



NYSAPF is the voice of New York's humane societies, SPCAs, non-profit and municipal animal shelters as well as animal welfare organizations which focus on homeless animals.

MEMO IN SUPPORT OF A.1170-A (Rosenthal)/S.7815-A (Gianaris) Reporting Animal Cruelty by Veterinarians

Year after year, law enforcement is faced with mounting crimes against animals. From hoarding and not being provided proper food or medical care to bait dogs being used in dog fighting rings to tying up puppies in a plastic bag and leaving them to die in a wooded area, the cruelty we've seen against animals has risen dramatically.

Thankfully, there is one group of medical practitioners who can take a major step forward in stopping this cruelty—veterinarians.

While some of these animal crimes never come to the light of day, veterinarians see much of how people mistreat their animals just through daily visits. Veterinarians examine and treat sick and/or injured animals. They play a pivotal role in the legal process. They know what animal cruelty is. They know how it starts with denying food and water and how it can escalate. They know how to define animal cruelty and how to help prosecutors bring those who commit these crimes to justice.

A.1170-A (Rosenthal)/S.7815-A (Gianaris) would allow veterinarians to use their discretion to report suspected animal cruelty to law enforcement and humane law enforcement of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals. The bill would mandate that veterinarians report suspected aggravated animal cruelty to the same.

This bill is an important step in stemming the tide of animal abuse in New York. In May of 2019, a couple, Ellie Knoller and his wife Jessica Kuncman, were both charged in the death of two puppies just days after obtaining them and nearly killing a third. **The first two puppies were brought by Kuncman to two different veterinarians—neither of whom reported the incidents.** They first two puppies were dead by the time Kuncman sought medical treatment.

The third puppy was brought to the Veterinary Referral & Emergency Center of Westbury 15 hours after the puppy appeared to be in pain because of brutal treatment by Knoller. Thankfully, the Veterinary Referral & Emergency Center works with the Nassau County SPCA (NCSPCA) and immediately called to alert them of the situation. Once the NCSPCA stepped in, the Nassau County District Attorney's Animal Crimes Unit got involved and pressed charges.

This scenario shows the importance of veterinarians stepping up and stepping in to prevent animal crime and animal abuse. A.1170-A/S.7815-A is an important first step in getting veterinarians to report the abuse and getting the right members of law enforcement—sheriffs, police and SPCA humane law enforcement or peace officers—involved to make a difference.

We call on the New York State Legislature to pass this bill and help stop animal crimes and animal abuse in New York State.

Patterns on Non-accidental Injury

| Type of Injury | Examine for: | Diagnostic Process or Test |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Head Trauma | Asymmetry from contusions or fractures Petechiae Ruptured tympanic membranes | Radiographs Inner ear exam |
| Abrasions or Bruising | Evidence of healing bruises or cuts (indicative of repetitive abuse) Embedded debris in skin or fur that can indicate dragging or throwing Fractured bones or ribs, including evidence of past injuries | Radiographs Note location, size and shape to connect to potential weapon |
| Feet Injuries | Frayed nails Torn pads Debris caught between pads and fur, or within frayed nail | Swipe feet across paper to preserve trace evidence; in deceased animals, remove nail DNA |
| Burns | Smell wound for accelerants, oils or chemicals | Swab the wound before and after treatment for analysis of chemical Photograph burn patterns |
| Starvation | Evidence of pica Gastric ulcers Occult fecal blood Melena | Bone marrow fat analysis Routine profile Examine stomach content and feces |
| Embedded Collar | Visible signs of trauma Foul odor from infection and necrosis | Take pictures before and after shaving Measure width and depth of wound Save the collar |
| Dog Fighting | Characteristic puncture wounds on face, neck and front legs Evidence of starvation and beatings Evidence of heavy chain used as collar | Test for use of steroids, analgesics, hormones or diuretics |
| Gunshot Wounds | Fur forced in or out at entrance and exit wounds Singed fur or coat Abrasion rings Gunshot residue on or inside the wound | Remove bullets with fingers or cotton-wrapped forceps Photograph each wound before and after cleaning Shave and note powder patterns |
| Ligature Injuries | Crushing injury to skin, blood vessels and tissue Surrounding tissue may be inflamed and infected | Characteristic bruising pattern Trace evidence |
| Knife Wounds | Length and type of blade Note tapers on one or both ends of wound | Measure external wounds Measure wound depth Swab for DNA, both human and animal |

Source: Melinda Merck, DVM
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