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LAW SCHOOLS

# Animal rights litigation grows throughout U.S.

**Lynne Marek / Staff reporter**
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The Humane Society's Jonathan Lovvorn

The practice of animal law is expanding in the United States as animal rights advocates build up law school studies in the area and ramp up litigation.

"It's growing really fast, and faster than we can probably keep up with," said Jonathan Lovvorn, who leads the Humane Society of the United States' litigation department and has quadrupled his staff to 12 during the past two years.

Work by groups such as the Humane Society and the Animal Legal Defense Fund are encouraging student and attorney interest and funneling it into legal activity. Lovvorn's department has 40 cases pending around the country and has handled 100 since starting in January 2005.

Lawyers in the area say that the public is increasingly interested in staking out legal protections for animals, and that courts are more receptive to such arguments than they have been in the past. They also credit a rise in law school interest, buoyed by $7 million in support for animal law courses from a foundation set up by *The Price is Right* television show host Bob Barker.

University of Michigan Law School is likely to become the next recipient of a $1 million Barker grant, which would be the eighth since 2001.

Georgetown University Law Center is using its grant to fund a clinic that will give students credit for working with the Humane Society's litigators. The money will also be used for a fellowship at the society for a graduate and an animal law conference next year.

Harvard Law School, Columbia Law School, Duke University School of Law, Northwestern University School of Law, University of California at Los Angeles School of Law and Stanford Law School have also received Barker grants, said Henri Bollinger, a spokesman for the TV host.

## 86 courses

U.S. law schools now have 86 courses in the area, nearly 10 times as many as in 2000, when just nine schools offered nine classes, according to the Animal Legal Defense Fund. The fund has also helped students organize 96 law school animal law chapters, compared to 12 in 2000.

"We're trying to develop new legal theories to challenge existing problems," said Joyce Tischler, founding director of the Cotati, Calif.-based fund.

A conference the fund held at Harvard this year was sold out for the first time with more than 300

attendees. There were about six animal law attorneys at animal welfare organizations when Tischler started in the area in 1980, and now there are about 100, not including the rising number of private-practice lawyers, she said.

Bruce Wagman, an attorney in the San Francisco office of Chicago-based Schiff Hardin who brings cases for the fund, said he turned his attention nearly full-time to animal law about three years ago because of rising demand. Owners setting up trusts for their pets to be taken care after they die is an example of the kind of work that is increasing, he said.

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