

3023 Recognizing Crimes Against Animals

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Instructor Guide

Criminal Justice Specialized Course

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The training in this course is provided to familiarize students with issues that may involve high liability and/or high stress activities. FDLE urges students to ensure that their practices are correct in accordance with their agencies' policies and procedures. Employing agencies are solely responsible for guiding their employees' actions in actual situations.

UPDATES

This course was updated on July 21, 2025, with the following revisions:

- Legislative updates about wildlife and dangerous animals in unit 2, lesson 5, objective 2.5.6.

See Curriculum Alert 2025-08

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our sincere appreciation to the agencies of the Florida Criminal Justice System that allowed their members to help develop this Specialized Course.

Brevard County Sheriff's Office

City of Tallahassee Animal Services

Collier County Sheriff's Office

Escambia County Animal Services

Flagler County Sheriff's Office

Florida Agricultural Crimes Intelligence Unit

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Jacksonville Sheriff's Office

Lake County Sheriff's Office

Lee County Animal Services

Lee County Sheriff's Office

Miami Beach Police Department

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office

Polk County Sheriff's Office

Seminole County Animal Services

Seminole County Sheriff's Office

State Attorney's Office, Fifth Judicial Circuit

Tallahassee Police Department

The Humane Society of the United States

University of Florida

FOREWORD

This course is part of the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission Specialized Training Program pursuant to Rule 11B-35.007, F.A.C. Courses in the Specialized Training Program are designed for post-basic or in-service training to enhance an officer's knowledge, skills, and abilities in a specific area and may be credited toward an officer's mandatory retraining, pursuant to Rule 11B-27.00212, F.A.C.

Specialized courses are competency-based, meaning the course may be completed in less than the total course hours assigned, provided all learning goals and objectives are covered. Training schools and instructors have the flexibility to redistribute topic hours in areas where greater emphasis is needed. At their discretion, instructors may use additional learning aids to enhance instruction of the learning goals and objectives.

This course does not require that students pass a written end-of-course examination.

EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

Instructors and students are encouraged to contact FDLE directly and leave feedback. We strive to constantly improve our curriculum and appreciate hearing about areas in which the course could be refined, as well as any other feedback. Please email curriculum@fdle.state.fl.us or call the Bureau of Training directly at (850) 410-8600. Your feedback is always appreciated.

SUMMARY

Instructor notes will appear throughout the course in yellow boxes. These notes serve as reminders and are there to guide instructors through the lessons.

Helpful Tips:

- Consider treating each learning objective as an opportunity to engage your students with situations and examples that you believe will enhance their understanding of the content.
- Break the content up into bite-sized chunks to avoid long-winded lectures.
- It is recommended that you invite guest speakers who specialize in animal autopsies, prosecuting animal crimes, or investigating cases from the animal control perspective.

Instructional Goal: To provide an overview for how to recognize crimes committed against animals. This course is primarily intended for the patrol officer with limited experience in this area.

Structure of Course: 2 Units, 8 Lessons

Total Estimated Time: 16 Hours

Suggested Hour Breakdown:

- Unit 1—Introduction to Crimes Against Animals (3 hours)
- Unit 2—Recognizing Crimes Against Animals (13 hours)

Required Materials and Supplies:

- Florida Statutes
- Applicable case law
- Applicable federal law
- Scenarios, case studies, and activities
- Laptops
- Course images:
 - ▶ These can be found in the instructor course landing page of the Course Materials Website:
<https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/getdoc/e0972536-c73d-41b0-b9fe-3a6562463711/ASSC.aspx>

UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO CRIMES AGAINST ANIMALS

LESSON 1 ANIMAL CRIMES OVERVIEW

LESSON GOAL

Students will learn about the types of crimes associated with animal crime cases and their role in the investigation.

Materials and Resources

- The National Link Coalition: <https://nationallinkcoalition.org/>

INTRODUCTION

This lesson gives a broad overview of the types of crimes and situations an officer may encounter when responding to and handling cases involving animal victims. This lesson also explores the history of animal protection laws in the United States, as well as the importance of investigating crimes against animals and the consequences for failing to do so.

ANIMAL CRIMES OVERVIEW

✓ 1.1.1. Identify the Five Freedoms of animal welfare

Animals experience fear and feel pain. They deserve to live life without experiencing undue or prolonged suffering. Over time a set of standards for animal welfare has developed. Animal welfare is generally evaluated using the concept of the "Five Freedoms," which are as follows:

1. freedom from hunger, thirst, and malnutrition
2. freedom from discomfort
3. freedom from pain, injury, or disease
4. freedom to express normal behavior
5. freedom from fear and distress¹

It is important for officers to consider the "Five Freedoms" when encountering cases involving animals in order to ensure that their needs are being met.

✓ 1.1.2. Explain why it is important to recognize and investigate animal abuse and its links to other violent crimes

A common saying within the field of animal welfare is, "When animals are abused, people are at risk; when people are abused, animals are at risk."²

There is a direct correlation between animal abuse and domestic and familial violence, so recognizing animal abuse may be the first step to stopping the cycle of abuse within the household. While animal abuse can be considered a precursor to human violence, the truth is that they often co-occur.

It is not uncommon for abusers to assert or maintain control over their victims by targeting their pets. This threat towards a pet can prevent or delay the abused partner from seeking shelter or staying with friends and family, which may place the victim in more danger. Furthermore, abused children may hurt their pets to gain a sense of control or process their own mistreatment.

Domestic violence is not the only crime associated with animal abuse. Various studies have found a link between animal abuse offenders and their tendency to engage in other illegal activities such as violent crimes, property crimes, drug offenses, disorderly conduct, and arson.³ Some officers fail to act on reports of animal abuse due to inexperience, lack of training, or indifference, which allows abusers to continue their violence. This is why it is critical for officers to follow up on reports of animal abuse.

An officer may not be able to arrest the person with regards to battery or domestic violence; however, they could initiate an arrest on the grounds of animal cruelty. Regardless of why the person is arrested and how they are charged, the result is the same. The abuser is removed, and both the human and the animal victims are safer for it. Ultimately, the identification, response, and potential prosecution of crimes against animals provides greater protection for the entire community.⁴

Instructor Note: Introduce and share with the class the National Link Coalition website. Then, explain their purpose and describe how officers would use this resource: <https://nationallinkcoalition.org/>

✓ 1.1.3. Identify the common types of calls for services regarding animals

While there is a wide range of crimes against animals, officers are most likely to encounter the following calls for service:

- neglect—the animal lacks sufficient food, water, shelter, or medical care. Law enforcement officers will often see neglect in large-scale animal operations such as puppy mills, over-extended animal rescues, or hoarding situations.
- intentional acts of cruelty—the animal is purposefully harmed, including but not limited to blunt force trauma, projectile trauma, and sharp force trauma.
- animal abandonment—the animal is left alone by their owner or caretaker in a public area, residence, or at a shelter without providing the proper care, sustenance, protection, or shelter for the animal.
- animals left in vehicles—the animal is left unattended in a vehicle by the owner and is in immediate danger of suffering harm. This harm is usually because of dangerous temperatures.
- animal fighting—the animal is pitted against one or more animals, usually in a homemade arena. These situations usually involve dogs (dogfighting) or roosters (cockfighting).
- practicing veterinary medicine without a license—the animal undergoes illegal cosmetic or surgical procedures so that negligent owners can avoid the cost of hiring a licensed veterinarian.
- animal hoarding—the animal is confined with so many other animals that the owner or caretaker loses the ability to provide minimum standards of care.
- sexual activities involving animals—the animal is sexually abused by one or more people, where injuries to the animal may not be visible.

✓ 1.1.4. Identify the role of the patrol officer when responding to crimes against animals

Patrol officers are often the first to arrive on the scene, so it is their responsibility to secure the scene, collect information, and preserve evidence for the investigator. Patrol officers must also accurately assess the level of severity and determine whether additional resources are needed or if exigent circumstances apply. Finally, it is the patrol officer who notifies their chain of command and animal control services. Depending on agency policies and procedures, the patrol officer may even need to detain a suspect or make an arrest.

✓ 1.1.5. Identify the role of the investigator when responding to crimes against animals

After the patrol officer's initial response, the investigator will conduct a more extensive investigation to determine what further resources are necessary, identify which crimes have been committed, and establish probable cause for potential search or arrest warrants. The investigator is also responsible for consulting with subject matter experts to assist in analyzing potential evidence and ensuring that evidence is properly processed; additionally, the investigator acts as the agency's representative to the court. As a representative to the court, the investigator prepares the case presentation, coordinates with the state attorney, and testifies in court as needed.

✓ **1.1.6. Explain how law enforcement officers can reduce risk of infection from animal contact**

Be aware that humans can contract **zoonotic diseases**, which are diseases that are passed from animal to human. Therefore, appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE) should always be used depending on the type of case and species. Some examples of appropriate PPE include respiratory masks, gloves, booties, and eye protection.

When dealing with potentially diseased animals, officers should refer to their agency's standard operating procedures or follow the guidance of a subject matter expert such as a veterinarian or animal control officer. If the case involves **livestock**, or domesticated animals that are raised in an agricultural setting, infected with disease, the officer should contact the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Instructor Note: Discuss with the class some of the possible infections linked to contact with animals such as rabies, ring worm, salmonella, psittacosis, campylobacteriosis, leptospirosis, and brucellosis.

✓ **1.1.7. Examine why law enforcement officers may fail to identify and follow up on crimes against animals**

Occasionally, law enforcement officers who encounter a crime against an animal may not recognize the criminality of the situation or fail to follow up on a report. The following are the most common reasons why this happens:

- lack of knowledge, training, or experience
 - ▶ For example, animals are property under the law. Some officers may mistakenly believe that since an animal is considered "property," the owner can do whatever they want.
 - ▶ Officers may also mistakenly characterize the call as a civil dispute.
- lack of resources or knowledge of resources available
- lack of agency or supervisor support
- high call volume or the prioritization of calls
- misconception that animal control is solely responsible for handling anything related to animals
- normalization of the mistreatment of animals
- apathy

✓ **1.1.8. Describe the potential consequences of failing to properly investigate crimes against animals**

Animal cruelty and neglect are serious crimes that often indicate that other crimes are co-occurring, or about to occur. Failure to properly intervene or investigate a crime could lead to the continued suffering of an animal, other crimes going undetected, or the escalation of violence—which may lead to additional injury or death of human and animal victims.

These poorly handled cases may evoke negative media attention for the agency, which may have the potential to tarnish the trust between law enforcement and the public. Failure to properly investigate can also mean the officer faces agency discipline, which could mean suspension, termination, or even civil liability or criminal charges.

Instructor Note: Ask the students to share with the class their agency's policies and procedures for handling animal-related complaints.

LESSON 2 FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL LAWS RELATING TO ANIMAL CRIMES

LESSON GOAL

Students will learn the federal, state, and local laws related to crimes against animals.

Materials and Resources

- Statute Index
- Instructor Attachment: Scenario Answer Key

INTRODUCTION

This lesson introduces the federal, state, and local laws pertaining to crimes against animals. All animal-related offenses will fall into one of two classes: criminal and non-criminal, also known as civil. Civil typically includes ordinance violations and criminal will usually include federal and state law violations—although there can be instances where they overlap.

Instructor Note: It is recommended to have guest speakers from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), and local animal cruelty investigators to review federal, state, and local examples.

CIVIL AND CRIMINAL VIOLATIONS

✓ 1.2.1. Differentiate between civil infractions and criminal offenses involving animals

Criminal offenses are arrestable offenses with varying penalties such as a fine, jail time, probation, or special orders. Special orders in these cases may appear as pets being included in restraining orders, prohibition of the ownership of animals, or sentencing of community service but excluding any work with animals.

Civil infractions are ordinance violations where civil citations could be issued including, but not limited to, animals-at-large, and improper **tethering**, which is the act of securing an animal to a stationary object such as pole or tree to confine them. Note that local ordinance violations may be more restrictive than state law, but never less restrictive. A civil infraction usually results in a fine and is not an arrestable offense, however, civil infractions may turn in to criminal offenses. For example, consider a situation in which a civil infraction results in a citation requiring veterinary care; however, the owner then fails to secure the veterinary care and the animal dies. In this situation, a civil issue has now become criminal. Keep in mind that it may not always be clear whether an incident is criminal or civil at the beginning of the investigation.

Instructor Note: Explain to the class that there are crimes involving the transportation and sale of animals that are not necessarily cruelty violations, such as fraudulent health certificates, livestock without required identification, and animals without proof of state mandated testing. Tell the class to check with FDACS for domestic species and FWC for wildlife and exotic species.

Also, discuss civil versus criminal law and how these cases can overlap. For example, animal ownership disputes or being able to remove animals in distress as outlined in s. 828.073, F.S.

FLORIDA LAWS AND ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

✓ 1.2.2. Explain the difference between animal cruelty and aggravated animal cruelty

Section 828.12(1), F.S., defines animal cruelty as unlawfully and unnecessarily overloading, overdriving, tormenting, depriving of necessary sustenance or shelter, or unnecessarily mutilating or killing any animal. Whereas s. 828.12(2), F.S., defines aggravated animal cruelty as intentionally committing an act to an animal, which results in the cruel death, or excessive or repeated infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering. Animal cruelty is a first-degree misdemeanor offense, while aggravated animal cruelty is a third-degree felony offense.

✓ 1.2.3. Identify some of the Florida Statutes related to crimes against animals

Most laws pertaining to the welfare of animals can be found in chapter 828 of the Florida Statutes. Refer to the statute index to learn about each one.

Instructor Note: Review the statute index with the class, and emphasize s.828.12, F.S., since the information found in this statute provides the foundation for this course.

✓ 1.2.4. Identify the Florida Administrative Codes (F.A.C.) rules relevant to investigating crimes against animals

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) also have Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) rules pertaining to animals. Some of the more common rules an officer should be aware of are:

- Chapter 68-6, F.A.C. is comprised of a series of state rules and regulations relating to the possession, care, welfare, and security of captive exotic and dangerous animals.
- 68A-9.010, F.A.C. governs the elimination of nuisance wildlife and prohibits the use of certain methods such as steel traps and poisons. This rule also sets restrictions on inhumane euthanasia and protections for certain species.
- 5C-30, F.A.C. has multiple administrative violations for domestic animals being imported or transported in Florida.

FEDERAL LAWS

✓ 1.2.5. Identify the federal laws relating to animal crimes

The following are federal laws that are meant to stop cruelty towards animals:

- Animal Welfare Act (AWA)—this act regulates the treatment of animals kept captive for research and exhibition purposes (including zoos and circuses) and includes provisions for transporting animals for commercial purposes, including some large-scale dog or cat breeders, under certain conditions. The act is enforced by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Animal Care.
- Federal Animal Fighting and Baiting Prohibition Enforcement Act—this act imposes a fine or prison time relating to sponsoring or exhibiting an animal in an animal fighting venture; buying, selling, transporting, delivering, or receiving for participation in an animal fighting venture; and using the mail, or other instrumentality of interstate commerce to promote or further an animal fighting venture.
- Horse Protection Act—this act prohibits sore horses from participating in or being transported to shows, exhibitions, sales, or auctions.

Instructor Note: Explain to the class that a “sore horse” is a horse who has had pain intentionally inflicted on their legs or hooves to produce a specific, exaggerated style of walking.

- Migratory Bird Treaty Act—this act protects migratory birds from unauthorized take, trade, and transport.

- Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act—following a 2010 federal law which banned animal “crush” videos (discussed in Unit 2, Lesson 4), this 2019 act expands federal jurisdiction, specifically to include crush videos, burning, drowning, suffocation, impaling, or sexual exploitation, in/or affecting interstate commerce.
- The Lacey Act—enacted in 1900 and since amended several times, this act made it a federal crime to “import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire, or purchase in interstate or foreign commerce any wildlife that was taken, possessed, transported, or sold in violation of any law or regulation of any state or in violation of any foreign law.”⁵ Under the Lacey Act, it is illegal to mislabel wildlife shipments, bring injurious species into the country, and import live wildlife under inhumane conditions. APHIS, the National Marine Fisheries Service and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are the agencies with jurisdiction.

Instructor Note: Review and have students complete the mandatory scenario: Noise Complaint.

INSTRUCTOR ATTACHMENT: SCENARIO ANSWER KEY

Mandatory Scenario—Noise Complaint

Instructor Instructions: Allow the class to read the scenario and answer the questions, either on their own or in groups. Then, hold a discussion and review the answers. Consider adding additional questions you believe would enhance student learning.

An officer responds to a noise complaint from a neighbor involving multiple barking dogs. The officer arrives at the house and is given verbal consent to enter by the homeowner. Upon entering the house, the officer sees 20 puppies, three dogs, four cardinals, and two lemurs. Several of the dogs appear to be very thin and in need of veterinary care. The house is unkept with a strong smell of ammonia and there is an abundant amount of feces on the floor. Receipts are found showing that the puppies and lemurs are being sold. You notice two young children present in the home, both of whom are barefoot.

Q1: Do you believe an investigation should be started? Why or why not?

Answers may include:

- Yes, as the officer should be able to easily identify multiple conditions that justify a child neglect and animal cruelty investigation. For example, the air quality is hazardous, feces on the floor indicates a major safety risk, there are malnourished animals, etc.

Q2: Explain what steps the officer should take next.

Answers may include:

- Identify the primary caretakers for the animals and children.
- Search for previous calls or complaints, such as prior DCF calls or animal services complaints.
- Call animal services or a veterinarian to assist on scene and get a second opinion on the animal's perceived malnutrition.
- Ideally, have a veterinarian trained in cruelty cases perform thorough exams on all the animals or issue a 24-hour notice for veterinary care in accordance with your agency's policies and procedures.
- Carefully document everything on the scene, take statements from witnesses, and write a thorough report. This documentation will serve as the basis for probable cause, should the seizure of animals become necessary.
- If the officer needs to seize animals under s. 828.073, F.S., animal control will need to collect and house the animals or agree to put in place a plan to allow the caretakers time to fix the situation if it does not meet the threshold of charges.
- Request an ammonia strip reader from the fire department or animal control prior to the scene being altered.
- Check ordinance violations that are applicable.
- Check social media for evidence or confirmation of animal sales and possession. If social media accounts are found containing evidence of the crime, the investigator will need to make a preservation request.
- Search the suspect's phone number on the internet to see if they are selling the animals.

Q3: What local, state, or federal laws should be considered in this case and what other considerations should be discussed?

Answers may include:

- Check county ordinances and possibly s. 828.12, F.S., for cruelty and veterinary care requirements.
- Call FWC law enforcement about proper permitting for the lemur and ensure that the Lacey Act was not violated. A class III permit is needed to sell a lemur.
- Check with FWC for either proper permits for the cardinals or possible violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
- Request health certificates for any dogs being offered for sale under s. 828.29, F.S.
- Contact Animal Services and Department of Children and Families for other possible violations.

UNIT 2 RECOGNIZING CRIMES AGAINST ANIMALS

LESSON 1 ANIMAL NEGLECT

LESSON GOAL

Students will learn the indicators of animal neglect in their community and the proper response.

Materials and Resources

- Statute Index
- Appendix A: Interview Strategies
- Appendix B: Animal Investigation Follow-up Form
- Lesson Attachment: Purina Canine Body Condition System
- Lesson Attachment: Purina Feline Body Condition System
- Instructor Attachment: Scenario Answer Key

INTRODUCTION

This lesson goes over the various types of animal neglect officers may encounter while on duty. Animal neglect cases are not always straight forward since there are many factors to consider when determining if neglect is occurring. The root causes of animal neglect typically stem from a lack of resources provided to the animal, and the level of crime is dictated by the severity and duration of the event.

ANIMAL NEGLECT OVERVIEW

✓ 2.1.1. Explain animal neglect

Animal neglect involves depriving an animal of their most basic needs which includes food, water, shelter, and medical care. It is one of the most common forms of abuse and is often associated with the caretaker neglecting themselves or their dependents. Neglect can stem from a caregiver's lack of resources or education, which may result in mandatory education or an ordinance violation. In its most severe form, neglect can lead to the death of the animal along with a possible felony arrest of the caregiver.

Keep in mind that, under Florida law, any person who neglects their animal can be charged with animal cruelty, abandonment, or the confinement of animals without sufficient food, water, or exercise.

Instructor Note: Review and discuss with the class s. 828.02, F.S.—Definitions.

MISDEMEANOR VERSUS FELONY NEGLECT

✓ 2.1.2. Explain the difference between misdemeanor and felony animal cruelty

A person who neglects their animal(s) may be charged with either misdemeanor neglect or felony neglect depending on the level of severity and reoccurrence.

Section 828.12(1), F.S., defines misdemeanor animal cruelty as:

a person who unnecessarily overloads, overdrives, torments, deprives of necessary sustenance or shelter, or unnecessarily mutilates, or kills any animal, or causes the same to be done, or carries in or upon any vehicle, or otherwise, any animal in a cruel or inhumane manner, commits animal cruelty, a misdemeanor of the first degree...

Generally, misdemeanor neglect is brief and not sustained or repeated. An example of misdemeanor neglect would be someone failing to feed their dog enough food because of financial hardship.

By contrast, s. 828.12(2), F.S., defines aggravated animal cruelty as:

a person who intentionally commits an act to any animal, or a person who owns or has the custody or control of any animal and fails to act, which results in the cruel death, or excessive or repeated infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering, or causes the same to be done, commits aggravated animal cruelty, a felony of the third degree...

The general characteristics of felony neglect may entail the intentional withholding of necessities such as food, water, medication, or the excessive or repeated infliction of pain or suffering, or anything leading to cruel death. An example of felony neglect would be someone tethering their dog in an abandoned backyard and leaving it without any food, water, or shelter for an extended period, ultimately resulting in the dog's death.

✓ 2.1.3. Identify signs of potential misdemeanor or felony neglect of animals

An officer will assess their surroundings from the moment that they arrive on the scene. If an animal is involved, or noticed on the property, the officer should look for the following signs of potential misdemeanor or felony animal neglect:

- There is a lack of, or an inadequate amount of, food and water.
 - ▶ Is the water fresh and clean or are there bugs, mud, particles, and filth floating in it? Are there algae on the sides of the water bowls? Are the water bowls dry and dusty?
 - ▶ Is the water in a container that cannot be overturned?
 - ▶ If the animals are in a pasture, is there enough grass or vegetation to eat or is it all chewed down?
 - ▶ Is there any evidence of feed, hay, pellets, etc.? If food is available, can all the animals access it? Is the food moldy or filled with bugs?
- There is a lack of, or an inadequate amount of, shelter (note that appropriate shelter is defined by species and by ordinance).
 - ▶ Does the animal have protection from the elements?
 - ▶ Does the animal have any shade?
- There are signs of poor grooming.
 - ▶ Is the animal's fur dirty or matted?

Instructor Note: Some students may not see dirty or matted fur as a problem. Consider discussing how matted fur or hair can get very heavy and can lead to sores, maggots, and potentially the amputation of a limb.

- ▶ Are the animal's nails overgrown?
 - ▶ If the animal has hooves, are the hooves cracked? Are the hooves overgrown?
 - ▶ Is the animal standing in or covered in mud or filth?
- There is a tight collar or harness embedded into the animal's skin.
- There are foul odors resulting from a medical condition or lack of sanitation.
- There is urine staining on the animal's feet and legs.
- There are animals who appear to be extremely thin or show other signs of malnourishment.

Instructor Note: Review with the class the Purina Canine Body Condition System and Feline Body Condition System.

- There are apparent chronic medical conditions.
 - ▶ Does the animal appear to have poor dental health?
 - ▶ Is the animal suffering from respiratory infections?
 - ▶ Is the animal covered in lice or fleas, or suffers from worms or another parasitic infection?
 - ▶ Does the animal have untreated skin conditions leading to loss of hair?
- There are apparent acute medical conditions.
 - ▶ Is the animal lame (abnormal stance or walk resulting from a dysfunction in the locomotor system)?
 - ▶ Does the animal have open or infected wounds?
 - ▶ Does the animal suffer from one or more prolapsed organs?

Instructor Note: Explain to the class that a prolapsed organ occurs when an abdominal organ such as the bladder, uterus, or rectum protrudes from within the body via the vagina or anus. If left untreated, prolapsed organs can become life-threatening to the animal. Officers should consider issuing a 24-hour notice for veterinary care in accordance with their agency's policies and procedures.

✓ 2.1.4. Discuss how animal neglect can occur unintentionally

Most cases of animal neglect occur when a caretaker fails to meet the animal's basic needs. This may be due to a lack of resources such as money or housing but can also be the result of a caretaker's poor physical or mental health. For example, the caretaker may be too ill to get out of bed or have mobility issues which may hinder them from fully caring for their animals. The caretaker may also be suffering from a mental health condition that causes them to neglect themselves and, by extension, their animals.

Lack of knowledge and understanding of what the animal requires to thrive can also lead to neglect. For example, offering the wrong type of food to their livestock or failing to provide sufficient outdoor shelter due to a false assumption that an animal's fur is enough protection.

Not all caretakers who neglect their animal(s) need to be arrested or fined, so consider the following circumstances:

- What is the level of neglect?
- Is this a first-time offense?
- Did the caretaker believe they were acting in good faith?
- Did the caretaker simply not know better?
- How does the caretaker respond? Are they willing to learn and do the right thing?

For caretakers and first-time offenders who made a mistake and demonstrate a willingness to get their animal(s) help, the best course of action may be to refer the caretaker to their local animal control services, humane society, pet pantry, or veterinary services with the promise of following up with them at a later date to ensure compliance.

✓ 2.1.5. Review the reasons somebody suspected of neglect may give in order to explain the physical state of an animal

Those suspected of animal neglect will often give reasons for an animal's condition or behavior when being questioned by an officer. Sometimes the reasons they provide will have merit, and sometimes they will not. Regardless, the officer must follow up and attempt to verify any information given instead of taking the suspect at their word.

Instructor Note: Review and discuss Appendix A: Interview Strategies. More specifically, the list of common reasons for animal neglect, along with potential suggestions for how the officer can respond. Consider adding more examples to this list.

Also, emphasize to the class that officers should not coerce a person to surrender their animal in lieu of charges as it may later lead to complications during trial.

ANIMAL NEGLECT CASE ISSUES

✓ 2.1.6. Discuss typical issues that can arise when investigating and prosecuting animal neglect cases

Animal neglect cases can be difficult to investigate and prosecute for a variety of reasons. Despite this, animal neglect is incredibly common. Best practice includes being aware of the more frequently encountered issues such as:

Signs of Neglect Are Not Always Apparent

An animal's fur may hide that they are underweight, malnourished, or medically neglected. Some animals, such as dairy cows, appear malnourished when they are not. Other animals with thick fur or wool, such as sheep, will need to be felt to evaluate their body condition. In contrast, the public may report a naturally thin animal that they perceive as neglected or underweight but is in good nutritional condition.

Tunnel Vision for the Original Call

An officer responding to a domestic violence call may only focus on the human victims without ever noticing or questioning the state of the animal(s) present.

Reluctance to Charge Someone With a Mental Health Condition

An officer may choose not to charge an owner for neglecting their animals due to the owner's exhibited mental health condition. However, charging the owner may be one of the only ways to get them access to professional help. In addition, the person charged may be banned from further animal ownership, thus preventing any future cases of animal cruelty.

Reluctance to Charge a Non-Profit

An officer may choose not to charge an animal rescue due to their non-profit status and support from the community. However, some non-profits may have started out with good intentions but have become animal hoarding situations over time.

Lack of Resources to Handle Large-Scale Investigations

Large-scale cases may overwhelm the investigating agency's resources. It is important for the agency to know their limitations and have plans in place to address these shortfalls. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with other local, state, and national agencies may be required.

Longevity of the Case

Animal neglect cases may take days, weeks, or months to investigate. For example, in cases of starvation, the medical care of the animal may require months of rehabilitation before the animal reaches normal body weight. Despite how long the recovery process can take, being able to demonstrate the animal's progression to a judge or jury is powerful evidence.

Lack of Cooperating Witnesses or Other Parties

Neighbors, veterinarians, and family members may be afraid of retaliation and, therefore, reluctant to work with law enforcement, so be prepared to explore other avenues of investigations that do not require the cooperation of witnesses.

Instructor Note: Ask the class, when responding to an emaciated or sick animal, how they would differentiate between an owner legitimately trying to care for their animal versus one who is neglecting it, including what evidence would they look for to prove their case.

LARGE-SCALE ANIMAL NEGLECT

✓ 2.1.7. Describe the general characteristics of large-scale animal neglect

Large-scale animal neglect is when numerous animals are deprived of basic needs such as food, water, shelter, and medical care. The animals involved may be single or mixed species and many will be in varying states of health. Animal hoarding and puppy mill cases tend to fall into this category.

Large-scale animal neglect cases involve vast amounts of animal victims at the location. There may be so many animals that the investigating agency will not have enough resources to satisfy the minimum standards of care for the number of animals present.

Regarding the environmental conditions, there are typically poor standards of sanitation and waste elimination due to the accumulation of urine and feces. This accumulation tends to result in hazardous levels of ammonia which is a health risk for people and animals.

Animals may be standing in and covered with their filth, and their living areas tend to be excessively dirty with broken glass, piles of garbage, rotting structures, or other harmful objects. The space, lighting, and ventilation is frequently insufficient for the number of animals present. There may be several cages stacked on top of each other containing both living and deceased animals. Mass graves and burn piles may also be present at the scene.

Animals living in these conditions experience chronic stress. They tend to be sickly, tired, fearful, and show a wide range of abnormal behaviors. Ultimately, large-scale animal neglect is a public health issue and should be addressed as such. Because of this, officers are advised to wear proper PPE while on the scene.

Instructor Note: Explain to the class why it is important to include healthy animals in the reports as evidence documentation. Even if some animals are healthy, they were still subjected to the same living conditions as the non-healthy animals. The presence of healthy animals does not negate the cruelty charges.

Show the class images of large-scale animal neglect, which can be found on FDLE's course materials website on the instructor materials landing page: <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/getdoc/e0972536-c73d-41b0-b9fe-3a6562463711/ASSC.aspx>

Also, consider showing body worn camera (BWC) footage from your agency or through public records requests of large-scale animal neglect.

✓ 2.1.8. Explain the planning and logistics necessary for investigating a large-scale animal neglect case

Because large-scale animal neglect cases are complex, tend to strain resources, and require coordination between multiple entities, it is important for agencies to have a plan in place before a large-scale investigation occurs.

Taking the time to plan will lead to a better use of resources, as well as the increased likelihood of a successful rescue and investigation. Here are sample procedures for conducting a large-scale animal neglect investigation, which can be broken down into two phases: preplanning phase and operations phase.

Preplanning Phase

1. Establish relationships with resources outside and within your agency.

2. Clearly define agency roles and responsibilities.
3. Identify the resources needed that do not exist within the investigating agency.
 - a. Arrange for shelter, transportation, medical needs, etc.
 - b. Acquire property and equipment for the housing and maintenance of seized animals.

Instructor Note: Ask the students to name some resources in their jurisdiction that could be used for a large-scale animal neglect investigation. Then, ask them which of those resources would be difficult for their agency to acquire.

4. Develop a medical plan for the animals through animal services and a contracted veterinarian.
5. Identify how evidence will be collected and stored and select a method for identifying and labeling items.
6. Determine who is fiscally responsible for each aspect of the investigation.

Operations Phase

1. Use the incident command system (ICS) to establish command and delegate personnel to various aspects of the investigation.
2. Triage the animals on scene.
 - a. Use teamwork and coordination to make the triaging process as smooth as possible.
 - b. Separate and transport animals with communicable diseases away from the rest of the animals.
 - c. Note that it is possible to process the scene while expediting the removal and treatment of animals.

Instructor Note: Explain to the class that triage may be handled differently from one jurisdiction to the next and how the preservation of life for the animal may take precedence over the collection of evidence due to exigency, which will need to be detailed in the reports. Also explain why BWC footage may be useful in these incidences.

3. Collect, store, and determine who will analyze the evidence.
4. Decide how the organization will maintain daily operations during the investigation.
5. If warranted, solicit assistance from a mental health agency for the caretaker.

✓ 2.1.9 Identify the best practices for following up with neglect cases

Documentation is paramount with cases of animal neglect, so document any follow-up such as warnings or unannounced, periodic check-ins. Document all outreach to the caretaker, even if they do not respond. Take photographs of posted notices you place on doors, and contact other relevant parties such as veterinarians, feed stores, and animal non-profits to ensure that the caretaker has complied with instructions for the caring of their animal(s). Cultivate a good working relationship with the local animal control and reach out to them for assistance with any case follow-up.

If the initial responding unit is not responsible for following up, make sure they inform the appropriate responsible party to ensure this is done. Depending on the incident, severity, and impact to the animal, the officer should use their best discretion in determining the time frame needed to render care. If no changes are made and the caretaker is non-compliant, the officer should consider any of the following options:

- verbal or written warning
- citation
- education
- impoundment or seizure
- orders to provide care
- arrest

Instructor Note: Review and discuss with the class Appendix B: Follow-Up Form. Also, review and have students complete the mandatory scenario: Medical Neglect.

INSTRUCTOR ATTACHMENT: SCENARIO ANSWER KEY

Mandatory Scenario—Medical Neglect

Instructor Instructions: Allow the class to read the scenario and answer the questions, either on their own or in groups. Then, hold a discussion and review the answers. Consider adding additional questions you believe would enhance student learning.

A patrol officer responded alongside animal services to a report from a neighbor advising that a horse had been laying down in the same location for more than a day. Upon arrival at the scene, the horse was located and found to be in distress; it also appeared to be spontaneously aborting (miscarrying) a foal. The horse was very thin, lethargic, and appeared to be suffering. The horse did not have access to any water, food, or shelter. A local veterinarian was contacted and came to examine the animal on scene. After the examination, the veterinarian found the horse was very ill and was suffering. The veterinarian recommended euthanasia.

While speaking with the neighbor on scene, the officer learned that the neighbor had seen the horse's owner near the horse on multiple occasions while the horse was down. At no point did the neighbor see the owner bring the horse any food, water, or medication. The neighbor advised that the horse had been down since the previous morning at the very least.

The owner arrived home from work while the officer was still on-scene, and the veterinarian was in the process of euthanizing the horse. The owner stated that he knew the horse was not doing well but chose to go to work that morning instead of seeking care.

Q1: What crimes, if any, were committed and what level was the offense?

Answers may include:

- Felony animal cruelty. The owner knew the horse was not doing well and failed to seek treatment. The decision to medically neglect the horse led to its prolonged suffering.

Q2: Based on the information provided, do you believe the owner's cruelty was intentional or unintentional?

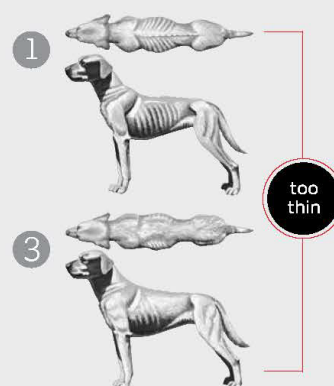
- Answers may vary; however, it is likely that the cruelty was intentional, as the owner admitted to knowing that their horse was sick, could not stand, and still chose to go to work. The owner had also visited the downed horse on multiple occasions and did not attempt to treat the horse or alleviate its suffering.

LESSON ATTACHMENT: PURINA CANINE BODY CONDITION SYSTEM

Canine Body Condition System



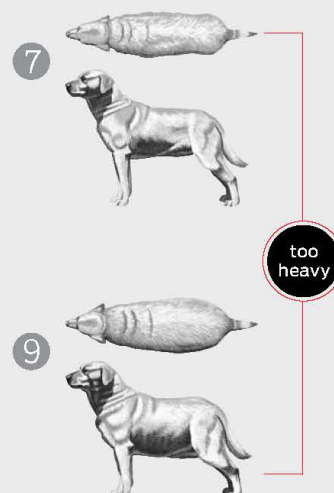
1. Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones and all bony prominences evident from a distance. No discernible body fat. Obvious loss of muscle mass.
2. Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones easily visible. No palpable fat. Some evidence of other bony prominence. Minimal loss of muscle mass.
3. Ribs easily palpated and may be visible with no palpable fat. Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible. Pelvic bones becoming prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.



4. Ribs easily palpable, with minimal fat covering. Waist easily noted, viewed from above. Abdominal tuck evident.
5. Ribs palpable, without excess fat covering. Waist observed behind ribs when viewed from above. Abdomen tucked up when viewed from side.



6. Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering. Waist is discernible viewed from above but is not prominent. Abdominal tuck apparent.
7. Ribs palpable with difficulty. Heavy fat cover. Noticeable fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent or barely visible. Abdominal tuck may be present.
8. Ribs not palpable under very heavy fat cover, or palpable only with significant pressure. Heavy fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent. No abdominal tuck. Obvious abdominal distention may be present.
9. Massive fat deposits over thorax, spine and base of tail. Waist and abdominal tuck absent. Fat deposits on neck and limbs. Obvious abdominal distention.



Questions? Contact your Purina Veterinary Sales Consultant (PVC) or the Purina Veterinary Resource Center at 1-800-222-VETS (8387) 8:00 AM–6:00 PM WEEKDAYS, CST.

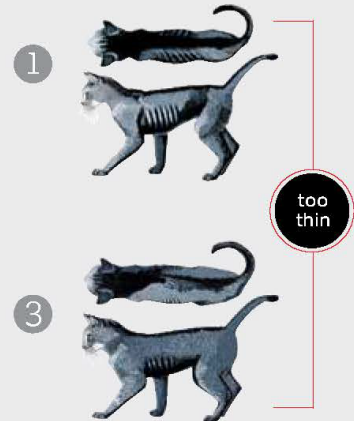
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LESSON ATTACHMENT: PURINA FELINE BODY CONDITION SYSTEM

Feline Body Condition System



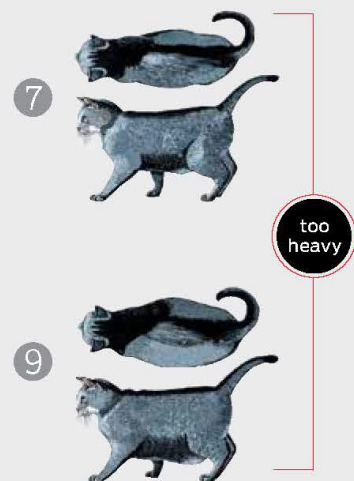
1. Ribs visible on short-haired cats. No palpable fat. Severe abdominal tuck. Lumbar vertebrae and wings of ilia easily palpated.
2. Ribs easily visible on short-haired cats. Lumbar vertebrae obvious with minimal muscle mass. Pronounced abdominal tuck. No palpable fat.
3. Ribs easily palpable with minimal fat covering. Lumbar vertebrae obvious. Obvious waist behind ribs. Minimal abdominal fat.
4. Ribs palpable with minimal fat covering. Noticeable waist behind ribs. Slight abdominal tuck. Abdominal fat pad absent.



5. Well-proportioned. Observe waist behind ribs. Ribs palpable with slight fat covering. Abdominal fat pad minimal.



6. Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering. Waist and abdominal fat pad distinguishable but not obvious. Abdominal tuck absent.
7. Ribs not easily palpated with moderate fat covering. Waist poorly discernible. Obvious rounding of abdomen. Moderate abdominal fat pad.
8. Ribs not palpable with excess fat covering. Waist absent. Obvious rounding of abdomen with prominent abdominal fat pad. Fat deposits present over lumbar area.
9. Ribs not palpable under heavy fat cover. Heavy fat deposits over lumbar area, face and limbs. Distention of abdomen with no waist. Extensive abdominal fat deposits.



The BODY CONDITION SYSTEM was developed at the Nestlé Purina PetCare Center and has been validated as documented in the following publications:
D. Mawby, J. W. Bartges, T. Mayers, et al. "Comparison of body fat estimates by dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry and deuterium oxide dilution in client owned dogs," *Compendium* 23(9A) (2001): 70; D. P. Laflamme, "Development and Validation of a Body Condition Score System of Dogs," *Canine Practice* July/August 22 (1997): 10-15
Kealy, et al. "Effects of Diet Restriction on Life Span and Age-Related Changes in Dogs," *JAVMA* 220 (2002): 1315-1320

Questions? Contact your Purina Veterinary Sales Consultant (PVC) or the Purina Veterinary Resource Center at 1-800-222-VETS (8387) 8:00 AM-6:00 PM WEEKDAYS, CST.

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LESSON 2 ANIMAL SEX CRIMES

LESSON GOAL

Students will learn about the terminology and actions associated with sexual activities involving animals.

Materials and Resources

- Statute Index
- Instructor Attachment: Scenario Answer Key
- Instructor Attachment: Case Study Answer Key
- Veterinary Forensic Pathology of Animal Sexual Abuse:
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0300985816643574>
- Sexual Assault Forensic Examination: <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/Documents/SAEKrev5.aspx>

INTRODUCTION

This lesson provides an overview of the motivations behind and the common indicators of animal sexual abuse. This type of abuse may not always result in physical injury, and pain and suffering do not need to be inflicted upon an animal for a crime to have occurred. Sexual activities involving animals, even when the animal is uninjured, is still a form of abuse and a crime. In 2022, the Florida Legislature enacted a law that amended s. 828.126, F.S., changing sexual abuse of animals from a misdemeanor to a felony. It is important for officers to know that sexual activities involving animals is a serious offense. Uncovering this crime relies heavily on the investigation, as offenders tend to commit the offense in secret.

Instructor Note: At any point in the lesson, introduce and share with the class the following website:

- Sexual Assault Forensic/Medical Examination: <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/Documents/SAEKrev5>

ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE OVERVIEW

✓ 2.2.1. Identify the acts associated with animal sexual abuse

Section 828.126, F.S., defines “sexual contact with an animal” as any act committed between a person and an animal for the purpose of sexual gratification, abuse, or financial gain which involves the following:

- contact between the sex organ or anus of one and the mouth, sex organ, or anus of the other;
- the fondling of the sex organ or anus of an animal; or
- the insertion, however slight, of any part of the body of a person or any object into the vaginal or anal opening of an animal, or the insertion of any part of the body of an animal into the vaginal or anal opening of a person.

The most common cases of animal sexual abuse that officers may encounter are oral-genital, vaginal intercourse with a female animal, masturbating an animal, or receiving anal intercourse from a male animal.

✓ 2.2.2. Identify commonly used terminology associated with animal sexual abuse

While Florida Statutes label animal sexual abuse as “sexual activities involving animals,” officers may be more familiar with other terms like bestiality and zoophilia. **Bestiality** is any kind of sexual or physical contact with an animal, and **zoophilia** is

the sexual preference for or attraction to animals. Because these terms are centered around humans and do not take the animal into consideration, officers should use the term animal sexual abuse when writing their reports.

✓ 2.2.3. Explain the overlap between animal sexual abuse and other forms of abuse

Animal sexual abuse sometimes coincides with the sexual abuse of a child. Sexual contact with animals is a significant risk factor and strong predictor of sexual molestation of a child. In a 2020 study of sexually violent predators in the state of Virginia, offenders that had a history of engaging in animal sexual abuse were more likely to be victims of childhood sexual abuse, engage in non-sexual animal abuse, and commit child sexual abuse.⁶

Within some abusers' households, their dependents may be forced into participating or observing acts of animal sexual abuse. These abusers may also force or coerce their battered partner into participating in sexual activities with animals as a form of degradation or sexual exploitation. It is therefore crucial for officers to recognize and respond appropriately to these cases, as doing so may break the cycle of abuse affecting both the human and animal residents of a household.

✓ 2.2.4. Discuss the motivations behind animal sexual abuse

Generally, the motivations of those who sexually abuse an animal can be classified under one of three categories: opportunistic or experimental motivation, fixed or primary motivation, or domineering or sadistic motivation.

- opportunistic or experimental motivation—this type of abuser is typically younger and acts out of curiosity. This abuser seeks out animals that are accessible, vulnerable, and non-threatening.
- fixated or primary motivation—this type of abuser has a sexual preference for animals.
- domineering or sadistic motivation—this type of abuser is likely to be a batterer, rapist, or pornographer who forces women, children, or vulnerable people to engage in sexual activities with animals to humiliate, dominate, control, or exploit both the human and animal victims.⁷

Sometimes, in conjunction with the previous motivations, perpetrators have been known to record acts of animal sexual abuse and distribute the material for financial gain.

✓ 2.2.5. Identify which animals are more likely to be sexually abused

Any species of animal can be sexually abused; however, dogs and horses are the most common victims. Ultimately, any animal of any sex that is capable of being detained, conditioned, or trained and is anatomically compatible can be a target for sexual abuse. Farm animals such as cows, sheep, horses, and chickens are considered easy targets due to the nature of where they are kept (e.g., open fields and areas without many people around).

✓ 2.2.6. Identify common injuries associated with animal sexual abuse

Signs of animal sexual abuse may vary from a lack of injuries to mild or fatal injuries that may include tearing and bleeding from the genital region. If the sexually abused animal is deceased, the death may be due to their injuries directly related to the sexual act or from related non-sexual trauma.

Some animal sexual abuse, such as oral-genital contact, rarely produces injuries. Penetration of the anus or vagina may also fail to produce injuries. Be aware that a negative exam does not rule out the possibility that the animal was sexually abused. Also, know that the case can still be prosecuted even if the examination yields no immediate evidence. It is important for the animal to be seen as a victim and examined by a veterinarian as soon as possible.

There may be indirect evidence attributed to animal sexual abuse. If the animal was physically restrained by rope or duct tape, there may be physical, or trace evidence associated with either the animal or the restraint. Other injuries may be found with victims of animal sexual abuse; these may include fractures, broken bones (skull, ribs, tail), or bruising that may have occurred in an attempt to subdue the animal. There may also be evidence that drugs or sedatives were administered to keep the animal compliant. Lastly, scratches and bite marks on the suspect may indicate that the animal struggled.

The evidence associated with cases of animal sexual abuse are often transient in nature and must be collected in a timely manner. For example, urine from a dog can be analyzed for sedatives, so prioritizing the collection of a urine sample is recommended.

✓ 2.2.7. Discuss some of the challenges officers may face in animal sexual abuse investigations

One of the biggest challenges associated with investigating an animal sexual abuse case can be the lack of physical evidence or injury on the animal. Officers may also struggle to find a veterinarian with the knowledge and equipment required to handle these cases. Agencies who investigate animal crimes should identify and engage with veterinarians who specialize in forensic examination of animal victims. Upon examination of the animal, law enforcement must ensure that the animal is photographed and processed for trace evidence. When processing an animal for trace evidence, a human sexual assault evidence kit should be used.

Sexual activities involving animals are often crimes without witnesses, so officers may need to collect phones, cameras, and other video or digital evidence since the acts may be recorded. Multi-agency collaboration is needed between animal control or animal services and law enforcement to adequately respond to these cases. For example, law enforcement must prioritize preservation requests for social media sites from seized devices, while animal control or animal services agencies examine, house, and care for the animals.

Instructor Note: Explain to the class why it is important for the officer to ask the veterinarian to examine the animal for every type of trauma. Also, emphasize that sexual assault kits are needed, and human sexual assault kits will work for animals.

Review and have students complete the mandatory scenario: Deceased Chicken, and the mandatory case study: Sexual Abuse of a Female Dog (2020).

INSTRUCTOR ATTACHMENT: SCENARIO ANSWER KEY

Mandatory Scenario—Deceased Chicken

Instructor Instructions: Allow the class to read the scenario and answer the following questions, either on their own or in groups. Then, hold a discussion and review the answers. Consider adding additional questions you believe would enhance student learning.

Over several evenings, three chickens are found deceased inside of a chicken coop. In response, the owners of the chickens installed a security camera outside the coop. On a subsequent evening, a male neighbor was observed entering the coop and taking a chicken out. The neighbor walks off camera and reappears with the chicken in one hand and the other hand in front of his pants. He places the chicken back in the coop and leaves. The next morning the same chicken that was taken is found deceased in the coop.

Q1: How would you approach this case?

- Contact animal services to possibly arrange a forensic exam and autopsy of the chicken. If needed, help provide a sexual assault kit.
- If the chicken's injuries are proven to be a result of animal sexual abuse, review the suspect's criminal history, if possible, to ensure there are not any other types of sexual offenses.
- Interview the suspect.

Q2: What possible crimes might you be investigating?

Answers may include:

- theft
- burglary of the structure
- trespassing
- animal sexual abuse
- animal cruelty

INSTRUCTOR ATTACHMENT: CASE STUDY ANSWER KEY

Mandatory Case Study—Sexual Abuse of a Female Dog (2020)

Instructor Instructions: Allow the class to read the case study and answer the following questions, either on their own or in groups. Then, hold a discussion and review the answers. Consider adding additional questions you believe would enhance student learning.

On July 28, 2020, at approximately 1903 hours, a deputy from the Volusia County Sheriff's Office (VCSO) was dispatched to a miscellaneous call. The deputy was informed by the reporting person that she had located a black LG cellphone in her sister's room that did not belong to her sister. The cell phone was collected because it was stolen in a past robbery. Pursuant to a warrant, a search of the phone revealed numerous images of child and animal sexual assault.

On August 13, 2020, the director of the Volusia County Animal Services (VCAS) met with a detective from VCSO. The detective informed the VCAS director of an active investigation involving both human and animal victims. The director received a compact disk containing four JPEG screenshots, 28 JPEG photographs, and seven MP4 video files.

The photographs and videos depict a brown female Labrador Retriever/Cocker Spaniel mix dog wearing a black harness with reflective striping. The photographs and videos also show a suspect engaging in sexual activity with the dog, where the suspect's face is visible. While reviewing the evidence, the VCAS director observed brown shag carpet on the floors, white wooden trim, and tan colored walls in the background of most of the photographs. He also observed a tan square and rectangle geometric linoleum flooring, in addition to several distinct dog toys in the photographs. Additionally, there are four JPEG screenshots of texts messages between the suspect and another person that reveals the suspect describing engaging in sexual activity with his dog.

The VCAS director and a forensic veterinarian were brought to the suspect's residence to process the scene for animal related evidence. The dog, identified as "Brownie" by the suspect's mother, was observed within a back bedroom. The dog was identical in appearance to the one depicted in the digital files provided by VCSO.

The dog was observed to be withdrawn and skittish when the VCAS director approached her. The dog did not seek attention, avoided contact, often cowered when approached, and even tried to bite when contact was made. In the room the dog was found in, the VCAS director observed several dog toys that were unique in style and color—which were identical to those seen in the digital photographs provided by VCSO. These items were photographed and collected by the VCSO evidence team on scene. The VCAS director also observed a distinctive square and rectangle geometric linoleum flooring inside the front doorway and kitchen areas of the home. This pattern was consistent with that seen in photographs provided by VCSO.

A receipt found in a separate room indicated that the suspect's mother was the owner of the brown female Labrador Retriever/Cocker Spaniel mix dog. The suspect's mother elected to surrender custody of the dog to VCAS.

Later that day, the dog was brought to VCAS for a forensic live animal examination.

Part of the veterinary exam report reads:

This dog exhibits abnormal behavior during processing of room C in the house where she lives. She is cowering in the corner of a room/behind a door. She did not look directly at the people in the room, yawned multiple times, licked her lips, and had a tucked tail. The dog is occasionally trembling/shaking when in the room. The dog did not try to escape the room being searched even when the door is open, rather she stayed in the corner/behind the door in the room. The dog wants to be away from people when on a leash. When examined at the VCAS, she is bright, alert, and responsive. At first, she wants to retreat from those attending the examination; however, given time to acclimate to the examiners/handlers, the dog allows me to touch her, and she is non-aggressive. She allows me to touch all areas of the body but is uneasy during external examination of the vaginal area (touch sensitivity).

- *She has a hunched posture, and the forepaws and hind paws are deviated laterally.*
- *The dog has an adequate skin tent response.*
- *All permanent teeth are erupted and there is minimal staining and tartar observed. Peripheral lymph nodes are not enlarged.*

- *The dog is panting, and lungs fields sound clear. The heart rate is 100 beats per minute.*
- *There is no pain on palpation of the abdomen and back.*
- *There is no vaginal or rectal discharge. There is a small triangular abrasion at the 6 o'clock position of the anal mucosa. Vulvar folds are prominent.*

ALTERNATE LIGHT SOURCE EXAMINATION

Alternate light source (ALS) examination is performed using blue light (wavelength 455 nm) and orange goggles. There is rare orange fluorescence of flecks of debris on the fur of the thorax. There is a region of clump fur on the right side of the ventral aspect of tail near the base with orange fluorescence.

IMAGING REPORT SUMMARY

There are no atypical accumulations of gas in the vagina, cervix, uterus or rectum or pelvic canal and no osseous trauma, which would support the reported vaginal sexual assault. The prominent vulvar soft tissues can be associated with inflammation and trauma, that could occur with sexual assault; however, this soft tissue change can also be associated with normal estrus, aging, and vaginal hyperplasia and should be correlated with the forensic examination.

FORENSIC EVIDENCE COLLECTION

A sexual assault examination kit is used for purposes of collection of biological evidence. The following samples were collected:

- external vaginal swabs
- vaginal swabs
- perianal swabs
- rump swabs
- buccal swabs
- tail fur swabs
- tail fur clippings (ALS fluorescence region)

All samples are placed in individual packaging and sealed with evidence tape. All individual packages are placed in a single sealed box.

COMMENTS:

Multiple videos were reviewed and showed penetration of Brownie's vagina by a human's finger and penis. There was no external trauma to the vagina such as tearing or bruising at the time of examination at VCAS. There is a small abrasion of the anal mucosa. The ALS examination revealed an area on the tail suspicious for biological material of unknown type. Samples from this site were collected for further processing. Although there was no significant external pathology, the lack of external findings is not unexpected in cases of animal sexual abuse. Lesions, in cases of animal sexual abuse, can range in severity from none to fatal.

The dog had behavioral abnormalities observed at the scene and with time, at VCAS, she became more comfortable with our presence. Some of these behaviors are examples of stranger-directed fear. A tucked tail by a dog indicates concern or fear. The dog was uncomfortable when her vaginal area was examined, and this is an example of touch sensitivity. Stranger-directed fear is observed at an increased level in abused dogs and based on my assessment, these changes support prolonged abuse.

Overall, Brownie was sexually abused with penetration of her vagina by a human's finger and penis. Animal sexual abuse does not always leave evidence of external trauma to the genitalia. Ultimately, a lack of external trauma does not rule out animal sexual abuse. The behavior exhibited by this dog is abnormal and is consistent with human-directed fear.

Q1: What charges could potentially be issued against the male suspect?

Answers may include:

- s. 827.071(5), F.S. Possession of Material Containing a Sexual Performance by a Child

- s. 828.12(2)(a), F.S. Cruelty to Animals
- s. 828.126(2)(a), F.S. Sexual Activities Involving Animals

Q2: Do you think there is enough evidence to charge the suspect with sexual activities involving animals considering the dog has no injuries consistent with sexual trauma?

Answers may include:

- Sexual abuse of an animal does not always lead to obvious injuries or even any injuries at all. Injuries are not needed to prove that sexual abuse of an animal occurred. Never rule out the possibility that sexual abuse occurred just because there are no obvious injuries to the genital area.

LESSON 3 ANIMAL FIGHTING

LESSON GOAL

Students will learn about the signs and characteristics of animal fighting, and the terminology associated with it as well as how to respond to an animal fighting scene.

Materials and Resources

- Glossary
- Statute Index
- Instructor Attachment: Scenario Answer Key
- Animal Fighting Spectator Prohibition Act of 2013, H.R. 366, 113th Cong. (2013): <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/366>
- Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act 2007 § 2156: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-bill/137>

INTRODUCTION

This lesson will help students recognize the signs and characteristics of the different levels of animal fighting, as well as how to respond to these types of cases. The lesson also explains how animal fighting is an intentional and organized crime frequently associated with other illegal activity such as the buying and selling of narcotics, human and animal trafficking, illegal firearms purchasing, gambling, and other various gang activities. There are primarily two types of animal fighting: dogfighting and cockfighting.

Instructor Note: At any point in the lesson, discuss with the class the following animal fighting acts:

- Animal Fighting Spectator Prohibition Act of 2013, H.R. 366, 113th Cong. (2013): <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/366>
- Title 7 U.S.C. § 2156 Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act of 2007: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-bill/137>

✓ 2.3.1. Define animal fighting and the penalties associated with it

Section 828.122, F.S., defines animal fighting as fighting between roosters or other birds or between dogs, bears, or other animals. This statute also defines **baiting** as using a live animal for the purpose of training another animal. Animal fighting is a third-degree felony and has its own statute separate from animal cruelty. Note that dogfighting is a felony in all 50 states.

DOGFIGHTING OVERVIEW

✓ 2.3.2. List some of the terms associated with dogfighting

The following terms are common slang used by those who participate in dogfighting. When reviewing evidence associated with suspected dogfighting, some of these terms will inevitably be encountered.

Some of these terms are organically defined in the lesson while others can be found in the glossary at the back of the course.

box dog	break stick	bump/roll	cat mill/jenny
chain weight	cur/cur out	game test	keep
match weight	pit/arena	rape stand	Register of Merit (ROM)
scratch lines	wash	long-knife	Producer of Merit (POM)

Instructor Note: Refer to the glossary at the back of the course to review and discuss these terms with the class.

✓ 2.3.3. Differentiate between street, hobbyist, and professional dogfighting

There are three main categories of dogfighting: street fighting, hobbyist fighting, and professional fighting.

STREET FIGHTING

Street-level dogfights are usually impromptu matches with no rules, and the dogs do not fight in a **pit/arena**, which is an area where animals typically fight. Instead, these fights tend to occur on street corners, in public parks, abandoned buildings, or back alleys. The dogs have no professional-level training, and they can be matched with a dog of differing breed, weight, or sex.

This type of dogfighting is extremely difficult to catch in the act and commonly falls under the umbrella of gang-related activity. Typically, the owners of street fighting dogs have very little to no regard for them and have been known to abandon severely injured dogs, resulting in their deaths.

HOBBYIST FIGHTING

Hobbyist dogfighters usually have one or more dogs participating in organized fights. They are more organized than street fighters but less organized than professional fighters. Hobbyists tend to engage in dogfighting for entertainment or financial purposes. Dogfighting may be a way for them to earn some quick cash, but it is not the hobbyist's main source of income. Those who engage in hobbyist fighting usually have some level of care for their dogs as they will often attempt to treat their wounds.

PROFESSIONAL FIGHTING

Those who engage in professional-level fighting are serious dogfighters who make a substantial income through breeding, selling, and dogfighting. As such, they will often have large properties with many dogs present. These dogfighters follow a strict set of rules and protocols with their dogs undergoing very regimented training programs before being matched to fight another dog of the same breed, weight, and sex.

Professional dogfighters operate nationally and internationally and require high levels of organization and money. Accordingly, they tend to be well-connected. This poses a unique challenge to investigating, despite being illegal in all 50 states.⁸

Instructor Note: Explain to the class that evidence of international dogfighting can be in the form of publications, paperwork or ledgers, health certificates for international or domestic transport, or digital evidence found during the investigation.

✓ 2.3.4. Identify the human participants in a dogfighting operation

Below are the various roles that human participants fill during professional dogfighting operations. These roles also apply in professional cockfighting operations.

- handlers—these are the people who are responsible for handling the animals during the fight. Handlers are allowed inside the pit and are usually the ones who own the animals.
- promoter—this is the person who organizes the location for the fight and provides equipment. They are responsible for contracts, hiring the referees, providing security, and concessions.

- referee—this is the person who ensures rules are followed during a fight and determines the winner. Beside the handlers, referees are the only other people allowed inside the pit.
- spectators—these are the people who attend the fights. They are usually present for entertainment, gambling, or are affiliates of those associated with the fight. At both a state and federal level, attending an animal fight is an illegal activity, even if the spectator had no part in the training or breeding of the animal(s). Contrary to popular belief, spectators are unlikely to stumble upon a dog fight. Spectators usually attend by invitation only.⁹

✓ 2.3.5. Discuss the type of training and conditioning dogs go through before they are expected to fight

Similar to how boxers and wrestlers train in the weeks leading up to a match, dogs used in dogfighting go through periods of training. This period is usually six to eight weeks in length and is known as the **keep**. During the “keep,” dogs are conditioned to fight. They are placed on an exercise and conditioning program, fed a diet high in protein, and are often given a variety of dietary supplements and performance enhancing drugs, such as steroids, to help build muscle, strength, and endurance—which are desired traits for dogfighting.

Professional dogfighters keep meticulous training, breeding, and nutrition records. Trainers often keep videos of training sessions on their phone or social media accounts. Notes and plans regarding the training regimen can be recovered in phone notes, text messages, notebooks, whiteboards, or files found on a dogfighter’s property.

Instructor Note: Explain to the class that digital evidence is typically found after a search warrant is obtained. Discuss evidence procedures for submitting electronic devices.

✓ 2.3.6. List the paraphernalia associated with dogfighting

A great deal of work goes into professional dogfighting. As a result, most dogfighters have a variety of items on their property that they use to train, strengthen, and medically treat their dogs. Officers who are not trained to see the signs may easily overlook the indicators of dogfighting. The following are paraphernalia commonly associated with a dogfighting operation:

- training equipment—These may include treadmills, **break sticks**, which are tools inserted into the dog’s mouth to break up a fight, cat mills, weighted collars, and chains. Note that chains should be photographed and weighed as part of the evidence.

Instructor Note: Explain to the class that weighing the chain is important since it can be compared to the dog’s body weight to support additional animal cruelty charges that prove the animal was overworked and mistreated pursuant to s.828.12, F.S.

- medical supplies—Most wounds are treated in-house since dogfighting injuries are distinct and would be easily spotted by a veterinarian. As a result, officers may see various medical supplies such as:
 - ▶ antibiotics, especially fish penicillin. A residence with fish penicillin and no fish is a red flag. Many dogfighters treat their dogs with fish penicillin because it is cheap, easily accessible, and does not require a prescription.
 - ▶ crash kits that include syringes, wound dressings, bags of saline, skin stapler or sutures, or dexamethasone. Dexamethasone treats shock in dogs.
 - ▶ epinephrine
 - ▶ painkillers and sedatives
 - ▶ steroids
- vitamins or supplements—These may include B-12, creatine, or iron supplements to assist with recovery and prepare the dogs for their next fight.
- literature—These may include publications about dogfighting or Pitbull owners’ manuals, records of breeding, bills of sale pedigrees, or journals and calendars with training, conditioning, and dietary regimens.
- awards—These may include trophies, ribbons, plaques, or cash prizes.

- structures—These may include rape stands, an arena area with scratch lines, cages, and pens, and enclosures that may contain both living and deceased dogs. For example, female dogs are secured to **rape stands**, which are stands that a female dog is secured to while a male dog mates with her. In addition, dogs are placed opposite of each other behind **scratch lines**, which are two diagonal lines located at the opposite ends of a pit, before the start of the fight.

✓ 2.3.7. Discuss how evidence of one dogfighting operation can be found across multiple locations

Dogfighting can be split into three components: the housing component, training component, and the fighting component. These components can take place in one location or be outsourced to multiple people and locations. For example, one person might be responsible for breeding and housing the dogs at one property, while another person trains and conditions the dogs on a separate property. An officer should know that the absence of dogs on scene does not rule out the possibility of dogfighting activities occurring there.

Instructor Note: Explain to the class that suspects may give the excuse that the equipment used for training and conditioning dogs is for weight-pulling competitions. Also, explain how it is common for fights to be arranged at weight-pulling competitions because these functions can be easily used as a front.

✓ 2.3.8. Describe some of the challenges with evidence collection specific to dogfighting

Much of the evidence recovered from a dogfighting operation is large and difficult to remove. This may require equipment such as trailers and tools to dismantle pits and a plan of where to send dogs, if needed, to impound. Additionally, evidence may be located across multiple properties. The dogs themselves are **transient evidence**, which is physical evidence that may change, degrade, or disappear within a certain timeframe, so initial documentation of their condition is critical. There is often biological material of evidentiary value associated with dogfighting paraphernalia, such as blood, which can be used to link victims, suspects, and locations.

✓ 2.3.9. Identify the type of body scarring typically associated with dogfighting

Typically, dogs used for dogfighting purposes will have both old and fresh wounds at various stages of healing. These wounds tend to be found on the dog's flank, forelimbs, and face. Not all dogs will have scars, particularly if they have not yet **bumped** or **rolled**, which is a brief test fight.

Instructor Note: Discuss with the class the common excuses for the wounds discovered on a dog. For example, excuses for wounds found on a dog may include that the animal came into contact with a barbed wire fence, was injured hog catching and hunting, that the animal was involved with fighting over a bone, etc. Note that sometimes hog dogs are used in dogfighting. This is usually done at the hobbyist level.

✓ 2.3.10. Describe the behavior of dogs who have been bred and conditioned to fight

Dogs that have been professionally bred to fight tend to be friendly and docile towards humans but extremely aggressive towards other animals. This is because exhibiting any aggression towards their handler or referee disqualifies the dog from fighting and may even lead to their execution.

Note that dogs who are used for street fighting may be aggressive to both humans and animals. This is due to the less structured environment of street fighting and the subsequent lack of training, conditioning, and socialization.

COCKFIGHTING OVERVIEW

✓ 2.3.11. Discuss the basics of cockfighting

Cockfighting is the pitting of two or more roosters against one another as part of a cockfight operation. This can occur during the conditioning and training of the rooster or a more formalized event where bets are placed on the outcome. The winner is the surviving opponent.

Roosters molt or shed feathers during the late summer and early fall. As roosters do not fight well while molting, most cockfights will take place between the months of November and July.

There are four main types of cockfights, each with their own set of rules. First is the **battle royal**, which is a match where any number of birds fight at the same time, and at the end, the last bird standing wins. Second is the **main**. This is when two matched birds, weighing within 2 ounces of each other, fight an odd number of battles and whoever wins most of the fights is the ultimate winner. Third is the **Welsh main**, which is when eight pairs of birds fight, with the winners fighting again and again until only one remains. And fourth is the **derby**. This is a large event where the cockfighters pay an entry fee to enter their birds. The cockfighter with the greatest number of winning fights collects the prize money. The derby is the most common type of organized cockfighting in the United States.

✓ 2.3.12. Define some of the terms associated with cockfighting

The following terms are common slang used by those who participate in cockfighting. When reviewing evidence associated with suspected cockfighting, some of these terms will inevitably be encountered.

Some of these terms are organically defined in the lesson while others can be found in the glossary at the back of the course.

Catch weight	Check weight	Dubbing	Flirt
Gaff	Gameness	Keep	Natural fight/naked heel fight
Pit/arena	Runner	Sparring muffs/mitts/gloves	Spurs

Instructor Note: Refer to the glossary at the back of the course to review and discuss these terms with the class.

When describing short-knives and gaffs, explain how they are typically tied to the left leg because most people are right-handed. As the bird is being heeled with a knife, people who are right-handed are more easily able to tie onto the birds left leg given their dexterity.

✓ 2.3.13. Describe the typical physical indicators of cockfighting or cockfighting preparations

Dubbing occurs when birds involved in cockfighting have their wattles, earlobes, and combs removed when they are about one year old to reduce weight and prevent injury. Birds who fight will also be “trimmed out.” **Trimming out** is when the feathers are removed to reduce weight and lessen the likelihood of overheating.

Common excuses for the removal of wattles and combs include requirements for bird shows, frostbite or injury, and spontaneous fights between other birds.

✓ 2.3.14. Describe the preparation for, and commencement of, a typical cockfight

Like dogfighting, there may be separate locations where the birds fight and separate locations for where they are raised and trained. A location that houses and breeds birds for cockfighting will generally have more roosters than hens, as females are only present for breeding purposes. Roosters are typically tethered to a small structure, such as an A-frame or barrel out of reach of other roosters. They may also be caged in individual wire enclosures. If breeding, there will be up to two females with only one male per enclosure. Due to their aggression, fighting roosters are never housed together.

Instructor Note: Explain to the class that the ratio of hens to roosters is much different with people who casually raise and own chickens for their eggs. These owners will usually have several hens and only one or two roosters. By contrast, cockfighters predominantly have roosters with just a few hens for breeding purposes.

Cockfights are generally held in a pit that is round or rectangular, three feet high, and 15 to 20 feet in diameter. The birds are held in temporary pens before “shows” and these pens are usually narrow at the top and wide at the bottom. **Shows**, which are a set of fighting matches, is a term that applies to all animal fights.

The birds’ feathers are removed before the fight, and a referee examines each bird to determine if they are eligible. About 15 to 20 minutes before the fight starts, short or long-knives and **gaffs**, which are small, sharp spikes that are attached to the bird’s legs as a weapon. To provoke the birds to fight, referees will hold the birds and allow them to peck at each other for about 10 to 30 seconds. Next, the handlers take the birds behind two parallel score lines and release them when the referee commands it.

The fight is over when one of the following happens:

- A bird leaves the pit.
- A bird dies.
- A handler concedes.
- A bird fails to attack for three successive counts of 10 seconds and one count of 20 seconds.

Most birds who lose will die in the pit or soon after the end of the fight. Fighting roosters will have punctures and stab wounds all over their bodies. The deceased birds are typically tossed into a barrel or pit with the knives and gaffs still attached. Once the barrel or pit is full, they may burn or dispose of the bodies.

Instructor Note: Discuss with the class safe handling procedures of birds, deceased or otherwise—particularly ensuring the use of proper PPE. There are many types of poultry diseases that can cross from bird to human such as Salmonella, Campylobacteriosis, Newcastle Disease, Avian Influenza, etc.

✓ 2.3.15. List the paraphernalia associated with cockfighting

The following is a list of what an officer might expect to see at the scene of a cockfighting operation:

- A-frame housing or T-perches, which are perches shaped like the letter “T”
- fly pens which are tall, fenced-in cages
- piles or barrels of dead birds
- medical supplies, such as adrenaline booster injectables, vitamin B-12, dexamethasone, penicillin, and wound care materials (e.g., staples, sutures, and bandages)
- gaffs, short-knives, long-knives, and artificial spurs
- publications, records (training, medical care, matches, etc.), receipts, contracts, rules (written or digital)
- scales
- awards such as trophies, plaques, ribbons, or cash prizes
- bird transport boxes

PROSECUTING ANIMAL FIGHTING

✓ 2.3.16. Discuss the types of criminal activities that often co-occur with animal fighting

Like many of the other crimes against animals discussed in this course, animal fighting does not occur in a vacuum. The most common co-occurring crimes are illegal gambling, sex trafficking, and the buying and selling of narcotics.

Spectators are usually charged an entrance fee to the fight and continue to spend their money by illegally placing bets on which animal they think will win. Note that adults can also be charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor if children are found in attendance.

An officer working an animal fighting case should always be alert for evidence of other crimes. Ideally, investigators and prosecutors should aim for a charge of animal fighting as it is a felony; however, any strong case that will prosecute the suspect(s) should be pursued as it will keep the community safer.

✓ 2.3.17. Discuss the difficulties of investigating and prosecuting cases of animal fighting

Investigating and prosecuting cases of animal fighting can be difficult to achieve for various reasons. First, it is rare for law enforcement to catch an animal fight in the act. Often, law enforcement officers believe they must find people in the act of baiting or fighting animals to prove it occurred. This is false as the presence of paraphernalia, along with other evidence, can be enough for prosecution.

Traditionally, law enforcement officers encounter evidence of animal fighting during the routine work of responding to calls. Usually, these calls are from neighbors regarding, “multiple animals on property” or “excessive noise.” Officers have also been known to encounter evidence of animal fighting during traffic stops when they see a cash prize or bloody dogs or roosters in the back of a vehicle.

Evidence of animal fighting can sometimes be uncovered while executing a search warrant for a different crime such as possession of illegal drugs or firearms. Narcotics cases are commonly linked with animal fighting. Despite this link, a narcotics officer working a case may not recognize signs of illegal animal fighting due to lack of training.

Further complicating matters, legitimate trainers frequently and legally use many paraphernalia associated with animal fighting such as treadmills, weights, and supplements. However, when all of these are present at the same location, it becomes a strong indication of animal fighting.

Street-level dogfighting is very difficult to catch in the act as the fight locations constantly change. Furthermore, street-level dogfighting poses a greater threat to officer safety as fighting dogs can be transported via the trunk of a vehicle. If an officer conducts a search of that vehicle, they risk being attacked upon opening the trunk.

Due to a lack of training and knowledge, many cases of animal fighting are prosecuted as animal cruelty charges instead of animal fighting.

Instructor Note: Review and have the students complete the mandatory scenario: Social Media Post.

INSTRUCTOR ATTACHMENT: SCENARIO ANSWER KEY

Mandatory Scenario—Social Media Post

Instructor Instructions: Allow the class to read the scenario and answer the following question, either on their own or in groups. Then, hold a discussion and review the answers. Consider adding additional questions you believe would enhance student learning.

A crime stoppers tip is called in concerning numerous videos uploaded to a social media account. The videos depict multiple dogs in the backyard of a residence engaged in a possible organized dog fight. In the videos, the officer can see an arena as well as scratch lines. Upon reviewing the social media profile further, the officer sees several posts about dogs containing common dog fighting terms such as “cur out” and “box dog.” The officer is able to identify that the address of the account holder is within their jurisdiction.

Q1: If you were the officer, describe what your next steps would be and why?

Answers may include:

- Confirm the IP address from the video.
- Immediately preserve the social media page and obtain a search warrant for the account.
- Conduct a complete background check on the address and everyone connected to the address. The officer may collect this information by using reverse address in the Driver’s License Database, consulting with the property appraisal website, looking up all incident searches in their law enforcement agency’s database, and more.
- Contact your agency’s narcotics unit to identify any past or present investigations at the address. See if they have noticed anything about this address or people connected with the address.
- Contact other units to see if there are any parallel investigations at the residence.
- Contact the local animal enforcement agency. Ask these agencies about parallel investigations as well.
- Conduct surveillance on the house.
- If there are children at the address, check for previous complaints. DCF investigators may take pictures of the residence before closing out their cases or they may remember details from their time working with the family.
- Initiate a trash pull, if possible. Look for receipts of where they are buying their supplies or any evidence of dogfighting paraphernalia such as syringes, supplements, fish antibiotics, bloody bandages, etc.
- Speak with people in neighboring properties about what they may have noticed.
- Develop suspects.
- Develop probable cause.
- Determine if there are any animals in need of immediate care.
- Obtain a warrant. Note that there may be enough probable cause obtained from the social media warrant to get a search warrant for the residence.

LESSON 4 INTENTIONAL CRUELTY, TORTURE, AND TORMENT

LESSON GOAL

Students will learn how to recognize violent animal crimes and the common acts associated with it.

Materials and Resources

- Statute Index
- Instructor Attachment: Scenario Answer Key
- *Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah*, 508 U.S. 520 (1993):
<https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/exercise-religious-practices-rule-law>

INTRODUCTION

This lesson will explain why it is important for officers to be familiar with the common signs of violent crimes against animals so that they can recognize potential cases of animal cruelty. This lesson will also explore the common reasons why abusers engage in cruelty towards animals as well as the frequent excuses they give to explain the state of the animal.

INTENTIONAL CRUELTY, TORTURE, AND TORMENT OVERVIEW

✓ 2.4.1. Define intentional cruelty, torture, and torment

Intentional cruelty is when a person purposefully inflicts physical harm or injury on a person or animal. Cruelty, torture, or torment includes any act, omission, or neglect whereby unnecessary or unjustifiable pain or suffering is intentionally caused, permitted, or allowed to continue when there is reasonable remedy or relief, except when in the interest of medical science.

Instructor Note: Discuss with the class the exceptions for justifiable self-defense. For example, a dog charges an officer, so the officer shoots the dog, and it runs home. The owner is responsible for getting care for the dog's gunshot wound.

✓ 2.4.2. Identify the common injuries associated with intentional cruelty, torture, and torment of an animal

Various types of physical trauma can be inflicted on an animal to injure, torment, or torture them. The following is a list of the most common types of physical trauma:

- **Blunt force trauma**—This injury is caused by the impact of a blunt object in motion against a stationary body, the impact of a body in motion against a stationary object, or the impact of a body in motion against a blunt object in motion. Examples include, but are not limited to, kicking, punching, hitting with a bat, and throwing the animal against a wall or floor. This type of trauma may result in abrasions, bruises, internal bleeding, lacerations, or broken bones.
- **Sharp force trauma**—This injury is caused by a sharp or pointed object being forced into the body. Examples of sharp objects typically used in this type of injury include, but are not limited to, knives, razors, scalpels, glass, nails, box cutters, screwdrivers, and scissors. This type of trauma may result in puncture wounds, incisive wounds, or chop wounds. Puncture wounds, also known as stab wounds, are wounds that are deeper than they are wide. Incisive wounds, also known as cutting wounds, are wounds that are wider than they are deep. By contrast, chop wounds are wide, deep, and long wounds that have the appearance of both a sharp wound and a blunt force injury. These wounds typically result from axes, cleavers, machetes, or hatchets.

- **Projectile wound**—This wound is caused by a fast-moving object propelled by a range weapon. The range weapons and their projectiles are usually bows and arrows, air guns and pellets, crossbows and bolts, and firearms and bullets. It is ideal to recover the projectiles from the body or scene to allow for ballistics analysis. Projectile wounds can either be perforating, which is when the projectile completely passes through the body, or penetrating, which is when the projectile does not exit the body.
- **Asphyxia**—This kind of injury or death is caused by rapid deprivation of oxygen to the brain. Asphyxia occurs because of strangulation, suffocation, mechanical asphyxia, or drowning.
- **Burns**—This injury is caused by excessive heat or chemicals that damage or kill body tissue. The following is not an exhaustive list: burn injuries may occur from flames, cigarette burns, hot liquids and steam, microwaves and electrical currents, clothes dryers, and by boiling an animal alive.

Other intentional acts of cruelty may include intentional starvation or poisoning as a form of punishment or restricting the animal's movement by having them on too short of a tether, taping their muzzle shut, or taping their limbs together.

✓ **2.4.3. Discuss some of the motivations behind intentional animal cruelty**

A person will intentionally harm an animal for many reasons besides self-defense. For example, they may commit the abuse because of their desire to:

- control or attempt to control an animal
- retaliate against an animal
- “discipline” an animal
- satisfy prejudice against a particular species or breed
- gain attention, or shock people for amusement—often by uploading the abuse on social media
- retaliate against another person
- attempt to control and have power over another person

Other reasons for the abuse may include mental health issues or because the person grew up in a household where animal abuse was common.

Instructor Note: Consider discussing how there are various cultural norms surrounding methods of training and caring for animals.

✓ **2.4.4. Give examples of common explanations given to justify the state of an injured or deceased animal**

Rarely will officers encounter an abuser outright admitting their role in an animal's injuries. Usually, the abuser has an explanation for why the animal is injured, which is why veterinarians are key in determining if the animal's injuries match the explanation provided. The following is a list of some of the most common explanations an officer may hear from an abuser:

- The animal got out and was hit by a car.
- One of my neighbors must have poisoned the animal.
- I am not the owner of this animal.
- I just got this animal, and it came with these wounds.
- I don't know what happened; the animal escaped and came back like this.
- The animal has an underlying medical condition.
- My animal got into a fight with a wild animal.
- It was coming at me/attacking me.
- I just rescued this animal.

Officers should include this information in their report and then follow up and verify that the story matches the evidence.

✓ 2.4.5. Discuss the legality of ritualistic animal killings

Some religious practices include the ritualistic killing of animals. Due to the First Amendment protection of religion, it is legal for an animal to be killed as part of a religious practice. Despite this, the killing must be done in a manner consistent with commonly accepted agricultural practices and in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act. In all cases, the animal must be free of pain and suffering. Therefore, while a person may keep animals on their property with the intent to ritualistically kill them later, those animals must still be provided with proper food, water, and shelter.

Once deceased, the animal(s) must be properly disposed of, according to s. 828.041, F.S. Religious exemption does not provide immunity from the disposal law. If the body has been improperly disposed of, contact the local agency responsible for disposing remains to collect the body.

Most religions that have ritualistic killings specify the type of animal and method of sacrifice. Officers should become familiar with the type of animals that are usually sacrificed.

Instructor Note: Discuss the Supreme Court case *Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. Hialeah*, 508 U.S. 520 (1993): <https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/exercise-religious-practices-rule-law>. This case ruled that an ordinance that forbid the killing of an animal during a religious ceremony was unconstitutional.

✓ 2.4.6. Explain the characteristics of “animal crush videos”

Animal crush videos are recordings that typically depict people (usually women in stilettos or bare feet) crushing, stomping on, or impaling small animals, such as mice or gerbils, to satisfy the sadistic sexual fetishes of viewers. These types of videos will almost always come to the attention of law enforcement through social media or someone seeing something online and reporting it. While crush videos may be done for sexual gratification, they are typically prosecuted under s.828.12, F.S., which is the animal cruelty statute, and not s.828.126, F.S., Sexual activities involving animals.

Instructor Note: Review and have students complete the mandatory scenario: Self-Defense Claim.

INSTRUCTOR ATTACHMENT: SCENARIO ANSWER KEY

Mandatory Scenario—Self-Defense Claim

Instructor Instructions: Allow the class to read the scenario and answer the following questions, either on their own or in groups. Then, hold a discussion and review the answers. Consider adding additional questions you believe would enhance student learning.

A patrol officer responds to a “shots fired” call. Upon arriving at the scene, they discover a deceased dog in the driveway of a duplex. The dog has two gunshot wounds to the chest. On the porch of the duplex are a man and a woman screaming at each other. The woman lives at the duplex and states that she had come outside to walk her Shih Tzu when the dog charged her. She states she shot the dog in self-defense.

The man on scene is the dog’s owner. He claims that the woman lured his dog over to her home and then shot his dog to get back at him. He claims this was revenge because he had made several noise complaints to the police regarding the woman’s late-night parties. His dog is a mixed breed but was about the same size as the woman’s Shih Tzu.

Q1: Were any crimes committed in this scenario?

Answers may include:

- Animal cruelty occurred if the dog was shot maliciously.
- Potential firearm charges if the woman was not legally allowed to own a firearm (convicted felon).
- If the dog was off its property, review the local ordinances on loose dogs.

Q2: If you were the officer, how would you confirm or disprove that a crime was committed?

Answers may include:

- Look for security cameras or witnesses to corroborate the suspect’s story.
- Consider the size and breed of the deceased dog compared to the state, size, and breed of the suspect’s dog.
- Conduct a neighborhood canvass to see if:
 - ▶ the deceased dog was a repeat offender of being loose
 - ▶ the deceased dog was known for charging other animals
 - ▶ the history of interactions between the suspect and the deceased dog’s owner
- Use your agency’s database to search animal complaints within that area. Reach out to your local animal control for this information as well.
- Have a veterinarian perform an autopsy to confirm cause of death. Based on the veterinarian’s report, do the dog’s injuries match the description of what occurred according to the suspect?
- Conduct a complete investigation. The story provided by the suspect must be substantiated with evidence. Refer to s.767.03, F.S. – Good defense for killing dog.

LESSON 5 OTHER CRIMES AGAINST ANIMALS

LESSON GOAL

Students will learn about other crimes against animals not involving cruelty.

Materials and Resources

- Statute Index
- Appendix C: Officer Resources
- Instructor Attachment: Scenario Answer Key
- Instructor Attachment: Case Study Answer Key

INTRODUCTION

This lesson will explore other common crimes against animals not yet discussed in this course such as animals being left in hot cars, animal abandonment, pet retail crimes, animal poisoning, and laws surrounding the proper disposal of deceased animals. The conclusion of this lesson provides additional information on the various resources available to officers in Florida for assistance in animal crimes investigations.

ANIMALS LEFT IN VEHICLES

✓ 2.5.1. Discuss the illegality of leaving an animal in a parked motor vehicle

Reports of animals left in motor vehicles are among the most frequent animal-related calls officers receive. Leaving an animal inside a motor vehicle is not inherently a crime; however, it becomes illegal when the conditions inside the car endanger the animal. In some cases, exigent circumstances may exist.

Obvious signs of animal distress in a parked motor vehicle may include the following:

- excessive panting or drooling
- if the animal is a dog, their tongue has turned dark purple
- the animal is behaving frantically, pawing at the window or trying to stick its nose out
- loss of bowel control
- sluggish and unresponsive behavior

Sometimes, officers are called to a scene where a person is upset because another person, acting in good faith, has damaged their vehicle to rescue an animal inside. Section 768.139, F.S., provides immunity from civil liability for rescuing a vulnerable person or domestic animal from a motor vehicle, so long as the rescuer:

- determines the motor vehicle is locked and there is no reasonable method for the vulnerable person or domestic animal to exit the motor vehicle without assistance
- has a good faith and reasonable belief, based upon the known circumstances, that entry into the motor vehicle is necessary because the vulnerable person or domestic animal is in imminent danger of suffering harm
- ensures that law enforcement is notified or 911 called before entering the motor vehicle or immediately thereafter

- uses no more force to enter the motor vehicle and remove the vulnerable person or domestic animal than is necessary
- remains with the vulnerable person or domestic animal in a safe location, in reasonable proximity to the motor vehicle, until law enforcement or other first responders arrive

✓ 2.5.2. Identify the best practices for handling a case after an animal is found trapped inside a hot vehicle

Officers responding to an animal trapped in a hot vehicle without water should take the following actions to build a solid case:

- Speak with any witnesses at the scene to determine a timeframe for how long the animal was in the vehicle.
- Take the temperature inside the vehicle and document it.
- Document the ambient weather using a credible weather reporting source.
- Take photos of the inside and outside of the vehicle to prove there was a lack of water.
- Canvas the area for cameras.
- Make note of how quickly the animal began consuming water once provided.
- Describe the animal's panting and other signs of distress.
- If the animal is alive, take them to a veterinarian.
- If the animal is deceased, have an autopsy performed.
- Have a veterinarian give a statement on the likelihood of suffering the animal endured while trapped in the vehicle.

Instructor Note: Tell the class to consider obtaining a laser thermometer to make it easier to get surface temperatures. Explain why they should not shine the laser thermometer through the window, as that will lead to an inaccurate reading.

ANIMAL ABANDONMENT

✓ 2.5.3. Discuss the issues surrounding animals reported as abandoned

Animal abandonment is one of the most common violations reported. These reports are typically initiated by neighbors, landlords, and apartment or hotel management. One of the difficulties when investigating these reports is determining whether the owner has actually abandoned their animal(s). It is very common to receive these reports when the owner is in the process of moving but is waiting to move their pets when the rest of their move is complete. In these cases, they are still providing proper care for the animals but are not at the residence.

Legally, animals are personal property that are subject to the constitutional rights of the owner. Due to Fourth Amendment protections, officers must ensure that their retrieval of an abandoned animal is legal. Organizational protocols and procedures for entering a personal property should be followed. Responding officers are encouraged to request assistance from their local animal control if they have access to those resources.

Be aware of landlord and tenants who will try to resolve potential disputes through law enforcement or animal control. Agreements between a landlord and a tenant include, but are not limited to, pet authorizations, breed restrictions, and weight restrictions, which are all civil matters. A landlord should provide proof to law enforcement that the tenant no longer has a claim to this property through a writ of eviction or expired lease. If these can be provided, then the animal(s) should be removed.

It is similar with guests at hotels and vacation rental properties. Managers of these types of properties may report abandonment because the animals are present while an owner is out. This is not abandonment; the owner is simply leaving their pets in their hotel room or vacation home. Except for exigent circumstances, animals should not be removed from these types of properties until the rental agreement has expired.

The responding officer should attempt to contact the owner of the animals by phone. If they are unable to reach anyone by phone, the officer should leave a notice on the door requesting that the owner contact them within 24 hours. If they are not

contacted within the timeframe, the officer should follow up to see if the notice is still there. If the notice has been removed the officer may post another 24-hour notice. In the event there is still no response to the notice, the officer should consider entering to do a welfare check for the safety of the animals in accordance with their agency's policies and procedures or advice of counsel.

Animals are often found abandoned in public areas like parks, dog parks, or tied to street signs. It can be difficult to find the owners of these abandoned animals to hold them accountable. Officers should look for witnesses and check the animals for any type of identification that might lead to their owner. It is not unusual for the person who called in the complaint to be the person who abandoned the animal.

People will also abandon animals outside of shelters, humane societies, and other rescue organizations. If an officer wants to pursue charges in these cases, they can use procedures for animals abandoned on public property. However, it can be challenging to succeed in court because it could be argued that the person believed they were doing the right thing by leaving the animals at a place that would provide care.

Officers must recognize that a report of abandonment does not always mean the animal is truly abandoned. For instance, there are cases where no one lives on the property, but someone is still coming by to care for the animal(s). This would not be an example of abandonment. For s.828.13, F.S., to apply, the owner would have to fail to supply the animal with proper and sufficient quantity of food and water.

Instructor Note: Discuss with the class how they would gain entry to a residence with an abandoned animal. Examples may include proving exigent circumstances and obtaining a search warrant.

ANIMAL RETAIL

✓ 2.5.4. Review crimes commonly associated with large-scale for-profit animal breeders

Officers should know that certain crimes tend to co-occur alongside large-scale, for-profit animal breeding operations. In many of these operations, profit is placed over the welfare of the animals, leading to chronic and untreated medical conditions, neglect, and cruelty.

Not all large-scale breeders will have these issues; however, when on-site of a large-scale for-profit operation, officers should look for the following indications:

- A prescription for one animal being distributed to the entire population.
- Labeled medications being used for a different species that have not been prescribed by a veterinarian.
- Breeders placing profit over providing reasonable care, leading to a higher incidence of poor animal welfare.
- Selling a cat or dog without a health certificate along with the required tests and vaccines. Refer to s.828.29, F.S., regarding health requirements and transportation or sale of dogs and cats.
- Evidence of someone practicing veterinary medicine without a license. For example, negligent owners of large-scale for-profit operations look to cut costs, so they hire unlicensed people to perform cesarean sections, crop ears, and other cosmetic procedures. Refer to s.474.213, F.S., regarding prohibitions and penalties for practicing veterinary medicine without a license.

Instructor Note: Explain to the class that veterinary licenses are regulated by the Department of Business and Professional Regulations (DBPR), so operating without one is a felony. Also, explain that the owner who hires the person without a veterinary license to perform a surgical procedure can also be held liable.

PET RETAIL CRIMES

✓ 2.5.5. Review crimes that are commonly associated with pet retail

Any pet store concerns or complaints an officer receives should be relayed to the local animal services as they are responsible for pet-store inspections. Also, contact FWC if there are any species present other than dogs and cats, as they have record of the necessary permit requirements. USDA APHIS Animal Care also has permit requirements for certain species under the Animal Welfare Act. The following are crimes commonly associated with pet retail:

Selling Animals without a Health Certificate

Section 828.29, F.S., requires an official health certificate along with required standardized tests and vaccines before selling a dog or cat. Examples of vaccines and tests required for dogs include distemper, parvovirus, Bordetella, rabies (if 3 months or older), and deworming. Officers may ask for the health certificate records of dogs and cats for sale for a one-year retention period, but there is no retention period for the out-of-state paperwork.

Violations of s.828.29, F.S., can either be criminal or civil in nature, depending on the circumstances. If an animal shows signs of illness, they should no longer be offered for sale until treated and cleared by a licensed veterinarian. Any law enforcement officer can act on the criminal aspect of this statute.

Illegally Imported Animals Offered for Sale

Most puppies sold in Florida pet retail stores are imported from large-scale breeders outside of the state, and not all comply with s. 828.29, F.S.

Selling a Permitted or Prohibited Species

Other regulated wildlife species are frequently imported from out of the country. There are laws and ordinance requirements that cover the intrastate, interstate, and international movement of animals. Some species may need additional permits or movement may be banned altogether. Examples of prohibited species currently include green iguanas, Nile monitors, Burmese pythons, tegus, and piranhas. The full list of prohibited species can be found in 68-5.006, F.A.C. Furthermore, s. 379.231, F.S., states that it is unlawful to import non-native species for sale, use, or release within the state unless permitted.

Failing to Maintain the Proper Standards of Care

Proper standards of care will differ depending on the animal and species. Officers should refer to their county ordinances for specifics on watering, feeding, and veterinary care. Section 828.13, F.S. also addresses standards of care.

Instructor Note: It is recommended to invite guest speakers from FWC or FDACS for this section to cover nuances, depending on the species. Also, encourage students to identify their local FWC law enforcement officers for future assistance.

WILDLIFE AND DANGEROUS ANIMALS

✓ 2.5.6. Examine the risks associated with dangerous animal calls

Officers may sometimes be called to a location with a dangerous animal present. These animals generally range from domesticated animals and livestock to **wildlife**, which are non-domesticated animals who live in the wild. Animals that are classified as wildlife include venomous snakes, primates, and various other carnivores. In these situations, there is a great risk of disease, serious injury, and death. For example, an officer or another first responder may be exposed to the rabies virus from an animal bite, resulting in mandatory quarantine. Due to the potential for zoonotic diseases, contact local animal control and the Department of Health (DOH) anytime an animal bite occurs. Officers should advise victims of animal bites or scratches to always seek medical care, even if the wound appears minor.

Dogs are the most common dangerous animal an officer will encounter. Section 767.11, F.S., defines a dangerous dog as being an animal that "has aggressively bitten, attacked, or endangered or has inflicted severe injury. Generally, a dog is considered dangerous when they have committed at least two animal bites or one human bite, although some county ordinances are stricter. Note that any dogs subject to a dangerous dog investigation which have killed or bitten a human being to a certain level of severity must be immediately confiscated, placed in quarantine, if necessary, impounded and held by an animal control authority until the completion of certain actions as outlined in s. 767.12, F.S. Sometimes, the presence of dangerous dogs is an indication of other crimes. For example, narcotics dealers may keep aggressive dogs chained outside of the drug house to help thwart attention from their illegal activity. These dogs also function as an alarm system for the dealers.

When dangerous animals are uncontained, it becomes a public safety concern that needs to be mitigated. For calls concerning dangerous dogs, the officer should contact their local animal control, follow s. 767.12, F.S., and their county ordinances. If a dog owner has knowledge of the dog's dangerous propensities, the owner must securely confine the dog in a proper enclosure as defined in s. 767.11, F.S. A "proper enclosure" means, while on the owner's property, the dog is securely confined indoors in a securely enclosed or locked pen or structure, suitable to prevent the entry of young children and designed to prevent the dog from escaping. The pen or structure must have secure sides and a secure top to prevent the dog from escaping over, under, or through the structure and must also provide protection from the elements. For cases involving dangerous wildlife, the officer should immediately contact FWC's law enforcement division.

✓ 2.5.7. Explain that regulated wild animals have unique requirements

Laws regarding the sale of regulated wildlife differ from those concerning the sale of domestic animals or livestock. An FWC permit is always required for the sale, ownership, and exhibition of any regulated wildlife. Furthermore, any injuries resulting from regulated wildlife must be immediately, or as soon as possible, reported to FWC's law enforcement division. If a regulated wild animal harms someone or escapes, there is strict criminal liability for the owners. See 68A-6.018, F.A.C. for more information regarding regulated wildlife injuries and escapes. Consult 68A-6.009(2), F.A.C. for information about the proper conditions, care, and caging requirements for captive wildlife. For further guidance, s. 379.3761, F.S., and s. 379.304, F.S., cover the laws regarding the exhibition or sale of captive wildlife.

ANIMAL POISONING

✓ 2.5.8. Discuss cases involving animal poisoning

Poisons can be dangerous to not only humans but also to animals. Section 828.08, F.S., outlines the penalty for exposing the public to poison. The law explains:

"Whoever leaves or deposits any poison or any substance containing poison, in any common street, alley, lane, or thoroughfare of any kind, or in any yard or enclosure other than the yard or enclosure occupied or owned by such person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree."

Other laws pertaining to the poisoning of animals includes s. 487.031, F.S., which prohibits the misuse of pesticides. Note that pesticides are sometimes used off-label and mixed with sweeteners to target animals. 68A-9.010, F.A.C. prohibits poisoning wildlife anywhere, whether it is on private property or public property. Section 501.916, F.S., could possibly be used to charge someone who places unlabeled antifreeze out but has not yet injured an animal.

Note that poisoning cases and toxin cases can look identical, but various toxins may be naturally occurring in the environment and are not criminal. Poisoning cases can be referred to the University of Florida's Veterinary Forensic Sciences Laboratory, but toxin cases should also be reported to FDACS.

Cases involving animal poisoning are some of the more difficult to prove. There must be witnesses, evidence, and knowledge of what to test for. Based on the fact pattern of each unique case, such as whether it was an isolated incident or recurring event, the animal species involved, and more, different poisons or toxins could be suspected. Therefore, multiple samples may need to be collected and properly preserved until testing. There is no single toxicology test that can be used to determine or rule out every possible poison. Instead, multiple tests will be needed, some of which require blood samples, while others need samples of tissues of various organs, urine, hair follicles, and more. In addition, it is difficult to prove accidental versus intentional poisoning. Here are some of the possible signs of poisoning:

- Multiple species are all deceased in the same place.

- Many animals are found deceased at the same time.
- There is rapid decomposition of the deceased animal(s).
- Multiple animals are convulsing or seizing.
- Animals are vomiting with unusual foodstuffs, colored pellets, etc. If this is the case, ask the owners what they normally feed the animal.

After spotting any of the above signs, canvass the area to determine what occurred. If there are multiple poisoned animals in an area, it creates a pattern. While canvassing, look for unusual foodstuffs, unusual containers of food, or other unknown substances. Avoid direct inhalation of any chemicals and always ensure proper use of PPE. Note that some of the most used poisons are antifreeze, anticoagulants like rat poison, and pesticides. Veterinarian involvement is essential in a suspected case of poisoning.

DECEASED ANIMALS

✓ 2.5.9. Identify proper disposal of a deceased domestic animal

Most counties have specific ordinances that officers should refer to regarding the disposal of a deceased domestic animal. Section 823.041, F.S., states that deceased domestic animals (meaning any equine or bovine animal, goat, sheep, swine, dog, cat, poultry, or other domesticated beast or bird) must be disposed of by either burning or burying at least two feet below the surface of the ground. Note that people may inadvertently damage gas and electric lines when attempting to bury their animal(s).

If a law enforcement officer wishes to dispose of an animal's body, they should know that only Class I landfills accept deceased animals. Officers may also consider calling or having the owner of the deceased animal call someone with a carcass hauler permit to transport a dead animal. If there is unusual morbidity or mortality of domestic animals, FDACS should be notified for possible further investigation or testing.

AGENCY RESOURCES

✓ 2.5.10. Discuss situations where other agencies such as FWC, FDACS, county health departments, or animal control should be contacted

The following table provides examples for when an officer should contact a third party such as FWC, FDACS, the county health department, or animal control for assistance or support.

Who to Contact	When to Contact
County Health Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bite or scratch to a human
Florida Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concern of a reportable animal disease or unusual morbidity or mortality • concern of illegal or improper importation of animals to the state • suspected animal toxin cases

Who to Contact	When to Contact
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue or concern of exotic animals that are part of a traveling entertainment group • bite from an exotic animal (call Department of Health first) • need for identification of possibly venomous reptiles • need for removal or transportation of dangerous exotic animals or wildlife • need for housing exotic animals as their care is highly specialized (ex: temperature of housing, food source, size and location of cage, etc.) • need for subject matter expertise
Animal Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bite or scratch to a human • animals are left in residence after the resident has been removed • improper importation of animals into the state • vaccination and licensing requirement of domestic animals • shelter and seizure of animals from a suspected crime scene • access to a veterinarian familiar with casework • access to resources for animals that have been unintentionally neglected such as pet food, vaccines, and medical care

Instructor Note: Review and discuss with the class Appendix C: Officer Resources. Then, identify other situations where specific agencies may be called to assist.

Also, review and have students complete the mandatory scenario: Pet Store Disturbance and the mandatory case study: Capuchin Monkey Case (2016).

INSTRUCTOR ATTACHMENT: SCENARIO ANSWER KEY

Mandatory Scenario—Pet Store Disturbance

Instructor Instructions: Allow the class to read the scenario and answer the following questions, either on their own or in groups. Then, hold a discussion and review the answers. Consider adding additional questions you believe would enhance student learning.

An officer receives a disturbance call at a local pet store. Upon arriving, he meets a woman complainant who is irate that her 9-year-old daughter was bitten by a caged “finger monkey” displayed at the store. The girl has visible open wounds to her hand. The owner states that while he sells finger monkeys (Pygmy Marmoset monkeys) at the store, this one is his personal pet which keeps him company during the day. While looking around, the officer also spots several filthy plastic bins containing snakes with no labels.

Q1: What other agencies should be called while on-scene? Which agency would you call first?

Answers may include:

- The officer should contact FWC law enforcement for an exotic animal bite investigation. County health departments are often asked to assist in epidemiology decisions.
 - ▶ FWC’s dispatch should be contacted first since FWC officers often cover large areas, which can affect their response times.
 - ▶ In addition, if the store owner is selling exotic animals, FWC is likely already familiar with them. An FWC officer will be able to distinguish the various species of monkeys as well as the snakes in the bin. The FWC officer will assist with the removal of any dangerous reptiles.
 - ▶ The FWC officer will also have a better idea of the permits needed.
- The officer must call EMS and the county health department regarding the animal bite.
- The officer should contact USDA regarding poor conditions at a pet retail establishment.

Q2: If you were the officer, what items or documents would you ask to see?

Answers may include:

- The officer can ask to see the store owner’s USDA permit which is required to sell mammals such as Pygmy Marmoset monkeys.
- The officer can ask to see an FWC Class III sale or exhibit permit, which is required to sell or exhibit wildlife in Florida. (FWC defines “exhibition of wildlife” as public display of an animal with or without charge. Taking personal pets into a public place is considered exhibition of wildlife.)
- The officer can ask to see local business certificates.

INSTRUCTOR ATTACHMENT: CASE STUDY ANSWER KEY

Mandatory Case Study—Capuchin Monkey Case (2016)

Instructor Instructions: Allow the class to read the case study and answer the following question, either on their own or in groups. Then, hold a discussion and review the answers. Consider adding additional questions you believe would enhance student learning.

On 1/29/16, an investigator from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (“FWC”), received a call from dispatch at approximately 1400 hours regarding a complaint in North Port, FL. Sarasota Animal Control reported two live monkeys were found at a homicide scene in a North Port, FL motel room.

Upon the FWC officer’s arrival, he was asked by the North Port Police Department (NPPD) to remove the monkeys from the motel room so that they could safely process the homicide scene. The FWC officer observed two capuchin monkeys in separate plastic animal carriers in the parking lot. The FWC officer examined the containers and determined that the safest course of action was to leave the animals in these containers for transport.

The FWC officer met with an NPPD lead detective who explained that they had received a disturbance call at the motel room. Upon NPPD’s arrival, they discovered a deceased female inside the room and an incoherent, combative male subject that had to be electrocuted with an electronic control device. Two caged live monkeys were inside the room as well. There was a suicide note inside the room that asked that the monkeys, “Flash and Star,” be cared for.

A records check revealed that the male subject was the owner of the two capuchin monkeys named “Flash” and “Star” and that he once had a valid FWC permit for them, but it expired in 2011. Neither the male subject nor the deceased female subject had a valid permit to possess the monkeys.

The monkeys were transported to a licensed facility and turned over at 1815 hours. The monkeys were not in good condition. Both animals appeared to be underweight and were showing signs of stress. Both monkeys had been shaved to facilitate the wearing of diapers. On 2/1/16, the boarding facility sent pictures of “Flash” depicting a deformed tail and abscesses caused by diaper wearing and poor animal husbandry.

On 2/2/16, the FWC officer spoke with the NPPD lead detective who indicated that the male subject was part of an unsuccessful suicide pact. The male subject was hospitalized under the Baker Act but was released from the hospital on 2/2/2016 and would be transported to the Sarasota County Jail on several outstanding warrants. The subject has two outstanding warrants for violating probation (VOP) resulting from an arrest for DUI and possession of heroin. The FWC officer spoke with the probation officer and found that the subject has a severe substance abuse problem that has been documented.

The FWC Officer interviewed the subject upon his release from the hospital on 2/9/16. The officer Mirandized the subject using a prepared card. He then asked the subject about the monkeys and that day in the motel.

The interview with the subject can be summarized as follows:

- The subject was informed on his monkeys’ safety.
- The subject stated he fed the monkeys fruits, vegetables, and monkey chow.
- The subject stated the monkeys had no known medical conditions.
- The subject cannot recall the last visit to a veterinarian, although it was maybe 5 to 10 years ago.
- The subject stated he does not have a substance abuse problem and he does not use illegal drugs.
- The FWC officer asked the subject if he had told anyone that the monkeys were in the room given his plans of suicide. He responded, “No,” and that he did not know he would wake up.
- The FWC officer asked the subject if he has made any plans for the monkeys, and he responded, “I knew someone would take care of them.”
- The subject refused to voluntarily relinquish ownership of the monkeys to the state at this interview.

- The subject refused to sign or accept a property receipt for the monkeys.
 - The FWC officer asked the subject if he had any family or qualified people to take care of the monkeys during his incarceration. He said he did not.
-

Q1: What charges could potentially be issued against the male subject and why?

Answers may include:

- Given that the subject's note requests that the monkeys be cared for, this shows an intent to abandon the two capuchin monkeys that day. The subject made no effort to ensure the monkeys were safe, cared for, fed, or given water.

Additionally, the subject made no effort to protect the public from the monkeys. Although capuchins are considered class III animals by the FWC, they are subject to Class II rules and precautions due to the risk of injury these animals pose to the public. The subject created a dangerous situation where a motel employee or first responder could come into contact with a potentially dangerous primate.

The subject also possessed the monkeys without a valid permit.

- FWC should request that the following charges be issued against the subject:
 - ▶ (1) Possession/exhibition of capuchin monkeys with a permit expired by more than one year. Section 379.3761, F.S.; s. 379.4015(2)(a)(1), F.S. (Level 2 violation, second degree misdemeanor).
 - ▶ (2) Violation of 68A-6.009, F.A.C. "No person shall maintain captive wildlife in any unsafe or unsanitary condition, or in a manner which results in threats to public safety, or the maltreatment or neglect of such wildlife." (Level 2 violation, second degree misdemeanor)
 - ▶ (3) Violation of s. 828.13, F.S., for abandonment and confinement without sufficient food and water. (First degree misdemeanor).

LESSON 6 HUMAN AND ANIMAL CRIMES CONNECTION

LESSON GOAL

Students will learn how crimes committed against humans and animals overlap and connect.

Materials and Resources

- Instructor Attachment: Scenario Answer Key
- The National Link Coalition: <https://nationallinkcoalition.org/>

INTRODUCTION

This lesson will examine the relationship between animal cruelty and various crimes, highlighting its potential as a risk factor for human violence. The connection between animal abuse and domestic violence will be the primary focus, along with the long-term impacts on children who witness animal abuse. Additionally, the lesson will address the link between animal abuse and mental health issues, such as hoarding disorder.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HUMAN AND ANIMAL CRIMES

✓ 2.6.1. Discuss how crimes against animals do not typically occur in isolation

Historically, crimes against animals were seen as isolated incidents. It was later theorized that violent offenders often start with animal victims before escalating to human victims. Further research has shown that this is not always the case; violence against animals and humans often co-occurs. There is also a wide overlap of criminal behaviors. For example, in cases of animal neglect, the animal's owner may also be neglecting their children. In cases of animal fighting, there are often other crimes taking place at the scene such as illegal drug use, illegal firearm possession, and illegal gambling.¹⁰

Aside from the more easily recognized crimes, law enforcement may also encounter crimes such as wildlife trafficking, human trafficking, possession of prohibited species, practicing veterinary medicine without a license, and violation of FDACS health certificate requirements.

It is important for officers to understand that when a crime against an animal is committed, the suspect is likely involved in other crimes that warrant investigation. These additional crimes can lead to more charges or be used to support the animal cruelty investigation.

ANIMAL ABUSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

✓ 2.6.2. Review signs that domestic, child, elder, and animal abuse may be occurring simultaneously

Violent behavior towards animals often extends to humans. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize signs that suggest abuse may be occurring within the household, affecting both animals and humans. Identifying this abuse can help secure treatment for victims and prevent future violence. The following are some potential signs of abuse within the household:

- Both the animal and human residents appear fearful of the suspect(s).
- The suspected human victims of abuse may appear standoffish and reluctant to communicate or give details to the officer.
- Visual injuries, both fresh and old, may be apparent on the animal and human victims.
- The animal may have dirty and unkempt fur.

- The animal's behavior and demeanor change when around the suspect(s).
- Children in the household may lash out or be aggressive toward the animal(s).

Instructor Note: Explain to the class that the Florida legislature passed a bill requiring child protective investigators to report suspected animal neglect, abandonment, and cruelty to the appropriate authorities. This same bill made animal control officers mandatory reporters of suspected child neglect, abandonment, and abuse. This information can be found in s. 39.208, F.S.

✓ 2.6.3. Discuss how children who witness intentional animal cruelty are impacted long-term

Regularly witnessing intentional acts of cruelty and physical harm towards animals can cause children to become desensitized towards violence. They may even begin to abuse animals themselves. This can sometimes be a precursor to that child becoming an abusive adult, thus perpetuating the cycle of abuse. In fact, multiple studies have demonstrated a link between animal cruelty and other forms of interpersonal violence and antisocial behavior such as bullying, juvenile delinquency, and adult criminality for both violent and non-violent offenses. Furthermore, some of these studies found that youth who are exposed to aggression towards animals at an early age are not only more likely to commit animal cruelty, but also do so at a higher frequency than those exposed to animal cruelty at later ages.¹¹

Officers who investigate cases where the perpetrator of the abuse is a minor may be tempted to drop the case. However, these cases should still be pursued as they may lead to the minor receiving necessary treatment and counseling. If the minor is a victim of abuse, further investigation can potentially result in charges against their guardians and removal of the minor from their home.

✓ 2.6.4. Identify resources to help remove a person and their pet(s) from a domestic violence situation

The following resources can help people and their pet(s) safely leave a domestic violence situation.

- Florida Department of Children and Families Abuse Hotline (1-800-962-2873)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233)
- faith-based outreach programs
- Florida Network of Children's Advocacy Center
- safe house programs
- animal rescues
- local animal shelters and humane societies

Instructor Note: Consider revisiting and reviewing with the class the National Link Coalition website: <https://nationallinkcoalition.org/>

ANIMAL ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH

✓ 2.6.5. Discuss how animal hoarding coincides with mental health

Officers will likely encounter people with mental health issues when responding to animal abuse crimes, especially with hoarding cases. Animal hoarding is a mental health condition that is classified in *the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5-TR) as a hoarding disorder. The DSM-5-TR defines animal hoarding as:

*"...the accumulation of a large number of animals and a failure to provide minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation, and veterinary care and to act on the deteriorating condition of the animals (e.g., disease, starvation, death) and the environment (e.g., severe overcrowding, extremely unsanitary conditions)."*¹²

Hoarding is a complex issue that occurs because of multiple factors, from mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression to trauma and genetics. Be aware that, without proper intervention and support, many people who hoard animals will relapse.¹³ There may be reluctance to charge someone with a hoarding disorder; however, this is one of the fastest

methods for getting them the help they need. Prohibiting ownership of pets as part of their sentencing is imperative to prevent recidivism. Additionally, mental health services should be mandated as part of their sentence.

Instructor Note: Review and have students complete the mandatory scenario: Domestic Violence Dispute.

INSTRUCTOR ATTACHMENT: SCENARIO ANSWER KEY

Mandatory Scenario—Domestic Violence Dispute

Instructor Instructions: Allow the class to read the scenario and answer the following question, either on their own or in groups. Then, hold a discussion and review the answers. Consider adding additional questions you believe would enhance student learning.

Officers responded to an address in a residential neighborhood for a domestic violence call. The female subject who made the call says she left the residence after her boyfriend slammed her head into a door, resulting in injuries. A few hours later, her boyfriend sent texts threatening to kill her dog.

Once on scene, officers located an intoxicated male subject who stated he was alone in the house. Officers did a safety sweep of the residence. On the back patio, officers located a dog hiding behind a sofa with an apparent wound to the face. The dog was still alive. Contact was made with the female victim, who provided video footage from their home security camera showing the male subject kicking the dog in the head and stomping on it. After the reading of his *Miranda* rights, the subject stated that his girlfriend had left him. He also mentioned that he kicked the dog in front of the camera to get a reaction from her because she was refusing to return his phone calls.

Q1: Is there a reason to pursue charges for animal abuse, if the abuser is already being charged for domestic violence violations?

Answers may include:

- Yes, charges should still be pursued because it can mean a greater sentence for the male suspect.
- It provides justice for the animal victim.
 - ▶ Charges may also initiate protective orders for the female victim, even if she later becomes uncooperative with the investigation.
- A victim of domestic violence may drop the charges. Animal cruelty charges, however, can be picked up and pursued by the state on behalf of the dog.
 - ▶ This may lead to the subject being jailed, which helps stop the cycle of abuse and provides greater protection to the community from those prone to violence.

Instructor Note: Discuss with students the importance of ensuring that when a domestic violence victim petitions for an injunction of protection, they should include pets in the order. If awarded, the subject would have no contact with the victim or the household pets. To guarantee that the petition is properly completed, an attorney should be assigned to work with the domestic violence victim requesting the injunction.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

Suspect Reasons: The following is a list of common reasons given by suspects for the neglect of an animal, along with suggestions for how the officer can respond.

Suspect Reason:

- “I just rescued them.”

Officer Response Options:

- “Which shelter or animal rescue did you get the animal from?”
- “When did you get the animal?”

After questioning, the officer should contact the animal rescue or shelter to follow up.

Suspect Reasons:

- “I’ve been offering them food, but they just won’t eat.”
- “I have been feeding them, but they’re not gaining any weight.”

Officer Response Options:

- “Will you show me what food you are feeding the animal?”
 - “May I see the bag or container?”
 - “Where did you buy the food?”
 - “How often do you buy the food?”
 - “How much and how often do you feed the animal?”
 - “When was the last time the animal was fed and who was the person to feed them?”
 - “Have you brought the animal to a veterinarian? Which one? Do you have receipts?”
-

Suspect Reason:

- “I just ran out of food this morning.”

Officer Response Options:

- “What is your plan for getting food?”
 - “Where is the bag or container for the food?”
 - “May I check the trash?”
-

Suspect Reason:

- “I have an appointment with the vet.”

Officer Response Options:

- “What is your veterinarian’s contact information?”
- “When is the appointment?”

After questioning, the officer should contact the veterinarian's office to verify the appointment. After the scheduled appointment, the officer should follow up with the owner.

Suspect Reason:

- "I am not the owner."

Officer Response Options:

- "Who is the real owner and what is their contact information?"
- "Why do you currently have possession of the animal?"

After questioning, the officer should contact the alleged owner to confirm or deny the excuse. They may also consider reviewing the relevant parties' social media accounts for any pictures of the animal. It is hard to dispute ownership when the officer can present evidence from online posts by the suspect.

Suspect Reasons:

- "I am just letting the animal live out its days."
- "It's just an old animal."

Officer Response Options:

- "Have you brought the animal to a veterinarian?"
- "Which veterinarian, and do you have records or receipts?"

After questioning, the officer should issue a notice to provide care.

Suspect Reason:

- "It is my (minor child's) animal and it is their job to feed them."

Officer Response Options:

- The adult is always the responsible party for the minor child and the minor child's property, including animals.
-

Suspect Reason:

- "I was worried that if I took them to the vet, they would be euthanized."

Officer Response Options:

- "How long has the animal been sick?"

After questioning, the officer should inform that veterinarians cannot euthanize an owned animal without consent. The officer should issue a notice to provide care.

Suspect Reasons:

- "I do not have a car."
- "I do not have enough money."

Officer Response Options:

- The officer should assist in keeping the animal and owner together by connecting the owner with community resources. If that is unsuccessful, the officer may suggest rehoming the animal. However, the owner should never be coerced into surrendering their animal to avoid charges.

Suspect Questions: The following is a list of interview questions the officer could ask the suspect, and what the suspect's answer to those questions could prove.

Questions for Suspects:

- "Is this your animal? What is the animal's name?"
- "How long have you had the animal?"
- "Where did you get the animal?"

What the Suspect's Answer can Prove:

- Establishes ownership or caretaker status and a timeline.
-

Questions for Suspects:

- "What do you feed them?"
- "How many times a day do you feed them?"

What the Suspect's Answer can Prove:

- Establishes caretaker status.
-

Question for Suspects:

- "What type of breed is the animal?"

What the Suspect's Answer can Prove:

- Demonstrates the breadth of knowledge they have for the species and breeds they own or care for.
-

Questions for Suspects:

- "What is the name of your vet?"
- "When was the last time you took the animal to the vet?"
- "Has the animal been vaccinated?"

What the Suspect's Answer can Prove:

- Establishes caretaker status and a timeline. May also establish if the caretaker has previously declined veterinary care for the animal.
-

Question for Suspects:

- "What are the (treadmills, break stick, spring pole, other training equipment, etc.) used for?"

What the Suspect's Answer can Prove:

- Establishes the suspect's knowledge of paraphernalia and its usage in animal fighting or other associated crimes.

Witness Questions: The following is a list of interview questions the officer could ask witnesses of suspected animal abuse crimes.

Questions for Witnesses:

- What, if any, relationship do you have with the suspect? (This question establishes the credibility of the witness and makes sure they are impartial.)
 - What did you hear, see, or smell? Where were you when you heard, saw, or smelled these things? When did you hear, see, or smell these things?
 - Did the suspect previously have animals? If so, what happened to the previous animals?
 - Do you have any recordings or photographs of the abuse?
 - Do you have any text messages or other communications from the suspect that you are willing to share?
 - Are you willing to provide a statement and later testify?
-

Owner Questions: The following is a list of interview questions the officer could ask owners who are assumed not to be suspects.

Questions for Owners (Assumed Not to Be Suspects):

- Who had possession of the animals at time of the alleged crime?
- Who do you think did this to the animals?
- Do you have any text messages or other communications from the suspect that you are willing to share?
- Do you have any prior veterinary records for the animals?
- If applicable—How much did the animal cost? (The value of the animal could affect criminal charges.)

APPENDIX B FOLLOW-UP FORM

Animal Recommendation and Animal Investigation Case Worksheet

Initial Investigation Date _____ Incident # _____

***Photographs will be taken during the initial inspection and every follow-up inspection of animal(s) and location.**

Photographs Submitted ☐ Yes ☐ No

Animal Type and Number of Animals:

Food and Water on Premises ☐ Yes ☐ No

Veterinary Response (if applicable) ☐ Yes ☐ No If Yes, Name _____

Recommendations:

Feed/Hay: _____

Water: _____

(Provide Larger, Clean Container, etc.)

Shelter/Pasture/Fencing/Living Conditions/Debris Removal/Exercise

Recommendation: _____

Veterinary Care/Routine Care

Recommendation: _____

(For example: Consult, Farrier, Parasite Control, Dental Care, Grooming, etc.)

I, _____, (owner, custodian, caretaker), have been informed of the problems regarding the care of the animal(s) listed above. I understand what corrections are recommended and will make the corrections within the allotted _____ days.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Officer/Investigator: _____ Member #: _____ Date: _____

While under investigation, notify the _____ County Sheriff's Office Agricultural Unit if the animal(s) involved are slaughtered, moved, or sold. **These recommendations do not constitute a seizure-in-place order.**

Received Copy: ☐ Yes ☐ No

APPENDIX C OFFICER RESOURCES

Officers may use the following resources to assist with an animal crimes investigation.

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

Depending on the case, this organization can offer remote and on-site assistance for case preparation and identification of resources.

- [The ASPCA in Miami, Florida | ASPCA](#)
- 844-692-7722

Florida Agricultural Crimes Investigation Unit (FACIU)

This unit promotes and facilitates the exchange of agricultural related intelligence to law enforcement officers.

- <https://florida-faciu.org/>

Florida Animal Protection and Advocacy Association (FAPAA)

This organization provides aid by cooperating with public agencies that manage animal control and protection, disaster planning, and the promotion of equity in enforcement of local and state regulations.

- <https://floridaanimalprotection.org/>

Florida Association of Animal Welfare Organizations (FAAWO)

This group of private non-profit animal shelters, rescue groups, and animal advocates assists with legislation, disaster response, and animal transport.

- <https://faawo.org/>

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)

This group provides assistance and testing when regulated diseases are suspected and can help identify resources. Bronson Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (BADDL) is a state lab that can run a variety of different animal tests.

- <https://www.fdacs.gov/>
- 321-697-1400 (laboratory)

Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF)

Always involve DCF for cross reporting for children and vulnerable adults.

- <https://www.myflfamilies.com/>
- 850-300-4323 (customer call center)
- 850-487-1111 (DCF headquarters)

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

This agency will assist with any case that requires the seizure, capture, chemical capture, or transportation of exotics or wildlife.

- <https://myfwc.com/>
- 850-488-4676 (community relations)

Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)

Depending on the case, this organization can offer remote and on-site assistance for case preparation and identification of resources.

- <https://www.humanesociety.org/>
- 863-646-7722

Local Code Enforcement

This agency can help with zoning issues, such as determining whether livestock can be on certain properties. They can also assist with getting into run-down structures and more.

- Website: _____
- Phone: _____
- Email: _____

Local County Health Department

This agency will assist with human animal bite injuries and questions regarding rabies or zoonotic diseases.

- Website: _____
- Phone: _____
- Email: _____

Local Mental Health Resource

Mental health organizations and clinicians can assist with subjects in crisis or with mental health conditions.

- Website: _____
- Phone: _____
- Email: _____

Local Property Appraisers

Property appraisers can identify who the owner of record is.

- Website: _____
- Phone: _____
- Email: _____

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

APHIS Animal Care offers assistance with federal regulations concerning welfare, and APHIS Veterinary Services offers assistance and testing when regulated diseases are suspected.

- <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/veterinary-services>

University of Florida (UF)

The university's Veterinary Forensic Sciences Laboratory (VFSL) offers forensic autopsy, toxicology, scene assistance, case consultations and more. Their UF Extension Services can help find livestock handlers and property for livestock and will assist on-scene to provide expertise on issues pertaining to livestock.

- <https://forensics.med.ufl.edu/>
- <https://extension.vetmed.ufl.edu/>

GLOSSARY

baiting—to attack with violence, to provoke, or to harass an animal with one or more animals for the purpose of training an animal, or to cause an animal to engage in fights with or among other animals. This includes the use of any live animal to bait another live animal, within or outside the same species.

battle royal—A match where any number of birds fight at the same time. The last bird standing wins.

bestiality—Any kind of sexual or physical contact with an animal.

body condition scoring (BCS)—A common method used to evaluate the body fat mass in animals. BCS will vary by species.

box dog—A dog that is trained and ready to fight.

break stick—A stick that is used to break up dog fights. The stick is inserted into the dog's mouth when the dog is latched onto another and will not let go.

bump/roll—Meaning to briefly test fight a dog.

cat mill/jenny—A machine with spokes that dogs are harnessed to. Bait animals will be harnessed to other spokes. The dog then chases the bait animal until they are no longer interested.

catch weight—A bird that fights without weight limits. These are typically birds who weigh 6 pounds and 6 ounces or more.

chain weight—The maintenance weight when a dog is not being worked or conditioned.

check weight—The exact weight of the bird to be fought. Most birds who fight are within 2 to 3 ounces of one another. Birds are weighed just before the fight.

cur/cur out—A dog that does not scratch or quits a fight.

derby—A large event where the cockfighters pay an entry fee to enter their birds. The cockfighter with the greatest number of winning fights collects the prize money. This is the most common type of organized cockfighting in the United States.

dubbing—The act of having the wattles, earlobes, and combs removed from a bird.

flirt—A decoy-like object used to agitate and antagonize a bird during their keep. These objects are used to train a bird to display desired fighting behaviors, such as jumping, kicking, and vertical flight.

gaff—Small, sharp spikes that are attached to a bird's legs as a weapon. They can be made from a variety of materials including metal, acrylic, and bone. Typically, there is one gaff placed on each leg.

game test—An ongoing process used to select dogs that display the desired behaviors and traits for dog fighting.

gameness—In both cockfighting and dogfighting, it is the ability of the animal to continue to fight even with severe injuries.

keep—In dog fighting, it is a six- to eight-week weight training program for a dog, intended to prepare them for a fight. In cockfighting, it is a rigorous feeding schedule and training program used to condition a bird before a fight. Unlike the six to eight weeks of training for dogs, birds are in the keep for two weeks.

livestock—Domesticated animals that are raised in an agricultural setting such as sheep, goats, cows, pigs, horses, etc.

long-knife—A weapon used in certain types of cockfights. A long knife is usually 3 inches long and tied to the left leg of a bird.

main—A type of cockfight where two matched birds, weighing within 2 ounces of each other, fight an odd number of battles and whoever wins most of the fights is the ultimate winner.

match weight—The optimal fighting weight for dogs involved in dogfighting.

natural fight/naked heel fight—A type of cockfight without knives or gaffs. The rooster's natural spurs are sharpened to a point. These fights typically last much longer than fights involving knives and gaffs; the individual injuries are less severe, so it takes much longer for the opponents to die.

pit/arena—The area where the animals typically fight. In dogfighting, it is typically 14 to 20 feet wide with walls around 24 to 36 inches high. In cockfighting, they are usually 15 to 20 square feet in diameter and 3 feet high. Most dogfighting pits are wooden and square shaped. Most cockfighting pits are round or square.

producer of record (POR)—A list of dogs where points are earned based on the performance of their immediate offspring. Males need 15 points and females need 10 points to be on the list.

rape stand—A stand that a female dog is secured to while a male dog mates with her.

register of merit (ROM)—A list of dogs based on their offspring. Males must sire at least 4 champions and females must sire at least 3 champions.

runner—A bird who does not fight or attempts to flee their opponent.

scratch lines—Two diagonal lines located at opposite ends of a pit. Dogs and roosters are placed behind the lines before the start of a fight.

short-knife—A weapon used in short-knifed cockfights. It is shorter than a long knife, ranging from ¾" to 1 1/2" in length. It is tied to the rooster's left leg.

show—A set of animal fighting matches.

sparring muffs/mitts/gloves—Covers that resemble boxing gloves that are placed over the bird's natural spur. These can be made with leather or rubber and can contain lead weights. These are used during practice fights to build the bird's confidence and condition their strength and endurance.

spurs—The natural bone-like appendage located on the rooster's leg; this is their natural weapon.

tethering—The act of securing an animal to a stationary object such as a pole or tree to confine them. Tethering laws vary by jurisdiction. Many municipalities have outlawed the practice of tethering. In general, a tethered animal must have access to proper shelter and water. All other aspects likely vary by local ordinance.

transient evidence—Physical evidence that might change, degrade, or disappear within a certain timeframe.

trimming out—A cockfighting tactic where a bird's feathers are removed prior to the fight to reduce weight and lessen the likelihood of overheating.

wash—An area where dogs are washed in detergent and or milk to remove any caustic substances which may have been applied to their coat. Caustic substances are sometimes applied to the dog to give them a competitive advantage.

Welsh main—A type of cock fight where eight pairs of birds fight with the winners fighting again and again until only one remains.

wild animal or wildlife— Non-domesticated animals who live in the wild.

zoonotic diseases—Diseases that are passed from animal to human.

zoophilia—The sexual preference for or attraction to animals.

STATUTE INDEX

FLORIDA STATUTE

- s. 39.208, F.S., Cross-reporting child abuse, abandonment, or neglect and animal cruelty
- s. 379.231, F.S., Regulation of nonnative animals
- s. 379.304, F.S., Exhibition or sale of wildlife
- s. 379.3761, F.S., Exhibition or sale of wildlife; fees; classifications
- s. 474.213, F.S., Prohibitions; penalties
- s. 487.031, F.S., Prohibited acts
- s. 501.916, F.S., Mislabeling of antifreeze
- s. 767.03, F.S., Good defense for killing dog
- s. 767.11, F.S., Definitions
- s. 767.12, F.S., Classification of dogs as dangerous; certification of registration; notice and hearing requirements; confinement of animal; exemption; appeals; unlawful acts
- s. 768.139, F.S., Rescue of vulnerable person or domestic animal from a motor vehicle; immunity from civil liability
- s. 823.041, F.S., Disposal of bodies of dead animals; penalty
- s. 827.04, F.S., Contributing to the delinquency or dependency of a child; penalty
- s. 827.071, F.S., Sexual performance by a child; child pornography; penalties
- s. 828.02, F.S., Definitions
- s. 828.073, F.S., Animals found in distress
- s. 828.08, F.S., Penalty for exposing poison
- s. 828.12, F.S., Cruelty to animals
- s. 828.122, F.S., Fighting or baiting animals; offenses; penalties
- s. 828.126, F.S., Sexual activities involving animals
- s. 828.13, F.S., Confinement of animals without sufficient food, water, or exercise; abandonment of animals
- s. 828.29, F.S., Dogs and cats transported or offered for sale; health requirements; consumer guarantee

FEDERAL STATUTE

- 7 U.S.C. §§ 2131–2156, Animal Welfare Act
- 15 U.S.C. §§ 1821–1831, Horse Protection Act
- Ch. 128, 40 Stat. 755 (1918) (codified as amended at 16 U.S.C. §§ 703–712), Migratory Bird Treaty Act
- Ch. 553, 31 Stat. 187 (1900) (codified as amended at 16 U.S.C. §§ 3371–3378 and 18 U.S.C. § 42), Lacey Act
- Pub. L. No. 110-22, 121 Stat. 88 (codified as amended at 7 U.S.C. § 2156 and 18 U.S.C. § 49), Animal Fighting and Baiting Prohibition Enforcement Act of 2007
- Pub. L. No. 116-72, 133 Stat. 1151 (2019) (codified at 18 U.S.C. § 48), Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act

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