

## Arkansas Advances Stricter Animal Cruelty Act

**Proposal includes extra jail time for abuse in the presence of children.**

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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 or younger, the bill 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.