

# Bradley to file animal cruelty legislation

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By Daymond Steer



**A Wolfeboro woman was cited for keeping dozens of Great Danes at her Wolfeboro property. (MEREDITH LEE/HSUS PHOTO)**WOLFEBORO — State Sen. Jeb Bradley (R-Wolfeboro) intends to file legislation aimed at preventing animal cruelty cases like the one last month in which dozens of Great Danes were seized.

Eighty-four dogs were taken by law enforcement from allegedly squalid conditions at a commercial breeding operation in Wolfeboro and Bartlett on June 16. Another nine dogs came to the Conway Area Humane Society prior to the raid. Christina Fay, 59, of Wolfeboro was arrested on two misdemeanor counts of animal neglect. Her trial is set for Oct. 25 at 1 p.m. in Carroll County Circuit Court in Ossipee.

In a phone interview Thursday, Bradley said he met with Wolfeboro Police Chief Dean Rondeau, Humane Society of the United States State Director Lindsay Hamrick and state Reps. William Marsh (R-Brookfield), Stephen Schmidt (R-Wolfeboro) and Edith DesMarais (D-Wolfeboro) on Wednesday.

"We had a pretty thorough discussion," said Bradley. "I think the Wolfeboro police chief gave a pretty compelling account of the situation the officers faced."

A police complaint charges that Fay did "knowingly permit or cause animals in her possession or custody, Great Dane dogs, to be subjected to cruelty, inhumane treatment, or unnecessary suffering by keeping them in an environment where they live in their own feces and urine, are not properly treated for disease and injuries and are fed infested food."

Bradley said his first priority is addressing the state of the law when it comes to breeding operations. He said one does not have to be a licensed dog breeder until 50 puppies are sold in a year. Other states have lower thresholds.

"The current state of the law would not have allowed any sort of licensure requirement for the Wolfeboro situation," said Bradley, adding he will review laws from other states to see what requirements they have. "I think that legitimate breeders, I would imagine, are going to welcome this kind of oversight because it gives them the stamp of legitimacy."  
New Hampshire Gov Chris Sununu also is joining the cause.

"Animal cruelty will not be tolerated in New Hampshire. I look forward to working with advocates and legislators to pass commonsense legislation that protects animals, ensuring that the type of situation that took place in Wolfeboro never happens again," Sununu said in a statement Thursday.

Bradley expects some may claim a stricter license requirement would be a barrier to entry into the dog-breeding industry.

"The answer to that is to look at what happened in the situation in Wolfeboro," said Bradley. "The descriptions that I've heard, had it not been for a whistleblower on one hand and officers filing serving civil paperwork who observed the conditions through being on the property ... that situation could still be ongoing. I respect the 'barrier to entry' argument, but at the same time, there is an animal cruelty argument, too, that is pretty important."

Hamrick said someone can breed 10 litters or 50 puppies before having to be licensed by the Department of Agriculture. Hamrick would like to create a license requirement based on the number of breeding female dogs a person has, which is the way Maine does it. That law would be easier to enforce, she said.

Bradley also wants to find ways to protect towns from the costs that such large-scale rescues create.

"Right now, I think the cost of boarding about 90 animals could run as high as half a million dollars," said Bradley. "That is something somebody is paying for."

He expects a sticking point will be trying to get money from a defendant pre-conviction.

"There will be people who object to that, but at the same time, I think when people realize how staggering these bills can be when a situation gets as out of control as it was and the taxpayers are getting left potentially on the hook, there is a counter-balancing argument."

Hamrick said other states have addressed that issue. She suggested New Hampshire could change the law so there could be a hearing after a seizure happens. A judge would determine if the animals were legally seized and if the owner should be billed for the cost. For a seizure to occur, probable cause has to be found.

"The police department can't just seize your animals for any reason," said Hamrick.

The Humane Society of the United States is covering the costs of the Great Danes in their care, which is most of them. According to Hamrick, the way the law is written now, the town where the animal cruelty case originates is legally responsible for their upkeep.

"If there wasn't an animal shelter or organization like ours absorbing those costs, it would fall in this case to the town of Wolfeboro," said Hamrick. "The problem is realistically towns don't have these budgets."

Hamrick said to watch for updates on the Humane Society of the United States' Facebook page, [facebook.com/HSUSNewHampshire/](https://facebook.com/HSUSNewHampshire/).

Bradley said anyone with advice is welcome to call him at (603) 271-2609.