

Stricter Animal Cruelty Act in Arkansas Advances

Proposal includes extra jail time for abusing a dog, cat, or horse in the presence of kids.

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Arkansas lawmakers voted 34-0 for legislation that calls for making aggravated cruelty to a dog, cat, or horse a felony on first offense.

Lead sponsor of Senate Bill 77, Sen. Sue Madison, D-Fayetteville, also has the support of the Arkansas Farm Bureau and animal welfare groups. The bill has been ordered to the House for consideration.

According to the act, the cruelty offense would be punishable by a maximum penalty of six years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. In cases where a person is convicted of mistreating an animal in the presence of a child 16 years and younger, the bill also includes a five-year sentencing enhancement.

Currently, cruelty to animals is considered a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine up to \$1,000 and up to one year in jail.