



# THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

## *State Felony Cruelty Laws*

Prior to 1986, only four states had felony provisions for animal cruelty. In that year, HSUS vice president Dr. Randall Lockwood published a seminal article entitled “The Tangled Web of Animal Abuse” for Humane Society News. His article, which drew from a growing body of research linking animal cruelty to violence against humans, galvanized efforts to enact meaningful penalties for animal abuse. In 1989, at the request of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, we prepared an updated version (revised in 2001) for distribution to tens of thousands of police officials around the globe.

Since 1986, with The HSUS leading the charge and working hand-in-hand with local advocates, 45 states and the District of Columbia have enacted felony penalties for egregious acts of animal cruelty – leaving South Dakota as the only state with a penal code that still punishes an automobile vandal more harshly than an animal torturer.

And because laws are only effective if they are adequately enforced, The HSUS has provided literally hundreds of training programs for police, sheriffs, and prosecutors on effective investigation, case-building, and prosecution of animal cruelty, while our animal rescue team provides direct assistance to local law enforcement in cases of large-scale animal cruelty.

The now overwhelming body of research demonstrating “The Tangled Web” of animal and human violence has certainly helped move these laws forward. But so too has an increasing refusal on the part of the American public to accept senseless animal cruelty. As our collective bond with companion animals strengthens, so too does our body of laws to protect them from cruelty.

YEAR	STATE	YEAR	STATE	YEAR	STATE
2000	Alabama	1995	Louisiana	2002	Ohio
2008	Alaska	2001	Maine	1887	Oklahoma
1999	Arizona	2001	Maryland	1995	Oregon
2009	Arkansas	1804	Massachusetts	1995	Pennsylvania
1988	California	1931	Michigan	1896	Rhode Island
2002	Colorado	2001	Minnesota	2000	South Carolina
1996	Connecticut	2010	Mississippi		South Dakota
1994	Delaware	1994	Missouri	2001	Tennessee
1989	Florida	1993	Montana	1997	Texas
2000	Georgia	1992	Nebraska	2008	Utah
2007	Hawaii	1999	Nevada	1998	Vermont
2012	Idaho	1994	New Hampshire	2002	Virginia
1999	Illinois	2001	New Jersey	1994	Washington
1998	Indiana	1999	New Mexico	2003	West Virginia
2000	Iowa	1999	New York	1986	Wisconsin
2006	Kansas	1998	North Carolina	2003	Wyoming
2003	Kentucky	2013	North Dakota	2001	District of Columbia