

Hawaii Passes Its First Animal Cruelty Bill

With the governor's signature, Hawaii's first animal cruelty bill will make extreme cases of animal abuse a felony offense.

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There are a handful of U.S. states that still are without felony-level penalties for animal abuse, but soon Hawaii will no longer be one of them.

On May 1, the Hawaii senate passed State Bill 1665, which increases the penalty for extreme cases of animal abuse. After the governor signs the bill, the intentional torture, mutilation or poisoning of a pet animal will be a felony offense.

Under the legislation, felony abuse is considered intentionally or knowingly torturing, mutilating or poisoning or causing the torture, mutilation, or poisoning of any pet animal resulting in serious bodily injury or death of the pet animal.

The bill will exempt certain veterinary practices, scientific research, and animal cropping and docking procedures.

The felony provision not only applies to acts of cruelty toward dogs and cats, but also rabbits, birds, and even domesticated pigs, which some native islanders keep as pets. It was actually a surge of attacks on pet pigs in 2006 that spurred the legislation.

Currently, 42 states, plus Washington, D.C., the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico have felony animal cruelty laws. The states with no animal cruelty felony provisions currently are Alaska, Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Mississippi, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Utah.