

Baltimore Takes On Cruelty to Dogs, Cats

City officials and animal advocacy groups form a task force to fight animal cruelty.

Posted: July 14, 2009, 5 a.m. EDT

In the wake of the burning deaths of a dog and two cats, Baltimore city officials and animal advocacy groups, including the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), have teamed up to create an Anti-Animal Abuse Task Force. The task force, unveiled July 8, is charged with helping the city of Baltimore prevent and prosecute animal cruelty.

"The protection and safety of animals in the city of Baltimore is an important concern," Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon said in a statement. "This is more than a legal issue. This is a community issue. If you improve animal welfare in a community, you improve public safety for everyone."

In June, Baltimore police charged two teenagers with allegedly dousing a pit bull with gasoline and setting him on fire. The dog had to be euthanized due to the severity of his injuries, according to reports. Two cats were reportedly burned to death in June.

The task force is expected to meet regularly over the next year to establish steps the city should take to combat animal cruelty. Recommendations are to be submitted to the mayor next summer.

"We have long recognized the dangerous potential for animal cruelty to lead to more serious crimes, and we look forward to working with the city of Baltimore to help put a stop to these violent injustices against animals," said Randall Lockwood, vice president of anti-cruelty field services for the ASPCA.

Lockwood will sit on the task force along with representatives from the state attorney's office, the city council, the mayor's office, the Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Center and the Maryland Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.