



Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals

Public Survey Regarding Animal Cruelty in NH

May 2023

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Introduction

In May of 2023, the Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals (Commission) distributed a brief survey generally related to the issues and legislation it has been discussing and researching to get a perspective of opinions and the Commission's impact.

The survey contained 10 objective questions with an opportunity for explanations and a final comment question. The Commission members distributed the link to the survey through their representative organizations and personal contacts. The survey was created and analyzed with Qualtrics XM Survey Tool. There were 459 complete responses returned.

The survey began with a qualification question to be sure the respondent lived and/or worked in NH.

Question 1 was a check off for the respondent to indicate his/her affiliations related to animals and the Commission members' constituencies. Most of the additional questions had Likert responses with a chance to comment on the reason for answers. (See **Appendix A** for charts showing questions and answer distributions.)

General Trends from all Responses

Most respondents were interested in the welfare of both companion and farmed animals. Of these, the welfare of dogs and cats and farm animals in general were rated "very good" or "mostly good", but there were 35-40% "unsure" regarding small mammals and birds and 25-49% "unsure" about farmed animals.

As far as the opinions about group or professional stewardship (Question 6), most respondents felt it was "mostly good" for all categories. The "not good" groups chosen most frequently were breeders of dogs and cats (31%), animal rescues from out of state (23%), courts (37%), and government officials/legislators (22%). There were also many "unsure" about livestock (23%), animal rescues from out of state (27%), courts (37%), and government officials/legislators (30%).

Regarding NH laws and initiatives compared to other New England states (Question 7), the majority (31%) were "unsure". There were several comments about New England being better than southern states, but that was not the questions asked.

Concerning NH laws and regulations (Question 8), the most common responses were more could be done at the state and federal levels and there could be more enforcement of current laws. 10% were "unfamiliar" with laws and enforcement.

Approximately 60% of respondents said they had witnessed animal cruelty (Question 9) and 29% reported to law enforcement (Question 10.) There was a mixture of other responses regarding reporting, the total number of which was significant. 12% took no action to report. This was a multiple answer question, so respondents could choose more than one answer.

A Few Specific Results by Constituency

Many respondents identified with more than one constituency, which made it difficult to isolate any meaningful comparisons.

For those identifying with national animal welfare and state humane organizations, there was consensus that pet owners are mostly or very good at pet care and a large majority felt that the welfare of dogs and cats in the state is good or very good. There were some concerns and/or dissatisfaction expressed with the NH court system, the government and legislature as well as out of state breeders and rescues.

Veterinarians generally felt all professions/constituencies were very or mostly good. There were a lot of “unsures” concerning laws in NH vs other states. It was felt that the NH laws were adequate but there needed to be more enforcement.

Veterinary technicians were concerned about breeders and rescue groups and saw the need for more laws and regulations regarding animal care.

Written Comments

Respondents had a lot to say in their voluntary narratives explaining their answers. It was obvious that the majority of people who chose to take the survey were passionate about animals and their care. There were many comments about pending (May 2023) and suggested legislation.

From those who were obviously familiar with or working directly within the current NH law, there was concern about the cost of care of seized animals, the lack of court hearings taking account of animals kept in custody for extremely long times. There were concerns that the NH law is confusing and does not have enough guidelines and definitions.

There were many who were concerned about the lack of enforcement. With this, there was praise for certain organizations that did a “good job”. Overshadowing this was the observation that the public does not realize the animal cruelty law in NH includes neglect, that it is in the criminal code, and only certified law enforcement officers have the authority to conduct investigations, bring charges and prosecute.

Some respondents were concerned with of the lack of facilities to house large numbers of seized animals especially farmed animals.

There were many concerns raised about small farms, zoning and lack of regulations and education for the farm owners.

From the performance and sportsmen’s dog perspective, concerns were that laws and proposed legislation do not take into account the uniqueness of these dog events/work and that there may be differences in humane care and training of these dogs vs. house companion dogs.

Commission Take-Aways and Major Issues Revealed

The Commission was pleased that the respondents as a whole thought that NH was doing a good job of looking after the welfare of its animals.

The major issues that the survey and the individual comments revealed were pretty much expected by the Commission from past surveys and meeting discussions.

The major issue related to the responses was the need of education of the public and professional disciplines regarding animal welfare and animal cruelty.

- **Public** - Proper husbandry and welfare of all animals. Recognizing animal cruelty and how to report.
- **Law Enforcement** – The importance of animals to the public, knowledge of cruelty laws. Resources available and willing to help. Cost of care fund.
- **Prosecutors** - The importance of housing seized animals for the shortest time possible for the animals’ welfare and for the cost of care to a municipality.
- **Courts** - The importance of housing seized animals for the shortest time possible for the animals’ welfare and for the cost of care to a municipality.
- **Veterinarians and Veterinary Technicians** - Method of reporting animal cruelty.

- **Legislators and Government Officials** - Knowledge of the cruelty laws.

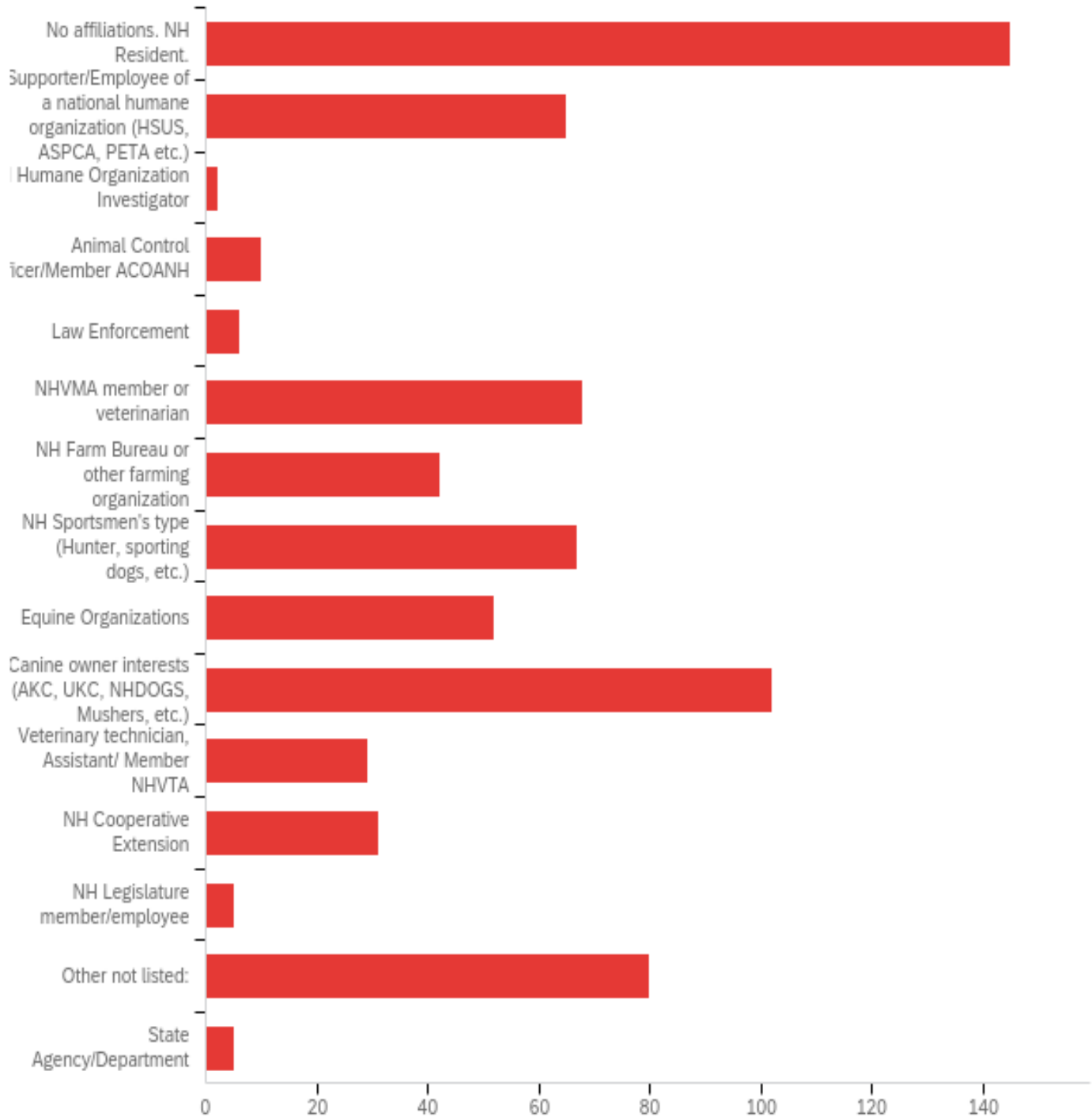
Conclusions

The survey proved worthwhile in confirming that the Commission is on the right track and pursuing endeavors that will benefit NH's animals. The Commission is an advisory body to the Governor and has been communicating this information but is encouraged to know that its work is in accordance with the public's opinions and suggestions. It is currently working within the scope of the Governor's Executive Order 2021-07 to resolve this issues.

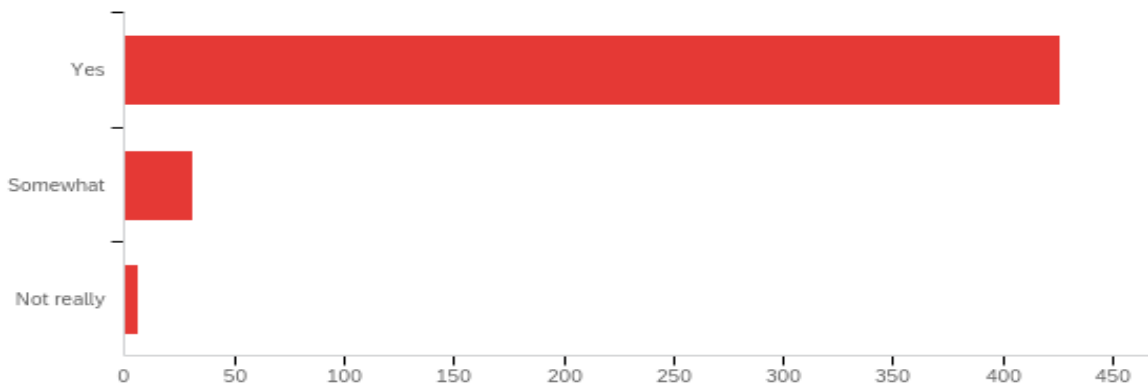
Appendix A

Public Survey Regarding Domestic Animal Welfare in NH - Final

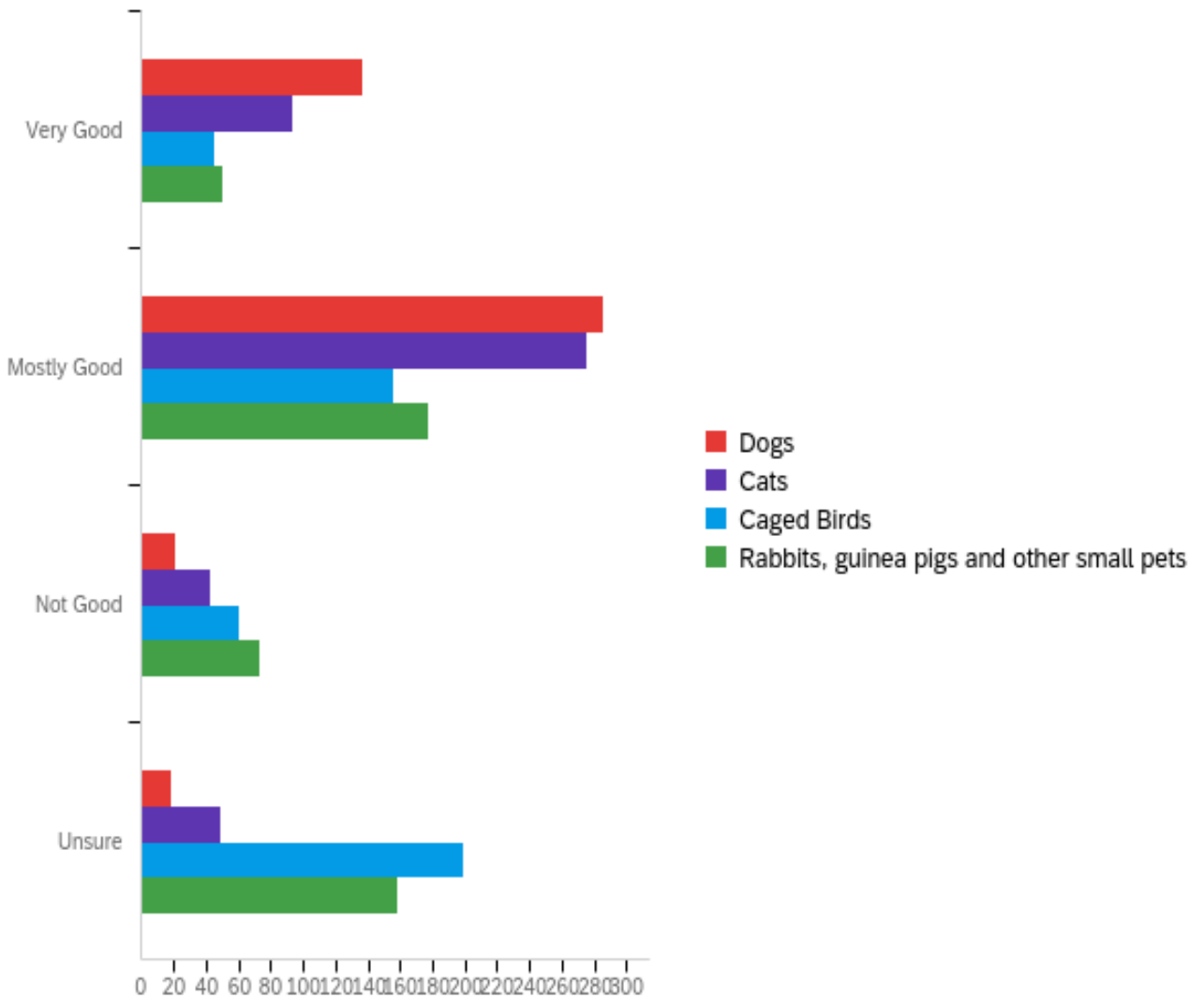
1 - Please check off or add your membership/employment/support of in any animal affiliated organizations. You may check off all that apply.



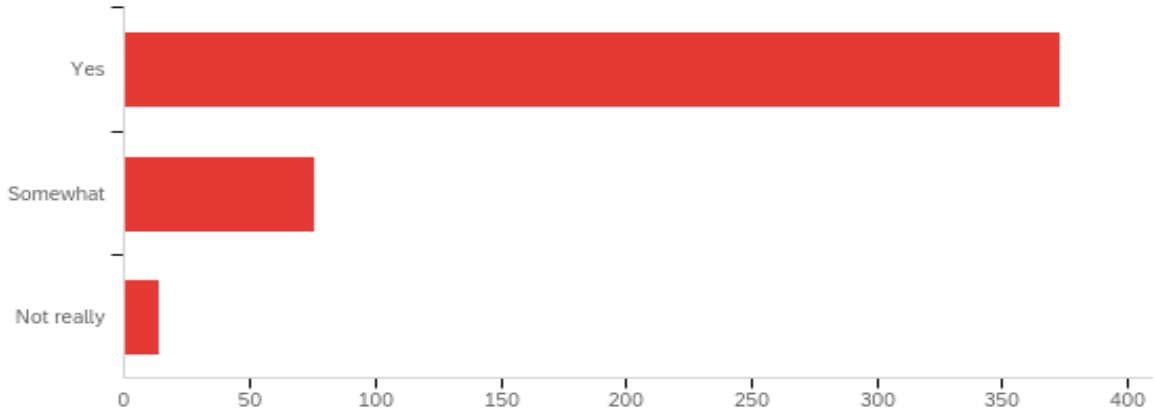
2 - Are you interested in the welfare of companion animals such as dogs, cats and birds?



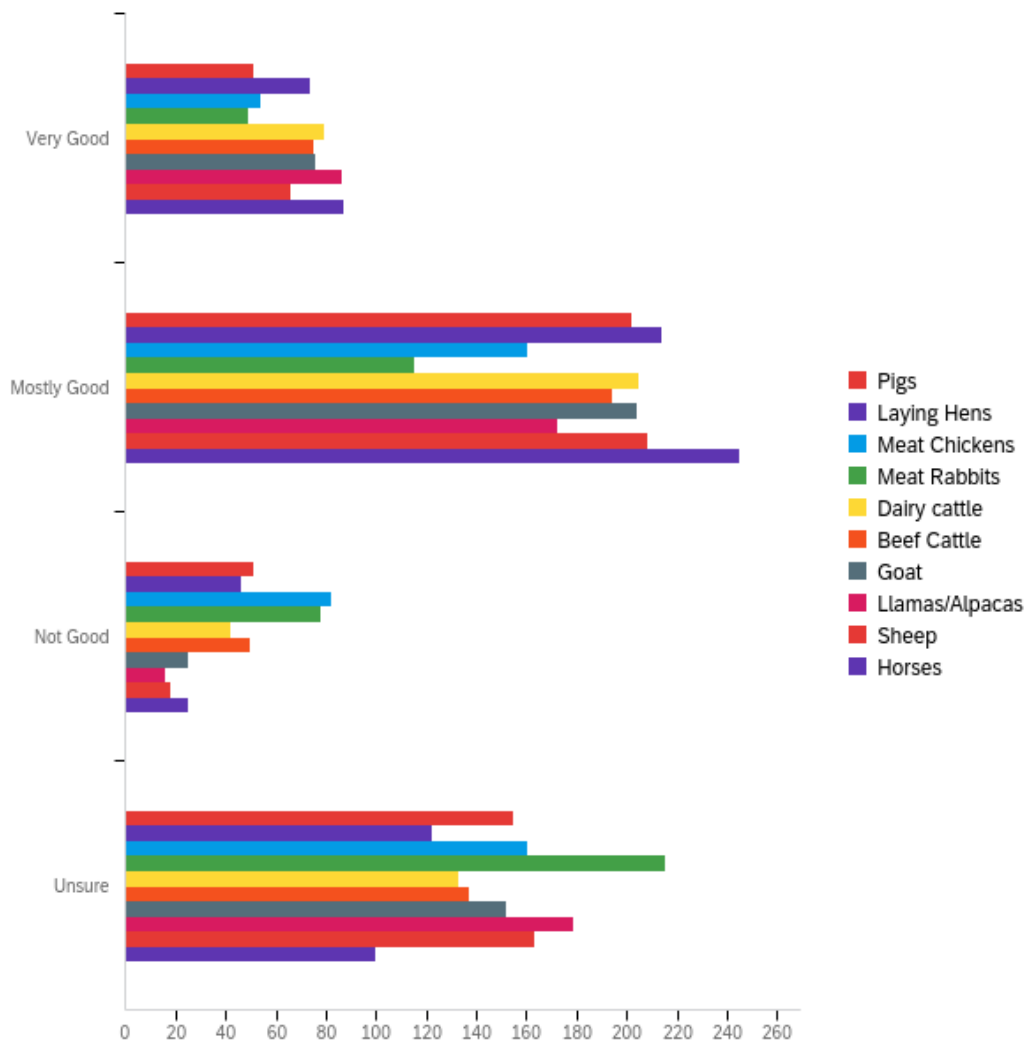
3 - How would you rate the welfare of the following types of companion animals in NH?



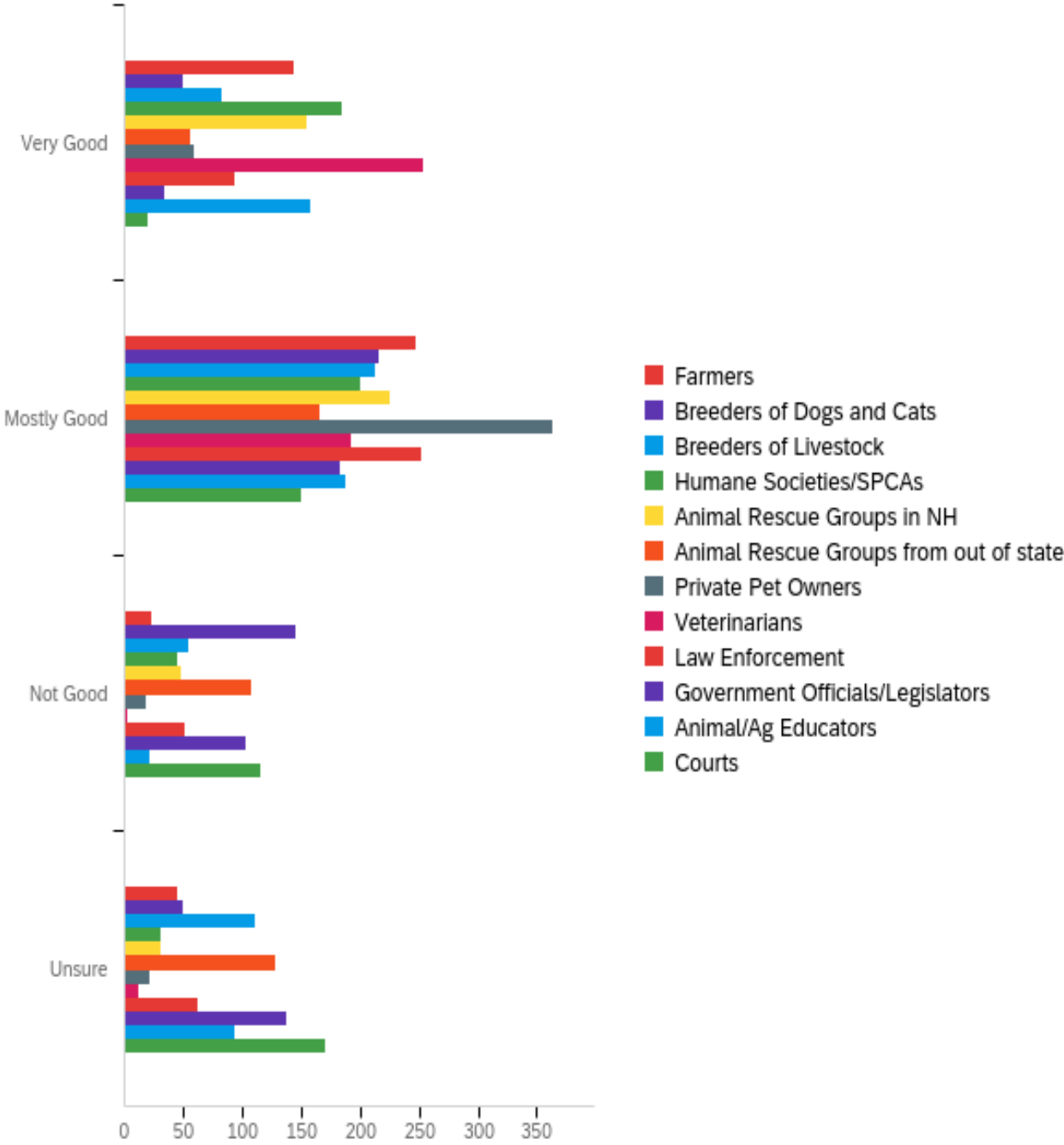
4 - Are you interested in the welfare of farmed animals such as pigs, chickens and cattle?



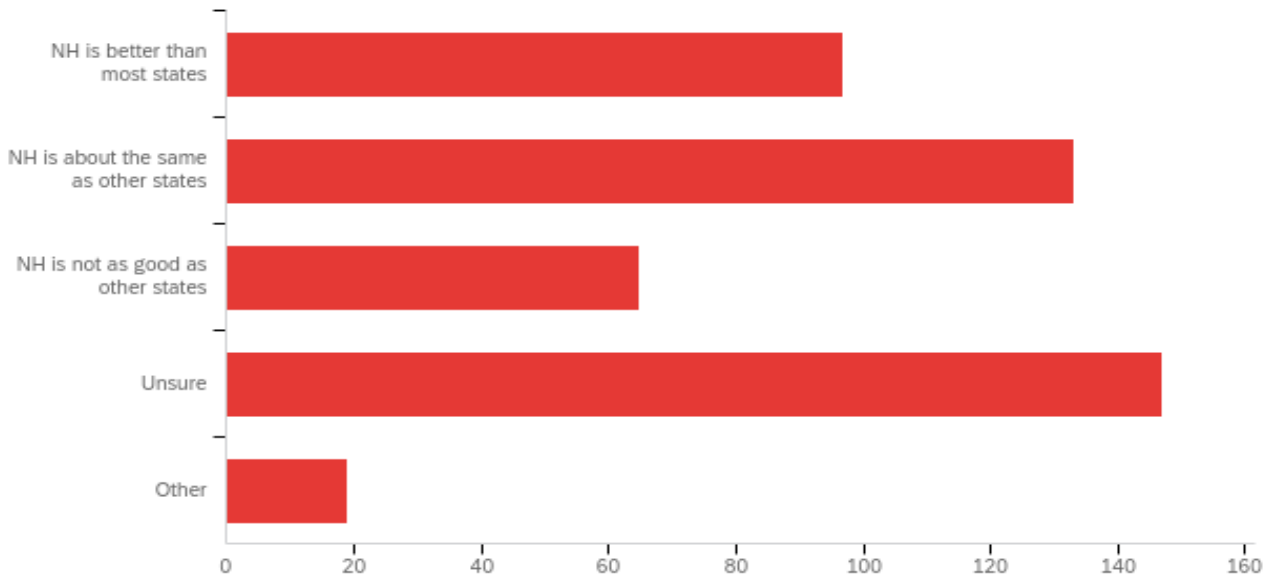
5 - How would you rate the welfare of the following farmed animals in NH?



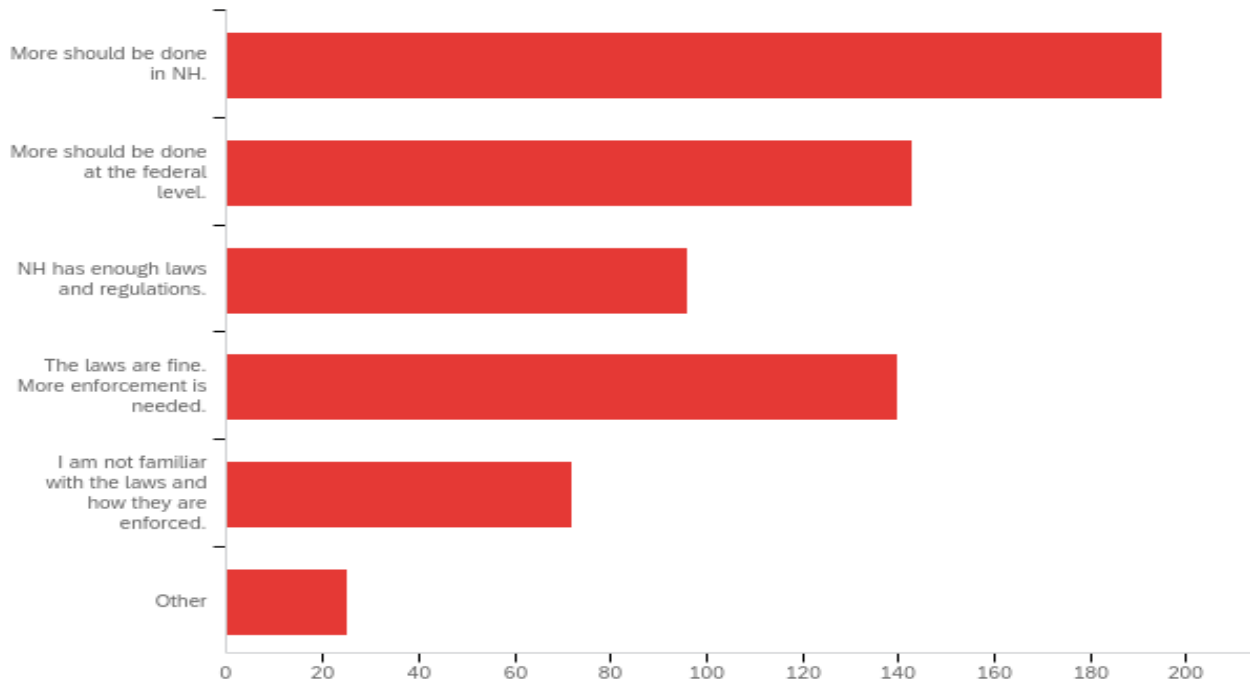
6 - This is a list of hobbies or professions/disciplines that often play a role in the welfare of animals. From your individual perspective, please check off your opinion of their stewardship of animal welfare concerns in NH.



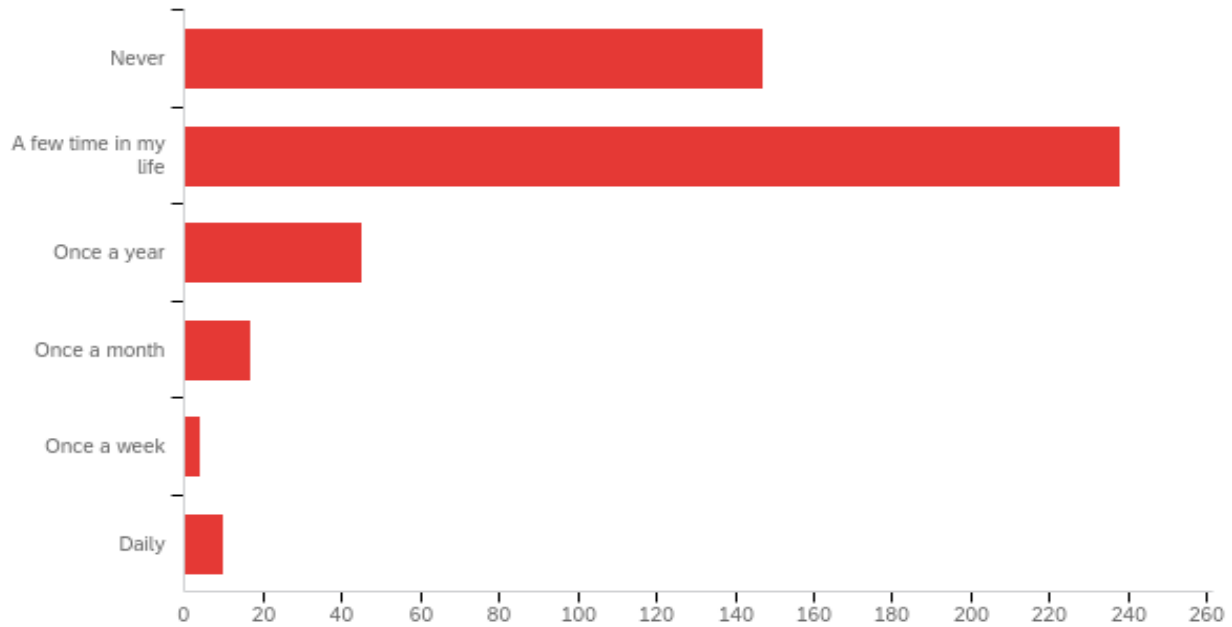
7 - How would you rate NH animal welfare initiatives and laws related to other New England states?



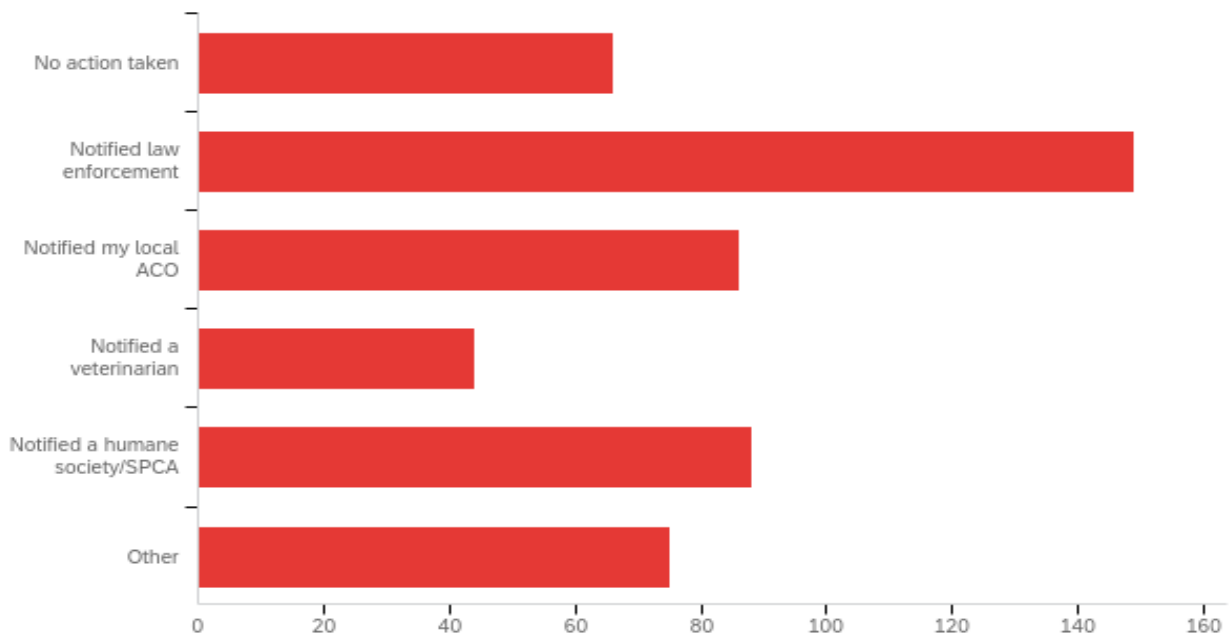
8 - What is your opinion on current regulatory and deterrent laws meant to prevent animal cruelty in NH? You may check more than one answer.



9 - Have you ever witnessed what you considered animal cruelty in NH? What frequency?



10 - If you have witnessed animal cruelty, please check off any and all actions you took. (Multiple answers accepted.)



Appendix B

Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals on May 2023

Incumbent FN	Incumbent LN	Represents
Jane	Barlow Roy	NH Vet Med Association
Jozi	Best	NH Farm Bureau
Cynthia	Collins	Gen Public
Barbara	Comtois	NH Representative
George	Cook	Dog Owners of the Granite State/NH Musers
Marga	Coupl	Gen Public
Stephen	Crawford	State Veterinarian
Mary	Davis	UNH Coop Extension
Thomas	DeRosa	Gen Public
Jennifer	Eber - Co Chair	Gen Public
Kurt	Ehrenburg	National Humane Organization
Heather	Faria	NH Federation of Humane Org
Vacant		NH Police Chief's Assn
Sheila	Johannesen	Animal Control Officers Assn of NH
Tona	McCarthy	Humane Cruelty Investigator
Tyson	Morrill	NH Sportsmen
Patricia	Morris	Equine Associations
Wendy	Munroe	NH Vet Tech Assoc
Tom	Seymour -Secretary	Gen Public
David	Watters	NH Senator
William	Wright	NH Sheriff's Association
Jerilee	Zezula - Co-Chair	Gen Public