



Animal Cruelty

COST OF CARE LEGISLATION

Hold animal abusers accountable for the financial cost of their crimes

When abused and neglected animals are seized by law enforcement in cruelty cases, sometimes they are held for months—or even years—while criminal charges are prosecuted. That’s a significant and needless financial cost to animal agencies, taxpayers and animals.

What are Cost of Care Laws?

Strong “cost of care” laws shift the financial burden of animal care in cruelty cases from local agencies and taxpayers to the animals’ owner. If animals are seized in a cruelty case and a judge determines the seizure was warranted, the owner must either pay for animal care or relinquish the animals so they can be adopted.

Why do states need them?

One of the greatest obstacles with enforcing animal cruelty laws is the significant cost associated with caring for abused and neglected animals while cruelty charges are prosecuted.

Sometimes these high costs prevent state or local agencies from rescuing animals who are suffering from illegal abuse because they do not have the resources to provide long-term care to the animals. And when they do seize animals, holding abused dogs and cats for long periods in a shelter environment can be detrimental to the very animals the cruelty laws were meant to protect.

It is unfair for shelters and municipal agencies to have to pay the significant cost of caring for seized animals, when it is their owner who is legally responsible for caring for them.

How does the Cost of Care process work?

- Provides a legal process so anyone who has had his or her animals lawfully seized due to cruelty may be required to pay the cost of their care
- Requires that the owner have notice and a hearing to review if the seizure was warranted
- Allows seized animals to be placed in new homes if the owner fails to pay for the animals’ care

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