

Hawaii Passes Its First Animal Cruelty Bill

Law makes animal abuse a felony.

Posted: May 15, 2007 5 a.m. EDT

There are a handful of U.S. states that still are without felony-level penalties for animal abuse, but Hawaii will soon 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 bill is signed by the governor, 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.

Exempted are certain veterinary practices, scientific research, and animal cropping and docking procedures.

The felony provision not only applies to acts of cruelty toward cats and dogs, but also rabbits, birds and even domesticated pigs, which some native islanders keep as pets. It was actually a spate 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 are: Alaska, Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Mississippi, North Dakota, South Dakota and Utah.