



NH Governor's Commission on The Humane Treatment of Animals  
Monthly Meeting Minutes

**October 12, 2023**

**Call To Order**

Having achieved a quorum, Dr. Jeri Zezula called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

**Roll Call**

Commissioners Present (14)

Cynthia Collins – General Public  
George Cook – Dog Owners of The Granite State / NH Musers  
Marga Coulp – General Public  
Thomas DeRosa – General Public (L)  
Jennifer Eber – General Public  
Kurt Ehrenburg – Humane Society of The United States  
Heather Faria – NH Federation of Humane Organizations  
Chief David Goldstein – NH Police Chief's Association  
Tona McCarthy – Humane Cruelty Investigator  
Tyson Morrill – NH Sportsmen (L)  
Wendy Munroe – NH Vet Tech Association  
Tom Seymour – General Public  
David Watters – NH State Senator  
Dr. Jeri Zezula – General Public

Commissioners Absent (8)

Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy – NH Vet Med Association  
Jozi Best – NH Farm Bureau  
Barbara Comtois – NH State Representative  
Dr. Stephen Crawford – NH State Veterinarian  
Mary Davis – UNH Cooperative Extension  
Sheila Johannesen – Animal Control Officers Association of NH  
Patricia Morris – NH Equine Association  
Sheriff William Wright – NH Sheriff's Association

Public Present

Marta Hurgin – General Public

Introductions

Commissioners introduced themselves to our newest member, Police Chief David Goldstein, and guest Marta Hurgin. Chief Goldstein and Ms. Hurgin each, in turn, introduced themselves including a quick biography.

**Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Dr. Jeri Zezula asked for amendments to the September 2023 meeting minutes. Not hearing any, Heather Faria motioned to accept the meeting minutes. George Cook seconded the motion. The passed with 10 Aye, 0 Nay, and 3 Abstentions (due to absence).

## **Old Business**

### Cost of Care Update

Dr. Jeri Zezula had communicated with Department of Agriculture Commissioner Jasper asking that he continue to share information each quarter. Emphasis was placed on the program's use and the program's publicity. Commissioner Jasper agreed that the statute needs revision to permit third-party application and reimbursements, specifically animal shelters, and rescues.

### Public Survey on Animal Cruelty: Breakout Stats and Plan

Of the 700+ that took the survey, 262 identified themselves as NH residents, but did not go further to complete the survey. This explained the difference in numbers and verified the reported results as correct.

Dr. Jeri Zezula emailed link to the Commission reports broken out by group divisions with the minutes of last meeting. Dr. Jane Barlow-Roy told Jeri that she was not surprised at the results in veterinarians break-out as they mirrored survey results her group has seen. In both cases it appears that people at the extreme ends of each topic replied and commented. Those supporting moderate views seem to be underrepresented.

Commission members were asked to review the survey results and think about how these survey results could guide the work of the Commission and/or be used for some educational purpose. We will further discuss at the November meeting.

## **New Business**

### Governor's Report Feedback

Jennifer Eber advised that we still do not have approval from the Governor to our request about reducing the Commission's meeting schedule from 8 minimum meetings to 4. Regarding the proposed legislation in the report, the Governor's Office said the Governor was open to the general idea of sponsoring legislation during this upcoming term, but did not specifically indicate what legislation was approved for the Commission to work on.

The Department of Agriculture provided feedback through the Governor's office with suggestions for RSA revisions. Details behind the suggestions were not available as the Governor's Office and the Department of Agriculture view their communications as being confidential. This legislation basically moves the equine cruelty issues to the general cruelty statute.

### Legislative Review / Preview / Schedule

A number of LSRs have been submitted and a list was distributed to the Commission. As noted below, the generic topic is listed, but definitive language has yet to be published.

#### **House LSRs:**

#2092 (Stringham) Establishing a committee to study protection of business operators regarding fraudulent or untrained service animals.

#2098 (Rochefort) Relative to disposition of vicious dogs.

#2126 (Read) Relative to certain equine practices and animal cruelty.

#2175 (Kelley) Relative to animal chiropractors.

#2208 (Cannon) Relative to sale and use of rodent glue traps.

#2244 (Horrigan) Relative to historic horse racing moratorium.

#2362 (Mackenzie) Relative to the definition of commercial kennels.

#2431 (Ammon) Relative to exemptions from rabies vaccine.

#2432 (Mannion) Relative to allowing private ownership of small-tailed monkeys, raccoons, foxes, skunks, otters, and kangaroo.

#2552 (Aron) Relative to establishing a conditional veterinary license for veterinarians educated in other countries.

#2708 (Kelley) Prohibiting retail sale of dogs, cats, and rabbits.

#2719 (Read) Relative to the definition of animal cruelty.

#2731 (Hoell) Relative to repealing the requirement to register dogs annually.

#2756 (Prudhomme-O'Brien) Relative to establishing an animal abuse offender registry.

**Senate LSRs:**

#2921 (Pearl) Relative to animal shelters.

#2941 (Pearl) Relative to the cost of care fund.

George Cook said there will be a hold over regarding animal grooming that may result in the Department of Agriculture publishing guidelines (best industry practices) for groomer selection on its website as a public aid.

Senator Watters said he would be speaking with Senator Pearl to get further information on the LSRs Senator Pearl has submitted.

Chief Goldstein indicated he would carry the LSRs forward to the other committees he works with.

Reports on Any Cruelty Cases

Tona McCarthy noted an increase in reported cases. He also noticed that many cases are involving more than one species. When asked about root cause, he said he had not seen anything to indicate cause.

**General Discussion on Goals for 2023/2024**

Jennifer Eber asked what the Commission saw as its major objectives during this term. Marga Coulp suggested we work to push information to the general public either through newspapers, social media, or other similar sources. She felt we should inform the public about what this Commission does and about animal cruelty. Heather Faria said the Commission's objective is to advise the Governor according to the Executive Order. She also thought that the Governor could use the Department of Education to publicize educational materials. Heather commented that the diverse Commission membership helps to provide a well-rounded understanding of animal care as a whole. She reiterated that the Commission's objective is to advise the Governor so he may act upon those topics that he feels are appropriate. She also mentioned that some of the top issues that NH is facing is (1) lack of access to vet care; (2) limited law enforcement; and (3) cost of care issues. George Cook said the Commission's job is to advise the Governor about poor legislation and good legislation. He further said the Commission should develop wise, swift, and effective recommendations and to help clarify law and expedite the process in doing so.

Senator Watters advised that legislative committees allocate time outside of the formal hearing process to collect input from interested parties and that the Commission could seek have the Co-Chairs speak on the Commission's behalf. He stressed the importance of the Commission educating legislatures on the issues raised by pending legislation. Dr. Jeri Zezula commented that this Commission used to review LSRs in detail in order to offer testimony. George Cook also mentioned that this Commission had previously been told that Commission members may offer testimony on bills but must do so as individuals or as representatives of other organizations.

Kurt Ehrenburg said when the Commission agrees on a stance the Commission should move forward and get involved in legislation. He suggested the Commission become precise with problem definition and be broader in scope with solutions. He gave the example of the ACO issue that we identified, but never followed-through with a solution.

Chief Goldstein reminded everyone that we can also be in contact with our individual representation in the state government in addition to personal contacts. Social media can also be used individually to promote legislation. He also suggested we consider the upcoming gubernatorial elections and push heavily on the leading candidates.

Jennifer Eber suggested this might be a good time to press for desired changes to the Executive Order with the soon-to-be new Governor. Tom DeRosa agreed saying that in January of 2025 the Commission could attempt to re-establish itself as it sees fit with the new administration. Jennifer also suggested maybe the Commission notify the Governor's office of intended action, rather than seek affirmative permission.. Kurt Ehrenburg agreed that the Commission should be more assertive.

Tyson Morrill added that we need to represent our various organizations at the meetings. He also had the idea of having an education part to the meetings, similar to Fish and Game. He said that Fish and Game was very active and perhaps the Commission could function more like Fish and Game.

Jennifer Eber asked if we should recreate subcommittees. Dr. Jeri Zezula was hesitant as she felt previous subcommittees were not effective where not all members contributed. Heather Faria like the subcommittees but suggested we change up the topics. Marga Coulp proposed we tackle one topic at a time. Kurt Ehrenburg suggested we let the recent survey data point to which topics we should consider.

#### **Action Items - ALL:**

- Review and familiarize yourself with the Executive Order.
- Review and prepare to discuss the survey results from your constituency perspective.
- Develop a list of top issues.
- Investigate how other states are handling similar issues, time permitting.

#### **Comments from Members/Guests**

Guest Marta Hurgin expressed her appreciation for the works and accomplishments of this Commission.

#### **Adjournment**

With no further business to conduct, Heather Faria motioned to adjourn. Tyson Morrill seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Dr. Jeri Zezula adjourned the meeting at 11:30 am.

#### **Next Meeting**

November 9, 2023, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm, Location to Be Determined

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Seymour, Secretary  
Dr. Jeri Zezula, Co-Chair  
Jennifer Eber, Co-Chair