

MISCELLANEOUS ANIMAL STATUTES

- Administration: These statutes are for informational purposes.
- Revisions: These statutes were last revised in the 2014 session of the Nebraska Legislature.
- Rules: The Department of Agriculture has no authority to promulgate regulations under these statutes.

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28-1008. Terms, defined. For purposes of sections 28-1008 to 28-1017, 28-1019, and 28-1020:

(1) Abandon means to leave any animal in one's care, whether as owner or custodian, for any length of time without making effective provision for its food, water, or other care as is reasonably necessary for the animal's health;

(2) Animal means any vertebrate member of the animal kingdom. Animal does not include an uncaptured wild creature or a livestock animal as defined in section 54-902;

(3) Cruelly mistreat means to knowingly and intentionally kill, maim, disfigure, torture, beat, mutilate, burn, scald, or otherwise inflict harm upon any animal;

(4) Cruelly neglect means to fail to provide any animal in one's care, whether as owner or custodian, with food, water, or other care as is reasonably necessary for the animal's health;

(5) Humane killing means the destruction of an animal by a method which causes the animal a minimum of pain and suffering;

(6) Law enforcement officer means any member of the Nebraska State Patrol, any county or deputy sheriff, any member of the police force of any city or village, or any other public official authorized by a city or village to enforce state or local animal control laws, rules, regulations, or ordinances. Law enforcement officer also includes any inspector under the Commercial Dog and Cat Operator Inspection Act to the extent that such inspector may exercise the authority of a law enforcement officer under section 28-1012 while in the course of performing inspection activities under the Commercial Dog and Cat Operator Inspection Act;

(7) Mutilation means intentionally causing permanent injury, disfigurement, degradation of function, incapacitation, or imperfection to an animal. Mutilation does not include conduct performed by a veterinarian licensed to practice veterinary medicine and surgery in this state or conduct that conforms to accepted veterinary practices;

(8) Police animal means a horse or dog owned or controlled by the State of Nebraska or any county, city, or village for the purpose of assisting a law enforcement officer in the performance of his or her official enforcement duties;

(9) Repeated beating means intentional successive strikes to an animal by a person resulting in serious bodily injury or death to the animal;

(10) Serious injury or illness includes any injury or illness to any animal which creates a substantial risk of death or which causes broken bones, prolonged impairment of health, or prolonged loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ; and

(11) Torture means intentionally subjecting an animal to extreme pain, suffering, or agony. Torture does not include conduct performed by a veterinarian licensed to practice veterinary medicine and surgery in this state or conduct that conforms to accepted veterinary practices.

28-1009. Abandonment; cruel neglect; harassment of a police animal; penalty.

(1) A person who intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly abandons or cruelly neglects an animal is guilty of a Class I misdemeanor unless the abandonment or cruel neglect results in serious injury or illness or death of the animal, in which case it is a Class IV felony.

(2)(a) Except as provided in subdivision (b) of this subsection, a person who cruelly mistreats an animal is guilty of a Class I misdemeanor for the first offense and a Class IV felony for any subsequent offense.

(b) A person who cruelly mistreats an animal is guilty of a Class IV felony if such cruel mistreatment involves the knowing and intentional torture, repeated beating, or mutilation of the animal.

(3) A person commits harassment of a police animal if he or she knowingly and intentionally teases or harasses a police animal in order to distract, agitate, or harm the police animal for the purpose of preventing such animal from performing its legitimate official duties. Harassment of a police animal is a Class IV misdemeanor unless the harassment is the proximate cause of the death of the police animal, in which case it is a Class IV felony.

(4) A person convicted of a Class I misdemeanor under this section may also be subject to section 28-1019. A person convicted of a Class IV felony under this section shall also be subject to section 28-1019.

28-1010. Indecency with an animal; penalty. A person commits indecency with an animal when such person subjects an animal to sexual penetration as defined in section 28-318. Indecency with an animal is a Class III misdemeanor. A person convicted under this section may also be subject to section 28-1019.

28-1011. Violations; liability for expenses. (1) In addition to any other sentence given for a violation of section 28-1009 or 28-1010, the sentencing court may order the defendant to reimburse a public or private agency for expenses incurred in conjunction with the care, impoundment, or disposal of an animal involved in the violation of such section. Whenever the court believes that such reimbursement may be a proper sentence or the prosecuting attorney requests, the court shall order that the presentence investigation report include documentation regarding the nature and amount of the expenses incurred. The court may order that reimbursement be made immediately, in specified installments, or within a specified period of time, not to exceed five years after the date of judgment.

(2) Even if reimbursement for expenses is not ordered under subsection (1) of this section, the defendant shall be liable for all expenses incurred by a public or private agency in conjunction with the care, impoundment, or disposal of an animal. The expenses shall be a lien upon the animal.

28-1012. Law enforcement officer; powers; immunity; seizure; court powers.

(1) Any law enforcement officer who has reason to believe that an animal has been abandoned or is being cruelly neglected or cruelly mistreated may seek a warrant authorizing entry upon private property to inspect, care for, or impound the animal.

(2) Any law enforcement officer who has reason to believe that an animal has been abandoned or is being cruelly neglected or cruelly mistreated may issue a citation to the owner as prescribed in sections 29-422 to 29-429.

(3) Any animal, equipment, device, or other property or things involved in a violation of section 28-1009 or 28-1010 shall be subject to seizure and distribution or disposition shall be made under section 29-818 and in such manner as the court may direct.

(4) Any animal involved in a violation of section 28-1009 or 28-1010 shall be subject to seizure. Distribution or disposition shall be made under section 29-818 and in such manner as the court may direct. The court may consider adoption alternatives through humane societies or comparable institutions and the protection of such animal's welfare. For a humane society or comparable institution to be considered as an adoption alternative under this subsection, it must first be licensed by the Department of Agriculture as having passed the inspection requirements in the Commercial Dog and Cat Operator Inspection Act and paid the fee for inspection under the act. The court may prohibit an adopting or purchasing party from selling such animal for a period not to exceed one year.

(5) Any law enforcement officer acting under this section shall not be liable for damage to property if such damage is not the result of the officer's negligence.

28-1013. Sections; exemptions. Sections 28-1008 to 28-1017 and 28-1019 shall not apply to:

(1) Care or treatment of an animal or other conduct by a veterinarian or veterinary technician licensed under the Veterinary Medicine and Surgery Practice Act that occurs within the scope of his or her employment, that occurs while acting in his or her professional capacity, or that conforms to commonly accepted veterinary practices;

(2) Commonly accepted care or treatment of a police animal by a law enforcement officer in the normal course of his or her duties;

(3) Research activity carried on by any research facility currently meeting the standards of the federal Animal Welfare Act, 7 U.S.C. 2131 et seq., as such act existed on January 1, 2010;

(4) Commonly accepted practices of hunting, fishing, or trapping;

(5) Humane killing of an animal by the owner or by his or her agent or a veterinarian upon the owner's request;

(6) Use of reasonable force against an animal, other than a police animal, which is working, including killing, capture, or restraint, if the animal is outside the owned or rented property of its owner or custodian and is injuring or posing an immediate threat to any person or other animal;

(7) Killing of house or garden pests; and

(8) Commonly accepted animal training practices.

28-1014. Local regulation; authorized. Any city, village, or county may adopt and promulgate rules, regulations, and ordinances which are not inconsistent with the provisions of sections 28-1008 to 28-1017, 28-1019, and 28-1020 for the protection of the public, public health, and animals within its jurisdiction.

28-1015. Ownership by child; applicability of penalties. When an animal is owned by a minor child, the parent of such minor child with whom the child resides or legal guardian with whom the child resides shall be subject to the penalties provided under sections 28-1008 to 28-1017, 28-1019, and 28-1020 if the animal is abandoned or cruelly neglected.

28-1016. Game and Parks Commission; Game Law; sections, how construed. Nothing in sections 28-1008 to 28-1017, 28-1019, and 28-1020 shall be construed as amending or changing the authority of the Game and Parks Commission as established in the Game Law or to prohibit any conduct authorized or permitted by such law.

28-1017. Animal abandonment, cruel neglect, or cruel mistreatment; report required by certain employees; violation; penalty.

(1) For purposes of this section:

(a) Reasonably suspects means a basis for reporting knowledge or a set of facts that would lead a person of ordinary care and prudence to believe and conscientiously entertain a strong suspicion that criminal activity is at hand or that a crime has been committed; and

(b) Employee means any employee of a governmental agency dealing with child or adult protective services, animal control, or animal abuse.

(2) Any employee, while acting in his or her professional capacity or within the scope of his or her employment, who observes or is involved in an incident which leads the employee to reasonably suspect that an animal has been abandoned, cruelly neglected, or cruelly mistreated shall report such to the entity or entities that investigate such reports in that jurisdiction.

(3) The report of an employee shall be made within two working days of acquiring the information concerning the animal by facsimile transmission of a written report presented in the form described in subsection (6) of this section or by telephone. When an immediate response is necessary to protect the health and safety of the animal or others, the report of an employee shall be made by telephone as soon as possible.

(4) Nothing in this section shall be construed to impose a duty to investigate observed or reasonably suspected animal abandonment, cruel neglect, or cruel mistreatment. Any person making a report under this section is immune from liability except for false statements of fact made with malicious intent.

(5) A report made by an employee pursuant to this section shall include:

(a) The reporter's name and title, business address, and telephone number;

(b) The name, if known, of the animal owner or custodian, whether a business or individual;

(c) A description of the animal or animals involved, person or persons involved, and location of the animal or animals and the premises; and

(d) The date, time, and a description of the observation or incident which led the reporter to reasonably suspect animal abandonment, cruel neglect, or cruel mistreatment and any other information the reporter believes may be relevant.

(6) A report made by an employee pursuant to this section may be made on preprinted forms prepared by the entity or entities that investigate reports of animal abandonment, cruel neglect, or cruel mistreatment in that jurisdiction. The form shall include space for the information required under subsection (5) of this section.

(7) When two or more employees jointly have observed or reasonably suspected animal abandonment, cruel neglect, or cruel mistreatment and there is agreement between or among them, a report may be made by one person by mutual agreement. Any such reporter who has knowledge that the person designated to report has failed to do so shall thereafter make the report.

(8) Any employee failing to report under this section shall be guilty of an infraction.

28-1018. Sale of puppy or kitten; prohibited acts; penalty. (1) A person, other than an animal control facility, animal rescue, or animal shelter, who sells a puppy or kitten under eight weeks of age without its mother is guilty of a Class V misdemeanor.

(2) For purposes of this section: (a) Animal control facility means a facility operated by the state or any political subdivision of the state for the purpose of impounding or harboring seized, stray, homeless, abandoned, or unwanted animals; (b) Animal rescue means a person or group of persons who hold themselves out as an animal rescue, accept or solicit for dogs or cats with the intention of finding permanent adoptive homes or providing lifelong care for such dogs or cats, or who use foster homes as defined in section 54-626 as the primary means of housing dogs or cats; and

(c) Animal shelter means a facility used to house or contain dogs or cats and owned, operated, or maintained by an incorporated humane society, animal welfare society, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, or other nonprofit organization devoted to the welfare, protection, and humane treatment of such animals.

28-1019. Conviction; order prohibiting ownership, possession, or residing with animal; duration; violation; penalty; seizure of animal. (1)(a) If a person is convicted of a Class IV felony under section 28-1005 or 28-1009, the sentencing court shall order such person not to own, possess, or reside with any animal for at least five years after the date of conviction, but such time restriction shall not exceed fifteen years. Any person violating such court order shall be guilty of a Class I misdemeanor.

(b) If a person is convicted of a Class I misdemeanor under section 28-1005.01 or 28-1009 or a Class III misdemeanor under section 28-1010, the sentencing court may order such person not to own, possess, or reside with any animal after the date of conviction, but such time restriction, if any, shall not exceed five years. Any person violating such court order shall be guilty of a Class IV misdemeanor.

(c) Any animal involved in a violation of a court order under subdivision (a) or (b) of this subsection shall be subject to seizure by law enforcement. Distribution or disposition shall be made under section 29-818.

(2) This section shall not apply to any person convicted under section 28-1005, 28-1005.01, or 28-1009 if a licensed physician confirms in writing that ownership or possession of or residence with an animal is essential to the health of such person.

28-1020. Animal abandonment, cruel neglect, or cruel mistreatment; report required by animal health care professional; immunity from liability.

(1) Any animal health care professional, while acting in his or her professional capacity or within the scope of his or her employment, who observes or is involved in an incident which leads the animal health care professional to reasonably suspect that an animal has been abandoned, cruelly neglected, or cruelly mistreated, shall report such treatment to an entity that investigates such reports in the appropriate jurisdiction.

(2) Nothing in this section shall be construed to impose a duty to investigate observed or reasonably suspected abandonment, cruel neglect, or cruel mistreatment of an animal. Any person making a report under this section is immune from liability except for false statements of fact made with malicious intent.

(3) For purposes of this section, an animal health care professional means a licensed veterinarian as defined in section 38-3310 or a licensed veterinary technician as defined in section 38-3311.

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