



# OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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## **ANIMAL CRUELTY CASES IN CONNECTICUT**

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This report summarizes Connecticut's primary animal cruelty statute ([CGS § 53-247](#)) and the outcome of offenses brought under it from 2002 to November 7, 2011.

### **SUMMARY**

[CGS § 53-247](#) punishes people convicted of specified animal cruelty acts, with maximum fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000, imprisonment ranging from maximum sentences of one to 10 years, or both. Since 2002, there have been a total of 3,292 offenses brought under this statute. Of those offenses, 497 (15%) were found guilty, 7 (0.2%) were found not guilty, 1,104 (33.5%) were dismissed, and 1,679 (51%) offenses were nolle (i.e., the prosecutor decided not to prosecute).

These statistics are based on offenses disposed of by the courts. It does not represent the number of persons charged. An individual could be charged with multiple offenses or have multiple cases during a year.

### **ANIMAL CRUELTY STATUTE (CGS § 53-247)**

Connecticut law defines "animals" as all brute creatures and birds ([CGS § 29-108a](#)). [CGS § 53-247](#) prohibits numerous abusive behaviors toward animals and provides different penalties based on the severity of abuse and the abuser's intent.

## ***Cruelty to Animals***

[CGS § 53-247](#)(a) prohibits people from overdriving, overloading, overworking, torturing, depriving of substance, mutilating, cruelly beating or killing, or unjustifiably injuring any animal. If impounding or confining an animal, it prohibits (1) failing to provide it proper care; (2) neglecting to cage or restrain it from injuring itself or another animal; or (3) failing to supply it with wholesome air, food, and water. The statute also bans unjustifiably administering or exposing a domestic animal to any poisonous or noxious drug or substance intending that the animal will take it. Individuals in custody of an animal may not act cruelly to it; fail to provide it with proper food, drink, or shelter; abandon it; or carry or cause it to be carried in a cruel manner. Fighting with or baiting, harassing, or worrying an animal to make it perform for amusement, diversion, or exhibition is also prohibited. These offenses are punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000, imprisonment of up to one year, or both.

Under [CGS § 53-247](#)(b), maliciously and intentionally maiming, mutilating, torturing, wounding, or killing an animal is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000, up to five years imprisonment, or both. This offense does not apply to (1) licensed veterinarians following accepted practice standards; (2) persons following approved slaughter methods; (3) students, employees, or persons performing medical research and associated with a hospital, educational institution, or laboratory; and (4) persons abiding by generally accepted agricultural practices or lawfully engaged in taking wildlife.

### ***Animals Engaged in Exhibition of Fighting***

Under [CGS § 53-247](#)(c), the following actions are also punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000, up to five years imprisonment, or both: knowingly (1) owning, possessing, keeping, or training an animal engaged in fighting for amusement or gain; (2) possessing, keeping, or training an animal to engage in a fighting exhibition for amusement or gain; (3) allowing such acts to occur on premises under one's control; (4) acting as a judge or spectator at such an exhibition; or (5) betting or wagering on the outcome of an exhibition.

***Intentional Injury or Killing Police Animals or Dogs in Volunteer Canine Service or Rescue Teams***

Under [CGS § 53-247](#)(d), intentionally injuring an animal performing its duties under a peace officer’s supervision or intentionally injuring a dog performing its duties as a member of a volunteer canine search and rescue team, is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000, up to five years imprisonment, or both.

And under [CGS § 53-247](#)(e), intentionally killing such an animal is punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000, up to 10 years imprisonment, or both.

**OUTCOME OF ANIMAL CRUELTY CASES**

The following tables summarize Judicial Department data on animal cruelty offenses from 2002 to November 7, 2011.

Table 1 shows the procedural outcome of animal cruelty offenses, by year. As the table shows, during this period 51% of the offenses were nolle, 34% were dismissed, and 15% resulted in guilty findings.

**Table 1: Procedural Outcome of Animal Cruelty Offenses, 2002 - November 7, 2011**

Finding	Total for Period	YEAR									
		2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 (as of 11/7/11)
Bond Forfeiture	5	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dismissed	1104	255	108	62	33	140	146	107	100	83	70
Guilty	497	57	37	32	38	70	54	38	66	48	57
Not Guilty	7	3	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0
Nolle	1679	111	201	249	130	212	138	217	136	125	160
<b>Total</b>	<b>3292</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>287</b>

Table 2 shows the number of animal cruelty offenses by statute and year. Ninety-seven percent of the offenses were violations of the statutory subsection prohibiting people from using or treating animals in harmful ways ([CGS § 53-247](#)(a)). (The other subsections penalize people for intentionally, knowingly, or maliciously abusing animals in specific ways.)

**Table 2: Animal Cruelty Offenses by Statute, 2002 to November 7, 2011**

Violation Description and Penalty	CGS	Year										Total
		2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 (as of 11/7/11)	
Cruelty to animals.	<a href="#">53-247(a)</a>	419	344	341	192	419	323	356	286	252	276	3208
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals.	<a href="#">53-247(b)</a>	4	3	2	8	2	14	3	4	2	0	42
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals.	<a href="#">53-247(c)</a>	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	11	2	11	31
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team.	<a href="#">53-247(d)</a>	0	0	0	1	1	2	6	1	0	0	11
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team.	<a href="#">53-247(e)</a>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		428	348	344	201	422	339	365	302	256	287	3292

Attachments one through 10 show the outcome of each statutory category of animal cruelty offenses for 2002 to November 7, 2011, respectively.

**ATTACHMENT 1: 2002 Procedural Outcomes of Animal Cruelty Offenses**

Statutory Section	Total	Bond Forfeiture	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle
53-247(a)	419	2	253	55	0	109
53-247(b)	4	0	0	2	2	0
53-247(c)	5	0	2	0	1	2
53-247(d)	0	0	0	0	0	0
53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>111</b>

**ATTACHMENT 2: 2003 Procedural Outcomes of Animal Cruelty Offenses**

Statutory Section	Total	Bond Forfeiture	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle
53-247(a)	344	2	105	36	0	201
53-247(b)	3	0	2	1	0	0
53-247(c)	1	0	1	0	0	0
53-247(d)	0	0	0	0	0	0
53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>201</b>

**ATTACHMENT 3: 2004 Procedural Outcomes of Animal Cruelty Offenses**

Statutory Section		Bond Forfeiture	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle
53-247(a)	341	1	62	30	0	248
53-247(b)	2	0	0	2	0	0
53-247(c)	1	0	0	0	0	1
53-247(d)	0	0	0	0	0	0
53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>249</b>

**ATTACHMENT 4: 2005 Procedural Outcomes of Animal Cruelty Offenses**

Statutory Section	Total	Bond Forfeiture	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle
53-247(a)	192	0	32	31	0	129
53-247(b)	8	0	1	7	0	0
53-247(c)	0	0	0	0	0	0
53-247(d)	1	0	0	0	0	1
53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>130</b>

**ATTACHMENT 5: 2006 Procedural Outcomes of Animal Cruelty Offenses**

Statutory Section	Total	Bond Forfeiture	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle
53-247(a)	419	0	140	68	0	211
53-247(b)	2	0	0	1	0	1
53-247(c)	0	0	0	0	0	0
53-247(d)	1	0	0	1	0	0
53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>212</b>

**ATTACHMENT 6: 2007 Procedural Outcomes of Animal Cruelty Offenses**

<b>Statutory Section</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Bond Forfeiture</b>	<b>Dismissed</b>	<b>Guilty</b>	<b>Not Guilty</b>	<b>Nolle</b>
53-247(a)	323	0	146	49	1	127
53-247(b)	14	0	0	4	0	10
53-247(c)	0	0	0	0	0	0
53-247(d)	2	0	0	1	0	1
53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>138</b>

**ATTACHMENT 7: 2008 Procedural Outcomes of Animal Cruelty Offenses**

Statutory Section	Total	Bond Forfeiture	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle
53-247(a)	356	0	106	35	2	213
53-247(b)	3	0	0	1	1	1
53-247(c)	0	0	0	0	0	0
53-247(d)	6	0	1	2	0	3
53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>217</b>

**ATTACHMENT 8: 2009 Procedural Outcomes of Animal Cruelty Offenses**

Statutory Section	Total	Bond Forfeiture	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle
53-247(a)	286	0	100	53	0	133
53-247(b)	4	0	0	2	0	2
53-247(c)	11	0	0	11	0	0
53-247(d)	1	0	0	0	0	1
53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>136</b>

### ATTACHMENT 9: 2010 Procedural Outcomes of Animal Cruelty Offenses

Statutory Section	Total	Bond Forfeiture	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle
53-247(a)	252	0	82	46	0	124
53-247(b)	2	0	0	1	0	1
53-247(c)	2	0	1	1	0	0
53-247(d)	0	0	0	0	0	0
53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>125</b>

**ATTACHMENT 10: Procedural Outcomes of Animal Cruelty Offenses  
from January 2011 to November 7, 2011**

Statutory Section	Total	Bond Forfeiture	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle
53-247(a)	276	0	59	57	0	160
53-247(b)	0	0	0	0	0	0
53-247(c)	11	0	11	0	0	0
53-247(d)	0	0	0	0	0	0
53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>160</b>

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