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## Title 17: CRIMES

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### Chapter 42: ANIMAL WELFARE Subchapter 3: CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

#### §1031. Cruelty to animals

**1. Cruelty to animals.** Except as provided in subsections 1-D and 1-E, a person, including an owner or the owner's agent, is guilty of cruelty to animals if that person intentionally, knowingly or recklessly:

**A.** Kills or attempts to kill any animal belonging to another person without the consent of the owner or without legal privilege. Violation of this paragraph is a Class D crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (AMD); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

**A-1.** Violates paragraph A and, at the time of the offense, has 2 or more prior convictions for violations of this section, section 1032 or essentially similar crimes in other jurisdictions. Violation of this paragraph is a Class C crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

**B.** Except for a licensed veterinarian or a person certified under section 1042, kills or attempts to kill an animal by a method that does not cause instantaneous death. Violation of this paragraph is a Class D crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (AMD); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

**B-1.** Violates paragraph B and, at the time of the offense, has 2 or more prior convictions for violations of this section, section 1032 or essentially similar crimes in other jurisdictions. Violation of this paragraph is a Class C crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

**C.** If that person is a licensed veterinarian or a person certified under section 1042, kills or attempts to kill an animal by a method that does not conform to standards adopted by a national association of licensed veterinarians. Violation of this paragraph is a Class D crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (AMD); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

**C-1.** Violates paragraph C and, at the time of the offense, has 2 or more prior convictions for violations of this section, section 1032 or essentially similar crimes in other jurisdictions. Violation of this paragraph is a Class C crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

**D.** Injures, overworks, tortures, torments, abandons or cruelly beats or intentionally mutilates an animal; gives drugs to an animal with an intent to harm the animal; gives poison or alcohol to an animal; or exposes a poison with intent that it be taken by an animal. The owner or occupant of property is privileged



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E. Deprives an animal that the person owns or possesses of necessary sustenance, necessary medical attention, proper shelter, protection from the weather or humanely clean conditions. Violation of this paragraph is a Class D crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (AMD); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

E-1. Violates paragraph E and, at the time of the offense, has 2 or more prior convictions for violations of this section, section 1032 or essentially similar crimes in other jurisdictions. Violation of this paragraph is a Class C crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

F. Keeps or leaves a domestic animal on an uninhabited or barren island lying off the coast of the State during the month of December, January, February or March without providing necessary sustenance and proper shelter. Violation of this paragraph is a Class D crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (AMD); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

F-1. Violates paragraph F and, at the time of the offense, has 2 or more prior convictions for violations of this section, section 1032 or essentially similar crimes in other jurisdictions. Violation of this paragraph is a Class C crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

G. Hunts, traps or sells for the purpose of hunting any animal, except as permitted pursuant to Title 7, chapter 202-A and Title 12, Part 13, and excluding humane trapping of animals for population control efforts or animal control under Title 7, Part 9. Violation of this paragraph is a Class D crime; [2013, c. 115, §16 (AMD).]

G-1. Violates paragraph G and, at the time of the offense, has 2 or more prior convictions for violations of this section, section 1032 or essentially similar crimes in other jurisdictions. Violation of this paragraph is a Class C crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

H. Injects, inserts or causes ingestion of any substance used solely to enhance the performance of an animal by altering the animal's metabolism to that animal's detriment, including but not limited to excessive levels of sodium bicarbonate in equines used for competition. Violation of this paragraph is a Class D crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (AMD); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

H-1. Violates paragraph H and, at the time of the offense, has 2 or more prior convictions for violations of this section, section 1032 or essentially similar crimes in other jurisdictions. Violation of this paragraph is a Class C crime; [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

I. Commits bestiality on an animal. For purposes of this paragraph, "commits bestiality" means that a person:

- (1) Engages in a sexual act with an animal for the purpose of that person's sexual gratification;
- (2) Coerces anyone to engage in a sexual act with an animal;
- (3) Engages in a sexual act with an animal in the presence of a minor;
- (4) Uses any part of the person's body or an object to sexually stimulate an animal;
- (5) Videotapes a person engaging in a sexual act with an animal; or
- (6) For the purpose of that person's sexual gratification, kills or physically abuses an animal.



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**I. (REALLOCATED TO T. 17, §1031, sub-§1, ¶I)** [RR 2001, c. 1, §20 (RAL); 2001, c. 425, §7 (NEW) .]

**I-1. Violates paragraph I and, at the time of the offense, has 2 or more prior convictions for violations of this section, section 1032 or essentially similar crimes in other jurisdictions. Violation of this paragraph is a Class C crime;** [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §13 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF) .]

**J. (REALLOCATED FROM T. 17, §1031, sub-§1, ¶II)** Kills or tortures an animal to frighten or intimidate a person or forces a person to injure or kill an animal. Violation of this paragraph is a Class D crime; [2007, c. 702, §45 (AMD) .]

**J-1. Violates paragraph J and, at the time of the offense, has 2 or more prior convictions for violations of this section, section 1032 or essentially similar crimes in other jurisdictions. Violation of this paragraph is a Class C crime; or** [2007, c. 702, §46 (AMD) .]

**K. Confines an animal in a building, enclosure, car, boat, vehicle or vessel of any kind when extreme heat or extreme cold will be harmful to its health. Violation of this paragraph is a Class D crime.** [2007, c. 702, §47 (NEW) .]

[ 2013, c. 115, §16 (AMD) .]

**1-A. Animal cruelty.**

[ 2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §14 (RP); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF) .]

**1-B. Aggravated cruelty to animals. A person is guilty of aggravated cruelty to animals if that person, in a manner manifesting a depraved indifference to animal life or suffering, intentionally, knowingly or recklessly:**

**A. Causes extreme physical pain to an animal;** [2001, c. 425, §8 (NEW) .]

**B. Causes the death of an animal; or** [2003, c. 405, §24 (AMD) .]

**C. Physically tortures an animal.** [2001, c. 425, §8 (NEW) .]

**Violation of this subsection is a Class C crime. Notwithstanding Title 17-A, section 1301, the court shall impose a fine of not less than \$1,000 and not more than \$10,000 for a first or subsequent violation of this subsection. The sentencing provisions in subsection 3-B also apply to a person convicted of aggravated cruelty to animals.**

[ 2005, c. 281, §8 (AMD); 2005, c. 397, Pt. F, §1 (AMD) .]

**1-C. Cat or dog; exceptions. Except as provided in subsections 1-D and 1-E, a person is guilty of cruelty to animals if that person intentionally, knowingly or recklessly:**

**A. Kills or attempts to kill a cat or dog. Violation of this paragraph is a Class D crime; or** [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §16 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF) .]

**B. Violates paragraph A and, at the time of the offense, has 2 or more convictions for violations of this section, section 1032 or essentially similar crimes in other jurisdictions. Violation of this paragraph is a Class C crime.** [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §16 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF) .]

[ 2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §16 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF) .]



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452, Pt. I, §16 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

**B. Death is instantaneous;** [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §16 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

**C. Maximum precaution is taken to protect the general public, employees and other animals; and** [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §16 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

**D. Any restraint of the cat or dog during the shooting does not cause undue suffering.** [2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §16 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF).]

[ 2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §16 (NEW); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF) .]

**2. Affirmative defense.** It is an affirmative defense to prosecution under this section that:

**A. The defendant's conduct conformed to accepted veterinary practice or was a part of scientific research governed by accepted standards;** [1987, c. 383, §4 (NEW).]

**B. The defendant's conduct or that of the defendant's agent was designed to control or eliminate rodents, ants or other common pests on the defendant's own property;** [2007, c. 702, §48 (AMD).]

**C. The defendant's conduct involved the use of live animals as bait or in the training of other animals in accordance with the laws of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Title 12, Part 13; or** [2007, c. 702, §48 (AMD).]

**D. The animal is kept as part of an agricultural operation and in compliance with best management practices for animal husbandry as determined by the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.** [2007, c. 702, §48 (NEW); 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5 (REV).]

Evidence of proper care of any animal is not admissible in the defense of alleged cruelty to other animals.

[ 2007, c. 702, §48 (AMD); 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5 (REV) .]

**3. Penalty for cruelty to animals.**

[ 2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §18 (RP); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF) .]

**3-A. Penalty for aggravated cruelty to animals.**

[ 2003, c. 452, Pt. I, §19 (RP); 2003, c. 452, Pt. X, §2 (AFF) .]

**3-B. Penalties.** The following apply to violations of this section.

**A. In addition to any other penalty authorized by law, the court shall impose a fine of not less than \$500 for each violation of this section. The court may order the defendant to pay the costs of the care, housing and veterinary medical treatment for the animal including the costs of relocating the animal.** [2009, c. 573, §2 (AMD).]

**B. The court, as part of the sentence for a violation of this section, may prohibit the defendant from owning, possessing or having on the defendant's premises an animal or animals as determined by the court for a period of time, up to and including permanent relinquishment, as determined by the court. A person placed on probation for a violation of this section with a condition that prohibits owning, possessing or having an animal or animals on the probationer's premises is subject to revocation of probation and removal of the animal or animals at the probationer's expense if this condition is violated. The court as**

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~~2. Criminal or civil prosecution.~~ A person may be arrested or detained for the crime of cruelty to animals in accordance with the rules of criminal procedure. A person may not be arrested or detained for the civil violation of cruelty to animals. The attorney for the State shall elect to charge a defendant with the crime of cruelty to animals under this section or the civil violation of cruelty to animals under Title 7, section 4011. In making this election, the attorney for the State shall consider the severity of the cruelty displayed, the number of animals involved, any prior convictions or adjudications of animal cruelty entered against the defendant and such other factors as may be relevant to a determination of whether criminal or civil sanctions will best accomplish the goals of the animal welfare laws in the particular case before the attorney for the State. The election and determination required by this subsection are not subject to judicial review. The factors involved in such election and determination are not elements of the criminal offense or civil violation of animal cruelty and are not subject to proof or disproof as prerequisites or conditions for conviction under this subsection or adjudication under Title 7, section 4011.

[ 1999, c. 481, §1 (AMD) .]

**5. Exception.** This section may not be construed to prohibit the shooting of wild game in its wild state. This section may not be construed to prohibit the disposal of farm animals using an acceptable animal husbandry practice.

[ 2001, c. 425, §11 (NEW) .]

## SECTION HISTORY

1987, c. 383, §4 (NEW). 1989, c. 195, (AMD). 1993, c. 81, §2 (AMD). 1995, c. 490, §§25,26 (AMD). 1997, c. 456, §§13-16 (AMD). 1997, c. 690, §§69,70 (AMD). 1999, c. 254, §§19-21 (AMD). 1999, c. 481, §1 (AMD). 1999, c. 765, §11 (AMD). RR 2001, c. 1, §§18-20 (COR). 2001, c. 414, §§1-3 (AMD). 2001, c. 425, §§5-11 (AMD). 2001, c. 617, §11 (AMD). 2003, c. 405, §24 (AMD). 2003, c. 414, §§B30,31 (AMD). 2003, c. 414, §D7 (AFF). 2003, c. 452, §§I13-20 (AMD). 2003, c. 452, §X2 (AFF). 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF). 2005, c. 281, §8 (AMD). 2005, c. 397, §F1 (AMD). 2005, c. 422, §10 (AMD). 2007, c. 439, §37 (AMD). 2007, c. 702, §§45-48 (AMD). 2009, c. 573, §2 (AMD). 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5 (REV). 2013, c. 115, §16 (AMD).

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