

FBI MAKES ANIMAL ABUSE A CRIME AGAINST SOCIETY

By Vicki Clinebell

image: http://cdn1-www.dogtime.com/assets/uploads/2015/05/file_21735_column_fbi-animal-abuse-1.jpg



Crimes against humanity. (Photo Credit: Shutterstock)

The **Federal Bureau of Investigation** announced that animal abuse will be prosecuted as a crime against society and under the new categorization they will begin tracking and collecting information about incidents of animal cruelty and the perpetrators.

According to the FBI, the official definition of animal cruelty will be:

Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly taking an action that mistreats or kills any animal without just cause, such as torturing, tormenting, mutilation, maiming, poisoning, or abandonment. Included are instances of duty to provide care, e.g., shelter, food, water, care if sick or injured, transporting or confining an animal in a manner likely to cause injury or death; causing an animal to fight with another; inflicting excessive or repeated unnecessary pain or suffering, e.g., uses objects to beat or injure an animal. This definition does not include proper maintenance of animals for show or sport; use of animals for food, lawful hunting, fishing or trapping.

This new FBI categorization is intended to improve the way crimes against animals are tracked nationwide and could help bolster state animal cruelty laws across the United States. All 50 states now have felony animal cruelty provisions. On **March 14, 2014, South Dakota** became the final state to enact a felony provision for animal cruelty.

There's a national consensus that animal abuse should indeed be treated as a serious crime. Now animal cruelty will be a Group A felony. The new classification will make it easier to get harsher sentences, and to identify young offenders. Because cases of animal cruelty, including animal neglect, will now be

included in the **FBI Uniform Crime Report** law enforcement agencies have more incentive to pay attention to any incidents, and statistics on these types of crime will be more accurate and detailed. It will take some time to update **FBI and law enforcement databases** nationwide, so no data will be collected until January 2016, and then it's projected to be several more months before there are numbers to analyze.

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Animal abusers of today could be the serial killers of tomorrow. (Photo Credit: Shutterstock)

But the new animal cruelty statistics will allow police and counselors to identify and work with children who show early signs of trouble, so a preschooler hurting animals today can hopefully be prevented from becoming the serial killers of tomorrow. Infamous serial killers “Son of Sam” David Berkowitz, “Boston Strangler” Albert DeSalvo, and Jeffrey Dahmer are known to have tortured and killed animals before they went on to human victims.

The **SPCA** applauds this next step being taken, as the public gets serious about escalating incidents of animal cruelty. They believe animal cruelty is and should be identified as a violent crime, one that leads to bigger things if it goes unchecked. No longer will violent cases of animal cruelty be included in the “other offenses” category simply because the victims of the crime are animals.

A bill introduced in February, **HR 2293**, the **Prevent Animal Cruelty and Torture Act** would make it a federal crime to commit malicious cruelty to an animal in any area where the federal government has jurisdiction. **Federal law already prohibits animal fighting**, as well as the trade in obscene video depictions of animals being subjected to cruelty. While trade in these video depictions is banned, until now the underlying acts of cruelty themselves were not. Last year Congress banned attendance at animal fights.

The new FBI categorization is significant because it affirms that at the highest level of our government animal cruelty is recognized as a violent crime. As a civilized society, our opposition to all forms of animal cruelty must be unwavering.

Read more at <http://dogtime.com/reference/dog-laws/21735-fbi-makes->

animal-abuse-a-crime-against-society#mV3p6cRb2fwzsu7S.99