

MARCH 2021 E-NEWSLETTER



Legislative Update: We're Almost There

The legislative session is more than half over (June 9) and all Committees will report bills for chamber consideration (JF) no later than April 9. As of this date, the animal bills successfully passed by Committee and going to the House and Senate for a vote are: SB 923, Study of Animal Cruelty Laws by the Sentencing Commission, SB 925 Prohibiting the Import of Big Six African Wildlife; HB 6048 Prohibit Greyhound Racing; HB 6504 the Department of Agriculture agency bill which makes several positive changes in the APCP (Animal Population Control Program) and removes troublesome definitions. We are very disappointed that the legislature did not consider granting local control over the sale of dogs, cats and rabbits in pet stores, a ban on the sale of fur products and a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses. A run down of all the bills we are tracking follows:

- **Oppose Bear Hunting in CT:** There were more than 25 bills introduced this session to expanding hunting opportunities in CT including allowing a bear hunt in the state. The Environment Committee decided because of the complexities of legislating during a pandemic, there would be no bear hunting bills debated this year. With several representatives of the Environment Committee and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) pressing for a bear hunt, we expect

there to be vigorous debate next year.

- **SB923 An Act concerning review of animal cruelty laws by the Connecticut Sentencing Commission.** CVA has been working closely with the bill sponsor, Representative Dorinda Borer in the progress of this bill. CVA and others supported the bill at its public hearing on March 8. The Judiciary Committee, in a unanimous vote, approved the bill at its March 29 meeting.
- **SB 925 Act prohibiting import, sale, possession of the Big Six African species:** elephants, lions, leopards, black rhinoceros, white rhinoceros, and giraffes. CVA testified in support of the bill at its February 26 public hearing. The bill was favorably reported out of Committee by a vote of 24 yes and 8 no; the bill is ready for consideration by the House and Senate chambers.
- **HB 6048 Greyhound Racing Ban:** To close the loophole in CT statutes and statutorily prohibit greyhound racing in the state. CVA testified in support of the bill at the February 25 public hearing; the Committee voted favorably to bring the bill to the House and Senate Floor for consideration.
- **HB 6504 Animal Welfare - Dept of Agriculture Agency bill;** Legislation to make small changes to Department programs. The bill makes several improvements to the APCA programs by increasing the veterinarian vouchers, increasing from 10 to 20% the amount allocated to the feral cat grant program, and increasing the level of the low income vouchers available to spay/neuter cats and dogs. Importantly the Committee removed the troublesome change to the definition of animal that would have prohibited ACOs from responding to wildlife issues. The bill passed Committee and is on its way to the Chambers for a final vote.
- **Local Control of Pet Shops:** HB 6542 would clarify that local jurisdictions have authority over whether local pet shops can sell puppy mill dogs, cats and rabbits in their respective communities. A hearing was held on March 5 where CVA and other major animal advocacy organizations testified in support of the bill. It is very disturbing to report that the Committee chose not to bring the bill for a vote, making it a dead bill for this year. CVA and other animal advocacy organizations will not stop efforts to restrict the sale of dogs, cats and rabbits in CT pet shops.
- **Circus Bill: SB 66** would prohibit the use of exotic and wild animals in circuses and exhibitions. The bill garnered 24 co-sponsors but unfortunately did not move forward this year. The Environment Committee limited the number of bills voted out because of the pandemic and unfortunately the circus bill got caught up in the COVID limits. The large number and broad bi-partisan support for the bill will put it in a good position for next year.
- **Eliminate the Sale and Trade of New Fur Products in CT: HB 5031** The anti-fur bill also got caught up on the Environment Committees limit on the number of bills reported out this year due to the pandemic. There was progress, however, in educating elected officials on the cruel and inhumane issues surrounding the fur trade.

- **HB5030 An Act Requiring the Tracking of Climate Change Related Emissions from Foods Consumer by Residents of the State.** CVA testified in support of the bill at the March 10 public hearing. The bill has a unique opportunity to add to the State's already successful environmental efforts by including measuring life-cycle emissions associated with food. The bill will not move forward this year. It is a unique concept which needs time to mature before the legislature will address it.
- **SB 123 An Act to Increase the Penalties for Injuring or Killing a Police Dog or Dog in a Canine Search and Rescue Team:** Increases the penalty from a D to a C felony.



CVA Supports Landmark Review of Animal Cruelty Laws

Connecticut's 2016 enactment of a program for court appointed advocates, or Desmond's Law, was groundbreaking in the field of animal law. No other state in the country had successfully passed a law allowing expertise in animal cruelty in the courtroom to achieve in the name of justice, more fair and meaningful outcomes in animal abuse cases. The law, coupled with Desmond's Army -- a corps of dedicated volunteers who track and show up in court for every animal abuse case, have made a difference in the outcome and in bringing public attention to crimes against animals. But since 2016, CT has been less than progressive when it comes to modernizing its animal cruelty statutes. This is about to change. As the lead co-sponsor State Representative Dorinda Border (D-115) and over 25 bi-partisan legislators have been calling for an extensive review and update of these laws. SB 923, An Act Concerning the Review of Animal Cruelty Statutes by the Connecticut Sentencing Commission, passed the Judiciary Committee and its on the way to the Senate and House.

CT's animal cruelty statutes have not had a thorough review in more than 30 years. Instead, they have been added to periodically, creating redundant and inadequate terminology that makes interpretations confusing and difficult to administer by law enforcement. Senate Bill 923 will conduct a review over the next 14 months with any recommendation for change in time for the 2023 legislative session. CVA strongly supports the bill and has been working with Representative Border and others throughout the process.

In testimony before the Judiciary Committee this month, CVA Executive Director Jo-Anne Basile said this comprehensive approach is needed for CT to move its animal cruelty laws into the 21st Century. "CVA believes to do this well requires any study to be guided by experts in the field. Those who have both academic and first-hand experience in the practice and application of animal law. Looking at trends nationwide, learning from the mistakes as well as positive outcomes from laws in other states becomes an invaluable lesson in any review."

An equally important reason for this review is to better understand the link between animal cruelty and future violent crimes against people, particularly the vulnerable. According to the National Link Coalition a collaborative initiative to increase awareness and address public policy around violence against people and animals: "Animal maltreatment is often "the tip of the iceberg" and the first warning sign of an individual or family in trouble." For many, animal cruelty is viewed as a simple misdemeanor, not an indication of a perpetrator's likelihood to commit other, oftentimes violent, crimes. But research in the past 20-plus years clearly shows that taking a more serious look at these crimes is critical to address aggressive behavior towards humans.

CVA believes the Sentencing Commission can be a helpful partner to study CT's animal cruelty statutes. We are looking forward to how the project will reach out to experts and those with direct experience in animal law and animal cruelty. We believe these experts are key to an outcome that reflects real world experience coupled with an intellectually rigorous viewpoint of future trends and outcomes.

The hope is that a statutory review will result in fairer outcomes for animals when the law gives clear direction to those who carry it out.



Living with Wildlife: A Conversation with ACO Judy Umstead

Spring is finally bringing the greening of the landscape, a sight Connecticut residents have been looking forward to after our cold, snowy winter. But, for our stalwart Connecticut Animal Control Officers, it also means the onslaught of daily phone calls from concerned residents about daytime wildlife sightings. To try to dispel some long-standing myths surrounding these sightings, we checked in with Watertown and Woodbury Animal Control Officer, Judy Umstead.

Q: Do calls about wildlife sightings tend to increase as spring approaches?

A: Yes, mainly because there's a long-standing myth that when you see nighttime animals during the day, such as skunks and foxes, it's because they're rabid or ill. That's not necessarily true. As spring approaches, these animals spend more time during the day hunting for food for their newly established families. And, if you haven't blocked off the bottom part of sheds and outbuildings by now, don't be surprised if raccoons, skunks, and possibly fox, deliver their babies there. Once the babies are born, please do not attempt to move them. Please contact your local ACO for further instructions.

Q: Can homeowners help by feeding these creatures?

A: No one should feed any wildlife. They may become dependent on that source of food preventing them from hunting for the appropriate diet for their growing families. As wildlife becomes accustomed to being around and trusting humans, they may lose their natural fear of humans making them more susceptible to hunters and predators.

With spring's arrival, you are going to see more wildlife, such as skunks, deer, foxes, rabbits, and possums, with and without their offspring.

Foxes: Although foxes are harmless to humans, they will prey on small pets, rodents, rabbits and chickens. If you see them during the day, they are most likely looking for food including squirrels, chipmunks, birds, and their eggs. Please do not leave pets outdoors unattended.

Skunks: Skunks will not attack you or your domestic pets and will only spray defensively. They're extremely gentle creatures and will not bother you. Please keep pets away and give skunks their space.

Fawns: Another of the common wildlife myths is that if you see a fawn left alone for hours, the mother has abandoned the baby. Does often leave their fawns close to structures to keep them hidden from predators while they go off for hours to hunt. Please leave the fawn where it is, do not attempt to move or feed. Mom should return after several hours of hunting

Rabbits: Unfortunately, rabbits often make their nests completely exposed in your front or back lawn. A good plan for homeowners is to inspect your lawn before you mow to check for a possible nest of rabbit kittens.

Birds and Bears: All bird and suet feeders should be removed now to avoid attracting bears who are just about to appear in our New England landscape. Its also a good idea to secure your trash cans or lock them in a garage. There is plenty of food available naturally for birds in spring, summer, and fall

When in doubt about wildlife sightings or an animal appears to be ill, please call your local Animal Control Officer. And...watch the road for crossing wildlife. Let's live peacefully with our wildlife neighbors.



Closing the Loophole on Greyhound Racing

Legislation to ban Greyhound racing in CT has been raised once again this year. Although the state's Greyhound tracks have all closed down over the years, state law does not prohibit their establishment. CVA was asked by the bill's sponsors for our support in ensuring this inhumane sport never again resumes in CT.

House Bill 6048, An Act to Prohibit the Operation of Live Greyhound Racing in the State, was introduced by Reps. Michael D'Agostino and Josh Elliot and debated during a public hearing held by the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Security. CVA submitted testimony in support of the bill, which would close the technical loophole and once and for all prohibit the act of Greyhound racing in CT.

Greyhound racing is a cruel way to entertain the public and perpetuate gambling, and interest in the industry has dwindled over the years due to its inhumane reputation. The sport leads to great mistreatment of racing dogs as they are often kept in small cages for more than 20 hours a day and undergo inhumane training practices designed to create the world's fastest dogs. Greyhound racing itself can be dangerous and lead to severe injuries and death. Greyhounds have also been inhumanely overbred to meet the supply for the sport, leaving many dogs homeless and ultimately put down.

Please do your part and contact your legislator to let them know that you support passing HB 6048 to make sure Greyhound racing never returns to CT.



VEGAN APPLE WALNUT STUFFING

With spring finally here, thoughts of food may turn to fresh green vegetables and fruit rather than stuffing. But give this vegan version a try in some zucchini or acorn squash, and pull it out again in November for your bird-free Thanksgiving festivities! This recipe comes courtesy of CVA supporter Susan Macary. Share your favorite vegan recipes by emailing info@ctvotesforanimals.org.

Double Original

6 cups 3 cups firmly packed ½ inch cubed bread - 2 types such as whole grain and sourdough

(2 T) 1 Tablespoon canola, light olive oil or rice bran oil

(2) 1 clove garlic, minced

(1 ½ c) ¾ cup red onion, chopped into ¼ inch pieces

(1 ½ c) ¾ cup peeled, diced apple

(1 c) ½ cup water chestnuts, chopped into ¼ inch pieces

(2/3 c) 1/3 cup chopped walnuts

(1 t) ½ teaspoon thyme

(1 t) ½ teaspoon savory

(1 t) ½ teaspoon sage

(2 c) 1 cup apple juice

Salt and pepper to taste

1) Lightly toast most of the bread cubes

Preheat the oven to 350F (177C). Lightly brown 2/3 of the bread by placing it on a cookie sheet and placing it in the oven for about 15 minutes. Allow the bread cubes to cool and place them with the rest of the bread in a large mixing bowl.

2) Sauté the onion and garlic

In a large pan add the canola oil and allow it to get hot. Sauté the onion and garlic for a few minutes over medium heat, add the apple and sauté for another 5 minutes. Remove from heat.

3) Combine the stuffing ingredients

In a large mixing bowl, combine the bread cubes from step 1 and the onion, garlic and apple mixture from step 2. Add the diced water chestnuts, walnuts, thyme, savory, sage and toss to mix. Drizzle the apple juice over the stuffing to moisten and toss until there is no more apple juice at the bottom of the bowl. Salt and pepper to taste.

4) Bake the vegan stuffing to perfection

Apple Walnut Stuffing can either be used in Stuffed Seitan or bake it in an 8 x 8-inch baking dish. To bake in the baking dish, cover it with tin foil, poke about 6 small holes in the tin foil with a knife and bake at 350F (177C) for about 45 minutes.

This recipe makes about 3 or 6 cups Vegan Apple Walnut Stuffing or Dressing.