



**The veterinarian's framework  
for identification and response  
to suspected or known  
animal maltreatment**



## **DISCLAIMER**

Veterinarians often face difficult situations in their practices, including treating animals with conditions that lead to suspicions of neglect, maltreatment, cruelty, and similar abuse. The following materials were prepared to help veterinarians by providing guidance on how to deal with these issues when they arise. This publication should not be construed as legal or veterinary advice or opinion on specific facts, or representative of the view of the American Veterinary Medical Association®. This publication is not intended as a definitive statement on the subject but a tool, providing practical information for the reader. We hope you find this material useful.



# The veterinarian’s framework for identification and response to suspected or known animal maltreatment

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) recognizes that “veterinarians practice veterinary medicine in a variety of situations and circumstances” and that “[e]xemplary professional conduct upholds the dignity of the veterinary profession.”<sup>1</sup>

The dignity and status of the professional is uplifted each time a veterinarian addresses challenges in the profession, and AVMA ethical principles and policy provide guidance. The guidance contained in this document—applied in a patient-forward approach—can help to mitigate moral distress when encountering a case of suspected or known animal abuse or neglect, and can assist in deciding how to properly respond to the situation.

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<sup>1</sup> Principles of veterinary medical ethics of the AVMA, American Veterinary Medical Association, <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/principles-veterinary-medical-ethics-avma>.

## PURPOSE

Veterinarians have unique talent, training, and skills focused on protecting animal life, health, and welfare. Keeping animals healthy helps to keep people healthy. Therefore, the protection of animal health and welfare positively affects society as a whole. Veterinarians are especially valued and honored within society precisely because of these abilities.

Among other obligations, the veterinarian's charge is centered on the wellbeing of the patient. By embracing an animal-forward, patient-centered approach to care, the veterinarian is adhering to and advancing the AVMA ethical principles, policies, and guidance created on behalf of the profession. The interconnectedness of animal and human health, welfare, and safety is vital, and the veterinarian's impact on animal and human health, welfare, and safety cannot be overstated. As such, it is essential that all veterinarians understand the imperative to **identify and respond** to any suspected or known maltreatment of animals. A failure to perform according to legal, professional, and societal expectations for the protection of animal health, welfare, and safety—especially from criminal action—is a betrayal to animals, people, and the veterinary profession itself. In fact, a failure to live up to the society's expectations for moral and ethical behaviors endangers the respect currently enjoyed by veterinarians.

The concept that the protection of animals helps to protect people and other animals is not a new one, as established in the 1751 social commentary by English artist William Hogarth in his “The Four Stages of Cruelty” engravings, available in **Appendix K**.<sup>2</sup>

In this series, a fictional hero, Tom Nero—the surname is thought to be an intended contraction of “no hero”—is depicted as a young boy torturing a dog in the *First Stage of Cruelty*, progressing to a young man beating a horse in the *Second Stage of Cruelty*, followed by a career as a murderous robber in *Cruelty in Perfection*. In the final scene of *The Reward of Cruelty*, Tom's deceased body is publicly dissected, and his entrails are eaten by a dog. All along the way, other depictions of animal cruelty are portrayed, such as blood sports of cock throwing and animal fighting, sexual abuse of an animal, and callous overworking of pack animals. Children are seen torturing and tormenting animals. A dog set upon a cat devours the cat's intestines—foreshadowing Tom's ultimate fate. Throughout the series there is social commentary about the impact of animal cruelty, callous behavior, and other social harms.

The inextricable commingling of violence to people and other animals is known as “the link.”<sup>3</sup> The veterinarian is expertly situated at the intersection of such harms. As such, a veterinarian is socially and ethically—and often, legally—obligated to protect animals and prevent new or furthered harms to other animals and people. We can consider the protection from violence to fall under the “one safety” category of “One Health” or “One Welfare.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Art of William Hogarth, HALEY AND STEELE, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Four\\_Stages\\_of\\_Cruelty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Stages_of_Cruelty).

<sup>3</sup> *What is the link?*, NATIONAL LINK COALITION, <https://nationallinkcoalition.org/what-is-the-link>.

<sup>4</sup> Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM, The Role of Veterinary Forensics in Animal Cruelty Investigations, The Police Chief, International Association of Chiefs of Police, Feb. 2018, p. 29, [https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/PoliceChief\\_February-2018\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/PoliceChief_February-2018_WEB.pdf)

The purpose of this publication is to provide the veterinarian with a framework for recognizing, documenting, and reporting suspected or known animal maltreatment. This framework is straightforward and is as follows:

Unfortunately, animal **maltreatment occurs**, and veterinarians sometimes encounter signs consistent with animal maltreatment. Veterinarians must first **identify** and then **report** suspected or known maltreatment of animals. The veterinarian is advised to be familiar with the applicable cruelty laws in the jurisdiction where the maltreatment is thought to have occurred. The veterinarian is also advised to seek further education on the signs of non-accidental injury. It is **not** the veterinarian's task to determine if the maltreatment meets the enumerated elements of a crime; this is the duty of the investigating authority and the criminal justice system.

You may wonder:

*What is maltreatment and how do I identify it?*

*What if the person did not mean any harm?*

*Do I have to know absolutely that maltreatment has occurred?*

*How do I report it?*

This publication provides assistance with the identification, documentation, and reporting of suspected or known animal maltreatment, while also offering tools to mitigate risk to the individual veterinarian and the veterinary practice.

## DEFINITIONS

Legal definitions of seemingly straightforward terms may vary widely among jurisdictions and even within a jurisdiction. These varied terms often have alternate definitions depending upon several factors, such as where in a state's laws a particular provision lives. The definition for the same word can be different even among laws within the same jurisdiction.

In general, the following definitions apply for the purposes of access and understanding within this document. However, you should always review your local and other applicable laws, preferably in consultation with a competent legal professional. Know that the interpretation of law includes more than the written statutory or regulatory language. This is due to the modification of how laws are interpreted based on prior court decisions. For purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply:

**Animal:** Any nonhuman mammal, bird, reptile, or amphibian. Some federal, state, and local definitions of “animal” may exclude or include certain classes or orders of animals, such as invertebrates or fish.

**Animal cruelty:** Acts of violence (“abuse”) or neglect perpetrated against an animal. Typical statutes further define included acts or omissions such as torture, tormenting, sexual abuse, overloading, or deprivation of necessary sustenance or adequate shelter. Some laws may exclude certain categories of use of animals, such as permitted trapping or hunting of wildlife; raising, handling, slaughtering, and consuming domesticated animals used in agriculture; or researching and testing on animals for biomedical research or toxicity testing.

**Immunity:** A legal exemption from liability for reporting suspected or known animal maltreatment, so long as it is done in good faith and in accordance with the local statute. Also known as “permissive reporting.”

**Maltreatment:** An umbrella term to cover all illegal animal harms to include cruelty, neglect, organized fighting, sexual abuse, or other suffering resulting from intentional or negligent action or inaction. This includes harms arising from both ignorance and willfulness.

**Reporter:** One who is required (a mandated reporter) or permitted (a permissive reporter) by law to report reasonable suspicions or knowledge of illegal maltreatment. There need not be proof or knowledge of illegal activity beyond a reasonable suspicion.

**Report:** A verbal or written notification to the appropriate authority of a reasonable suspicion or knowledge of animal maltreatment. In various jurisdictions, the authority designated to receive such reports may be sheriffs, police, animal control officers, or another enforcing agency. It is recommended to make a verbal report, followed by a written report.

**Reasonable suspicion:** A commonsense conclusion about human behavior, something more than an unarticulated hunch. “Reasonable suspicion” may exist even when there is some doubt. It requires facts or circumstances that give rise to more than a bare, imaginary, or purely conjectural suspicion.

**Victim:** An individual harmed by criminal acts. The status as “Crime victim” in court confers certain rights, and therefore requires that the harmed individual be a human being, and so animals are excluded from a true Victimhood status in court. However, both federal and state courts have recognized each individual animal who suffered as result of a crime as crime victims for sentencing purposes.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See *generally*, Animals as Crime Victims: Development of a New Legal Status, ANIMAL LEGAL DEFENSE FUND, <https://aldf.org/article/animals-as-crime-victims-development-of-a-new-legal-status/>.

## IDENTIFYING SUSPECTED OR KNOWN ANIMAL MALTREATMENT

Veterinarians treat patients based on diagnoses, whether definitive or empirical. Patients’ treatment plans vary and are dependent upon how the patient presents and responds to initial treatments. Most diagnoses and therapies are for natural disease and accidental injury. Sometimes, however, a patient presents with physical or behavioral indications, or incongruent histories, that are suggestive of non-accidental injury. The maltreatment could be deliberate, secondary to a deliberate act where the injury to the animal was not necessarily intended, or due to a failure to provide adequate care.

A veterinarian likely will encounter some form of suspected maltreatment in the course of their practice, and therefore it should be a consideration when developing a list of differential diagnoses. Some circumstances will elevate non-accidental injury higher on the list.

“Cruelty”, “abuse” and “neglect” are legal terms defined in statutes, and the determination of whether an animal has been subject to cruelty or other illegal behavior is made by a trier of fact (a judge or jury). A veterinarian merely maintains an index of suspicion for non-accidental injury to be open to the possibility that an animal presented for evaluation and treatment may have been a victim of maltreatment, whether by the presenting individual or some other known or unknown person.

It is important to know what signs—on physical exam, diagnostics, necropsy, or other finding—to appreciate in order to recognize non-accidental injury. However, there is no easy formula or single method to identify maltreatment, as signs are particular to the type of harm sustained or inflicted. For this reason, all veterinarians are encouraged to seek further education on identifying non-accidental injury and veterinary schools are encouraged to include instruction on these matters to all veterinary students. Most frequently, the veterinarian will have an index of suspicion about maltreatment that can only be supported or refuted after an investigation is performed by the appropriate authority because a single injury or condition is not necessarily pathognomonic for abuse.

Category of maltreatment	Estimated suspected frequency seen in practice	Example criteria for suspicion
Neglect	Frequent to occasional	Poor body condition of patient; owner refusal of treatment, grooming, or care despite a range of options being offered; owner declines euthanasia in cases of unrelievable suffering; lack of concern for patient’s welfare; inadequate shelter; excessive number of animals; dangerous or unsanitary environment. There may be an element of self-neglect on the part of the client.
Large-scale neglect (e.g., hoarding, poorly managed breeding)	Occasional	Large number of often filthy and matted animals involved; poor body condition; poor continuity of care; repeated office visits for traumatic injuries inflicted by other animals; a high degree of infectious or parasitic conditions; owner might utilize several veterinarians or offices; multiple patients might have poor prognoses for their age.
Inflicted (non-accidental) injury	Occasional to infrequent	Injuries inconsistent with history given. In cases of battering or torture, there may be multiple traumatic injuries, often of different ages or different types of trauma (e.g., sharp and blunt force injuries, burns, luxations, ligature or manual strangulation, drowning).
Organized dog fighting	Infrequent	Pattern of bite wounds, linear abrasions and claw marks clustered on head, neck, and forelimbs; increased prevalence in particular breed types; owner or another layperson might administer medical or surgical therapies.
Sexual abuse	Infrequent	Physical injuries to the sex organs, perineum, or anus. May exhibit signs consistent with training to perform (i.e., thrusting motions during a vaginal or rectal exam). Possible signs of physical restraint such as blunt trauma or ligature marks, or possible signs of chemical restraint such as exposure to sedative or hypnotic substances.

**Remember:** You do not need to know definitively that cruelty or neglect has occurred or continues to occur to make a report of your suspicions. A veterinarian should evaluate clinical conditions with an open mind that presenting signs may be due to natural, accidental, or non-accidental conditions, and they should critically evaluate assumptions or conclusions in the light of possible bias. The patient's owner or handler might reveal that maltreatment has occurred, and this statement could be truthful or untruthful. The declaration of abuse is especially possible if the person has endured abuse or has witnessed an event but could also be the result of drawing conclusions based on their own biases. The veterinarian must maintain objective clinical judgment when evaluating animals, whether the patient arrives with or without allegations of maltreatment. A veterinarian simply should report any reasonable suspicions of maltreatment where reporting is permissive or unspecified and must report such reasonable suspicions where reporting is mandated.

Some real or misleading indicators for animal maltreatment to consider:

**Disclosure:** A patient's owner, caretaker, or handler might share information about maltreatment that occurred or suspected maltreatment that may have occurred.

**Profile:** Anyone can cause or contribute to the maltreatment of an animal. As such, it is important to not stereotype or profile people based on inappropriate bias. Those who permit, cause, or otherwise contribute to the maltreatment of an animal may be from any social, economic, or other class or category. Some people may visit multiple veterinarians to minimize the number of animals presented to any one practice. The owner or handler of the animal might be inconsistent in their versions of what happened to an animal.

**Behavior:** A patient's owner or handler might be kind, tearful, regretful, vague, aloof, aggressive, charismatic, or argumentative. In other words, it can be difficult to identify indicators of maltreatment based on a person's conduct. A maltreated patient's owner, caretaker, or handler may demonstrate behavior that is interpreted as indifferent, shifty, or nervous. This could be because they are responsible and feel various emotions, but it could also be that they are innocent and experiencing various emotions. Depending on the circumstances, it might be valuable to write down any statements made by an individual that seem to implicate their own or someone else's responsibility for an animal's condition. It may be best to make these notes in a document separate from the medical record, and the notes should be dated and initialed by the note taker (the person who directly heard the comments).

**Clinical conditions:** The patient may present with a medical history inconsistent with the animal's presenting condition or the versions of the history may change with retelling. The presented conditions that are suspicious for non-accidental injury might be older wounds (delayed presentation), wounds of various ages (suggestive of repetitive injury or "battering"<sup>6</sup>), fractures and other injuries incongruent with the physical forces described, and unusual constellations or patterns of injuries. The patient may demonstrate fear, submission, aggression, or calm when the owner or handler is present or not present. If the animal's behavior changes with the presence or absence of a particular person, this should be noted as well. Also, in cases of borderline care verging on neglect, it is appropriate to make recommendations for improved care with a scheduled recheck appointment. If the animal's care has not improved, or if the client fails to keep the recheck appointment, it may be appropriate to make a report at this time.

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<sup>6</sup> Munro HM, Thrusfield MV. 'Battered pets': non-accidental physical injuries found in dogs and cats. J Small Anim Pract. 2001 Jun;42(6):279-90.



## REPORTING SUSPECTED OR KNOWN ANIMAL MALTREATMENT

After the veterinarian's identification of possible maltreatment, the veterinarian must determine where the suspected or known incident of maltreatment should be reported. In general, reports of suspected animal maltreatment should be made in the community where the animal is believed to have been harmed (usually in the community where the animal lives, rather than the city or town where the veterinary practice is located if they are in different places). The National Link Coalition maintains a list of where to report suspected animal cruelty.<sup>7</sup>

**Remember:** When identifying or reporting animal maltreatment, the veterinarian does **not** need to definitively determine whether cruelty occurred, or who might be responsible. A veterinarian does not and should not take on this extra and specialized burden. Rather, the veterinarian's obligation is only to objectively report facts about the patient and specific or alleged circumstances that are discovered during professional interaction with the animal and people that caused the suspicion.

Determinations about whether cruelty in fact occurred are made through an investigation and the criminal justice process. A failure to make a report of suspected or known animal maltreatment out of sympathy for a person (or for other reasons) can contribute to inequitable prosecution of crimes. The veterinarian should understand that even if a report of suspected or known animal maltreatment is substantiated, this does not mean that there will automatically be a prosecution. The criminal justice system has pathways for the provision of social and support services that may be pursued separate from or in concert with a prosecution. The alleviation of human and animal suffering absolutely hinges upon the implementation of an investigation, which of course requires that a report be made. It is essential that veterinarians do not serve as gatekeepers preventing appropriate responses to an allegation of suspected or known animal maltreatment.

**None of the states in the United States explicitly prohibit veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty. Prior to April 2020, Kentucky was the only jurisdiction that explicitly prohibited veterinarians from making reports of suspected animal cruelty because at that time the Kentucky law did not allow veterinarians to release information about a client, absent a court order.**

### **Step one: Know whether reports are mandated and if immunity is provided.**

A veterinarian must first determine whether reports of suspected or known animal cruelty are mandated in the jurisdiction where they are practicing. Also, a veterinarian should understand whether the veterinarian who makes such a report is immune from civil liability when reports are made. If immunity from liability exists, the veterinarian should understand the scope of the immunity. Also, a veterinarian should know whether anyone else within the veterinary practice is required to make a report (such as a veterinary technician) and whether they are specifically protected. A table of reporting obligations and immunities is included in **Appendix B**.

<sup>7</sup> *How do I report suspected abuse?*, NATIONAL LINK COALITION, <https://nationallinkcoalition.org/how-do-i-report-suspected-abuse>.

**The lack of a mandate to report or immunity from civil repercussions should not prevent a veterinarian from reporting their reasonable suspicions.** The lack of a mandate or immunity should be known by a veterinarian, so that they can prepare themselves with appropriate legal advice and insurance to mitigate risk of negative consequences from making a good faith report. It is wise for every veterinary practice and individual veterinarian to consult with a legal practitioner, an insurance professional in the jurisdiction where the veterinarian practices, and their state veterinary medical association. This consultation should be made in advance of encountering a reportable circumstance, and it should be used to procure appropriate liability coverage and to develop a standard operating procedure for the practice.

A veterinarian who suspects animal maltreatment should write a report in plain language (avoiding veterinary terminology, abbreviations or jargon that would be obscure to the intelligent but lay reader) that highlights the key information (facts including who, what, where, and when various points of information became known). This report should describe the nature, extent, and duration of the animal's injuries, pain, or suffering, as well as briefly describe the veterinarian's reasoning for why maltreatment is suspected and why the report is necessary. This report will help the entity that receives the report to understand the condition of the animal, the potential type of maltreatment, and the next steps of an investigative process. A sample reporting form is included in **Appendix F**; using a form such as this can be helpful for the veterinarian to record and relay as much salient information as possible.

#### **Step two: Prepare to document cases and make reports.**

To identify, record, and report suspected or known maltreatment, general practitioners, veterinary pathologists, and shelter veterinarians must keep accurate, detailed, and thorough records for each individual animal. Each veterinarian, practice, or shelter should establish standard operating procedures (SOPs) regarding how the practice and veterinarian will generate and maintain reports. All SOPs should address whether reporting is mandated or permissive, and where such reports should be transmitted. All SOPs about reporting should concisely and clearly address all relevant operational and legal requirements and concerns. Prior to a real example, veterinarians should consider performing a "test" of the practice's reporting SOP and repeating it at least yearly to ensure that the SOP remains current and is understood by all staff.

It is possible to elicit further (and occasionally different) explanations of the circumstances surrounding how the animal was hurt from the presenting party by verbally expressing that an injury with such characteristics appears non-accidental or is contradictory with the history given. The veterinarian should feel comfortable asking clients "do you think someone may have hurt your animal on purpose?" when taking histories of animals impacted by unidentified trauma.

If injuries or poor condition are grossly apparent, they should be photographed in context of the whole animal, using photographs that demonstrate the overall animal, the region of the injury, and a closeup view of the injury or wound, with and without a ruler for scale. It is helpful also to draw a sketch of important findings on a diagram of the animal, noting measurements and distance from anatomical reference points. Any notes or sketches should be dated and initialed by the person creating them, and kept as part of the medical record. Any materials removed from the animal during treatment (e.g., embedded collar or matted fur) should be labeled with the name or record number of the animal, date, and initials of the individual collecting the material to be preserved as potential evidence. Moist evidence should be either preserved in the freezer or be allowed to dry and packaged in paper.

### Step three: How to report and who receives reports?

A veterinarian who makes reports of maltreatment should know in advance how to report and who receives the reports. Again, a veterinarian does not need to determine and report whether cruelty definitely occurred. The veterinarian needs to only identify the suspicion of maltreatment, and not whether the maltreatment is unlawful—that is the job of the investigator and prosecutor. The National Link Coalition maintains a database of entities where veterinarians can make reports.<sup>8</sup> After researching where to make a report of suspected animal cruelty, a veterinarian may be better informed about reporting and investigating than the agency they call. For this reason, veterinarians are encouraged to be patient, persistent, and professional.

In states where a veterinarian is a mandated reporter for suspected or known animal cruelty, the reporting veterinarian should start their verbal report with “My name is Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ and I am mandated to report suspected animal cruelty in the state of XYZ. I need to make a verbal report.” In states where a veterinarian is a permitted reporter for suspected or known animal cruelty, the reporting veterinarian should start their verbal report with “My name is Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ and I need to make a report of suspected animal cruelty in the state of XYZ.” In states where there is no directive for a veterinarian to report suspected or known animal cruelty, the reporting veterinarian should start their verbal report with “My name is Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ and I need to make a report of suspected animal cruelty.”

In the report, the veterinarian should concentrate on the injury and the reasons why it seems to differ from an accidental injury. It doesn’t matter as much, or can possibly be irrelevant, who is believed to have caused the injury or condition, or even how it was caused.

Every verbal report of animal cruelty should be followed by a report in writing, and the reporting veterinarian should maintain a record of the call, who they spoke with, and a copy of the submitted written report. If the individual spoken with at the agency receiving a report of suspected or known animal cruelty is reluctant to take the report, the veterinarian may need to request to speak with a detective or start the report with the local animal control officer, even if they are not the legally designated reporting entity. These individuals may be able to help you identify a more engaged or cooperative individual to receive the report.



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<sup>8</sup> What is the link?, National Link Coalition, <https://nationallinkcoalition.org/what-is-the-link>.

## **RISK MITIGATION AND ETHICS**

It is critical that veterinarians take steps to mitigate legal and ethical risk, engage in proper safety measures, and lead with courage in alignment with all applicable laws and ethical expectations. To mitigate legal risk, veterinarians must evaluate immunity, confidentiality, and develop appropriate protocols. With an understanding about legal risk and protections, veterinarians can act with safety and courage.

When making reports about the maltreatment of an animal, a veterinarian might be concerned that they would face legal liability for making a report, perhaps against the client's wishes or without informing the client. While animals are property of their owners, and the owner is the client, ultimately the most important relationship the veterinarian has is with their patient. Reporting of suspicions or knowledge of animal maltreatment is done to protect the animal, the patient. There may be resulting protections that also protect the client or others in the household or community.

An attorney may provide guidance about provisions in a treatment agreement (a contract) that can be added to owner and patient forms which outlines that the veterinarian will report suspicions or knowledge of animal cruelty to authorities. Provisions may also outline that the veterinarian will undertake any diagnostic tests necessary to understand and document an animal's condition. A veterinarian may also consider establishing policies about medical recordkeeping retention, so that documents about the animal's condition(s) are maintained, perhaps beyond the medical record retention period stipulated by the state's practice act.

### **Confidentiality**

It is reasonable for a veterinarian to include the animal's veterinary records when making a mandated or permitted report of suspected animal maltreatment as the record is supporting documentation for the suspicion. When a veterinarian is making a report of suspected or known animal cruelty in a state without a directive on reporting suspicions of animal cruelty, they should request the investigating agency subpoena the veterinary records. Also, when law enforcement requests veterinary records during an animal maltreatment investigation that the veterinarian did not initiate, the veterinarian should request a subpoena or court order before releasing the records. Even in states without existing or clear veterinary client confidentiality laws or regulations, requesting a subpoena ensures the veterinarian protects the client confidentiality expected in a state's practice act, to the best of their ability. Requesting a subpoena also protects the veterinarian against client reprisal and potential liability. The request for a subpoena can be made in a cooperative tone, indicating the veterinarian is willing to assist the investigation, but that they also have to protect the practice.

### **Traditional and social media**

While it seemingly may be helpful to make a post on social media about an active report of possible maltreatment, or engage in media interviews, it is not the purview of the veterinarian to publicize such reports. A veterinarian may be well-intended by posting about an active case to show what not to do to an animal or a veterinarian may attempt to solicit the public's assistance in finding a person who allegedly harmed an animal. A practice or animal shelter may be inspired to attempt to solicit monetary donations for work done during an active case. These actions are not proper; they may violate the rules of evidence and should not be undertaken during an active legal case. After a case is resolved, the decision to engage in any publicity should be carefully considered in consultation with appropriate authorities and legal counsel.

## **Courage**

There may be trepidation or fear associated with reporting potential animal cruelty relative to the process that will follow, fallout from making the report, concern over how the potential abuser may react, or other reasons. A veterinarian must exercise courage in the face of this discomfort. Fear that is predicated on real or imagined potential negative outcomes likely puts the veterinarian's interests before that of the animal and society. Ethical behavior often requires action even if it is not necessarily in one's immediate best interest to do so. Understanding how other professionals make mandated reports of suspected crimes, such as child maltreatment, can help veterinarians develop the courage to confidently make reports of suspected animal maltreatment. Performing a threat assessment of the veterinary practice in consultation with a security firm and ensuring that adequate measures are taken to protect staff can help provide physical safety and increase confidence when the need to make a report arises.

## **Ethics and social obligation**

Veterinarians should view harmed animals as victims in need of care and protection. Separate from the legal definition of a victim as a person, generally speaking, a victim is one who has been hurt or killed as the result of an accident or non-accidental incident. The veterinarian should consider the animal victim as their patient and, in accordance with their role in protecting animal health and welfare, they should do what is reasonable under the circumstances in compliance with applicable law to help prevent further suffering.



## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A REPORT IS FILED?

Veterinarians should maintain evidence and keep a written or electronic record of medical findings, tests, and procedures.<sup>9</sup> The reports and notes might become evidence in a court case. All evidence, including the body of a deceased animal, must be preserved and documented so that there are no issues related to who maintained the custody, control, or access to evidence; this ensures the authenticity of the evidence and preserves the evidence appropriately for trial. “[V]eterinarians involved in investigating animal abuse and neglect must be prepared to maintain chain of custody protocols.”<sup>10</sup> When an investigation is opened by an investigating authority, they will likely take possession of the evidence. The transfer of this evidence should be documented in a chain of custody paper trail. An example chain of custody form is included in **Appendix G**.

After a report is made, an investigation should ensue. The investigating body has no obligation to keep the reporting party or other witnesses apprised of the investigation process or outcome. The investigation may find that criminal charges are not warranted or they may file criminal charges. Depending on the nature of the infraction, there may be hearings before a grand jury to determine whether charges should be issued (called an indictment). A veterinarian may be summonsed to testify before a grand jury.

Despite the imposing moniker, grand jury testimony is the least stressful form of testimony as the questions are only posed by the prosecution. Some questions may come from the jurors, but there is no cross-examination by a defense team. Often, if a suspect is charged with a crime at the outset (arrested), they may admit criminal responsibility. In these cases, they may work with their attorney and the prosecutor to negotiate the terms of their plea arrangement.

Only 5% of criminal cases (for all types of criminal infractions) end up in trial. The more thoroughly a veterinarian documents a suspected case of animal maltreatment, the more likely it is that the suspect will be motivated to seek resolution short of adjudication (i.e., seek a plea before trial). If a case does go to trial, the veterinarian will likely receive a summons to testify at trial.

The first thing a veterinarian should do when receiving a court summons or subpoena is to call the courthouse listed on the subpoena, and noting the docket number on the subpoena, request to speak with the prosecutor on the case. This is the time to request a reschedule of the court date if a veterinarian will be unavailable on the specified date, and to request a preparatory meeting to review testimony. An in-person meeting with the prosecutor is normal and expected, and it is the most effective way to prepare for trial. This is also the best way to reduce anticipatory courtroom jitters.

On the scheduled trial date, the veterinarian should dress professionally (not in scrubs or an exam coat), bring the case file and notes, and be prepared to “hurry up and wait,” as these matters can move slowly. Often the defendant will file a last-minute guilty plea, and the trial will be averted at the final moment because the witnesses are present and prepared to testify at trial.

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<sup>9</sup> R. Touroo, K. Baucom, M. Kessler, M. Smith-Blackmore, Minimum standards and best practices for the clinical veterinary forensic examination of the suspected abused animal, *Forensic Science International: Reports*, Volume 2, 2020, 100150, ISSN 2665-9107, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsir.2020.100150>.

<sup>10</sup> The Association of Shelter Veterinarians. “The Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters: Second Edition”. *Journal of Shelter Medicine and Community Animal Health*, Dec. 2022, pp. 1-76, doi:10.56771/ASVguidelines.2022.

If the trial does move forward, when testifying the veterinarian should be truthful, careful not to anticipate questions or try to answer them before they are asked. Responding to questions for which you do not know the answer should be a confident “I do not know”—there is nothing wrong with not having all the answers. It is important to speak clearly with sufficient volume to be heard easily and to avoid non-verbal communication such as nodding or other gestures.

The veterinarian should listen carefully to questions and answer only what is asked, without elaboration. The veterinarian should look at the attorney asking the question while the question is being asked, and then pause to see if there will be an objection to the question. If there are no objections, the veterinarian should deliver the response to the judge or jury, as this is the deciding body that really needs to hear the answer. A veterinarian should remember that they are the expert in the room, and their role is similar to that of a teacher, instructing the judge or jury on what was seen, felt, and heard, and how various conclusions were made. People will want to learn from the veterinarian’s testimony.

The veterinarian should not allow themselves to become emotional in responding to persistent or aggressive questions—the opposing attorney may be trying to push the veterinarian to respond with anger to minimize their credibility. Also know that some questions will be asked simply to buy time for the attorney to think of their next strategic move—so some questions may seem superfluous or mundane, because in fact they are.

After all witnesses have testified, the judge or jury will deliberate and issue a finding: not guilty, guilty, or another outcome. The judge will then (on that date or a future date) issue a sentence, which may be deemed served based on pretrial holding, the sentence may be suspended, or the sentence will be non-carceral, involving fines, community service, education, and/or probation. Or, incarceration might occur. Probationary terms may include a prohibition of contact with animals. Generally, this prohibition may only be as long as the probationary period unless specific law exists to prevent animal contact for a longer period by a person who has abused an animal. The process for determining sentences is complex and based on sentencing guidelines, the defendant’s prior record, and in relation to sentences for other crimes. Regardless of the veterinarian’s opinion about the sentence, it is not appropriate for a witness to express their anger, sense of vengeance, or triumph in the media.



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## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX A

# American Veterinary Medical Association policy statement about animal abuse and animal neglect

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) policy statement about animal abuse and animal neglect is as follows:

“The AVMA recognizes that veterinarians may observe cases of suspected animal abuse or neglect as defined by federal or state laws, or local ordinances. The AVMA encourages state legislation providing immunity from liability in any civil, criminal, or state licensing action to any veterinarian who reports, in good faith, a suspected case of animal abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. Additionally, the AVMA encourages state legislatures to pass legislation that client/patient records related to suspected cases of animal abuse or neglect provided to proper authorities are exempt from confidentiality restrictions. Prompt disclosure of abuse is necessary to protect the health and welfare of animals and people. Veterinarians should be aware that accurate, timely record keeping and documentation of these cases are essential. The AVMA encourages veterinarians to educate clients, recognize the signs of animal abuse and neglect, and familiarize themselves with relevant laws and the appropriate authorities to whom they should report suspected cases of animal abuse or neglect within their jurisdiction.”

American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)

Animal abuse and animal neglect

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/animal-abuse-and-animal-neglect>

## APPENDIX B

# Animal abuse reporting obligations and immunities specific to veterinarians

The following chart contains information about reporting requirements in the United States. The material within the chart is subject to change, so be sure to confirm the accuracy with an attorney within the applicable jurisdiction.

JURISDICTION	COVERED PERSON	PERMISSIVE OR MANDATORY	IMMUNITY	REPORT TO
<b>Alabama</b>	<b>Veterinarian</b> Ala. Admin. Code 930-X-1-.10(16)	<b>Mandatory</b> Ala. Admin. Code 930-X-1-.10(16)	<b>Unknown/unspecified</b>	<b>Proper authorities</b> Ala. Admin. Code 930-X-1-.10(16)
<b>Alaska</b>	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>Arizona</b>	<b>Veterinarian</b> Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 32-2239(A)	<b>Mandatory</b> Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 32-2239(A)	<b>Immunity from civil liability</b> Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 32-2239(C)	<b>Law enforcement</b> Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 32-2239(A)
<b>Arkansas</b>	<b>A person</b> Ark. Code § 5-62-107 <b>A licensed veterinarian or a person acting at direction of a licensed veterinarian</b> Ark. Code § 5-62-109	<b>Permissive</b> Ark. Code §§ 5-62-107, 109	<b>Immunity from civil and criminal liability</b> Ark. Code §§ 5-62-107, 109	<b>Local law enforcement agency or to the State Police</b> Ark. Code §§ 5-62-107
<b>California</b>	<b>Licensed veterinarian</b> Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code §§ 4830.5, 4830.7	<b>Mandatory</b> Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code §§ 4830.5, 4830.7	<b>Immunity for civil liability</b> Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code §§ 4830.5, 4830.7	<b>Law enforcement authority</b> Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code §§ 4830.5, 4830.7
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>Licensed veterinarian</b> Colo. Rev. Stat. § 12-315- 120(1)	<b>Mandatory</b> Colo. Rev. Stat. § 12-315- 120(1)	<b>Immunity from civil or criminal liability</b> Colo. Rev. Stat. § 12-315- 120(4)	<b>Local law enforcement agency or the bureau of animal protection</b> Colo. Rev. Stat. § 12-315- 120(1)
<b>Connecticut</b>	Not specific to veterinarian Conn. Gen. Stat. § 22-329b; Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-100a	<b>Not mandatory for veterinarian</b> Conn. Gen. Stat. § 22-329b; Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-100a	Unknown/unspecified	<b>Commissioner of Agriculture</b> Conn. Gen. Stat. § 22-329b; Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-100a
<b>Delaware</b>	Not specific to veterinarian	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>District of Columbia</b>	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>Florida</b>	<b>Licensed veterinarian</b> Fla. Stat. §§ 828.12.4	<b>Permissive</b> Fla. Stat. §§ 828.12.4	<b>Immunity as held harmless from criminal or civil liability</b> Fla. Stat. §§ 828.12.4	Unknown/unspecified
<b>Georgia</b>	<b>Licensed veterinarian or veterinary technician</b> Ga. Code § 4-11-17(a)	<b>Permissive</b> Ga. Code § 4-11-17(a); see also Ga. Code § 24-12-31	<b>Immunity from civil or criminal liability for any person participating in making a report or participating in a proceeding</b> Ga. Code § 4-11-17(b)	<b>Commissioner, an animal control officer, a law enforcement agency, or a prosecuting attorney</b> Ga. Code § 4-11-17(a)
<b>Hawaii</b>	<b>Licensed veterinarian</b> Haw. Rev. Stat. § 471-18	<b>Mandatory</b> Haw. Rev. Stat. § 471-18	<b>Immunity for civil liability</b> Haw. Rev. Stat. § 471-18(c)	<b>Appropriate law enforcement authorities of the county where the event occurred.</b> Haw. Rev. Stat. § 471-18

JURISDICTION	COVERED PERSON	PERMISSIVE OR MANDATORY	IMMUNITY	REPORT TO
<b>Idaho</b>	Licensed veterinarian Idaho Code § 25-3514A	Permissive Idaho Code § 25-3514A	Immunity as held harmless from criminal or civil liability Idaho Code § 25-3514A	Law enforcement agency or animal care and control agency Idaho Code § 25-3501A
<b>Illinois</b>	Veterinarian	Mandatory 510 Ill. Comp. Stat. 70/3.07; 510 Ill. Comp. Stat. 70/4.02; 225 ILCS 115/25	Immunity from any civil, criminal, or other liability 510 Ill. Comp. Stat. 70/3.07; 510 Ill. Comp. Stat. 70/4.02; 225 Ill. Comp. Stat. 115/25.17	Department of Agriculture 510 Ill. Comp. Stat. 70/3.07
<b>Indiana</b>	Veterinarian or registered veterinary technician Ind. Code § 25-38.1-4-8.5	Permissive Ind. Code § 25-38.1-4-8.5	Immunity from civil or criminal liability Ind. Code § 25-38.1-4-8.5	Law enforcement officer Ind. Code § 25-38.1-4-8.5
<b>Iowa</b>	Not specific to veterinarian	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>Kansas</b>	Licensed veterinarian Kan. Admin. Regs. 70-8-1(q)	Mandatory Kan. Admin. Regs. 70-8-1(q)	Unknown/unspecified	Proper authorities Kan. Admin. Regs. 70-8-1(q)
<b>Kentucky</b>	Veterinarian Ky. Rev. Stat. § 321.188	Permissive Ky. Rev. Stat. § 321.188	Immunity for an action resulting from a disclosure Ky. Rev. Stat. § 321.185	Office of the State Veterinarian for on farm livestock or poultry care or law enforcement for any other animal Ky. Rev. Stat. § 321.188
<b>Louisiana</b>	Not specific to veterinarian	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>Maine</b>	Licensed veterinarian Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 7, § 4018	Mandatory for aggravated cruelty and Permissive for cruelty or neglect Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 7, § 4018	Immunity from criminal or civil liability Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 7, § 4018	Commissioner of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Resources or the Commissioner's designee Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 7, § 4018
<b>Maryland</b>	Treating veterinarian / veterinary practitioner Md. Code Regs. 15.14.15.03; Md. Code, Agric. § 2-313.1	Mandatory Md. Code Regs. 15.14.15.03; Md. Code, Agric. § 2-313.1	Immunity from civil liability or criminal prosecution Md. Code Regs. 15.14.15.03; Md. Code, Agric. § 2-313.1	Law enforcement agency or county animal control agency Md. Code Regs. 15.14.15.03; Md. Code, Agric. § 2-313.1
<b>Massachusetts</b>	Veterinarian Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 112, § 58B	Mandatory Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 112, § 58B	Immunity from civil or criminal liability Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 112, § 58B	Police officer or special state police officer Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 112, § 58B
<b>Michigan</b>	Veterinarian or veterinary technician Mich. Comp. Laws § 333.18827	Permissive Mich. Comp. Laws § 333.18827	Immunity from civil or criminal liability Mich. Comp. Laws § 333.18827	Peace officer or animal control officer or office of a private organization devoted to the humane treatment of animals Mich. Comp. Laws § 333.18827
<b>Minnesota</b>	Veterinarian Minn. Stat. § 346.37	Mandatory Minn. Stat. § 346.37	Immunity from civil and criminal liability Minn. Stat. § 343.215	Peace officers or humane agents Minn. Stat. § 346.37
<b>Mississippi</b>	Licensed veterinarian Miss. Code. § 73-39-87	Permissive Miss. Code. § 73-39-87	Immunity from liability in any civil or criminal action Miss. Code. § 73-39-87	Proper authorities Miss. Code. § 73-39-87
<b>Missouri</b>	Licensed veterinarian Mo. Code Regs. tit. 20, § 2270-6.011(11)	Mandatory (when cannot be resolved through education) Mo. Code Regs. tit. 20, § 2270-6.011(11)	Unknown/unspecified Mo. Code Regs. tit. 20, § 2270-6.011(11)	Appropriate authorities Mo. Code Regs. tit. 20, § 2270-6.011(11)
<b>Montana</b>	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified

JURISDICTION	COVERED PERSON	PERMISSIVE OR MANDATORY	IMMUNITY	REPORT TO
<b>Nebraska</b>	Any animal health care professional (licensed veterinarian or licensed veterinary technician) Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-1020	<b>Mandatory</b> Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-1020(a)	<b>Immunity from liability</b> Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-1020(b)	An entity that investigates such reports in the appropriate jurisdiction Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-1020(a)
<b>Nevada</b>	Any person Nev. Rev. Stat. § 574.053(1)	<b>Permissive</b> Nev. Rev. Stat. § 574.053(1)	Unknown/unspecified	Peace officer, officer of society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, or animal control officer Nev. Rev. Stat. § 574.053(1)
<b>New Hampshire</b>	Licensed veterinarian N.H. Rev. Stat. § 644:8(V)	<b>Permissive</b> N.H. Rev. Stat. § 644:8(V)	<b>Immunity as held harmless from criminal or civil liability</b> N.H. Rev. Stat. § 644:8(V)	Unknown/unspecified
<b>New Jersey</b>	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>New Mexico</b>	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>New York</b>	Veterinarian N.Y. Educ. Law § 6714	<b>Permissive</b> N.Y. Educ. Law § 6714(2)(a)	<b>Immunity from civil or criminal damages</b> N.Y. Educ. Law § 6714(4)	Officials as referenced in statute N.Y. Educ. Law § 6714(2)(a)
<b>North Carolina</b>	Licensed veterinarian N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-360.1	<b>Permissive</b> N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-360.1	<b>Immunity from civil and criminal liability and professional disciplinary action</b> N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-360.1	Unknown/unspecified
<b>North Dakota</b>	Licensed veterinarian N.D. Cent. Code § 36-21.2-10	<b>Mandatory</b> N.D. Cent. Code § 36-21.2-10	<b>Immunity from civil or criminal liability</b> N.D. Cent. Code § 36-21.2-13	Law enforcement N.D. Cent. Code § 36-21.2-10
<b>Ohio</b>	Licensed veterinarian and others, as listed Ohio Rev. Code § 959.09(A)(1)	<b>Mandatory</b> Ohio Rev. Code § 959.09(A)(1)	<b>Immunity from civil or criminal liability</b> Ohio Rev. Code § 959.09(B)	<b>Officer</b> Ohio Rev. Code § 959.132
<b>Oklahoma</b>	Veterinarian Okla. Stat. tit. 21, § 1680.3(A)	<b>Mandatory</b> Okla. Stat. tit. 21, § 1680.3(A)	<b>Immunity from civil liability</b> Okla. Stat. tit. 21, § 1680.3(B)	Law enforcement agency Okla. Stat. tit. 21, § 1680.3(A)
<b>Oregon</b>	Veterinarian Or. Rev. Stat. § 686.442; Or. Rev. Stat. § 686.445	<b>Mandatory for aggravated cruelty and permissive for abandonment, neglect, or abuse.</b> Or. Rev. Stat. § 686.442; Or. Rev. Stat. § 686.445	<b>Immunity from civil or criminal liability</b> Or. Rev. Stat. § 686.445	Peace officers, animal control officers or officers of private organizations; also to Dean of College of Veterinary Medicine for trapping device Or. Rev. Stat. § 686.445
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	Veterinarian 49 Pa. Code § 31.21	<b>Mandatory within profession</b> 49 Pa. Code § 31.21	Unknown/unspecified	<b>The Board</b> 49 Pa. Code § 31.21
<b>Puerto Rico</b>	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>Rhode Island</b>	Any Rhode Island licensed veterinarian, veterinarian technician, animal shelter, animal kennel, or other person entrusted with the care or custody of an animal R.I. Gen. Laws § 4-1-26.1	<b>Mandatory</b> R.I. Gen. Laws § 4-1-26.1	<b>Immunity for any person entrusted with care and custody of an animal as held harmless from criminal or civil liability arising out of reports made.</b> R.I. Gen. Laws § 4-1-26.1, 37	Local and/or state police, animal control officials, or officers of private organizations devoted to humane treatment of animals R.I. Gen. Laws § 4-1-37
<b>South Carolina</b>	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>South Dakota</b>	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified

JURISDICTION	COVERED PERSON	PERMISSIVE OR MANDATORY	IMMUNITY	REPORT TO
Tennessee	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
Texas	<b>Veterinarian</b> Tex. Occ. Code § 801.3585	<b>Permissive</b> Tex. Occ. Code § 801.3585	<b>Immunity from civil or criminal action</b> Tex. Occ. Code § 801.3585	<b>Appropriate governmental entity</b> Tex. Occ. Code § 801.3585
Utah	<b>Licensed veterinarian</b> Utah Code § 58-28-602	<b>Permissive</b> Utah Code § 58-28-602	<b>Immunity from civil or criminal action</b> Utah Code § 58-28-602	<b>Law enforcement or the proper authorities</b> Utah Code § 58-28-602
Vermont	<b>Licensed veterinarian</b> Vt. Stat. tit. 26, § 2404	<b>Permissive</b> Vt. Stat. tit. 26, § 2404	<b>Immunity from monetary liability</b> Vt. Stat. tit. 26, § 2404	<b>Humane officer, officer, or local board of health officer or agent</b> Vt. Stat. tit. 26, § 2404
Virginia	<b>Veterinarian</b> 18 Va. Admin. Code 150-20-140(14)	<b>Mandatory</b> 18 Va. Admin. Code 150-20-140(14)	<b>Immunity from any civil or criminal liability</b> Va. Code § 54.1-3812.1	Unknown/unspecified
Washington	<b>Licensed veterinarian</b> Wash. Rev. Code § 16.52.330	<b>Permissive</b> Wash. Rev. Code § 16.52.330	<b>Immunity for civil or criminal action</b> Wash. Rev. Code § 16.52.330	Unknown/unspecified
West Virginia	<b>Licensed veterinarian</b> W. Va. Code § 7-10-4a	<b>Mandatory</b> W. Va. Code § 7-10-4a	<b>Immunity from civil or criminal liability</b> W. Va. Code § 7-10-4a	<b>Humane officer</b> W. Va. Code § 7-10-4a
Wisconsin	<b>Veterinarian</b> Wis. Stat. § 173.12	<b>Mandatory for animal in a fight</b> Wis. Stat. § 173.12	Unknown/unspecified	<b>Local humane officer or local law enforcement agency</b> Wis. Stat. § 173.12
Wyoming	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified

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## APPENDIX C

### Digest of laws regarding confidentiality of veterinary records

The following chart contains information about laws regarding confidentiality of veterinary records in the United States. The material within the chart is subject to change, so be sure to confirm the accuracy with an attorney within the applicable jurisdiction. It is important to know that if you are not permitted to share veterinary records, you might be able to request a subpoena to lawfully do so. Consult with an attorney for guidance.

JURISDICTION	SUMMARY	CITATION
<b>Alabama</b>	A licensed veterinarian shall not violate the confidential relationship between himself or herself and his or her client.	Ala. Admin. Code 930-X-1-.10(15)
<b>Alaska</b>	Patient medical records may not be released to a third party without the written consent of the owner, absent listed exceptions.	Alaska Admin Code tit. 12, § 68.910(d)
<b>Arizona</b>	Veterinary records shall be provided to local law enforcement on request in furtherance of any criminal investigation for abuse, cruelty, neglect or animal fighting.	Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 32-2239(A)
<b>Arkansas</b>	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>California</b>	A veterinarian shall not disclose any information concerning an animal receiving veterinary services, the client responsible for the animal receiving veterinary services, or the veterinary care provided to an animal, except under listed circumstances.	Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 4857
<b>Colorado</b>	A veterinary-patient-client privilege exists (Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-72-204(3)(a)(XIV)) but may not be asserted for the purpose of excluding or refusing evidence or testimony in a prosecution for an act of animal cruelty or for an act of animal fighting.	Colo. Rev. Stat. § 12-315-120(5)
<b>Connecticut</b>	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>Delaware</b>	A veterinarian must protect the personal privacy of patients and clients by not willfully revealing privileged communications regarding the diagnosis and treatment of an animal. Communications that are not privileged, including, information necessary to protect the health and welfare of other individuals or animals, are listed.	Code Del. Regs. 3300-4.1
<b>District of Columbia</b>	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>Florida</b>	Records may not be furnished without written authorization of the client absent a listed circumstance	Fla. Stat. §§ 474.2165, 474.2167
<b>Georgia</b>	A veterinarian is not be required to disclose any information concerning the veterinarian's care of an animal except on written authorization or other waiver by the veterinarian's client or on appropriate court order or subpoena. Any veterinarian releasing information under written authorization or other waiver by the client or under court order or subpoena is not be liable to the client or any other person. The confidentiality requirement is waived to the extent that the veterinarian's client places the veterinarian's care and treatment of the animal or the nature and extent of injuries to the animal at issue in any judicial proceeding.	Ga. Code § 24-12-31
<b>Hawaii</b>	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
<b>Idaho</b>	A veterinarian must maintain a confidential relationship with their client unless otherwise provided by law or required by considerations related to public health and animal health.	Idaho Admin. Code r. 24.38.01.152(06)

JURISDICTION	SUMMARY	CITATION
<b>Illinois</b>	A veterinarian is not required to disclose any information concerning the veterinarian's care of an animal except with written authorization or other waiver by the veterinarian's client or by an appropriate court order or subpoena. When communicable disease laws, cruelty to animal laws, or laws providing for public health and safety are involved, the privilege provided by this Section is waived.	225 Ill. Comp. Stat 115/25.17 225 ILCS 115/25
<b>Indiana</b>	An animal's veterinary records and condition must be furnished if required by statute, an order by a court, as part of an inspection or investigation, as part of a request from a regulatory or health authority, physician, or veterinarian, as part of an animal cruelty report, or to a law enforcement agency.	Ind. Code § 25-38.1-4-5.5
<b>Iowa</b>	Unknown/Unspecified	Unknown/Unspecified
<b>Kansas</b>	A licensed veterinarian cannot disclose any information concerning the veterinarian's care of an animal except with written authorization or other waiver by the veterinarian's client or with an appropriate court order or subpoena. This privilege is waived for reporting cruel or inhumane treatment of any animal to federal, state or local governmental agencies or for other purposes, as listed.	Kan. Stat. § 47-839
<b>Kentucky</b>	A veterinarian must not release information concerning the client or care of the client's animal except if the veterinarian is in receipt of a written authorization or other form of waiver executed by the client or an appropriate court order or subpoena; if the veterinarian makes a report of animal abuse.	Ky. Rev. Stat. § 321.185
<b>Louisiana</b>	Records must be maintained for a period of five years and are the responsibility and property of the veterinarian.	46 La. Admin. Code Pt LXXXV, 701
<b>Maine</b>	Confidential information may be released to the court or to the department of agriculture, an animal control officer, attorney for the State or a law enforcement agency involved in the investigation.	Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 7, § 4018(2)
<b>Maryland</b>	A veterinarian who makes a report must include the name, age, and location of the animal; the name and home address of owners or custodian of the animal; the nature and extent of the suspected animal cruelty, including any evidence or information available about possible previous instances of animal cruelty; and any other information that would help to determine the cause of the suspected animal cruelty or the identify of any individual responsible for the suspected animal cruelty.	Md. Code Regs. 15.14.15.03, 04; Md. Code, Agric. § 2-313.1
<b>Massachusetts</b>	A veterinarian must maintain a confidential relationship with all clients, except as otherwise provided by law	256 Mass. Code Regs. 7.01; 256 Mass. Code Regs. 5.01
<b>Michigan</b>	Medical records are confidential and must not be released without the consent of the client or as required to protect public health or by law.	Mich. Admin. Code R 338.4921
<b>Minnesota</b>	A veterinarian cannot reveal a privileged communication from or relating to a client except when otherwise required or permitted by law	Minn. Stat. § 156.081(14)
<b>Mississippi</b>	Veterinary records must be provided without the owner's consent to public, animal health, animal welfare, wildlife or agriculture authorities employed by governmental agencies who have a legal or regulatory interest for the protection of animal and public health; or under court order or subpoena.	Miss. Code Ann. § 73 39 83
<b>Missouri</b>	Veterinarians cannot reveal confidential, proprietary, or privileged facts or data or any other sensitive information contained in a patient's medical records or as otherwise obtained in a professional capacity without the prior consent of the client except as otherwise authorized or required [...]. However, this section shall not apply to cases in which the veterinarian may observe animal abuse or neglect.	Mo. Code Regs. tit. 20, § 2270-6.011(11)
<b>Montana</b>	A veterinarian cannot reveal confidential information obtained as the result of a professional relationship without the prior consent of the recipient of services, except as authorized or required by law.	Mont. Code § 37-1-316(9)



JURISDICTION	SUMMARY	CITATION
Nebraska	It is unprofessional conduct to knowingly disclose confidential information except as otherwise provided by law	Neb. Rev. Stat. § 38-179(8)
Nevada	Any person, law enforcement agency, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals or animal control agency that willfully releases data or information concerning the identity of a person who made a report except for the purposes of a criminal investigation or prosecution, is guilty of a misdemeanor.	Nev. Rev. Stat. § 574.053
New Hampshire	Records must be readily retrievable and kept for a period of at least 5 years following the last treatment or examination. Records must be kept by veterinarians who work for entities other than a veterinary hospital such as, but not limited to, a humane society, shelter or breeder.	N.H. Code Admin. R. § 01
New Jersey	A veterinarian must keep records confidential unless otherwise required by law or it becomes necessary to release information in the records in order to protect the health of a person, the animal that is the subject of the records or another animal, or other listed exceptions.	N.J. Admin. Code § 13:44-4.9(b)
New Mexico	All records must be the property of the veterinary facility or practice that created such records and shall be kept where easily accessible for a minimum of four years after the animal's last visit.	N.M. Admin. Code 16.25.9.21
New York	A veterinarian may disclose records concerning the animal's condition and treatment	N.Y. Educ. Law § 6714(2)(a)
North Carolina	A veterinarian is not in breach of any veterinarian-patient confidentiality for making a report of animal cruelty.	N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-360.1
North Dakota	Contents of medical records must be kept private and not released to third parties unless authorized by the client or required by law unless for the protection of individual animal, human, or public health or welfare, or other listed exceptions.	N.D. Admin. Code 87-05-02-02(4)
Ohio	A veterinarian performing a physical examination, diagnosis, treatment or surgery on an animal or group of animals must prepare a written record or computer record.	Ohio Admin. Code 4741-1-21
Oklahoma	Reports must contain the breed and description of the animal together with the name and address of the owner. No veterinarian licensed pursuant to the Oklahoma Veterinary Practice Act shall be required to disclose any information concerning the licensed veterinarian's care of an animal except on written authorization or by other waiver by the licensed veterinarian's client or on appropriate court order, by subpoena or as otherwise provided by this section.	Okla. Stat. tit. 21, § 1680.3(A); Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 59, § 698.16a
Oregon	A legible individual record shall be maintained for each animal. Unless state or federal laws relating to confidentiality or the protection of health information prohibit disclosure, a veterinarian who has reasonable cause to believe that another licensee has engaged in prohibited or unprofessional conduct shall report the conduct to the Board.	Or. Rev. Stat. §§ 686.450 – 686.470; Or. Admin. R. 875-015-0030; Or. Admin. R. 875-011-0010
Pennsylvania	Veterinarians must protect the personal privacy of clients, unless the veterinarians are required by law to reveal the confidences or it becomes necessary to reveal the confidences to protect the health and welfare of an individual, the animal or others whose health and welfare may be endangered. Personal information that should be protected under this section includes a client's Social Security number and sensitive financial information and confidential health information about the client. Veterinary medical records of a client's animals shall be released to the Board or its agents upon demand. Any portion of a veterinary medical record relevant to public health shall be released to public health or law enforcement officials upon demand. Veterinary medical records shall be released to the general public only with the written consent of the client, subpoena or court order.	49 Pa. Code § 31.21
Puerto Rico	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified

JURISDICTION	SUMMARY	CITATION
Rhode Island	A veterinarian subject to the provisions of this chapter must keep a written record, or a computerized record able to produce a printed copy, of all animals receiving veterinary services, and provide a summary of that record to the owner of animals receiving veterinary services, when requested.	R.I. Gen. Laws § 5-25-71
South Carolina	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
South Dakota	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
Tennessee	A veterinarian cannot reveal without written permission knowledge obtained in a professional capacity about animals or owners except when the information is requested during a formal investigation by representatives of the State of Tennessee or other law enforcement agencies; when required to do so by a court of law; or when required by law to report to state or federal agencies. The veterinarian must maintain medical records as required by the board of veterinary medical examiners	Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1730-01-13 Tenn. Code § 63-12-103
Texas	A veterinarian shall not disclose any information concerning the relationship between the veterinarian and the client or the veterinarian's care for an animal except with authorization from the client, for law enforcement purposes or with receipt by the veterinarian of an appropriate court order or subpoena, and other listed exceptions	22 Tex. Admin. Code § 573.28
Utah	A veterinarian may not disclose information about the care of an animal unless the client consents to the disclosure in writing; disclosure to public health officials, animal health or welfare officials, agricultural authorities, or federal, state, or local officials is required, or necessary to protect the animal or to protect public health; disclosure is required by court order or subpoena; or the client has placed the veterinarian's care or treatment of the animal or the nature or extent of injuries to the animal at issue in a civil or criminal proceeding.	Utah Code § 58-28-605
Vermont	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
Virginia	A veterinarian cannot reveal confidences gained in the course of providing veterinary services to a client, unless required by law or necessary to protect the health, safety, or welfare of other persons or animals.	18 Va. Admin. Code 150-20-140
Washington	Unknown/unspecified	Unknown/unspecified
West Virginia	A veterinarian shall not violate his or her confidential relationship with the clients. Veterinary Medical Records are considered privileged and confidential. Disclosure of records is prohibited unless the client has provided written or documented verbal consent. A veterinarian shall provide a client medical records within 30 days of request. However, records may be released by court order, subpoena or compliance with local, state or federal law as deemed necessary to protect the animal or public health	W. Va. Code R. 26-4-3.14, 26-3.16
Wisconsin	A report must include a description and the location of the animal, any injuries suffered by the animal and the name and address of the owner or person in charge of the animal, if known.	Wis. Stat. § 173.12
Wyoming	Veterinarians must not reveal confidences unless required to by law or unless it becomes necessary to protect the health and welfare of other individuals or animals.	Wyo. Admin. Code 251.0001.16 § 2(m)

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## APPENDIX D

### Directory of state animal cruelty laws

This chart provides information about animal cruelty statutes and may not address specific animal-related statutes. The material within the chart is subject to change, so be sure to confirm the accuracy with an attorney within the applicable jurisdiction. Also, the interpretation of law is subject to case law and the unique facts of each situation. Moreover, the laws contained here are not a comprehensive list of all laws that may be used in matters of animal maltreatment. As such, it is important to recognize that the results of every case are unique and that the results of a case might not match the veterinarian's interpretation of the law.

JURISDICTION	CITE
Alabama	Ala. Code §§ 13A-11-14, 14.1, 240 – 247
Alaska	Alaska Stat. §§ 11.61.140 – 145 Alaska Stat. §§ 03.55.100 – 190
Arizona	Ariz. Rev. Stat. §§ 13-2910 – 2910.12
Arkansas	Ark. Code §§ 5-62-102 – 127
California	Cal. Penal Code §§ 596 – 600.5
Colorado	Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 18-9-201 – 209
Connecticut	Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 53-247 – 253
Delaware	Del. Code. tit. 11, §§ 1325 – 1327
District of Columbia	D.C. Code §§ 22-1001 – 1015
Florida	Fla. Stat. §§ 828.02 – 828.30
Georgia	Ga. Code §§ 16-12-4, 37
Hawaii	Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 711-1100 – 1110.5
Idaho	Idaho Code §§ 25-3501 – 3521
Illinois	510 Ill. Comp. Stat. 70/1 – 70/18
Indiana	Ind. Code §§ 35-46-3-0.1 – 15
Iowa	Iowa Code §§ 717.1 – 717f.13
Kansas	Kan. Stat. §§ 21-6411 – 6418
Kentucky	Ky. Rev. Stat. §§ 525.125 – 137
Louisiana	La. Stat. §§ 14:102 – 102.10
Maine	Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 17, §§ 1011 – 1046 Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 7, §§ 3901 – 4020
Maryland	Md. Code, Crim. Law §§ 10-601 – 10-626
Massachusetts	Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 272 §§ 77 – 95
Michigan	Mich. Comp. Laws §§ 750.49 – 750.70a
Minnesota	Minn. Stat. §§ 343.01 – 40
Mississippi	Miss. Code Ann. §§ 97-41-1 – 23
Missouri	Mo. Stat. §§ 578.005 – 578.188
Montana	Mont. Code §§ 45-8-209 – 217

JURISDICTION	CITE
Nebraska	Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 28-1004 – 1020
Nevada	Nev. Rev. Stat §§ 574.010 – 574.670; Nev. Rev. Stat § 206.150
New Hampshire	N.H. Rev. Stat. §§ 644:8 – 644:8-g
New Jersey	N.J. Stat. §§ 4:22-15 – 61
New Mexico	N.M. Stat. §§ 30-18-1 – 16
New York	N.Y. Agric. & Mkts. Law §§ 350 – 382
North Carolina	N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 14-360 – 14.363.3
North Dakota	N.D. Cent. Code §§ 36-21.2-01 – 15
Ohio	Ohio Rev. Code §§ 959.01 – 959.99
Oklahoma	Okla. Stat. tit. 21, §§ 1680-1700
Oregon	Or. Rev. Stat. §§ 167.305 – 167.390
Pennsylvania	18 Pa. Stat. and Cons. Stat. §§ 5531– 5561
Puerto Rico	Cite: 5 L.P.R.A. §§ 1660, 1664-1670, 1672, 1674, 1675
Rhode Island	R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 4-1-1 – 4-1-43
South Carolina	S.C. Code §§ 47-1-10 – 47-1-225 S.C. Code § 16-11-510
South Dakota	S.D. Codified Laws §§ 40-1-1 – 40-1-38
Tennessee	Tenn. Code §§ 39-14-201 – 39-14-219
Texas	Tex. Penal Code §§ 42.09 – 42.092
Utah	Utah Code 1953 § 76-9-301 – 76-9-308
Vermont	Vt. Stat. tit. 13, §§ 351 – 356
Virginia	Va. Code §§ 3.2-6500 – 3.2-6596
Washington	Wash. Rev. Code §§ 16.52.011 – 16.52.360
West Virginia	W. Va. Code §§ 61-8-19 – 61-8-23 W. Va. Code §§ 19-20-1 – 19-20-26
Wisconsin	Wis. Stat. §§ 951.01 – 951.18
Wyoming	Wyo. Stat. §§ 6-3-1001 – 1010

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## APPENDIX E

### Sample hospital policy

The following is a sample veterinary facility policy about reporting suspected or known animal abuse. Some of the language was adopted from the veterinary facility policy on reporting suspected animal abuse in Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup>

#### **[NAME OF FACILITY] policy on reporting suspected or known abuse or neglect of an animal – SAMPLE**

[NAME OF FACILITY] veterinarians, management, and staff recognize that the abuse of animals causes suffering and may be an indicator for other violence within the home or community. The abuse of an animal is a crime. The neglect of an animal is a crime.

Veterinarians [INCLUDE OTHERS, SUCH AS VETERINARY TECHNICIANS, AS APPLICABLE] in [STATE] are [MANDATED/PERMITTED/ENCOURAGED] to report in good faith [SUSPICIONS OR KNOWLEDGE] of animal cruelty.

[NAME OF FACILITY] actively supports reporting of [KNOWN OR SUSPECTED] abuse and/or neglect of an animal. A veterinarian in this facility may report suspicions of animal cruelty at any time and does not need permission from a facility manager or the owner(s) of an animal to make a report. A veterinarian may consult with colleagues in the process of forming a veterinary opinion.

The report of a suspicion of animal cruelty may cause an investigation to occur. As such, the reporting veterinarian must keep complete, objective, accurate, clear, and legible veterinary records. If it is safe to do so, the preference of [NAME OF FACILITY] is that the reporting veterinarian share with the manager, director, or owner that a report was made. This is to ensure the response by an investigating agency is not a surprise.

**Recognizing cruelty:** There are signs that indicate that cruelty may have occurred. Beating (hitting, kicking, striking, throwing), tormenting, starving, and/or overworking an animal is illegal. Also, it is illegal to abandon an animal, poison an animal, or leave an animal in a situation that exposes the animal to extreme heat or cold. Someone may have no intention to cause harm and may still be in violation of the law. Animals must be provided nutritious food, clean potable water, appropriate shelter from the weather, grooming, and veterinary care. The failure to provide an animal with these needs may be a criminal offense.

A verbal report may be made to [AGENCY] at [PHONE NUMBER]. This report should be followed by a written report. A copy of the written report should be retained by the reporting individual, and the reporting individual is encouraged but not required to share a copy of the report to the management of [NAME OF FACILITY].

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<sup>1</sup> Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM, Forensic Veterinary Investigations, LLC, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/556f707ae4b0b5473e12af04/t/5f3450e4e92ac47e749ade2b/1597264101686/Model+reporting+policy.pdf>

## APPENDIX F

### Sample reporting form

The following two pages are a sample reporting form that might be used. The material to be captured when reporting is subject to change and this sample form might not be applicable or appropriate for your jurisdiction. Be sure to confirm the appropriateness of any form you develop with an attorney within the applicable jurisdiction.

**[The remainder of this page is intentionally left blank.]**



# Veterinarian's report of suspected animal cruelty - SAMPLE

**Step 1: *Immediately*** report suspicions **verbally** to local law enforcement or other designated authority.  
State you are making the report as a veterinarian who is a mandated or permitted reporter.

**Step 2: *Within 48 hours***, complete and send this report to the department(s) receiving verbal report.

**Step 3: *Keep a copy*** of this report for your records.

\*\*\**Complete as much information as is known or available.*\*\*\*

***Reporting VETERINARIAN's information:***

Name:	
Practice name and address:	
Email:	Phone:

***Person presenting the animal(s):***

Name:	Reported relationship to animal: (owner, dog sitter, ACO etc.)  <input type="checkbox"/> Special assistance needed with communication (e.g., translator)
Address:	
Phone: (     )     -	
Email:	

***Owner (check box if same as above):***

Name:	<input type="checkbox"/> Special assistance needed with communication (e.g., translator)
Address:	
Phone: (     )     -	
Email:	

***Involved animals (use back and/or separate sheet if necessary)***

Species, breed/type, markings (e.g., brindle, B&W, etc.)	Sex	Approximate age (if known)	Name (check box if deceased)	Date seen
			□	
			□	

*If more animals are involved or suspected to be involved, please provide available information on back or additional pages*

Current location of animal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Please inform law enforcement if you believe other animals or people are in danger (including vulnerable persons, children, or elders).**

Description of concerns:

Is the animal's owner aware a report of suspicions of animal cruelty is being made? (check if yes)

Date/time of verbal report: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of officer/dispatcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency/officer phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of reporter: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of written report submission: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*File report with law enforcement or appropriate agency  
in the community where the harm is suspected to have occurred.\**

**Contact information for your local police department is available online.**

**For more information on where to submit your report, visit  
<https://nationallinkcoalition.org/how-do-i-report-suspected-abuse>**

## APPENDIX G

### Sample chain of custody form

The following two pages are a sample chain of custody form that might be used. The material within the sample form provides a format for recording who had access to and control of any evidence as it changes hands.

**[The remainder of this page is intentionally left blank.]**





# VETERINARY EVIDENCE CHAIN-OF-CUSTODY TRACKING FORM - SAMPLE

Case or file #: \_\_\_\_\_ Case type: \_\_\_\_\_

Submitting officer if any (name/town): \_\_\_\_\_

Incident/report # from submitting entity if any: \_\_\_\_\_

Case name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time discovered: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of evidence		
Item #	Quantity	Description of animals/items

Chain of custody				
Item #	Date/time	Released by (signature & ID)	Received by (signature & ID)	Comments/location

**VETERINARY EVIDENCE CHAIN-OF-CUSTODY TRACKING FORM - SAMPLE  
(continued)**

Chain of custody				
Item #	Date/time	Released by (signature)	Received by (signature)	Comments/location

Final disposal authority
<p><b>Authorization for disposal</b></p> <p>Item(s) #: _____ on this document pertaining to (case number): _____  is(are) no longer needed as evidence and is/are authorized for disposal by (check appropriate disposal method)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Return to submitting entity      <input type="checkbox"/> Destroy/cremate</p> <p>Print name of authorizing individual: _____ Signature: _____  Date: _____</p>
<p><b>Witness to destruction of evidence</b></p> <p>Item(s) #: _____ on this document were destroyed/submitted for cremation by _____  in my presence on (date) _____.</p> <p>Name of witness: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____</p>
<p><b>Release to lawful owner or submitting entity</b></p> <p>Item(s) #: _____ on this document was/were released by (name) _____  To : (Name) _____  Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____  Zip code: _____ Evidence preservation advised. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Telephone #: (____) _____ - _____</p> <p>Under penalty of law, I certify that I am the lawful owner or keeper of the above item(s).  Signature: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Copy of government-issued photo identification is attached. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p><b>Releasing party should maintain a copy of this form. The original veterinary evidence chain-of-custody form should travel with the evidence if transferred or kept as a record by the final releasing/destroying entity.</b></p>

## APPENDIX H

### **Sample intake for necropsy consent form**

The following page is a sample consent form for the submission of a deceased animal for the purposes of postmortem examination.

**[The remainder of this page is intentionally left blank.]**



## INTAKE FOR NECROPSY CONSENT FORM - SAMPLE

Case #: \_\_\_\_\_ Submitting entity case # \_\_\_\_\_

Submitting officer (name/town): \_\_\_\_\_

Address of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of animal: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's name/address (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that I am submitting the deceased animal described above to \_\_\_\_\_ for the purposes of a postmortem examination. I understand that this necropsy examination will be thorough, and at the end of this exam the animal's body will not be in a condition to be viewed. A postmortem examination often determines the cause of death; however, the examination does not guarantee a diagnosis.

I understand if the cause of death appears to be from unnatural or non-accidental causes, the suspicion of a crime will be reported to the police department in the town where the incident is suspected to have occurred, if the suspicion has not yet been reported.

I understand if a crime is suspected to have occurred, the body should be maintained as evidence for the duration of the judicial process. This veterinary practice is unable to maintain frozen remains for a period of any longer than two weeks after the conclusion of the postmortem exam.

By signing below, I certify that I am authorized to consent to a post-mortem examination of this animal. I also agree that I will take possession of the frozen remains within two weeks after the conclusion of the examination.

\_\_\_\_\_ Signed date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Printed name

## APPENDIX I

### Resources and links

#### **American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)**

AVMA policy about animal abuse and animal neglect

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/animal-abuse-and-animal-neglect>

#### **American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA)**

Animal abuse reporting position statement

<https://www.aaha.org/about-aaha/aaha-position-statements/animal-abuse-reporting/>

#### **Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV)**

Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters (Second Edition): Section 8, Forensics

<https://jsmcah.org/index.php/jasv>

#### **National Link Coalition**

How do I report suspected abuse?

<https://nationallinkcoalition.org/how-do-i-report-suspected-abuse>

#### **American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)**

Veterinary resources for recognizing and reporting animal cruelty and neglect

<https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/veterinary-resources-recognizing-and-reporting-animal-cruelty-and-neglect>

#### **Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium**

Hoarding information

<https://vet.tufts.edu/special-programs/shelter-medicine-program/hoarding-information>

## APPENDIX J

### Forensic expert consultations

Most cases of suspected animal cruelty can be adequately documented by any practicing veterinarian. Some complex cases can benefit from the expertise of a veterinary pathologist or forensic veterinarian. You may find assistance within your local agricultural university or veterinary school pathology department and one of the resources below. The following organizations provide forensics consulting; this is not an exhaustive list:

**American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals  
(ASPCA) Veterinary Forensic Science Center**

<https://www.aspcapro.org/about-programs-services/aspca-veterinary-forensic-science-center-avfsc>

**Forensic Veterinary Investigations, LLC**

<http://www.vetinvestigator.com>

**International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association (IVFSA)**

<https://www.ivfssa.org/contact/>

**Veterinary Forensics Consulting, LLC**

<http://www.veterinaryforensics.com>

**Wolf Veterinary Forensics Consulting, Inc.**

<https://www.wvfcinc.com>

## APPENDIX K

# The Four Stages of Cruelty

The following are images of the story of the Four Stages of Cruelty created and published by William Hogarth in 1751.<sup>2</sup>



**First Stage of Cruelty**



**Second Stage of Cruelty**



**Cruelty in Perfection**



**The Reward of Cruelty**

<sup>2</sup> Art of William Hogarth, HALEY AND STEELE,  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Four\\_Stages\\_of\\_Cruelty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Stages_of_Cruelty).