



# The National Agricultural Law Center

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States' Animal Cruelty Statutes:

*Alabama*



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# A National Agricultural Law Center Research Publication

## States' Animal Cruelty Statutes: Alabama

Ala. Code § 3-1-8, 10, 11.1, 13, 16, & 29;

Ala. Code § 13A-11-14, 14.1, & 16;

Ala. Code § 13A-11-240 through 247

*Current through Current through the end of the 2023 First Special, Regular, and Second Special Sessions, but not including corrections and changes made to the 2023 session laws by the Code Commissioner.*

### **§ 3-1-8. Destruction of certain abandoned animals by members, etc., of societies for prevention of cruelty to animals.**

Any agent, officer or member of a duly incorporated society for the prevention of cruelty to animals may lawfully destroy or cause to be destroyed any animal found abandoned and not properly cared for which may appear, in the judgment of two reputable citizens called by him to view the same in his presence, to be superannuated, infirm, glandered, injured or diseased past recovery for any useful purpose.

### **§ 3-1-10. Wanton, malicious, etc., destruction, injury, etc., of animal or article or commodity of value of another – Prohibited.**

Any person, who unlawfully, wantonly or maliciously kills, disables, disfigures, destroys or injures any animal or article or commodity of value which is the property of another must, on conviction, be fined not less than twice the value of the injury or damage to the owner of the property nor more than \$1,000.00 and may also be imprisoned in the county jail, or sentenced to hard labor for the county for not more than six months, and so much of the fine as may be necessary to repair the injury or loss shall go to the party injured.

### **§ 3-1-11.1. Killing or disabling livestock; penalty.**

**(a)** Any person, who unlawfully, wantonly, or maliciously kills, disables, disfigures, destroys, or injures the livestock of another while the livestock is on the premises of the owner of the livestock or on the premises of a person having charge thereof shall be guilty of a Class C felony.



(b) In addition to being guilty of a Class C felony, any person who unlawfully, wantonly, or maliciously kills, disables, disfigures, destroys, or injures the livestock of another while the livestock is on the premises of the owner of the livestock, or on the premises of a person having charge thereof, shall be liable for damages sustained by the killing, disabling, disfiguring, or destroying of the livestock in an amount equal to double the value thereof.

(c) For purposes of this section, livestock is defined as equine or equidae, cows, swine, goats, and sheep.

**§ 3-1-13. Right of officers, etc., of humane societies to take charge of and care for neglected or abused animals; written notice to owner from whom animal taken; lien for expenses for care and keeping of animal.**

Any duly authorized officer or employee of a recognized humane society shall have the right to take charge of any animal which is sick or disabled due to neglect or is being cruelly treated or abused and to provide care for such animal until it is deemed to be in suitable condition to be returned to its owner or to the person from whose custody such animal was taken.

The officer so taking such animal shall at the time of taking the animal give written notice to the owner or person from whose custody it was taken.

The necessary expenses incurred for the care and keeping of the animal after such notice by the humane society shall be a lien thereon and, if the animal is not reclaimed within 10 days from the giving of such notice, the humane society may sell the animal to satisfy such lien. If the humane society determines that the animal cannot be sold, it may cause the animal to be otherwise disposed of.

**§ 3-1-16. Employment by county commissions of persons to enforce laws for prevention of cruelty to animals; compensation; oath and powers of same.**

The county commissions of the respective counties of this state may employ a suitable person or persons who shall be charged specifically with the duty of enforcing all laws for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and to fix the compensation of such officer or officers, which shall be paid in the same manner as other salaries of county employees are paid, and such officer or officers, upon taking the oath as required to be taken by deputy sheriffs, shall be vested with all powers now vested by law in deputy sheriffs.

**§ 3-1-29. Activities relating to fighting of dogs prohibited; punishment; violations; confiscation; procedures for disposition of animals; bond for the care of seized dog; forfeiture.**



**(a)** It shall be a Class C felony for any person to do any of the following:

**(1)** To own, possess, keep, or train any dog with the intent that such dog shall be engaged in an exhibition of fighting with another dog.

**(2)** For amusement or gain, to cause any dog to fight with another dog, or cause any dogs to injure each other.

**(3)** To permit any act in violation of subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection.

**(b)** It shall be a Class C felony for any person to be knowingly present, as a spectator, at any place, building, or tenement where preparations are being made for an exhibition of the fighting of dogs, with the intent to be present at such preparations, or to be knowingly present at such exhibition or to knowingly aid or abet another in such exhibition.

**(c)** Any dog used to fight other dogs in violation of subsection (a) of this section shall be confiscated as contraband by the sheriff or other law enforcement officers and shall not be returned to the owner, trainer, or possessor of the dog. The court shall award the animals to the humane society or other agency handling stray animals. At its discretion, the humane society or other agency handling stray animals shall humanely dispatch or dispose of any confiscated dog.

**(d)** Any dog confiscated pursuant to subsection (c) by the sheriff or other law enforcement officers shall be taken to the local humane society or other animal welfare agency.

**(e)** An appointed veterinarian or officer of the humane society or other animal welfare agency may upon delivery or at any time thereafter destroy the animal that is in his or her opinion injured, diseased past recovery, or whose continued existence is inhumane and destruction is necessary to relieve pain or suffering.

**(f)** After confiscation the humane society or other animal welfare agency may make application to the circuit court for a hearing to determine whether any animal seized pursuant to subsection (c) shall be humanely destroyed due to disease, injury or lack of any useful purpose because of training or viciousness. The court shall set a hearing date not more than 30 days from the filing of the application and shall give notice of the same to the owners of the animals. Upon a finding by the court that the seized animals are diseased, injured,



or lack any useful purpose due to training or viciousness, it shall be within the authority of the humane society or other animal welfare agency to humanely destroy such animal. Any animal found by the court not to be diseased, injured, or lacking any useful purpose due to training or viciousness shall be delivered to a court-approved private veterinarian or a private housing facility under the supervision of a veterinarian. Expenses incurred in connection with the housing, care, or upkeep of the dogs by any person, firm, partnership, corporation, or other entity shall be taxed against the owner.

**(g)** After confiscation, any entity holding a dog confiscated pursuant to this section may make application to the circuit court for issuance of an order requiring the owner or keeper of the dog to post a bond or deposit funds with the clerk of the court to cover the reasonable costs of the seizure, care, keeping, and the possible disposal of the dog. Reasonable costs shall include, but not be limited to, transportation, food, shelter, and care, including veterinary care. The bond or deposited funds shall be ordered posted in 30-day increments until such time as the case that was the cause of the dog being confiscated is resolved. The court shall set a hearing date no more than 10 days from filing of the application and shall give notice of the same to the owner or keeper of the dog.

**(1)** If, within 72 hours of the conclusion of the hearing, the owner or keeper fails to post the bond or deposit funds with the clerk of the court as ordered by the court, then the dog shall be forfeited by operation of law.

**(2)** If the owner or keeper presents sufficient evidence for the judge presiding over the hearing to determine that the owner or keeper is indigent, the owner or keeper may be relieved of the requirement to post a bond or deposit funds with the clerk of the court and may be relieved of the forfeiture provision under subdivision (1).

**(3)** The owner or keeper may choose at any time to surrender the dog to the local animal shelter or other animal housing facility holding the dog. The surrender shall not be considered a presumption of guilt.

**(4)** At the end of the time for which expenses are covered by the bond or deposit of funds, if the owner or keeper fails to post a new bond or deposit new funds with the clerk of the court, which must be received before the expiration date of the previous bond or deposit of funds, then the dog shall be forfeited by operation of law. The court may correct, alter, or otherwise adjust the bond or funds to be deposited upon a motion made before the expiration date of the previous bond or deposit of funds.



No person may file more than one motion seeking an adjustment to the bond or funds to be deposited for each six-month period for which the dog is held under this section.

**(5)** The entity holding the dog confiscated pursuant to this section shall be entitled to draw on any bond posted or funds deposited to cover the actual costs incurred in the seizure, care, keeping, and the possible disposal of the dog.

**(6)** Upon resolution of any criminal charges brought against the owner or keeper of the dog confiscated pursuant to this section, the owner or keeper shall be refunded the amount remaining on any bond posted or funds deposited in accordance with this section not expended for the seizure, care, keeping, or disposal of the dog.

**(h)** If any dog owner is convicted under subsection (a) or (b), the animal or animals shall be awarded to the local humane society or other animal welfare agency.

**(i)** At any time, if a dog is confiscated pursuant to this section, the state or entity holding the dog may file a petition with the circuit court seeking civil forfeiture of the seized dog.

**(1)** As part of this petition, the state or entity holding the dog may seek an extension of any bond ordered by the judge under subsection (g), pending resolution of the civil forfeiture petition filed pursuant to this subsection. The bond extension shall be considered in accordance with the procedures set forth in subsection (g). Upon resolution of a civil forfeiture petition filed under this subsection, the owner or keeper shall be refunded the amount remaining on any bond posted or funds deposited in accordance with this subsection not expended for the seizure, care, keeping, or disposal of the dog.

**(2)** The court shall set a hearing date no more than 20 days from the filing of the petition for civil forfeiture and shall give notice of the hearing to the owner or keeper of the dog.

**(3)** If the state meets its burden at the forfeiture hearing, the judge shall order the owner or keeper to forfeit ownership of the dog.



(4) If the state fails to meet its burden at this forfeiture hearing, the judge shall order the dog immediately returned to the owner or keeper.

### **§ 13A-11-14. Cruelty to animals.**

(a) A person commits the crime of cruelty to animals if, except as otherwise authorized by law, he or she recklessly or with criminal negligence:

(1) Subjects any animal to cruel mistreatment; or

(2) Subjects any animal in his or her custody to cruel neglect; or

(3) Kills or injures without good cause any animal belonging to another.

(b) Cruelty to animals is a Class A misdemeanor and on the first conviction of a violation of this section shall be punished by a fine of not more than three thousand dollars (\$3,000) or imprisonment in the county jail for not more than one year, or both fine and imprisonment; on a second conviction of a violation of this section, shall be punished by a fine of not less than five hundred dollars (\$500) nor more than three thousand dollars (\$3,000) or imprisonment in the county jail for not more than one year, or both fine and imprisonment; and on a third or subsequent conviction of a violation of this section, shall be punished by a fine of not less than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) nor more than three thousand dollars (\$3,000) or imprisonment in the county jail for not more than one year, or both fine and imprisonment.

#### **§ 13A-11-14.1. Aggravated cruelty to animals.**

(a) A person commits the crime of aggravated cruelty to animals if the person intentionally or knowingly violates Section 13A-11-14, and the act of cruelty or neglect involved the infliction of torture to the animal.

(b) The word torture as used in this section shall mean the act of doing physical injury to an animal by the infliction of inhumane treatment or gross physical abuse meant to cause the animal intensive or prolonged pain or serious physical injury, or by causing the death of the animal.

(c) For purposes of this section and Section 13A-11-14, the terms torture and cruelty do not include the following:



(1) Actions taken if there is a reasonable fear of imminent attack, or conduct which is otherwise permitted under the agricultural or animal husbandry laws, customs, or practices of this state or the United States, including, but not limited to, catfish, cattle, goats, horses, pigs, hogs, poultry, sheep, pen-raised game, rodeo stock, and other farm animals.

(2) Conduct which is permitted under the fishing, hunting, and trapping laws, customs, or practices of this state or the United States.

(3) Conduct that is permitted under the laws, customs, or practices of this state or the United States related to the training, conditioning, and use of animals for rodeos, equine activities, livestock shows, field trials, and similar activities, or the use of dogs for hunting, service work, or similar activities.

(4) Conduct that is licensed or lawful under the Alabama Veterinary Practice Act or conduct by any licensed veterinarian that complies with accepted standards of practice of the profession within the State of Alabama, including, but not limited to, euthanasia.

(5) Conduct that is lawful under the laws of this state or the United States relating to activities undertaken by research and education facilities and institutions.

(6) Conduct that is prohibited under Section 13A-12-4.

(d) Aggravated cruelty to animals is a Class C felony.

**§ 13A-11-16. Greyhounds used for racing to be put to death by lethal injection.**

(a) It is the intent of the Legislature that animals that participate in greyhound racing on which pari-mutual wagering is conducted and animals that are bred and trained for greyhound racing be treated humanely, both on and off the racetrack, throughout the lives of the animals.

(b) A greyhound bred, trained, or used for greyhound racing may not be put to death by any means other than lethal injection. A greyhound may not be removed from this state for the purpose of being destroyed.

(c)



(1) Any person who violates this section on the first offense shall be guilty of a Class C misdemeanor.

(2) A person who violates this section on a second or subsequent offense shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

#### **§ 13A-11-240. Definitions.**

(a) The word "torture" as used in this article shall mean the act of doing physical injury to a dog or cat by the infliction of inhumane treatment or gross physical abuse meant to cause said animal intensive or prolonged pain or serious physical injury, or thereby causing death due to said act.

(b) The word "cruel" as used in this article shall mean: Every act, omission, or neglect, including abandonment, where unnecessary or unjustifiable pain or suffering, including abandonment, is caused or where unnecessary pain or suffering is allowed to continue.

(c) The words "dog or cat" as used in this article shall mean any domesticated member of the dog or cat family.

#### **§ 13A-11-241. Cruelty in first and second degrees.**

(a) A person commits the crime of cruelty to a dog or cat in the first degree if he or she intentionally tortures any dog or cat or skins a domestic dog or cat or offers for sale or exchange or offers to buy or exchange the fur, hide, or pelt of a domestic dog or cat. Cruelty to a dog or cat in the first degree is a Class C felony. A conviction for a felony pursuant to this section shall not be considered a felony for purposes of the Habitual Felony Offender Act, Sections 13A-5-9 to 13A-5-10.1, inclusive.

(b) A person commits the crime of cruelty to a dog or cat in the second degree if he or she, in a cruel manner, overloads, overdrives, deprives of necessary sustenance or shelter, unnecessarily or cruelly beats, injures, mutilates, or causes the same to be done. Cruelty to a dog or cat in the second degree is a Class A misdemeanor.

#### **§ 13A-11-242. Appointment of agents.**

Any county or municipality may appoint one or more trained agents to inspect all alleged violations of this article, to protect dogs or cats from any cruelty charged, and to



prevent any cruelty to any dog or cat. Any appointment made pursuant to this section shall be made at a meeting of the local governing body duly called with notice.

**§ 13A-11-243. Powers if agents; officers; liability.**

(a) Any law enforcement officer and any agent of the county or the municipality appointed pursuant to Section 13A-11-242, having reasonable belief, evidence of, or having found a dog or cat to be neglected or cruelly treated may perform either of the following:

(1) Remove the dog or cat from its present location.

(2) Order the owner of the dog or cat to provide certain care to the dog or cat at the owner's expense without the removal of the dog or cat from its present location.

(b) Neither the county or municipality, nor any employee or agent of the county or municipality, acting in good faith, shall be liable for any actions taken under this section, regardless of whether or not the dog or cat is returned to its owner after impoundment.

**§ 13A-11-244. Hearing.**

(a) The law enforcement officer or any agent of the county or of the municipality, without the requirement of any fee or charge for court costs, shall immediately petition the municipal court if the violation involves a municipal ordinance or the district court in the county in which the dog or cat is found for a hearing to be set within 20 days of seizure of the dog or cat or issuance of the order to provide care. The hearing shall be held not more than 10 days after the setting of the date to determine whether the owner, if known, is able to provide adequately and protectively for the dog or cat and is fit to have custody of the dog or cat. The hearing shall be concluded and the court order entered within 30 days after the date the hearing is commenced.

(b) The owner, at least five days prior to holding such a hearing, shall be notified of the date of the hearing to determine if the owner is able to provide adequately and protectively for the dog or cat and is fit to have custody of the dog or cat.

**§ 13A-11-245. Disposition of animal.**

(a) The law enforcement officer or agent of the county or municipality may provide for the dog or cat until either the dog or cat is returned to the owner



by the court, or the court refuses to return the dog or cat to the owner and implements one of the procedures pursuant to subsection (c).

**(b)** If the owner is adjudged by the court, with certification from a licensed veterinarian, to be able to provide adequately for and have custody of the dog or cat, the dog or cat shall be returned to the owner.

**(c)** If the court determines that the owner of the dog or cat is unable, unwilling, or unfit to adequately provide for, protect, and have custody of the dog or cat, the court may implement the following by court order:

**(1)** Upon the testimony of the person taking custody, a licensed veterinarian, or another qualified witness that the dog or cat requires destruction or other disposition for humane reasons or is of no commercial value, order the dog or cat destroyed or remanded directly to the custody of the dog or cat control, humane shelter, or similar facility designated by the county or the municipality or other appropriate person to be disposed of by the facility or person in a humane manner.

**(2)** Upon proof of the costs incurred by the agent or agency having custody of the dog or cat, order that the owner pay any costs incurred for the care of the dog or cat and for any costs incurred in destroying the dog or cat. A separate hearing may be held by the judge of the district court on the assessment of costs, which assessment shall include all costs of notice and hearing. In the event the court finds the owner innocent of charges, the owner shall not be charged with costs of the care of the dog or cat in custody.

**(d)** If the court determines that the owner is unable, unwilling, or unfit to adequately provide for and protect any other dog or cat in the custody of the owner that was not originally seized by the agency, agent, or other person when the dog or cat in custody was seized, the court may enjoin the owner of further possession or custody of the unseized dog or cat.

### **§ 13A-11-246. Applicability.**

This article shall not apply to any of the following persons or institutions:

**(1)** Academic and research enterprises that use dogs or cats for medical or pharmaceutical research or testing.

**(2)** Any owner of a dog or cat who euthanizes the dog or cat for humane purposes.



(3) Any person who kills a dog or cat found outside of the owned or rented property of the owner or custodian of the dog or cat when the dog or cat threatens immediate physical injury or is causing physical injury to any person, animal, bird, or silvicultural or agricultural industry.

(4) A person who shoots a dog or cat with a BB gun not capable of inflicting serious injury when the dog or cat is defecating or urinating on the person's property.

(5) A person who uses a training device, anti-bark collar, or an invisible fence on his or her own dog or cat or with permission of the owner.

**§ 13A-11-247. Construction.**

This article shall not be construed to repeal other criminal laws. Whenever conduct prescribed by any provision of this article is also prescribed by any other provision of law, the provision which carries the more serious penalty shall be applied.

