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Animal Cruelty Statutes A State-By-State Analysis

Elizabeth R. Springsteen
Research Associate
National Agricultural Law Center

The following chart presents a state-by-state survey of classifications and penalties for acts of animal cruelty. Because each state differs in its definition of “cruelty,” it is not meant to characterize specific acts as belonging to a certain category and thus meriting a specific punishment in the listed state. Instead, it is a reflection of how the individual states criminalize and punish different levels of animal-abusive criminal behavior. It is important to note that penalties for “fighting” animals or for injuring service animals are typically higher. While these enhanced penalties have not been included in the chart, they may be individually determined by examining each state’s statutes on animal cruelty. [Click here](#) to access the linkable map to the states’ statutes.

The “cruelty ‘plus’” category is named aggravated cruelty in some states, and in others is called animal cruelty in the first degree. Still others do not name it at all but merely define it as consisting of certain acts or a specific mental state. Regardless of the name, the common theme of the statutes is that some acts are more harmful or painful to the animal, and thus the penalty should be higher. It is worth noting, however, that a sizeable minority of states limits this charge to offenses against companion animals, pets, or other specifically delineated categories of animals.

There are several other almost universal traits of animal cruelty statutes that are not included in the chart but, again, are included in the individual language of the [states’ statutes](#). These include the judge’s ability to order psychiatric counseling for the offender, statutory authority to seize the abused animal, and guidelines for the severance of ownership rights from an abusive owner. A final commonality is the judges’ right to prohibit animal ownership for a number of years after the conviction. While not part of a traditional criminal sentence, these components serve to enhance the offender’s penalty for cruelty offenses.



| State | "Simple" Cruelty | | Cruelty "Plus" | | Other |
|--------------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| | Classification | Punishment | Classification | Punishment | |
| Alabama | Class B Misd | < 6 mths and/or < \$3,000 | Class C Felony | 1 yr & 1 day -10 yr and/or < \$15,000 | |
| | | | Class A Misdemeanor | < 1 yr and/or < \$6,000 | |
| Alaska | Class A Misd | < 1 yr and/or \$10,000 | N/A | | |
| Arizona | Class 1 Misd. | < 6 mths and/or < \$2,500 | Class 6 Felony | 6 mth - 18mth and/or < \$150,000 | |
| Arkansas | <i>Initial:</i> Unclassified Misd. | 1 day - 1 yr and/or \$50 - \$1,000 | * Class D Felony | < 6 yrs and/or < \$10,000 | "Cruelty plus" limited to offenses against dogs, cats, and horses. |
| | <i>Second:</i> Unclassified Misd. | 7 days - 1 yr and/or \$400 - \$1,000 | * | | |
| | <i>Third:</i> Unclassified Misd. | 90 days - 1 yr and/or \$900 - \$1,000 | * | | |
| | Fourth: Class D Felony | < 6 yrs and/or < \$10,000 | | | |
| California | (Not labeled) | < 1 yr and/or < \$20,000 | * N/A | | |
| Colorado | <i>Initial:</i> Class 1 Misd | 6 mth -18 mth and/or \$500 - \$5,000 | <i>Initial:</i> Class 6 Felony | 1 yr- 18 mth and/or \$1,000 - \$100,000 | |
| | <i>Subsequent :</i> Class 6 felony | 1 yr- 18 mth and/or \$1,000 - \$100,000 | <i>Subsequent:</i> Class 5 Felony | 1 yr- 3 yr and/or \$1,000 - \$100,000 | |
| Connecticut | (Not labeled) | < 1 yr and/or < \$1,000 | * (Not labeled) | < 5 years and/or < \$5,000 | * |
| DC | (Not labeled) | < 180 days and/or < \$250 | * Felony | < 5 years and/or < \$25,000 | * |
| Delaware | Class A Misd. | < 1 yr and/or \$2,300 | Class F felony | < 3 yrs and/or fines as deemed appropriate | |
| Florida | 1st Degree Misd. | < 1 yr and/or \$5,000 | + <i>Initial:</i> 3rd Degree Felony | < 5 yrs and/or \$10,000 | + |
| | | | <i>Subsequent:</i> 3rd Degree Felony | 6 mths - 5 yrs and \$5,000- \$10,000 | + |
| Georgia | <i>Initial :</i> Misd. | < 12 mths and/or \$1,000 | <i>Initial:</i> (Not labeled) | 1 yr - 5 yrs, and/or < \$ 15,000 | * |
| | <i>Subsequent (injury) :</i> Misd. | < 1 yr and/or \$5,000 | * <i>Subsequent:</i> (Not labeled) | 1 yr - 5 yrs and/or < \$100,000 | + |
| | <i>Subsequent (death) :</i> Misd. of high and agg. nature | 3 mth- 12 mth and/or \$10,000 | | | |
| Hawaii | Misd. | < 1 yr and/or \$2,000 | * Class C Felony | < 5 yrs and/or < \$10,000 | |
| Idaho | <i>Initial:</i> Misd. | <6 mths and/or \$100-\$5,000 | N/A | | |
| | #2: Misd. | < 9 mths and \$200-\$7,000 | | | |
| | #3: Misd. | <12 mths and \$500 - \$9,000 | | | |
| Illinois | <i>Initial :</i> Class A Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$2,500 | <i>Initial:</i> Class 4 Felony | < 1 yr and/or < \$25,000 | "Torture": Class 3 felony - < 1 yr and/or < \$25,000 |
| | <i>Subsequent :</i> Class 4 Felony | < 1 yr and/or < \$25,000 | <i>Subsequent:</i> Class 3 Felony | < 1 yr and/or < \$25,000 | |
| Indiana | <i>Initial :</i> Class A Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$5,000 | Class D Felony | 6 mth - 3 yrs and/or < \$10,000 | Neglect: Class B Misd. - < 180 days and/or < \$1,000 |
| | <i>Subsequent :</i> Class D Felony | 6 mth - 3 yrs and/or < \$10,000 | | | |
| Iowa | Aggravated Misd. | < 2 yrs and/or \$625 - \$6,250 | <i>Initial:</i> Aggravated Misd. | < 2 yrs and/or \$625 - \$6,250 | <i>Neglect :</i> Simple Misd. - < 30 days and/or \$65-\$625 |
| | | | <i>Subsequent:</i> Class D Felony | < 5 yrs and/or \$750 - \$7,500 | |
| Kansas | <i>Initial :</i> Class A Non-person Misd. | < 1 year and/or \$2,500 | Nonperson Felony | 30 days - 1 yr and \$500 - \$5,000 | * Lower class is basically neglect. Cruelty plus is traditional "cruelty" components |
| | <i>Subsequent :</i> Non-person Felony | 5 days - 1 yr | * | | |

" * " = Penalty set forth in cruelty statute

" + " = Penalty set forth in combination of cruelty and separate statute



| State | "Simple" Cruelty | | Cruelty "Plus" | | Other |
|----------------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| | Classification | Punishment | Classification | Punishment | |
| Kentucky | Class A Misd. | < 12 mths and/or \$500 | <i>Initial:</i> Class A Misd. | < 12 mths and/or \$500 | |
| | | | <i>Subsequent:</i> Class D felony | 1 yr - 5 yrs and \$1,000- \$10,000 | |
| Louisiana | (Not labeled) | < 6 mths and/or \$1,000; req. 40 hrs. of com. srvc. | * (Not labeled) | 1 - 10 years, and/or \$5,000 - \$25,000 | * |
| Maine | <i>Initial:</i> Class D Crime | < 1 yr and/or \$2,000 | Class C | < 5 yrs and/or \$1,000- \$10,000 | Civil violation (Initial): Between \$500 and \$2,500; (Subsequent): Between \$1,000 and \$5,000 |
| | <i>Subsequent :</i> Class C Crime | < 5 yrs and/or \$5,000 | | | |
| Maryland | Misd. | < 90 days and/or < \$1,000 | * Felony | < 3 years and/or < \$5,000 | * |
| Massachusetts | (Not labeled) | In state prison < 5 yrs or in house of correction < 2.5 yrs; and/or < \$2,500 | * N/A | | |
| Michigan | <i>Initial:</i> Misd. | Differs according to number of animals affected | * Felony | < 4 years and/or < \$5,000.00 and/or < 500 hrs com. srvc. | * |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> Felony | Differs according to number of animals affected | * | | |
| Minnesota | <i>Initial:</i> Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$3,000 | * (Not labeled) | < 2 years and/or < \$5,000 | * |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> Gross Misd. | < 2 yrs and/or < \$5,000 | * | | |
| Mississippi | <i>Dogs, Cats :</i> Misd. | < 6 mths and/or \$1,000 | Felony (livestock only) | 1 yr - 5 yrs, and/or \$1,500 - \$10,000 | * |
| | <i>All animals :</i> Misd. | 10 - 100 days and/or \$10 - \$100 | | | |
| Missouri | <i>Initial:</i> Class A Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$1,000 | N/A | | <i>Neglect (Initial):</i> Class C Misd. - < 15 days and/or < \$500 |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> Class D felony | < 4 yrs and/or < \$5,000 | | | <i>Neglect (Subsequent):</i> Class B Misd. - < 6 mths and/or \$1,000 |
| Montana | (Not labeled) | < 1 yr and/or \$1,000 | * (Not labeled) | < 2 years, and/or \$2,500 | * |
| | (Not labeled) | < 2 yrs and/or \$2,500 | * | | |
| Nebraska | <i>Initial:</i> Class I Misd. | < 1 yr and/or \$1,000 | Class IV felony | < 5 yrs and/or \$10,000 | |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> Class IV felony | < 5 yrs and/or \$10,000 | | | |
| Nevada | <i>Initial:</i> Misd. | 2 days - 6 mths; and \$200 - \$1,000 ; and 48 - 120 hours com. srvc. | * N/A | | |
| | <i>Second:</i> Misd. | 10 days - 6 mths; and \$500 - \$1,000; and 100 - 200 hrs com. srvc. | * | | |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> Category C Felony | 1 yr- 5 yrs and/or < \$10,000 | | | |
| New Hampshire | <i>Initial:</i> Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$2,000 | Class B felony | < 7 yrs and/or < \$4,000 | |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> Class B felony | < 7 yrs and/or < \$4,000 | | | |
| New Jersey | <i>Initial:</i> Crime of the 4th degree | < 18 mths and/or < \$10,000; AND <30 days com srvc. | + Crime of the 3rd Degree | 3 yrs - 5 yrs and/or < \$15,000; req. <30 days com srvc. | + Neglect: Disorderly persons offense- < 6 mths and/or \$250 |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> Crime of the 3rd degree | 3 yrs - 5 yrs and/or < \$15,000; AND <30 days com srvc. | + | | |
| New Mexico | <i>#1-#3:</i> Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$1,000 | 4th Degree Felony | < 18 mths and/or < \$5,000 | |
| | <i>4+:</i> 4th Degree Felony | < 18 mths and/or < \$5,000 | | | |
| New York | Class A Misd. | < 1 yr and/or \$1,000 | Class B Felony | 1 yr - 2 yrs and/or < \$5,000 | + |

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| State | "Simple" Cruelty | | Cruelty "Plus" | | Other |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| | Classification | Punishment | Classification | Punishment | |
| North Carolina | Class 1 Misd. | Sentencing Guidelines | Class I felony | Sentencing Guidelines | Maliciously starve: Class A1 Misd. - Sentencing Guidelines |
| North Dakota | Class A Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$2,000 | N/A | | |
| Ohio | 2nd Degree Misd. | < 90 days and/or < \$750 | <i>Initial:</i> 1st Degree Misd. | < 180 days and/or < \$1,000 | |
| | | | <i>Subsequent:</i> 5th Degree Felony | 6 mths - 12 mths and < \$2,500 | |
| Oklahoma | Felony | In state pen. < 5 yrs or in county jail < 1 yr; or < \$5000 | * N/A | | |
| Oregon | Injury: Class B Misd. | < 6 mths and/or < \$2,500 | Class C felony | < 5 yrs and/or < \$125,000 | |
| | Death: Class A Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$6,250 | | | |
| Pennsylvania | <i>Initial:</i> Summary Offense | < 90 days and/or \$50-\$750 | * <i>Initial:</i> 1st Degree Misd. | < 2 yrs and/or > \$1,000 | * |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> 3rd Degree Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$2,500 | <i>Subsequent:</i> 3rd Degree Felony | < 7 yrs and/or < \$15,000 | |
| Rhode Island | (Not labeled) | < 11 mths and/or \$50 - \$500 | * (Not labeled) | < 2 yrs and/or < \$1,000; req. 10 hrs com srvc. | * |
| South Carolina | <i>1st:</i> Misd. | < 60 days and/or \$100- \$500 | * Felony | 180 days - 5 yrs and \$5,000 | * |
| | <i>2nd:</i> Misd. | < 90 days and/or < \$800 | * | | |
| | <i>3 +:</i> Misd. | < 2 yrs and/or < \$2,000 | * | | |
| South Dakota | Class 1 Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$2,000 | N/A | | |
| Tennessee | <i>Initial:</i> Class A Misd. | < 11 mths, 25 days and/or < \$2,500 | Class E felony | 1 yr - 6 yr and/or < \$3,000 | |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> Class E Felony | 1 yr - 6 yr and/or < \$3,000 | | | |
| Texas | <i>#1 & #2:</i> Class A Misd. | < 1 yr and/or \$4,000 | <i>#1 & #2:</i> State Jail Felony | 180 days - 2 yrs and/or < \$10,000 | |
| | <i>3+:</i> State Jail Felony | 180 days - 2 yrs and/or < \$10,000 | <i>3+:</i> 3rd Degree Felony | 2 yr- 10 yr and/or \$10,000 | |
| Utah | <i>Reckless/Neg.:</i> Class C Misd. | < 90 days and/or < \$750 | <i>Neg.:</i> Class C Misd. | < 90 days and/or < \$750 | |
| | <i>Int./Knowing:</i> Class B Misd. | < 6 mths and/or < \$1,000 | <i>Reckless:</i> Class B Misd. | < 6 mths and/or < \$1,000 | |
| | | | <i>Int./Knowing:</i> Class A Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$2,500 | |
| Vermont | <i>Initial:</i> (Not labeled) | < 1 yr and/or < \$2,000 | * <i>Initial:</i> (Not labeled) | < 3 yrs and/or \$5,000 | * |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> (Not labeled) | < 2 yrs and/or < \$5,000 | * <i>Subsequent:</i> (Not labeled) | < 5 yrs and/or \$7,500 | * |
| Virginia | <i>Initial:</i> Class 1 Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$2,500 | Class 6 felony | In prison 1 yr- 5 yrs or jail < 1 yr and/or < \$2,500 | |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> Class 6 felony | In prison 1 yr- 5 yrs or jail < 1 yr and/or < \$2,500 | | | |
| Washington | Gross Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$5,000 | Class C felony | < 5 yrs and/or < \$10,000 | Abandon/Neglect: Misd.- < 90 days and/or \$1,000 |
| West Virginia | <i>Initial:</i> Misd. | < 6 mths. and/or \$300 - \$2,000 | * Felony | 1 yr - 5 yrs and/or \$1,000 - \$5,000 | * |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> Misd. | 90 days - 1 yr and/or \$500 - 3,000 | * | | |
| Wisconsin | Class A Misd. | < 9 mths and/or < \$10,000 | Class I felony | < 3 yrs, 6 mths and/or < \$10,000 | |
| Wyoming | <i>Initial:</i> Misd. | < 6 mths and/or < \$750 | * Felony | < 2 yrs and/or < \$5,000 | * |
| | <i>Subsequent:</i> High Misd. | < 1 yr and/or < \$5,000 | * | | |

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" + " = Penalty set forth in combination of cruelty and separate statute