

A Message from The Vermont Animal Cruelty Task Force

Animal cruelty is a growing problem in our society, and Vermont is no different. An informal survey of humane societies throughout the state showed the number of cruelty complaints to be in the thousands per year. These estimates don't reflect complaints made to law enforcement officers, or those that go unreported.

The Vermont Animal Cruelty Task Force (VACTF) was created to help coordinate the state's response to animal cruelty complaints. This unique collaboration includes:

- The Vermont Humane Federation
- The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association
- The Vermont Department of Agriculture
- The Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- The Vermont Farm Bureau
- The Vermont Sheriffs' Association
- The Vermont Police Chiefs' Association
- The Humane Society of the United States
- The Rutland City Police Department
- The Vermont Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
- Spring Hill Horse Rescue

The task force has been successful in creating a vehicle for member agencies to combat animal cruelty by sharing knowledge and resources. From the state's humane societies, rescue groups, animal control officers and veterinarians comes the animal care knowledge, while local, county and state law enforcement officers are the experts in criminal procedure. Our state's attorneys are charged with advising humane agents on cases, and sometimes prosecuting them when a voluntary resolution is not possible. Only by working *together* can we effectively respond to these often complicated and emotionally charged cases.

Brochure Sponsored by:

*The Vermont Veterinary
Medical Association*

Second Chance Animal Center

Rutland County Humane Society

Elizabeth Brown Humane Society

*The Burlington Police Department
-Animal Control Division
-Domestic Violence Division*

Vermont Volunteer Services for Animals

Spring Hill Horse Rescue

Caledonia Animal Rescue, Inc.

The Vermont Farm Bureau

*The Humane Society
of the United States'
New England Regional Office*



The Vermont Animal Cruelty Task Force

C/O The Humane Society of the United States'
New England Regional Office
PO Box 619

Jacksonville, VT 05342

Phone: 802-368-2790

Fax: 802-368-2756

Email: nero@hsus.org

THE VERMONT ANIMAL CRUELTY TASK FORCE



*Coordinating
Vermont's efforts to
prevent and respond
to animal cruelty
through
communication,
education,
training,
enforcement,
and legislation*

www.vactf.org

What is Animal Cruelty?

Animal cruelty encompasses a range of behaviors harmful to animals, from neglect to malicious killing. Most cruelty investigated by humane officers is unintentional neglect that can be resolved through education. Intentional cruelty, or abuse, is knowingly depriving an animal of food, water, shelter, socialization, or veterinary care, or maliciously torturing, maiming, mutilating, or killing an animal.

What Should I Do if I Witness Animal Cruelty?

Unless you feel comfortable and safe speaking to the pet owner directly about your concerns, you should contact your local animal shelter or law enforcement agency. They will know best if the pet owner is actually violating the law. In most cases, they can work with the owner on a voluntary resolution to the problem. If the complaint is more serious, they can file criminal charges and/or remove any animals that are suffering.

What Else Can I Do to Help?

■ Support your Local Animal Shelter

Your financial support can help offset the large costs involved with conducting cruelty investigations. You can also foster animals being held in court cases or volunteer your time at the facility.

■ Support the Vermont Animal Cruelty Task Force

Your donation to the Task Force will help fund the many programs that we offer to combat animal cruelty, including our emergency assistance fund for the direct care of animals seized in cruelty investigations.

■ Talk to your Municipal Officials

Let your local elected officials know that animal cruelty is a serious offense and that you support their efforts to fully investigate complaints.

■ Join our State Legislative Action Alert Team

By agreeing to contact your elected state government officials when key “animal legislation” is pending, you can help with efforts to strengthen Vermont’s animal welfare laws. Simply mail or fax the form provided if you would like to join our growing network.

Many studies in psychology, sociology, and criminology during the last 25 years have demonstrated that violent offenders frequently have childhood and adolescent histories of serious and repeated animal cruelty



COMMUNICATION AND ENFORCEMENT

The Vermont Animal Cruelty Response Network is a state-wide coalition of qualified individuals and agencies willing to assist with local animal cruelty complaints. Not every community has an animal shelter or police department, and investigating complaints is sometimes left up to municipal officials who may not feel qualified for this highly specialized—and sometimes dangerous—task. The animal welfare professionals, law enforcement officials, veterinarians and lawyers who make up the network are poised to help when local resources are insufficient.

EDUCATION

Education on responsible animal care and recognizing and reporting animal cruelty are priorities for the Task Force. Our website, www.vactf.org, is a wealth of information for both pet owners and concerned citizens. From what to do about a dog tied outside all day, to sample dog house plans, we offer practical solutions to sometimes easily resolvable problems.

TRAINING & RESOURCES

The Task Force routinely conducts educational training workshops for humane and law enforcement officers on the investigation of animal cruelty complaints.

The VACTF’s training manual, *How to Investigate Animal Cruelty in Vermont*, outlines the basics of a good investigation. The manual can be downloaded from the website, www.vactf.org.

LEGISLATION

The Task Force supports legislation to protect animals from abusive situations. Thanks to The VACTF’s efforts, municipalities can now create civil ordinances to address minor animal cruelty violations. By allowing municipalities to issue civil tickets and impose fines, they have yet another tool (besides criminal prosecution) to successfully rectify problems.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FUND

Money is one of the scarcest resources when conducting animal cruelty investigations. When animals are rescued by private agencies or municipalities, it is the rescuer (not the abuser) who foots the bill. Animals are sometimes held in “legal limbo” during cases, which could mean months of animal care, housing, and veterinary costs.

The Humane Society of the United States’ (HSUS) New England Regional Office maintains a fund from which Vermont non-profits and municipalities can draw to help pay for some of these expenses. Fill out the form below if you would like to make a donation, and send it to the address listed on the back of this brochure.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Fax _____

Enclosed is my tax deductible donation made payable to The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) in the amount of \$_____ for the “Vermont Animal Cruelty Task Force Fund”.

____ Please add me to the Vermont Legislative Action Alert Team.

See back for mailing and faxing information