



**Continuing Legal Education Event**

**Thursday, October 23, 2025**

**1:00 to 4:30pm**

**Prosecuting Animal Cruelty & Neglect in Ohio**

**3.5 Hours of CLE Approved**

## **Program Summary & Agenda**

This continuing legal education (CLE) program provides a comprehensive overview of the legal and practical issues involved in prosecuting companion animal cruelty and neglect cases under Chapter 959 of the Ohio Revised Code. Together, these panels will equip practitioners with the legal knowledge, practical tools, and strategic insights needed to effectively handle animal cruelty and neglect cases from investigation through sentencing. The program has been approved for 3.5 hours of credit.

### **Panel 1: Introduction to Animal Cruelty & Neglect Laws (1:00 to 2:00pm)**

Panelists: Sharon Harvey (Cleveland APL), Carole Heyward (CSU Law), Vicki Deisner (Ohio Animal Advocates) Moderator: Kailey Leary

- a. Brief History of Animal Cruelty & Neglect Laws
- b. Current Protections for Animals (federal, state and local)
- c. The Link between Animal Cruelty and Domestic Violence

This panel will give a brief overview of the history of federal, state and local laws protecting animals from cruelty and neglect. The panel will then focus on the protection of companion animals under Ohio Revised Code Chapter 959 and the Link between animal cruelty and domestic violence.

### **Panel 2: Investigating Animal Cruelty & Neglect (2:00 to 3:00pm)**

Panelists: Isadora Almaro (Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, Cuyahoga County), DanaMarie Pannella (Holland & Muirden) Chief Humane Agent Joe Dell'Anno (Cleveland APL), Dr. Michelle Gonzalez, DVM, MS.  
Moderator: Carole Heyward (CSU Law)

This panel will focus on the effective investigative practices, unique difficulties presented by companion animals as crime victims and the particular investigative challenges presented in cruelty and neglect cases. The panel will also address locating and effectively using expert witnesses to assist with investigation.

### **Break (3:00 to 3:15pm)**

### **Panel 3: Charging Decisions in Cruelty Cases (3:15 to 3:45pm)**

Panelists: Isadora Almaro (Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, Cuyahoga County), Chief Humane Agent Joe Dell'Anno (Cleveland APL), DanaMarie Pannella (Holland & Muirden), Dr. Michelle Gonzalez, DVM, MS.  
Moderator: Carole Heyward

This panel will focus on the strategic and policy reasons underlying the decision to charge an animal cruelty and neglect case as a felony or misdemeanor.

**Panel 4: Advocating for Appropriate Sentencing (3:45 to 4:15pm)**

Panelists: Isadora Almaro, Sharon Harvey, DanaMarie Pannella (Holland & Muirden),  
Chief Humane Agent Joe Dell'Anno (Cleveland APL),  
Moderator: Kailey Leary

This panel will discuss strategies for sentencing advocacy, including presenting aggravating or mitigating factors, addressing rehabilitation and deterrence, and ensuring outcomes that promote both justice and animal welfare.

**Questions (4:15 to 4:30pm)** All panelists present. Moderator: Carole Heyward

**Reception Following**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Panel One: Introduction to Animal Cruelty & Neglect Laws Slides
- II. Panel Two: Investigating Animal Cruelty & Neglect Slides
- III. Panel Three: Charging Decisions in Cruelty Cases Slides
- IV. Panel Four: Advocating for Appropriate Sentencing
- V. Chart Summarizing Elements of R.C. §959.131
- VI. Current Statutes (R.C. §§959.131, 959.132, 959.99)
- VII. Speaker Bios

# Introduction to Animal Cruelty & Neglect Laws

Panelists: Sharon Harvey, Carole Heyward, Vicki Deisner

Moderator: Kailey Leary

1

## Agenda

- ▶ Introductions
- ▶ Why are we here?
  - ▶ The animals
  - ▶ The people who love them
  - ▶ The Link between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence
- ▶ Focus on Companion Animals & Ohio Law
- ▶ Brief overview & history:
  - ▶ Local laws
  - ▶ Federal laws
  - ▶ State laws
- ▶ Current Protections Under Ohio Law
- ▶ Pending Legislation
- ▶ Current issues in Enforcement

2

## Association of Prosecuting Attorneys

### Animal Cruelty and Fighting Statement of Principles

- ▶ Animals are sentient beings with the undeniable capacity to suffer pain.
- ▶ Every state's criminal code recognizes animals' capacity to suffer, with all 50 states identifying certain acts of animal cruelty as felonies.
- ▶ There is a direct link between the criminal acts of animal abuse and interpersonal violence including murder, child abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse.
- ▶ Under-enforcement of animal cruelty laws is directly correlated to a host of corrosive societal ills - such as animal fighting in gangs and the harming or killing of companion animals in domestic violence situations.
- ▶ Animal cruelty, both active and passive, is a crime of violence, and as such requires a prosecutor's full attention, with the accompanying allocation of resources to hold the offenders accountable and achieve just results.
- ▶ Prosecutors, in exercising their professional discretion, should give animal cruelty cases priority and make certain that they are handled in the same professional manner as other crimes of violence.
- ▶ Available at this link: <https://www.apainc.org/animal-abuse/>

3

## Local Laws

- ▶ Many municipalities have their own neglect and cruelty laws some of which provide additional protections for animals
- ▶ Examples:
  - ▶ Akron
    - ▶ Tethering (Section 92.052)
    - ▶ Prohibition on coloring rabbits or baby poultry (Section 92.06)
  - ▶ Cincinnati
    - ▶ Tethering (Section 70-22)
    - ▶ Extreme Weather Conditions; Shelter; Food and Water (Section 70-26)
  - ▶ Cleveland
    - ▶ Tethering (Section 603.092)
    - ▶ Prohibition on coloring rabbits or baby poultry (Section 603.10)
  - ▶ Columbus
    - ▶ Tethering (Section 2327.20)

4

## Federal Laws

- ▶ Animal Welfare Act (“AWA”), originally enacted in 1966, amended in 1970, 1976, 1985, 1990, 2002, 2007, 2008 and 2014.
  - ▶ Impacts animals kept in zoos, animals used in research, and animals who are commercially bred and sold such as puppies by certain breeders. Prohibits dog fighting and cock fighting if it impacts interstate commerce.
  - ▶ AWA requires USDA to set minimum standards for the “handling, care, treatment, and transportation” of these animals.
- ▶ Animal Crush Video Prohibition Act, enacted in 2010 and amended in 2019.
  - ▶ Prohibits the creation and distribution of crush videos which show people torturing, crushing, and killing animals.
- ▶ Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act (PACT) enacted in 2019.
  - ▶ Amended the Animal Crush Video Prohibition Act.
  - ▶ Makes some of the most horrific acts of cruelty (crushing, burning, drowning, suffocating, impaling, or sexually exploiting an animal) a federal crime if the act occurs in or affecting interstate commerce or within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States.
  - ▶ Offers limited protection because of the act doesn’t apply to “customary and normal” agricultural and veterinary practices.

5

## Ohio Laws - History & Context

- ▶ Ohio’s first animal cruelty statutes became effective on 10-1-1953. They applied to all animals including what we now call companion animals.
  - ▶ Abandonment (959.01), Injuring Animals (959.02), Poisoning Animals (959.03)
- ▶ In late 2002, the 124<sup>th</sup> General Assembly passed S.B.221 which created two separate cruelty statutes, one for companion animals (959.131), and a general cruelty statute for other animals (959.13).
  - ▶ The bill defined companion animals as “any animal that is kept inside a residential dwelling and any dog or cat regardless of where it is kept. “Companion animal” does not include livestock or any wild animal.”
  - ▶ The bill increased the penalties for cruelty to animals and companion animals.
- ▶ In 2008, the 127<sup>th</sup> General Assembly passed Sub. H.B.71 which eliminated the current procedures and requirements governing the seizure, impoundment and disposition of an abused or neglected companion animal and replaced them and created a new statute (959.132) which required:
  - ▶ A probable cause hearing after seizure of the animal
  - ▶ If the court finds that probable cause existed, requires the court to set a bond or cash deposit to pay for the care of the animal for not less than 30 days

6

## Continued History & Context

- ▶ In 2013, legislators increased some protection for companion animals when the House passed Nitro's Bill. The bill was named for Nitro, a rottweiler, who starved to death with 8 other dogs while being boarded at a kennel.
  - ▶ Added definitions for training kennel, boarding kennel, dog kennel
  - ▶ Added prohibitions specifically focused on owners, managers, or employees of dog kennels who confine or are custodians or caretakers of companion animals. If they knowingly torture, maim, poison, commit an act of cruelty, or deprive an animal of necessary sustenance or shelter they can be charged with a 5<sup>th</sup> degree felony. Persons doing so negligently may be charged with a first-degree misdemeanor.
- ▶ In 2016, the 131<sup>st</sup> General Assembly passed Sub. H.B. 60 ("Goddard's Law"). Goddard's Law significantly advanced the protection of companion animals.
  - ▶ Amended to add a definition for "serious physical harm"
  - ▶ Prohibits a person from knowingly causing serious physical harm to a companion animal and makes such an act a fifth degree felony
  - ▶ Revises the prohibitions that apply to persons who are custodians or caretakers including owners, managers, and employees of kennels by specifying that food and water provided must be good and wholesome and that shelter provided must give protection from heat, cold, wind, rain, snow and sun.
- ▶ In 2022, the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly passed Am. Sub. S.B. 164 which made violations of 959.131(C) an "offense of violence" under R.C. 2901.01(A)(9)(e) effective on April 3, 2023.
  - ▶ We will address the importance of the designation as an offense of violence in Panels Three (Charging Decisions) and Four (Sentencing)

7

## Current O.R.C. 959.131 Prohibitions Concerning Companion Animals

- ▶ A copy of the full text of 959.131 is in your materials
- ▶ Section (A) contains definitions, Section H contains exceptions
- ▶ Prohibitions are contained in Sections (B)-(H)
  - ▶ (B) No person shall **knowingly** torture, torment, needlessly mutilate, cruelly beat, poison, needlessly kill or commit an act of cruelty
  - ▶ (C) No person shall **knowingly** cause serious physical harm (designated as an Offense of Violence)
  - ▶ (D) No person who confines or who is the custodian or caretaker shall **negligently**: torture, torment, or commit an act of cruelty, deprive necessary sustenance (good, wholesome food & water), or confine without providing access to shelter
  - ▶ (E) No person who confines or who is the custodian or caretaker shall **recklessly** deprive necessary sustenance or fail to provide good, wholesome, food and water
  - ▶ (F) No owner, manager or employee of a dog kennel who confines or who is the custodian or caretaker shall **knowingly**: torture, torment, or commit an act of cruelty, deprive necessary sustenance or fail to provide good, wholesome food and water, or confine without providing access to shelter
  - ▶ (G) No owner, manager or employee of a dog kennel who confines or who is the custodian or caretaker shall **negligently**: torture, torment, or commit an act of cruelty, deprive necessary sustenance or fail to provide good, wholesome food and water, or confine without providing access to shelter

8

## Other Relevant Ohio Statutes

- ▶ Abandoning animals (959.01)
- ▶ Poisoning animals (959.03)
- ▶ Animal fights (959.15)
- ▶ Dogfighting offenses (959.16)
- ▶ Sexual conduct with an animal (959.21)
- ▶ Possession of certain dogs by convicted felons prohibited (955.54)
- ▶ Mandatory Cross Reporting of Abuse (959.07, 959.08, 959.09, 959.10)

9

## The Link & Mandatory Cross-Reporting

- ▶ The 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly passed H.B. 33 in December of 2020 which:
  - ▶ Requires veterinarians and social service and counseling professionals to report a violation involving a companion animal cruelty under specified sections of Chapter 959
  - ▶ Requires law enforcement (humane agent, police officer, animal control professional, or dog warden) to report violations involving animal cruelty under specified sections of Chapter 959 to an appropriate social service professional when they suspect abuse toward a companion animal might impact a child or older adult in the home
  - ▶ Requires dog wardens, or other persons acting as animal control officers to report abuse or neglect suffered or threatened against children
  - ▶ Provides immunity (civil and criminal) to those who report in good faith
  - ▶ Imposes civil penalties on licensed veterinarians, counselors, social workers and marriage and family therapists for knowingly making a false report and for the second or subsequent violation of failing to report
  - ▶ R.C. 959.07 through 959.10, 2151.421, 4741.22, 4757.36, 5101.93

10

## What is The Link? The "Dark Side" of the Human- Animal Bond



- Animal abuse is a potential indicator and precursor of interpersonal violence
  - A gateway crime
  - A mirror of interpersonal relationships
  - A window into a family's world
- "When animals are abused, people are at risk; When people are abused, animals are at risk"



11

## Understanding The Link Helps Resolve Disconnects Between People, Pets, and the Law

- More homes have pets than have children
- Spend more money on pet food than on baby food
- More dogs in US than people in most countries in Europe
- More cats than dogs
- *A child in the US today is more likely to grow up with pets than with a father*



12

## Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse: What's the Risk?



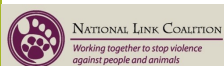
- 71% of pet-owning women reported animal was killed, harmed or threatened:
- 32%: children had hurt or killed animals
- 41% of IPV offenders had committed animal abuse
- IPV suspects with histories of pet abuse more violent:
  - 80%: prior unreported IPV incident
  - 76%: had been strangled
  - 26%: forced to have sex with suspect
  - 80%: fear they will be killed by the suspect

(Ascione, 1998; Febres et al., 2014; Campbell, Thompson et al., 2018)

13

## Evolution of The Link: 2000's – Risk Factors Linked with Animal Abuse

- Bullying
- Corporal punishment
- Physical and/or sexual abuse
- Exposure to domestic violence
- Witnessing as significant as perpetrating
- Bestiality (animal sexual abuse):
  - 34% also adult/child sex abuse
  - 51% had priors or subsequent crimes



1. Becker, Steuwig, Herrera & McCloskey, 2004: A Study of Firesetting and Animal Cruelty in Children: Family Influences & Adolescent Outcomes
2. Henry & Sanders (2007): Bullying and Animal Abuse: Is there a Connection
3. Jenny Edwards (2019)

14

## The Link is a Key to the Inter-Generational Cycle of Violence



15

## The LINK and Domestic Violence: Animal Abuse and the Duluth Model



**Isolation:** Refusing to allow victim to take their pet to the vet. Prohibiting victim from socializing their dog with other dogs.

**Emotional abuse:** Disappearing, giving away or killing pet to take away the victim's source of comfort and unconditional love. Forced participation in animal sexual abuse.

**Coercion and Threats:** Threatening to harm or kill the victim's pet if they leave or assert any independence.

**Legal Abuse:** Trying to take possession of a pet from the victim who has been the primary caretaker. Filing charges of theft if victim leaves with the pet. Custody battles.



**Economic Abuse:** Refusing to allow the victim to spend money on pet food and/or vet care (then blaming them).

**Intimidation:** Harming or killing pet: "Next time it'll be you..." Targeting pets of family/friends who aid the victim's escape.

**Minimizing, Denying & Blaming:** Blaming the victim or the pet for the cruelty.

**Using Children:** Harming or killing the children's pet to intimidate them. Blaming the "disappearance" of a family pet on victim to create a wedge between them and their children.

16

## Responses of Criminal Justice Interest: Increased public awareness

- Milwaukee “*spotabuse.org*” campaign to reduce domestic violence; public reports suspected animal abuse to 911.



17

## Ohio Passed Pet Protective Orders in 2014 – extended to dating relationships in 2018

- ODVN's 2010 report *In Harm's Way* showed:
- 79% of the OH DV victims surveyed identified the need for pet support for victims
- Over 40% reported their pets were killed, harmed or threatened to be harmed, and that they believed their pets would be harmed if they left home without them
- Victims stated pet safety impacted their decision to leave an abusive home. **This inability to leave places puts women, children, and pets at greater risk of exposure to emotional and physical trauma, and death.**

18

## Resources

Vincent, Aviva; McDonald, Shelby; Poe, Bethanie; Deisner, Vicki, *The Link Between Interpersonal Violence and Animal Abuse*, SOCIETY REGISTER 2019 / 3(3): 83-101 ISSN 2544-5502 DOI: 10.14746/sr.2019.3.3.05 available at:

- [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338378841\\_THE\\_LINK\\_BETWEEN\\_INTERPERSONAL\\_VIOLENCE\\_AND\\_ANIMAL\\_ABUSE](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338378841_THE_LINK_BETWEEN_INTERPERSONAL_VIOLENCE_AND_ANIMAL_ABUSE)

Ohio Animal Advocates factsheet on how to identify animal abuse and link to reporting animal abuse in Ohio

- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wskfiW6qoslxxwelwLj8baqlktBULfifs/view>

Ohio Animal Advocates statewide lists by county for pet safe havens, pet food pantries, where to report animal abuse, low-cost S/N and TNR, wildlife rehabbers, and companion animal veterinarians

- <https://www.ohioanimaladvocates.org/resources>

AWI's Animals and Family Violence Program

- <https://awionline.org/content/animals-family-violence>

## Proposed Legislation

Three bills of note pending:

- ▶ S.B. 265 which disqualifies a person from being a foster or adoptive parent if they have been convicted of animal cruelty.
  - ▶ <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/136/sb265>
- ▶ S.B. 252 which prohibits the declawing of cats and creates a civil penalty for those declawing a cat when it is not medically necessary.
  - ▶ <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/136/sb252>
- ▶ S.B. 64 which increases the penalties for most animal cruelty offenses.
  - ▶ <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/136/sb64>
- ▶ H.B. 417 which increases the penalties for animal cruelty offenses, requires 2 hours of training annually for peace officers re animal cruelty, makes it a crime to abuse a companion animal corpse, creates a state-wide do not adopt registry as well as a statewide dangerous and vicious dog registry.
  - ▶ <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/136/hb417>

20

## Current Enforcement Issues

21

Questions?

# Investigating Animal Cruelty & Neglect

Panelists: Isadora Almaro, DanaMarie Pannella, Joe Dell'Anno, Dr.  
Michelle Gonzalez, Richard Rutt

Moderator: Carole Heyward

1

## Agenda

- ▶ Introductions
- ▶ Identifying those who can investigate animal cruelty
- ▶ Who should be part of an effective investigative process
- ▶ First Priority - Protect Live Animals & Mandatory Report/The Link
- ▶ Physical Examination of Living Victims
- ▶ Forensic Necropsies
- ▶ Locating, Collecting, and Documenting Evidence
- ▶ Investigating other Potential Charges

2

## Enforcing Officials

Who can receive a report of animal cruelty and initiate an investigation?

- ▶ Law Enforcement
  - ▶ Humane Society Agent appointed by a Humane Society (R.C. 1717.06, 1717.061)
  - ▶ Police Officer, Sheriff, Highway Patrol
  - ▶ Dog Warden (only relating to dogs, R.C. 955.12) unless Sheriff is appointed as Dog Warden

Who prosecutes misdemeanor animal cruelty cases?

- ▶ Municipal/Township Law Director/Prosecutor
- ▶ Prosecutor appointed by a Humane Society (R.C. 2938.18)
- ▶ County Prosecutor

Who prosecutes felony animal cruelty cases?

- ▶ County Prosecutor (R.C. 2938.18)

3

## Building An Effective Investigative Process

- ▶ Why and when can a team approach be beneficial?
  - ▶ Increased knowledge
  - ▶ Increased resources
  - ▶ Team size should be appropriate to situation
- ▶ Who might the team include?
  - ▶ Law enforcement such as humane society agents, sheriffs, and/or local police, etc.
  - ▶ Veterinarian
  - ▶ Prosecutor
- ▶ Someone to care for animals that have been impounded

4

## Priority - Protect the Animals & Children/Older Adults

- ▶ Gather information to obtain warrant, if necessary
- ▶ Identify any animals in urgent need of care
- ▶ Identify if any children or older adults reside with the offender
  - ▶ The Link
  - ▶ R.C. 959.07, 959.08, 959.09, 959.10
- ▶ Move to impound animals that are the probable cause of the offense
  - ▶ R.C. 959.132
    - ▶ Requires notice to owner w/in 24 hours and a hearing within 10 days or next available court date
    - ▶ Purpose of hearing to determine probable cause to seize and amount of bond or cash deposit for care
- ▶ Some cases end after seizure through non-prosecution agreements. If a humane society enters into a non-prosecution agreement with an alleged offender, it must be approved by the Judge who presided over the probable cause hearing for seizure.
  - ▶ R.C. 1717.18

5

## Physical Examination of Live Animals

- ▶ Common issues/difficulties
- ▶ How those issues impact charging decisions and resolution

## Forensic Necropsies

- ▶ Common issues/difficulties
- ▶ How those issues impact charging decisions and resolution

6

## Locating, Collecting, and Documenting Other Evidence

- ▶ Common issues/difficulties
- ▶ How those issues impact charging decisions and resolution

7

## Investigating other Potential Charges/Crimes

- ▶ Other municipal ordinances such as tethering laws
- ▶ Obstructing official business (2921.31)
  - ▶ May be a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree misdemeanor or 5<sup>th</sup> degree felony
- ▶ Tampering with evidence (2921.12)
  - ▶ 3<sup>rd</sup> degree felony
- ▶ Domestic Violence

8

## Final Words of Wisdom & Questions

# Charging Decisions in Cruelty & Neglect Cases

Panelists: Isadora Almaro, DanaMarie Pannella, Joe Dell'Anno, Dr. Michelle Gonzalez

Moderator: Carole Heyward

1

## Charging Decisions Generally

As the ABA's Criminal Justice Standards for the Prosecution Function (4<sup>th</sup> Ed. 2017) recognize

“In order to fully implement the prosecutor's functions and duties, including the obligation to enforce the law while exercising sound discretion, the prosecutor is not obliged to file or maintain all criminal charges which the evidence might support.” Standard3-4.4.

Criminal Justice Standards may be found at this link:

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/criminal\\_justice/resources/standards/prosecution-function/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/criminal_justice/resources/standards/prosecution-function/)

2

Questions?

# Advocating for Appropriate Sentencing

Panelists: Isadora Almaro, Sharon Harvey, DanaMarie Pannella, Joe Dell'Anno

Moderator: Kailey Leary

1

## Agenda

- ▶ Purposes of Misdemeanor Sentencing
- ▶ Purposes of Felony Sentencing
- ▶ Offense of Violence - R.C. 959.131(C)
- ▶ Statutory Maximums
- ▶ Additional Penalties

2

## Purposes of Misdemeanor Sentencing

R.C. 2929.21

"The overriding purposes of misdemeanor sentencing are to protect the public from future crime by the offender and others and to punish the offender. To achieve these purposes, the sentencing court shall consider the impact of the offense upon the victim and the need for changing the offender's behavior, rehabilitating the offender, and making restitution to the victim of the offense, the public, or the victim and the public."

3

## Purposes of Felony Sentencing

R.C. 2929.11 provides:

"The overriding purposes of felony sentencing are to protect the public from future crime by the offender and others, to punish the offender, and to promote the effective rehabilitation of the offender using the minimum sanctions that the court determines accomplish those purposes without imposing an unnecessary burden on state or local government resources. To achieve these purposes, the sentencing court shall consider the need for incapacitating the offender, deterring the offender and others from future crime, rehabilitating the offender, and making restitution to the victim of the offense, the public, or both."

4

## Offense of Violence - 959.131C

Designation as an offense of violence has important consequences for an offender that include:

- ▶ The conviction is not eligible to be expunged
- ▶ The conviction may have to be reported to certain licensing authorities resulting in loss of license
- ▶ The conviction may prevent the offender from owning or possessing a firearm
- ▶ An offender cannot participate in a lieu of conviction program under R.C.2951.04
- ▶ Participation in a pretrial diversion program is less likely
- ▶ More likely to receive a jail sentence

5

## Statutory Maximums

- ▶ Fifth Degree Felony: 6-12 months in prison, up to a \$2500 fine, up to 5 years of community control.
- ▶ First Degree Misdemeanor: Not more than 180 days in prison, up to \$1000 fine, up to 5 years of community control
- ▶ Second Degree Misdemeanor: Not more than 90 days in prison, up to \$750 fine, up to five years of community control

6

## Typical Other Additional Terms

- ▶ Costs of care under R.C. 959.132
- ▶ Surrender companion animals under R.C. 959.99(D)(5)
- ▶ Prohibit or place limits on the ability to own or care for any companion animal for a specified or indefinite time under 959.99(D)(5)
  - ▶ State v. Hopkins, (Ohio App. 2 Dist., 12-8-23) 231 N.E.3d 501
- ▶ Community Service
- ▶ Restitution to owner (non-offending) of animal victim
- ▶ Reimbursement of care costs
- ▶ Mental health evaluation and care

7

## Words of Wisdom & Questions

8

**Offenses Under 959.131**

| <b>Section</b> | <b>Offender</b>                                           | <b>Victim</b>    | <b>Mens Rea</b> | <b>Act</b>                                                                                                                            | <b>Penalty*</b>                                                                                 |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 959.131(B)     | Person                                                    | Companion Animal | Knowingly       | Torture, torment, needlessly mutilate or maim, cruelly beat, poison, needlessly kill, or commit an act of cruelty                     | First Degree Misdemeanor on first offense;<br>Fifth Degree Felony on each subsequent offense.   |
| 959.131(C)     | Person                                                    | Companion Animal | Knowingly       | Cause serious physical harm (defined in 959.131(A)(12))                                                                               | Fifth Degree Felony Designated as an offense of Violence                                        |
| 959.131(D)     | Person who confines, or who is the custodian or caretaker | Companion Animal | Negligently     | Torture, torment, or commit an act of cruelty, deprive sustenance (good, wholesome food and water, impound or confine without shelter | Second degree misdemeanor on first offense, first degree misdemeanor on each subsequent offense |
| 959.131(E)     | Person who confines, or who is the custodian or caretaker | Companion Animal | Recklessly      | Torture, torment, or commit an act of cruelty, deprive sustenance (good, wholesome food and water, impound or confine without shelter | First Degree Misdemeanor on first offense;<br>Fifth Degree Felony on each subsequent offense.   |

|            |                                                                                                                                     |                  |             |                                                                                                                                        |                          |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 959.131(F) | No owner, manager, or employee of a dog kennel who confines or is the custodian or caretaker (dog kennel is defined in 959.131(A)7) | Companion Animal | Knowingly   | Torture, torment, or commit an act of cruelty, deprive sustenance (good, wholesome food and water), impound or confine without shelter | Fifth Degree Felony      |
| 959.131(G) | No owner, manager, or employee of a dog kennel who confines or is the custodian or caretaker (dog kennel is defined in 959.131(A)7) | Companion Animal | Negligently | Torture, torment, or commit an act of cruelty, deprive sustenance (good, wholesome food and water), impound or confine without shelter | First Degree Misdemeanor |

\*A court may order a person who is convicted or pleads guilty to a violation of 959.131:

- 1) to forfeit to an impounding agency any and all of the companion animals in the offender's ownership or care;
- 2) restrict or place limitations the offender's ability to own or care for a companion animal for a specified or indefinite period of time; and,
- 3) to reimburse the impounding agency for reasonable and necessary costs incurred for the care of the animal as a result of the investigation or prosecution provided that the costs were not otherwise paid under 959.132.

Exception to 959.131:

Section(H) of 959.131 excepts the following companion animals from its provisions: 1) companion animals used in scientific research in an institution in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act and its regulations; 2) the lawful practice of veterinary medicine by a person who is authorized to practice by a license, temporary permit or registration certificate; 3) dogs being used or intended for use for hunting or field trial purposes provided that the dogs are treated with usual and commonly accepted practices for training animals, and, 4) a person administering medicine to a companion animal that was properly prescribed by an authorized person.



## Ohio Revised Code

### Section 959.131 Prohibitions concerning companion animals.

Effective: April 3, 2023

Legislation: Senate Bill 164

---

(A) As used in this section:

- (1) "Companion animal" means any animal that is kept inside a residential dwelling and any dog or cat regardless of where it is kept, including a pet store as defined in section 956.01 of the Revised Code. "Companion animal" does not include livestock or any wild animal.
- (2) "Cruelty," "torment," and "torture" have the same meanings as in section 1717.01 of the Revised Code.
- (3) "Residential dwelling" means a structure or shelter or the portion of a structure or shelter that is used by one or more humans for the purpose of a habitation.
- (4) "Practice of veterinary medicine" has the same meaning as in section 4741.01 of the Revised Code.
- (5) "Wild animal" has the same meaning as in section 1531.01 of the Revised Code.
- (6) "Federal animal welfare act" means the "Laboratory Animal Act of 1966," Pub. L. No. 89-544, 80 Stat. 350 (1966), 7 U.S.C.A. 2131 et seq., as amended by the "Animal Welfare Act of 1970," Pub. L. No. 91-579, 84 Stat. 1560 (1970), the "Animal Welfare Act Amendments of 1976," Pub. L. No. 94-279, 90 Stat. 417 (1976), and the "Food Security Act of 1985," Pub. L. No. 99-198, 99 Stat. 1354 (1985), and as it may be subsequently amended.
- (7) "Dog kennel" means an animal rescue for dogs, a boarding kennel, or a training kennel.
- (8) "Boarding kennel" and "animal rescue for dogs" have the same meanings as in section 956.01 of the Revised Code.



(9) "Training kennel" means an establishment operating for profit that keeps, houses, and maintains dogs for the purpose of training the dogs in return for a fee or other consideration.

(10) "Livestock" means horses, mules, and other equidae; cattle, sheep, goats, and other bovidae; swine and other suidae; poultry; alpacas; llamas; captive white-tailed deer; and any other animal that is raised or maintained domestically for food or fiber.

(11) "Captive white-tailed deer" has the same meaning as in section 1531.01 of the Revised Code.

(12) "Serious physical harm" means any of the following:

(a) Physical harm that carries an unnecessary or unjustifiable substantial risk of death;

(b) Physical harm that involves either partial or total permanent incapacity;

(c) Physical harm that involves acute pain of a duration that results in substantial suffering or that involves any degree of prolonged or intractable pain.

(B) No person shall knowingly torture, torment, needlessly mutilate or maim, cruelly beat, poison, needlessly kill, or commit an act of cruelty against a companion animal.

(C) No person shall knowingly cause serious physical harm to a companion animal.

(D) No person who confines or who is the custodian or caretaker of a companion animal shall negligently do any of the following:

(1) Torture, torment, or commit an act of cruelty against the companion animal;

(2) Deprive the companion animal of necessary sustenance or confine the companion animal without supplying it during the confinement with sufficient quantities of good, wholesome food and water if it can reasonably be expected that the companion animal would become sick or suffer in any other way as a result of or due to the deprivation or confinement;



(3) Impound or confine the companion animal without affording it, during the impoundment or confinement, with access to shelter from heat, cold, wind, rain, snow, or excessive direct sunlight if it can reasonably be expected that the companion animal would become sick or suffer in any other way as a result of or due to the lack of adequate shelter.

(E) No person who confines or who is the custodian or caretaker of a companion animal shall recklessly deprive the companion animal of necessary sustenance or confine the companion animal without supplying it during the confinement with sufficient quantities of good, wholesome food and water.

(F) No owner, manager, or employee of a dog kennel who confines or is the custodian or caretaker of a companion animal shall knowingly do any of the following:

(1) Torture, torment, needlessly mutilate or maim, cruelly beat, poison, needlessly kill, or commit an act of cruelty against the companion animal;

(2) Deprive the companion animal of necessary sustenance or confine the companion animal without supplying it during the confinement with sufficient quantities of good, wholesome food and water if it is reasonably expected that the companion animal would die or experience unnecessary or unjustifiable pain or suffering as a result of the deprivation or confinement;

(3) Impound or confine the companion animal without affording it, during the impoundment or confinement, with access to shelter from heat, cold, wind, rain, snow, or excessive direct sunlight if it is reasonably expected that the companion animal would die or experience unnecessary or unjustifiable pain or suffering as a result of or due to the lack of adequate shelter.

(G) No owner, manager, or employee of a dog kennel who confines or is the custodian or caretaker of a companion animal shall negligently do any of the following:

(1) Torture, torment, or commit an act of cruelty against the companion animal;

(2) Deprive the companion animal of necessary sustenance or confine the companion animal without supplying it during the confinement with sufficient quantities of good, wholesome food and water if



it can reasonably be expected that the companion animal would become sick or suffer in any other way as a result of or due to the deprivation or confinement;

(3) Impound or confine the companion animal without affording it, during the impoundment or confinement, with access to shelter from heat, cold, wind, rain, snow, or excessive direct sunlight if it can reasonably be expected that the companion animal would become sick or suffer in any other way as a result of or due to the lack of adequate shelter.

(H) Divisions (B), (C), (D), (E), (F), and (G) of this section do not apply to any of the following:

(1) A companion animal used in scientific research conducted by an institution in accordance with the federal animal welfare act and related regulations;

(2) The lawful practice of veterinary medicine by a person who has been issued a license, temporary permit, or registration certificate to do so under Chapter 4741. of the Revised Code;

(3) Dogs being used or intended for use for hunting or field trial purposes, provided that the dogs are being treated in accordance with usual and commonly accepted practices for the care of hunting dogs;

(4) The use of common training devices, if the companion animal is being treated in accordance with usual and commonly accepted practices for the training of animals;

(5) The administering of medicine to a companion animal that was properly prescribed by a person who has been issued a license, temporary permit, or registration certificate under Chapter 4741. of the Revised Code.

(I) Notwithstanding any section of the Revised Code that otherwise provides for the distribution of fine moneys, the clerk of court shall forward all fines the clerk collects that are so imposed for any violation of this section to the treasurer of the political subdivision or the state, whose county humane society or law enforcement agency is to be paid the fine money as determined under this division. The treasurer to whom the fines are forwarded shall pay the fine moneys to the county humane society or the county, township, municipal corporation, or state law enforcement agency in



this state that primarily was responsible for or involved in the investigation and prosecution of the violation. If a county humane society receives any fine moneys under this division, the county humane society shall use the fine moneys either to provide the training that is required for humane society agents under section 1717.061 of the Revised Code or to provide additional training for humane society agents.



## Ohio Revised Code

### Section 959.132 Impounding and disposition of companion animal.

Effective: [March 31, 2021](#)

Legislation: [House Bill 24 - 133rd General Assembly](#)

---

(A) As used in this section:

"Companion animal" has the same meaning as in section 959.131 of the Revised Code.

"Impounding agency" means a county humane society organized under section 1717.05 of the Revised Code, an animal shelter, or a law enforcement agency that has impounded a companion animal in accordance with this section.

"Offense" means a violation of Chapter 959. of the Revised Code or an attempt, in violation of section 2923.02 of the Revised Code, to violate Chapter 959. of the Revised Code.

"Officer" means any law enforcement officer, humane society agent, or other person appointed to act as an animal control officer for a municipal corporation or township in accordance with state law, an ordinance, or a resolution.

(B) An officer may seize and cause to be impounded at an impounding agency an animal that the officer has probable cause to believe is the subject of an offense. No officer or impounding agency shall impound an animal that is the subject of an offense in a shelter owned, operated, or controlled by a board of county commissioners pursuant to Chapter 955. of the Revised Code unless the board, by resolution, authorizes the impoundment of such an animal in a shelter owned, operated, or controlled by that board and has executed, in the case when the officer is other than a dog warden or assistant dog warden, a contract specifying the terms and conditions of the impoundment.

(C) The officer shall give written notice of the seizure and impoundment to the owner, keeper, or harbinger of the animal not later than twenty-four hours after the animal was seized and impounded. If the officer is unable to give the notice to the owner, keeper, or harbinger of the animal, the officer shall post the notice on the door of the residence or in another conspicuous place on the premises at which the animal was seized. The notice shall include a statement that a hearing will be held not later



than ten days after the notice is provided or at the next available court date to determine whether the officer had probable cause to seize the animal and, if applicable, to determine the amount of a bond or cash deposit that is needed to provide for the animal's care and keeping for not less than thirty days beginning on the date on which the animal was impounded.

(D) An animal that is seized under this section may be humanely destroyed immediately or at any time during impoundment if a licensed veterinarian determines it to be necessary because the animal is suffering.

(E)(1) Not later than ten days after notice is provided or at the next available court date, the court shall hold a hearing to determine whether the officer impounding an animal had probable cause to seize the animal. If the court determines that probable cause exists, the court shall determine the amount of a bond or cash deposit that is necessary and reasonable to provide for the animal's care and keeping for not less than thirty days beginning on the date on which the animal was impounded.

(2) If the court determines that probable cause does not exist, the court immediately shall order the impounding agency to return the animal to its owner if possible. If the animal cannot be returned because it has died as a result of neglect or other misconduct by the impounding agency or if the animal is injured as a result of neglect or other misconduct by the impounding agency, the court shall order the impounding agency to pay the owner an amount determined by the court to be equal to the reasonable market value of the animal at the time that it was impounded plus statutory interest as defined in section 1343.03 of the Revised Code from the date of the impoundment or an amount determined by the court to be equal to the reasonable cost of treatment of the injury to the animal, as applicable. The requirement established in division (E)(2) of this section regarding the payment of the reasonable market value of the animal shall not apply in the case of a dog that, in violation of section 955.01 of the Revised Code, was not registered at the time it was seized and impounded.

(3) If the court determines that probable cause exists and determines the amount of a bond or cash deposit, the case shall continue and the owner shall post a bond or cash deposit to provide for the animal's care and keeping for not less than thirty days beginning on the date on which the animal was impounded. The owner may renew a bond or cash deposit by posting, not later than ten days following the expiration of the period for which a previous bond or cash deposit was posted, a new bond or cash deposit in an amount that the court, in consultation with the impounding agency,



determines is necessary and reasonable to provide for the animal's care and keeping for not less than thirty days beginning on the date on which the previous period expired. If no bond or cash deposit is posted or if a bond or cash deposit expires and is not renewed, the impounding agency may determine the disposition of the animal unless the court issues an order that specifies otherwise.

(F) If a person is convicted of committing an offense, the court may impose the following additional penalties against the person:

(1) A requirement that the person pay for the costs incurred by the impounding agency in caring for an animal involved in the applicable offense, provided that the costs were incurred during the animal's impoundment. A bond or cash deposit posted under this section may be applied to the costs.

(2) An order permanently terminating the person's right to possession, title, custody, or care of the animal that was involved in the offense. If the court issues such an order, the court shall order the disposition of the animal.

(G) If a person is found not guilty of committing an offense, the court immediately shall order the impounding agency to return the animal to its owner if possible and to return the entire amount of any bond or cash deposit posted under division (E) of this section. If the animal cannot be returned because it has died as a result of neglect or other misconduct by the impounding agency or if the animal is injured as a result of neglect or other misconduct by the impounding agency, the court shall order the impounding agency to pay the owner an amount determined by the court to be equal to the reasonable market value of the animal at the time that it was impounded plus statutory interest as defined in section 1343.03 of the Revised Code from the date of the impoundment or an amount determined by the court to be equal to the reasonable cost of treatment of the injury to the animal, as applicable. The requirements established in this division regarding the return of a bond or cash deposit and the payment of the reasonable market value of the animal shall not apply in the case of a dog that, in violation of section 955.01 of the Revised Code, was not registered at the time it was seized and impounded.

(H) If charges are filed under section 959.131 of the Revised Code against the custodian or caretaker of a companion animal, but the companion animal that is the subject of the charges is not impounded, the court in which the charges are pending may order the owner or person having



custody of the companion animal to provide to the companion animal the necessities described in division (D)(2), (D)(3), (E)(2), (E)(3), (F)(2), or (F)(3) of section 959.131 of the Revised Code until the final disposition of the charges. If the court issues an order of that nature, the court also may authorize an officer or another person to visit the place where the companion animal is being kept, at the times and under the conditions that the court may set, to determine whether the companion animal is receiving those necessities and to remove and impound the companion animal if the companion animal is not receiving those necessities.



## Ohio Revised Code

### Section 959.99 Violation; penalties.

Effective: April 6, 2023

Legislation: Senate Bill 164 (GA 134), House Bill 281 (GA 134)

---

(A) Whoever violates section 959.18 or 959.19 of the Revised Code is guilty of a minor misdemeanor.

(B) Except as otherwise provided in this division, whoever violates section 959.02 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree. If the value of the animal killed or the injury done amounts to three hundred dollars or more, whoever violates section 959.02 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree.

(C) Whoever violates section 959.03, 959.06, division (C) of section 959.09, 959.12, or 959.17 or division (A) of section 959.15 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the fourth degree.

(D) Whoever violates division (A) of section 959.13 or section 959.21 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree. In addition, the court may order the offender to forfeit the animal or livestock and may provide for its disposition, including, but not limited to, the sale of the animal or livestock. If an animal or livestock is forfeited and sold pursuant to this division, the proceeds from the sale first shall be applied to pay the expenses incurred with regard to the care of the animal from the time it was taken from the custody of the former owner. The balance of the proceeds from the sale, if any, shall be paid to the former owner of the animal.

(E)(1) Whoever violates division (B) or (E) of section 959.131 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree on a first offense and a felony of the fifth degree on each subsequent offense.

(2) Whoever violates division (C) of section 959.131 of the Revised Code is guilty of a felony of the fifth degree.

(3) Whoever violates section 959.01 of the Revised Code or division (D) of section 959.131 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree on a first offense and a misdemeanor



of the first degree on each subsequent offense.

(4) Whoever violates division (F) of section 959.131 of the Revised Code is guilty of a felony of the fifth degree.

(5) Whoever violates division (G) of section 959.131 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree.

(6)(a) A court may order a person who is convicted of or pleads guilty to a violation of section 959.131 of the Revised Code to forfeit to an impounding agency, as defined in section 959.132 of the Revised Code, any or all of the companion animals in that person's ownership or care. The court also may prohibit or place limitations on the person's ability to own or care for any companion animals for a specified or indefinite period of time.

(b) A court may order a person who is convicted of or pleads guilty to a violation of division (A) of section 959.13 or section 959.131 of the Revised Code to reimburse an impounding agency for the reasonable and necessary costs incurred by the agency for the care of an animal or livestock that the agency impounded as a result of the investigation or prosecution of the violation, provided that the costs were not otherwise paid under section 959.132 of the Revised Code.

(7) If a court has reason to believe that a person who is convicted of or pleads guilty to a violation of section 959.131 or 959.21 of the Revised Code has a mental or emotional disorder that contributed to the violation, the court may impose as a community control sanction or as a condition of probation a requirement that the offender undergo psychological evaluation or counseling. The court shall order the offender to pay the costs of the evaluation or counseling.

(F) Whoever violates section 959.14 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree on a first offense and a misdemeanor of the first degree on each subsequent offense.

(G) Whoever violates section 959.05 or 959.20 of the Revised Code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree.

(H) Whoever violates section 959.16 of the Revised Code is guilty of a felony of the fourth degree



for a first offense and a felony of the third degree on each subsequent offense.

(I) Whoever violates division (B) or (C) of section 959.15 of the Revised Code is guilty of a felony and shall be fined not more than ten thousand dollars.

---

*The Legislative Service Commission presents the text of this section as a composite of the section as amended by multiple acts of the General Assembly. This presentation recognizes the principle stated in R.C. 1.52(B) that amendments are to be harmonized if reasonably capable of simultaneous operation.*

## **Speaker Biographies:**

Isadora Almaro, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office.

Isadora was admitted to practice in the State of Ohio in 2000. She has served as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney in the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office for the last 13 years. In the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office, Isadora serves as part of the Grand Jury Unit and heads the Animal Crimes Unit, working closely with law enforcement officers, humane agents and animal control officers to advise on collection of evidence, reviewing cases for appropriate charges, and presenting cases to the Grand Jury. She also assists and advises felony division prosecutors in the prosecution of animal abuse cases. Prior to joining the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office, she served as an Assistant County Prosecutor in the Erie County Prosecutor's Office and as a staff attorney in the Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court and Juvenile Court.

Joe Dell'Anno, Chief Humane Investigator, Cleveland Animal Protective League.

Joe Dell'Anno has served as the Chief Humane Investigator for the Cleveland Animal Protective League for 11 years, where he oversees the organization's enforcement of Ohio's animal protection laws in Cuyahoga County and leads a growing team of dedicated humane society agents and support staff. With extensive experience in animal welfare and investigative work, Joe plays a critical role in ensuring that animals are safeguarded from cruelty, neglect, and abuse.

He holds a bachelor's degree in Zoology from Kent State University and began his career as a zookeeper at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, where he primarily cared for native Ohio species. He graduated at the top of his class from the Bryant & Stratton Police Academy, earned certification as a Police Officer, and is also a certified OPOTA (Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy) Instructor. Joe regularly provides training on animal welfare and humane law enforcement practices, including as a frequent presenter at the Ohio Animal Welfare Federation's Humane Society Agent training sessions.

Known for a compassionate yet firm approach, Joe balances his steadfast commitment to justice through criminal prosecution with education and prevention to create lasting solutions that protect animals and advance their welfare. His work requires close collaboration with local law enforcement, prosecutors, and community partners to ensure the best possible outcomes for animal victims of cruelty and neglect. As a mandated reporter for child and elder abuse, he also ensures that associated human suffering is identified and addressed.

Driven by a lifelong commitment to public service and animal welfare, Joe is recognized as a subject matter expert in the field and a trusted advocate for Ohio's most vulnerable

animals. In recognition of his expertise, effectiveness, and service, he was recently honored with the City of Cleveland Police Department's Citizen Award.

Vicki Deisner, Executive Director/Founder of Ohio Animal Advocates (OAA).

OAA's mission is to make Ohio a place where all animals are protected from cruelty, abuse, and neglect. OAA develops policies that protect animals and works to ensure that humane laws are vigorously enforced. OAA also establishes relevant and practical solutions to take on seemingly insurmountable animal cruelty issues. By challenging and changing entrenched systems that harm animals, OAA elevates animal protection concerns from a "fringe" issue to one taken seriously by the public and policymakers, who are beginning to understand the deep connection between the welfare of animals and that of society overall. In addition to her work at OAA, Vicki also serves as the State Government Affairs Representative for the Animal Welfare Institute where she successfully advocated for the passage of House Bill 33 in the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly that requires social workers, counselors and veterinarians to report animal abuse, and, law enforcement, animal control officers and dog wardens to report the presence of a child or older adult in the .

Vicki was formerly the Midwest Legislative Director of the ASPCA, where she was primarily responsible for legislative and advocacy initiatives in the states of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky. Vicki also served as a founding member of the Coalition of State Animal Advocacy Organizations (CSAAO). Prior to that she served as the Associate Director of the National Water Resources Campaigns for the National Wildlife Federation in Washington, DC, Executive Director of the Ohio Environmental Council and Ohio Assistant Attorney General, Environmental Enforcement Section in Columbus, Ohio.

Vicki received her J.D. from Salmon P. Chase Law School at Northern Kentucky University, her clinical degree in Respiratory Therapy from the University of Chicago, her M.S in Physiology from the University of Cincinnati, Medical College, and her B.S. in Zoology from The Ohio State University.

Dr. Michelle Gonzalez, Founder & Medical Director of the Rascal Unit

Dr. Michelle Gonzalez (Dr. G) was born and raised in Puerto Rico and obtained a B.S. in Zoology from Michigan State University (1995), a DVM from The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine (1999), and a Certificate of Internship in Small Animal Medicine, Surgery and Critical Care from the University of Missouri (2000). She has obtained a Graduate Certificate in Shelter Medicine (2015), an M.S. in Veterinary Forensics (2017) and in Forensic Science (2022) from the University of Florida, an M.S. in Forensic Psychology from Southern New Hampshire University (2020), and a Master of Studies in Law (2025) from Lewis & Clark University with a focus on Animal Law.

Dr. Gonzalez is the founder and Medical Director of the [Rascal Unit](#), a mobile veterinary practice providing affordable and accessible care for animals in Ohio. She is also the director of Rascal Charities, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit that provides sterilization, wellness, and medical care to individuals in need of financial assistance and community cat/TNR efforts. Dr. G assists in the investigation and prosecution of animal cruelty and neglect cases with both local and national humane organizations. She has been involved with several organizations as a consultant and board member and aims to use her experience and education to help improve the quality of life of both animals and humans. Her primary focus is access to care, the human-animal bond, and student education. In her spare time, Dr. Gonzalez hosts a podcast, *The Animal Welfare Junction*, which promotes animal welfare efforts and veterinary forensic cases

#### Sharon Harvey, President & CEO, Cleveland Animal Protective League

As the President and CEO of the Cleveland Animal Protective League (APL), Sharon oversees one of Ohio's most respected animal welfare organizations. Under her leadership, the Cleveland APL has expanded its impact through innovative and progressive programs and services, strong community partnerships, and a steadfast commitment to ensuring that animals receive compassion and humane care. Last year, more than 20,000 animals were helped by the Cleveland APL's team.

The Cleveland APL, a private, independent nonprofit humane society formed under Section 1717.05 of the Ohio Revised Code, is empowered to appoint humane society agents who have full authority to investigate suspected animal neglect and abuse and enforce Ohio's animal protection laws (ORC 959) within Cuyahoga County.

With more than 22 years of experience overseeing humane law enforcement programs, Sharon is a trusted and recognized voice for animal protection and respected subject matter expert on animal welfare and animal protection policy matters. Since 2015, she has actively collaborated with lobbyists, policymakers, and other stakeholders to shape and advance numerous pieces of legislation designed to strengthen animal protection and welfare in Ohio while fostering greater public awareness and accountability around their humane treatment and value in society.

In addition to her leadership at the Cleveland APL, Sharon serves as President of the Board of the Ohio Animal Welfare Federation, which is now widely regarded as the leading provider of training and education for Ohio's animal welfare professionals and humane society agents and as a member of the David H. Braff Animal Law Center's Advisory Council at Cleveland State University. She has also made significant contributions and helped to guide the strategic direction of the animal welfare field at the national level by serving on the Boards of Directors for Shelter Animals Count, the National Federation of Humane Societies, the Association for Animal Welfare Advancement, and as a member of the Hill's™ Shelter Advisory Board.

Carole Heyward, Senior Clinical Professor of Law and Director, David H. Braff Animal Law Center

Carole was admitted to practice in Ohio in 1993. She joined CSU College of Law in 2003 after spending ten years in private practice where she focused her practice on complex civil litigation and white-collar criminal defense in state and federal courts and served as the General Counsel for a nonprofit housing advocacy organization where she litigated housing discrimination cases in state and federal courts. Carole also served as an Assistant Law Director in a municipality for more than ten years where she focused her efforts on vacant housing, real property maintenance, and economic development. As Director of the David H. Braff Animal Law Center, Carole is responsible for shaping the Center's policies and strategies to fulfill its mission to: (1) provide a broad range of legal services to protect and enhance animal welfare; (2) offer a robust animal law curriculum; and, (3) engage with the community on issues involving animal welfare. Carole also serves as the Chair of the Ohio State Bar Association's Committee on Animal Law.

Kailey Leary, Director of CSU College of Law Animal Law Clinic and Supervising Attorney in the David H. Braff Animal Law Center.

As Director of the Animal Law Clinic at CSU, Kailey trains law students how to be effective advocates who support the enactment, enhancement, and enforcement of animal welfare law, rules and regulations through legislative initiatives, prosecutions and related support, and impact litigation. Prior to joining CSU College of Law, Kailey focused her practice on complex civil litigation, such as defending professional liability and third-party claims against licensed professionals. Kailey began her career as a criminal defense attorney at a boutique law firm that represented clients against various charges, from low-level felonies to violent and/or drug-related crimes.

DanaMarie Pannella, Holland & Muirden

Dana focuses her practice on representing individuals and organizations in a wide variety of animal welfare legal issues nationwide. She has served as an appointed prosecutor for thousands of animal cruelty cases in courts across the State of Ohio for more than a decade. Ms. Pannella is an Adjunct Professor for Animal Law at the Cleveland State University Law School and frequently conducts training sessions and presentations for humane agents, dog wardens, police, veterinarians, and attorneys. She holds a J.D. from Case Western Reserve University and is a member of the Ohio and Texas bars.