commonwealth of Virginia Office of the Attorney General's Animal Law Unit

The nation's first statewide Animal Law Unit to be established by an Attorney General was created in 2015 "to prevent animal fighting and animal cruelty because we wanted state agencies and local law enforcement to know where they could turn for these kinds of cases. Laws related to animal welfare and animal fighting should be strictly enforced for the sake of animals themselves and for the strength and safety of our communities since animal fighting often reveals other associated crimes like illegal gambling, illegal drugs or alcohol, or even things like assaults, domestic abuse, or illegal weapons." The unit is comprised of several staff attorneys led by Senior Assistant Attorney General Michelle Welch.

## **WASHINGTON**

Pierce County Property Crimes & Animal Cruelty Unit

The Property Crimes and Animal Cruelty Unit prosecutes felony property crimes and animal cruelty cases. Property crimes include residential and business burglaries, forgeries, employee embezzlements, identity thefts, metal thefts, and felony thefts. The Unit has one grant-funded deputy prosecuting attorney as part of the Greater Puget Sound Financial Fraud and ID Theft Task Force. The Unit handles more than 2,000 felony cases per year.

# **CANADA**

## **ALBERTA**

Edmonton Police Service

Canada's first dedicated animal cruelty law enforcement unit was established in 2021. It is housed in the Domestic Offender crime section because of The Link between animal cruelty, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child offenses, and elder abuse. The unit is headed by Constables Ilka Cunningham and Ted Dyck.