

## States Extend Domestic Violence Protective Orders to Dogs

**Illinois is the fifth state since 2006 to enact laws protecting dogs, cats, and other pets from domestic violence.**

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When Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich signed House Bill 9 into law in August 2007, the Land of Lincoln became the latest state to join the growing political tide that includes pets in domestic violence legislation.

Studies show that approximately 25 to 40 percent of domestic violence victims do not leave their abusers because they are concerned about what will happen to their pets or livestock, according to Jill Buckley, senior director of legislative services mediation training at the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. And 71 percent of pet-owning women in shelters reported a pet had been threatened, injured or killed by their abuser, she said.

"If the abuser is unable to vent his or her anger and rage at the human victim, he or she may very likely target the victim's beloved pet," said Buckley, explaining why these laws are needed. "Protective orders help victims of abuse to leave volatile domestic situations knowing that their beloved pets will be safe."

Maine was the first state to implement pet protection legislation. Vermont, New York and Connecticut have since followed suit, making Illinois the fifth state to have this type of legislation on the books. Illinois' law goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2008. It allows judges to include pets in domestic violence protection orders.

In California, a pet protection bill passed in the Senate and Assembly on Aug. 27 and is now on its way to the governor's office. California's bill is similar to the Illinois law and would amend California's Family Code to include pets in protection orders.

"[These laws] send a message that animals in cases of domestic violence are important and valued members of a family who require protections from the courts," Buckley said. "It's important that the courts consider violence against a pet as a serious issue. Allowing judges to issue protective orders for animals show that the courts are beginning to understand this nexus."

—Heidi Hatch, Associate News Editor for DogChannel.com