

HOW TO REPORT ANIMAL CRUELTY?

Report animal cruelty to all Houston and Harris County law enforcement in one form.

www.927paws.org | 832-927-PAWS

What Can Be Reported to 927-PAWS?

- Neglect
- Abuse
- Hoarding
- Torture
- Dog Fighting

WHAT IS ANIMAL CRUELTY? *Animal Cruelty – either deliberate abuse or simply the failure to take care of an animal.*

In Texas, two types of laws protect animals from cruelty: civil laws and criminal laws. The laws are similar but differ in the penalties they impose.

In a civil case, if a judge rules that a person or people have been cruel to animals, the judge may take away their animals and/or order them to pay restitution.

If prosecuted in a criminal case, a person may face penalties including fines, jail or both. Those under the age of 18 are also required to undergo counseling if convicted of animal cruelty.

Texas criminal laws only apply to domesticated animals, such as house pets and livestock defined as “domesticated living creature(s) or any wild living creature previously captured” and subject to a person’s care and control. The scope of civil laws are broader and do not differentiate between domestic and wild animals; however, civil statutes adopt a much narrower definition of what constitutes cruelty. Therefore, people could engage in actions that are not prosecutable under Texas criminal laws, but they would be held liable for their actions under civil laws.

Section 42.09 “Cruelty to Livestock Animals” and 42.092 “Cruelty of Non-Livestock Animals” of the Texas Penal Code prohibits a person from intentionally, knowingly or recklessly cruelly treating an animal. The following actions define cruel punishment:

- Torturing an animal
- Failing to provide food, care or shelter
- Abandoning an animal
- Transporting or confining an animal in a cruel manner
- Killing, seriously injuring or poisoning an animal
- Causing an animal to fight with another
- Using a live animal as a lure in a dog race
- Tripping a horse
- Injuring an animal belonging to another person
- Seriously overworking an animal.

House Bill 653 and Senate Bill 1724, commonly known as “Loco’s Law,” went into effect September 1, 2001, making animal cruelty a felony and punishable by a \$10,000 fine and up to two years in jail. The law was named for a puppy called Loco, whose eyes were intentionally gouged out. Prior to Loco’s Law, animal cruelty was not considered a felony under Texas law. Today, animal cruelty convictions are classified as either a felony or misdemeanor.

Compared to other states, Texas' animal cruelty statutes are very narrow in scope because they exclude certain types of animals—including circus animals, wild animals and animals used in experiments—from protection from animal cruelty laws.

Additionally, section 42.10 of the Texas Penal Code prohibits dog fighting, and also deems offensive such activities as attending a dog fight as a spectator or participating in the earnings or operation of a dog fighting facility.

Dog Fighting – is a sadistic “contest” in which two dogs—specifically bred, conditioned, and trained to fight—are placed in a pit (generally a small arena enclosed by plywood walls) to fight each other for the spectators' entertainment and gambling. Dog fighting is a felony offense, you can be charged with the following:

- Causing a dog to fight with another dog for money or without
- Participates in the earnings of a dog fight
- Operating a facility used for dog fighting
- Using or allowing others to use any real estate, building, room, tent arena, or other property for dog fighting
- Owning or training a dog with the intent that the dog be used for dog fighting
- Attending a dog fight

Cockfighting is a crime in Texas, where it is a felony, punishable by two years in a state jail and/or a \$10,000 fine. Since 2002, a federal law has prohibited any interstate or foreign transport of fighting animals. Sources: www.animallaw.info, www.capitol.state.tx.us, Texas Health and Safety Code 821.001

Who Abuses Animals?

Cruelty and neglect across all social and economic boundaries and media reports suggest that animal abuse is common in both rural and urban areas.

- Intentional cruelty to animals is strongly correlated with other crimes, including violence against people.
- Hoarding behavior often victimizes animals. Sufferers of a hoarding disorder may impose severe neglect on animals by housing far more than they are able to adequately take care of. Serious animal neglect (such as hoarding) is often an indicator of people in need of social or mental health services.
- Surveys suggest that those who intentionally abuse animals are predominantly men under 30, while those involved in animal hoarding are more likely to be women over 60.

Most Common Victims

The animals whose abuse is most often reported are dogs, cats, horses and livestock. Based on the 1,423 U.S. cruelty cases on pet-abuse.com's 2011 digest in which species of the victim was specified:

- 70.1% involved dogs.
- 20.9% involved cats.
- 24.1% involved other animals.

The Houston SPCA has 10 full-time, highly-trained animal cruelty investigators who respond to and investigate over 7,000 cases, primarily in Harris, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Liberty, Montgomery and Waller counties. If you believe an animal is being cruelly treated, please contact us and complete the [Online Animal Cruelty Report](#) or call 713-869-7722.

Accurate information is critical to our response. You can help us by providing the following information:

- Nearest major intersection.
- Suspect address, city, zip code and county.
- Apartment complex name or subdivision name.
- Major concern (lack of food, water, shelter, no medical attention, etc.).
- Animal species, breed, color, number of animals on the property and their location.
- Your contact information if we have any questions about the report.

To report animal cruelty, complete the Online Animal Cruelty Report at <http://www.houstonspca.org/> or call 713-869-7722.