



How You Can Help

The worst thing you can do if you witness or suspect animal cruelty or neglect is nothing. Be that animal's voice and get it out of its abusive situation immediately.

Four steps help an abused animal:

Animal cruelty is illegal in every state and a felony in 48 states. If you make a report of alleged animal cruelty the responding agency is required to investigate.

If you see an animal in distress, don't assume that someone else will take care of the situation. Animals can't speak for themselves; it's up to you to speak for them.

1. **Be prepared:** Most large municipalities have a local animal control department, or an animal shelter or humane society responsible for cruelty investigations. Do an online search to identify the agency in your area, and program the number into your mobile phone so you are prepared to report abuse.
2. **Speak up or call 911:** If you witness overt violence against an animal or suspect it, speak up! If you don't feel comfortable intervening in a situation directly, call 911 or your local animal welfare organization immediately. It's essential to call law enforcement when violence is involved, since it is likely part of an ongoing pattern that may include abuse against people as well. If you're traveling or living in a more rural area or community without an animal control agency, call 911 or the local police department.
3. **Document the details:** Tell the officer as many details of the situation as you can: the location, date, time and descriptions of the people and animals involved. Video and photographic documentation – even a mobile phone photo – can help bolster the case. Provide names of others who may have witnessed the incident. Remain on the scene until authorities arrive, if you can do so safely.
4. **Prepare to testify:** While you may remain anonymous, the case will be much stronger if you're willing to identify yourself and testify to what you witnessed. A human witness is crucial for building a strong, prosecutable case.