



Governor's Taskforce On The Humane Treatment of Animals Recommendation Report for 2007

1. The taskforce is made up of the following appointed members: Joanne Bourbeau, George Cook, Dr. Steve Crawford, Mark Ellingwood, Stephanie Frommer, Cassandra Gatsas, Lisa Hall, Virginia Hokenstrom, Michael Hughes, Mel Liston, Peter Marsh, Joyce Matott, Roni McCall, Susan Morrell, Ken Murphy, Elin Phinizy, Maureen Prendergast, Sheila Presby, Senator Sheila Roberge, Andy Shagoury, Representative Carla Skinder, Steve Sprowl, David Stowe, Dick Wentzell, and Dr. Jerilee Zezula.
2. In addition the following people helped with this report: Diane Puckhaber, Former Representative Nancy Johnson and Russell Pope.
3. In keeping with the provisions of the Executive Order, three sub-committees were formed to address the following major areas:
 - a. Legislative: How do our existing laws address the animal cruelty issue? Should new laws be added?
 - b. Education: The public needs to be informed about the NH Welfare Laws, and how they affect them. Currently, the only exposure the public gets is news about spectacular cases. Also, the law enforcement professionals, including judges, prosecutors, animal control officers (ACO's), humane investigators and the police should have a firm working knowledge of the cruelty laws.
 - c. Funding: The NH cruelty laws can be the best in the nation, but if the funding is not there to effectively pursue, prosecute and then take care of the animals involved then all is for naught. Enforcement of NH laws regarding the treatment of animals is crucial; proper funding is needed.

4. The Legislative Sub-Committee recognized the need for:
 - a. Proper enforcement of the existing laws
 - b. More cruelty investigators in NH that are authorized to make arrests. Currently only three full-time investigators in the entire state.
 - c. More standardized training for police, ACO's, prosecutors and even judges as to what the current laws are and what methods are available to enforce and prosecute them.
 - d. Proper funding which is needed to tackle large scale cases. Massive costs arise from the care and feeding of the animals as well as the prosecutorial costs and the related police and ACO work. It is true that small communities would reluctantly ignore potential large scale cases simply because they know the town can't afford to take action.

5. The Legislative Sub-Committee conducted a survey among the Task Force to determine what legislative areas needed improvement. The results showed the strongest support (but not necessarily unanimous) in the following areas:
 - a. Animal hoarding is not adequately addressed properly in NH and requires additional research. According to research it is a psychological disease that results in tremendous suffering for both the animals and the offenders living in unsanitary conditions. It is possible that the state could mandate psychological treatment.
 - b. A conclusion of our subcommittee studies show that hoarders who are allowed to keep a few animals are actually more successful at stopping their behavior.
 - c. Delinquency proceedings for minors. Currently NH does not allow cases against minors for felony animal cruelty to be transferred to Superior Court. The link between animal cruelty and human violence is well-known and well-researched, and some studies have shown that a disturbing majority of intentional cruelty cases are committed by youths. In truly egregious cases such as these, this action may be necessary for the early intervention and treatment for the offender.
 - d. A mandatory holding period for stray cats at animal shelters should be established. Many shelters do hold cats for a good while, but minimum holding periods are not mandated unless the cat is wearing some form of identification.
 - e. Cross reporting between social service agencies and animal welfare/animal control organizations: we recommend that social services agencies be encouraged to report suspicions of animal cruelty, and conversely that animal control authorities and humane investigators report suspicions of domestic violence.

The Task Force heard testimony from the public policy director of the NH Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence that social service agents are currently not mandated reporters for domestic violence when it involves adults -- only when child abuse is suspected or it involves an elder who has been deemed incompetent. By working in concert with each other, we can better address the needs of both human and animal victims of abuse.

6. The Education Subcommittee recommends:

Standardized and formal education of law enforcement professionals, including ACO's, as to what the NH cruelty laws are and how they can be effectively enforced. Dr. Zezula, with four co-instructors, taught an on-line UNH credit course on animal cruelty designed for law enforcement, ACO's, and Humane Officers during last fall semester. Eleven students were enrolled. It will be offered every fall.

a. Educating the public about animal welfare.

- Starting in the schools, lesson plans should be developed.
- Frequent public service announcements should be developed and distributed to local media outlets.
- The Task Force, through Dr. Zezula, developed and maintains the Governor's Task Force web site. It will be a reference to the public about the NH cruelty laws and about the work of the Task Force itself. (www.nh.gov/humane)

7. The Funding Sub-Committee recommends the need for:

Providing adequate funds so that every town in NH has the financial backing to deal with cruelty cases. Significant costs arise from the care and feeding of multiple animals over an extended period of time.

8. The Funding Sub-Committee suggests that to effectively deal with animal cruelty issues a minimum of \$1.2 million is needed annually with all proceeds to go to the department of agriculture. Suggested funding sources include:

- Increase in the real estate transfer fee
- a dedicated lottery ticket for animal welfare (i.e., scratch tickets)
- dedicated license plate
- grant writing
- the recommendation that towns be encouraged to set up a dedicated animal welfare fund - to be funded by unspent dog licensing monies and animal civil forfeitures
- Also suggested that large animals (i.e. horses, excluding livestock) be licensed

9. Additional suggestions:

- that an Assistant State Veterinarian be hired
- police standard and training council emphasis animal cruelty and investigations more extensively in the current curriculum