



2022 Candidate Survey on Animal Issues

Matt Despard

D-59

ANIMAL CRUELTY:

Question 1:

Cruelty to animals is a crime and is often a predictor of other forms of violence. Research has shown a strong link between animal cruelty and domestic abuse, and according to the Animal Legal Defense Fund, "As the Parkland shooting highlighted, 43% of mass school shootings involved offenders with a history of violence to animals. Taking crimes against animals seriously also protects humans, especially some of the most vulnerable such as children and the elderly." According to a 2019 CT General Assembly Office of Legislative Research report (the latest available) 80% of animal cruelty cases from 2008 to 2018 were either dismissed or not prosecuted. Would you support revising CT's animal cruelty statutes to make them stronger and offer greater protection to CT's animals?

Answer: Yes

Comment: Absolutely. There is no room for animal cruelty and I think we need to have stiffer consequences.

Question 2:

Would you support expanding CT's Courtroom Animal Advocate Program (Desmond's Law) to allow an animal advocate for any animal at the judge's discretion? Current law applies only to cats and dogs yet there has been a notable increase in highly publicized animal cruelty cases involving other animals such as horses and rabbits.

Answer: Yes

Comment: Yes every animal should get advocacy.

GREYHOUND RACING:

Question 3:

Live greyhound racing is cruel and inhumane and is now illegal in 42 states, including all surrounding New England states. CT's last dog race was held in 2005. Unfortunately, the statutory authority for dog racing was never removed from CT law so racing may resume at any time without scrutiny. Will you support having CT keep pace with other states and close the statutory loophole on live dog racing in the state?

Answer: Yes

Comment: We need to ensure this practice never sees a resurgence.

PROTECTING WILDLIFE AND EXOTIC ANIMALS:

Question 4:

Black Bears: Connecticut has a rich and diverse range of wildlife. Black Bears are a keystone species and play an important role in maintaining a healthy environment for all. Black bears are smart, and naturally shy. Most interactions happen because bears have a keen sense of smell and are opportunistic feeders. People living in an area frequented by bears need to remove food attractants and actively and consistently use methods to deter bears from coming onto their property. Would you support legislation to create a working group of environmental and animal protection organizations and DEEP to promote proven non-lethal strategies for peaceful coexistence between people and Connecticut's native black bears? This should include a state-wide initiative to remove food attractants (intentional or unintentional wildlife feeding) and public/private partnerships to offer regular public education programs throughout the state?

Answer: Yes

Comment: I am fully behind this initiative. We cannot hold Bears accountable for being attracted to food. We cannot be killing bears for a natural instinct.

RODENTICIDES:

Question 5:

Raptors — birds of prey such as hawks, owls, and eagles — and predators of all kinds are at risk from the devastating effects of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGAR). Secondary poisoning is not limited to birds, but is also well documented in wildlife, domestic pets, and sometimes humans. CT needs policies promoting alternatives to these poisons. Would you support an effort to stop the use, sale and distribution of SGARs state-wide with certain exemptions, as needed, to protect the public's health?

Answer: Yes

Comment: Absolutely.

CIRCUS ANIMALS:

Question 6:

Animals in traveling circuses endure long periods of intense confinement, physical and social deprivation, and brutal, violent methods of control. A 2019 study by the Monmouth University Polling Institute revealed that more than half of Americans would favor a law to prohibit the use of wild animals in circuses. Seven states and more than 170 local jurisdictions including Bridgeport and Stamford have statutory bans on using wild animals in circuses. Would you support legislation to ban the use of wild and exotic animals in circuses and traveling acts?

Answer: Yes

Comment: Yes. Many are treated inhumanly and it's not acceptable. It needs to be illegal.

PUPPY MILLS:

Question 7:

Puppy mills are inhumane high-volume dog breeding facilities driven by profit that churn out puppies with little regard for the health and well-being of the breeding dogs. While CT has none of these facilities, the dogs they breed are imported and sold in all dog (pet) shops in the state. More than 400 localities across the country and six states have taken action to prohibit pet stores from profiting off cruelly bred animals. In 2019, thousands of CT residents signed a petition asking legislators to stop puppy mill dog sales in CT. New York State just passed a law to immediately stop the sale of dogs, cats and rabbits in NY pet shops. Do you think Connecticut should follow other communities, especially its neighbor New York, and stop the sale of dogs, cats and rabbits from inhumane and cruel commercial breeding facilities?

Answer: Yes

Comment: Yes we should follow NY and stop this.