

NH Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals
Meeting Minutes
April 19, 2021

Call to Order & Roll Call:

- The regular monthly meeting of the Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals was called to order at 1:05 pm, via Zoom, by Co-Chairs, Jeri Zezula and Jennifer Eber.
- Roll call introductions of current board members were made to the newest commission member and the public attendees. We welcomed our newest member, Jeb Bradley – NH State Senator.

Members Present:

- Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau (phone)
- Jeb Bradley – NH State Senator
- George Cook – Dog Owners of the Granite State & NH Musers
- Marga Coulp – General Public
- Tom DeRosa – General Public
- Jennifer Eber – Co-Chair, General Public
- Kurt Ehrenberg – National Humane Organization (Left Early)
- Elaina Enzien – UNH Co-Op Extension
- Heather Faria – NH Federation of Humane Organizations
- Sheila Johannsen – Animal Control Officers Association of NH
- Gary Lambert – NH Sportsmen (phone)
- Wendy Munroe – NH Veterinary Technician Association
- Tom Seymour – General Public
- Steven Sprowl – Humane Cruelty Investigator
- William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association
- Dr. Jeri Zezula – Co-Chair, General Public

Members Absent:

- Jane Barlow Roy – NH Veterinary Medical Association
- Cynthia Collins – General Public
- Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative
- Dr. Stephen Crawford – State Veterinarian
- Patricia Morris – Equine Associations
- Dean Rondeau – NH Police Chief's Association

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Public Present:

- Joanne Bourbeau – Former Commission Member
- Jana McMillan – ACO
- Jonathan Melanson – NH Governor's Office

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Motion to accept the meeting minutes of March 15, 2021 as written was made by Shelia Johannson and was seconded by George Cook. The motion passed unanimously.

Legislation:

- Per our discussion on the role of this Commission, we agreed to continue tracking the following bills. Brief discussion summaries are included in the following table.

HB 174	TEXT	Title: Relative to Reporting Cat / Car Collisions	<p>The Governor has authorized the Commission to develop an opinion for this proposed legislation relative to reporting a collision between a cat and a motor vehicle. However, hearing dates have past and only written testimony will now be considered.</p> <p><u>To Date:</u> House Floor Decision – Ought to Pass as Amended. Senate Transportation Committee – Ought to Pass. Floor Decision Pending.</p>
HB 246	TEXT	Title: Establishing Protective Order for Vulnerable Adults	<p>The Governor has requested the Commission refrain from developing an opinion for this proposed legislation establishing a protective order for vulnerable adults.</p> <p><u>To Date:</u> House Committee Report – Inexpedient to Legislate House Floor Decision – Indefinitely Postpone</p>
HB 250	TEXT	Title: Relative to Pet Vendors	<p>The Governor has requested the Commission refrain from developing an opinion for this proposed legislation relative to pet vendors.</p> <p>Animal volume has been amended and now stands at 35 dogs and/or cats.</p>

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			<p><u>To Date:</u> House Floor Decision – Ought to Pass with Amendment Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee – Hearing Date 4/19/2021 @ 1:20pm.</p>
HB 338	TEXT	<p>Title: Relative to Penalties for Dog Theft & Tampering with a Dog’s Radio Collar</p>	<p>The Governor has authorized the Commission to develop an opinion for this proposed legislation relative to penalties for dog theft and tampering with a dog's radio collar. However, hearing dates have past and only written testimony will be considered.</p> <p>Rep. Comtois advised this bill has had the original penalties reduced. Dr. Jeri Zezula noted there seems to be a disconnect between this bill and current civil and criminal codes. It was further noted that this bill added references specific to tracking collars and microchips.</p> <p><u>To Date:</u> House Floor Decision – Ought to Pass with Amendment Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee – Hearing Date 4/19/2021 @ 1:30pm. Jennifer and Jeri sent in the Commission’s opinion to the Senate Committee.</p>
HB 532	TEXT	<p>Title: Creating an Animal Records Database</p>	<p>This proposed legislation creating an animal records database has been amended and passed on to Ways & Means. The bill will return to the floor before heading to the Senate.</p> <p>This Commission will further review with the intent of providing a formal opinion prior to cross over (April 6, 7, & 8). A “Special” meeting may be called in order to make the deadline.</p> <p><u>To Date:</u> House Environment & Agriculture Committee – Retained in Committee.</p>

- **Next Steps:** Commission to stay in tune with amendments as best we can.

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Executive Order Changes:

- The new Executive Order (E.O.) was released today and was distributed to Commission members. The E.O. clarifies and details many changes requested by the Commission. A major clarification made clear that legislation relating to wildlife is excluded from Commission's purview.
- The Commission's membership makeup remains unchanged.

DOJ Involvement in Animal Cruelty Reporting:

- Jennifer Eber and Jeri Zezula met with DOJ (Geoff Ward) about 2 ½ weeks ago to see if the DOJ can aid in gathering animal cruelty data. It was suggested that it might be possible to gather the data through some of the existing data gathering methods or work through the Department of Safety or the County Attorneys to gather data. It has been a struggle trying to gather data across multiple areas, departments, and agencies. Further efforts may be placed to dive deeper into existing data, including FBI data. Jennifer has reached out to Tom Velardi to see if the County Attorneys can assist with gathering the data.
- Assumptions animal cruelty reporting is ongoing and sent to County Attorneys. However, this turns out to be false.
- **Next Steps:** Maintain open communications with the DOJ with the objective of developing an efficient and accurate data collection process. Further research on NIBRS reporting and data available through this reporting. Reach out to Department of Safety on possible data gathering.

14 Day Status Hearings:

- The new law requires a status hearing must occur within 14 days. An administrative order was sent by Judge King to alert judges to the 14 day status hearing requirement. Monitoring has been ongoing, but there seems to be inconsistencies. One case in question (Kevin Butler) had a status hearing within the 14 days but it is unclear as to whether cost of care was addressed at the hearing. Perhaps submitting articles to prosecutors would assist in clarifying expectations and requirements. A guidance document might be beneficial. Cost of care regulations may make the issue more pertinent and discussed at the 14 day status hearing. .
- **Next Steps:** Continue monitoring ongoing cases for compliance. Commission to consider creating a draft guidance document/articles for distribution.

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Administrative Rules:

- Jeri Zezula stated that Dr. Crawford reported that the first implementation of cost of care may be in June, by that time all other steps will have been completed.

New Cruelty Cases:

- Steve Sprowl reported 2 cases:
 - Farmington, NH: 62 rabbits removed. Charges are to be dropped upon the surrender of the rabbits.
 - Pittsfield, NH: Working with the State Veterinarian and the town, 4 horses, 1 mini-horse, and 1 mule were removed. The woman responsible for their care surrendered all of them. The woman involved, who is well known to animal cruelty investigators, has had up to eight horses removed as part of a number of previous cases. All of the previous cases had charges down-graded to violations.
- Further evidence was presented indicating prosecutors do not necessarily follow the requirements established for charges being filed correctly. Information is contained within the Commission's manual, but the manual is not being used or referenced as intended.
- **Next Steps:** Commission to consider what other actions might be taken to publicize the need to follow established procedure.

Correspondence to Commission:

- Voices for Wildlife wanted to partner with the Commission. It was explained to them that wildlife does not fall within the oversight of this Commission. All Commission members are welcome to join, volunteer, or assist, if they should so choose. Jeri shared the contact information for Voices of Wildlife.

Member/Guest Comments/Questions:

- Jozi Best reports that the Horse Association is anticipating hay shortages due to drought. The association is actively looking for opportunities and resources to offset the potential shortage. Steve Sprowl advised that he is aware of resources that are available for the entire State of New Hampshire and will send details and contact information to Jozi.

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Subcommittees:

- Subcommittee #1 – Data & Laws: Heather Faria, Chair.
 - Draft submitted. Short of further direction, actions items are complete.
- Subcommittee #2 – Propose Legislation: Marga Coulp, Chair.
 - Commission members are encouraged to submit ideas for future legislation by Friday, April 23rd. Send any suggested future legislation (specific or general) to Marga and Jennifer. There will be a meeting Monday, April 26th for the discussion of submitted ideas.
- Subcommittee #3 – Reporting: Wendy Munroe, Chair.
 - The ACO Questionnaire and the results were presented in the meeting preparation email detailing ACO overview across the state.
 - The Subcommittee thinks the Commission might wish to undertake the improvement of the reporting process for ACOs.
 - The Subcommittee also feels the Commission should to track complaints in addition to court cases.
 - Jeri Zezula reports that those contributing to NIBRs reporting are not following the defined procedure as “incidents” include all reports of cruelty, not just court cases.
- Subcommittee #4 – Training: Jeri Zezula, Chair.
 - Available resources were divided into manageable bits to ease the burden of review. The Veterinary Association was approached to see if they would upload information onto their website for veterinary access. The updating of resources for the state is moving along and organizations are submitting updated and pertinent information.
- Subcommittee #5 – Legislation Tracking: George Cook, Chair.
 - Efforts are ongoing and updates have been provided for each Commission meeting. The legislation process speed has increased placing challenges on the Subcommittee and its charge to track said legislation. Omnibus bills become most challenging where bills can be attached and difficult to track.
 - SB 127 (HB2) database inclusion and (HB250) pet vendor language changes could be in the upcoming budget proposal.
- **Next Steps:** Targeting May for draft reports and June for final report submission. Will need completed subcommittee work next meeting.

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Adjournment

- Tom DeRosa moved to adjourn the meeting. Sherriff Wright seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- Dr. Jeri Zezula adjourned the meeting at 2:35 pm.

Next Meeting

- Scheduled for Monday, May 17, 2021 at 1:00 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Seymour

Secretary