

## Ohio Seeks Stiffer Penalties for Pet Abuse

**New legislation would make mistreatment of cats and dogs a felony.**

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A push to make the mistreatment of cats and dogs a felony instead of a misdemeanor is under way in Ohio.

Legislation introduced recently seeks to increase the degree of offense for the prohibition against the cruel treatment of a companion animal by the animal's custodian or caretaker to a felony of the fifth degree.

House Bill 70, sponsored by Rep. Ronald Gerberry, D-Canfield, was written in response to a case in Youngstown, Ohio, involving a kennel owner who was ordered to serve four months in jail plus fines for starving seven dogs to death and abusing 12.

Proponents of the bill say Ohio must join 45 other states in making animal abuse a serious felony crime and not allow cruelty to continue with little to no punishment. This measure would increase fines and potential jail time for a person who is convicted or pleads guilty to abuse charges.