



## **SB 1295 Animal Cruelty; Domestic Animals; Classification**

(Sponsor: Senator John Kavanagh)

### **Background**

The Humane Legislation Coalition of Arizona, in partnership with Maricopa County Attorney Bill Montgomery, worked to develop SB 1295, a bill that strengthens penalties against convicted animal abusers. Vicious crimes against family pets are often part of a larger pattern of domestic violence, but current Arizona law only allows even the most heinous crimes be charged at the lowest felony designation – felony 6. This bill would make killing or torturing animals a felony 5.

The current law was written before the relationship between animal abuse and domestic violence was well understood. That is no longer the case. Countless studies over the past several decades have clearly demonstrated that violent offenders frequently have histories of serious and repeated animal cruelty. The FBI recognizes the connection between animal abuse and human abuse and now collects data on animal abuse. Research has shown consistent patterns of animal cruelty among perpetrators of other forms of violence, including child, spousal and elder abuse.

*"I look forward to changes in our criminal laws that will allow us to meet community expectations in punishing this vicious type of behavior."*

*-Maricopa County Attorney Bill Montgomery*

Increasing penalties for heinous cases of pet abuse gives prosecutors a crucial tool to ensure that the sentence reflects the severity of the crime. Senate Bill 1295 ensures that the most violent abusers would be facing a Class 5 felony.

*"Every day, our emergency animal rescue and cruelty team and trauma hospital see horrific cases of animal cruelty. Our current laws must be stronger, and penalties greater. Prosecutors need the right tools to ensure the punishment fits the crime."*

*- Steven Hansen, DVM, Arizona Humane Society President and CEO.*

### **Provisions**

SB 1295 makes it a class 5 felony to:

- Intentionally or knowingly subject a domestic animal to cruel mistreatment. (To torture, inflict unnecessary serious physical injury or kill the animal in a manner than causes protracted suffering.)
- Intentionally or knowingly kill a domestic animal without either legal privilege or consent of the domestic animal's owner or handler.

Domestic animal is defined as "a mammal that is kept primarily as a pet or companion or that is bred to be a pet or companion."