

Animal Cruelty Cases in Connecticut (2007 – 2017)

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Issue

Summary of Connecticut's primary animal cruelty statute ([CGS § 53-247](#)) and the outcome of offenses brought under it from 2007 through 2017. (This report updates OLR Report [2017-R-0049](#).)

Summary

[CGS § 53-247](#) punishes people convicted of specified animal cruelty acts with maximum fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000, maximum imprisonment ranging from one to 10 years, or both. [PA 13-258 \(§ 114\)](#) amended this statute, classifying certain violations of this statute as class D felonies without changing the prison terms or fines.

According to the judicial branch, from 2007 through 2017, 3,480 offenses were brought under this statute. Approximately 80% of these cases were either dismissed or not prosecuted (see sidebar for procedural outcomes). In reviewing this data, it is important to note that an individual could be charged with multiple offenses or have multiple cases during a year.

Of the 1,206 cases dismissed during this period, 935 (78%) were dismissed after the offender successfully completed a diversionary program, such as the [Accelerated Rehabilitation Program](#).

Animal Cruelty Statistics

3,480 - Total offenses brought under the animal cruelty statute from 2007 through 2017

95% of the offenses were cruelty to animal violations ([CGS § 53-247\(a\)](#))

Procedural outcomes:

- 45% - not prosecuted (nolled)*
- 35% - dismissed*
- 19% - guilty*
- 1% - not guilty*

Animal Cruelty Statute

Connecticut law defines “animals” as all brute creatures and birds ([CGS § 29-108a](#)). [CGS § 53-247](#) prohibits many abusive behaviors toward animals and provides different penalties based on the severity of abuse and the abuser's intent. The prohibited acts and associated penalties are five distinct crimes: cruelty to animals, malicious or intentional cruelty to animals, animals engaged in exhibition of fighting, and intentionally injuring or killing police animals or dogs in volunteer canine service and rescue teams.

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. The law prohibits a person who impounds or confines an animal from (1) failing to provide it with proper care; (2) neglecting to cage or restrain it from injuring itself or another animal; or (3) failing to provide 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 the animal to take it. Individuals who have custody of an animal may not treat it cruelly; 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.

A first violation of any of the above provisions is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000, imprisonment for up to one year, or both. Each subsequent offense is a class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000, imprisonment for up to five years, or both.

Malicious or Intentional Cruelty to Animals

Under [CGS § 53-247\(b\)](#), it is a class D felony for a first offense, and class C felony for subsequent offenses, to maliciously and intentionally maim, mutilate, torture, wound, or kill an animal. This law 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\(c\)](#), it is a class D felony to knowingly commit any of the following actions:

1. own, possess, keep, or train an animal engaged in fighting for amusement or gain;
2. possess, keep, or train an animal to fight in an exhibition for amusement or gain;
3. allow any of the above mentioned acts to occur on premises under one's control;
4. act as a judge or spectator at such an exhibition; or
5. bet or wage on the outcome of an exhibition.

Intentionally Injuring or Killing Police Animals or Dogs in Volunteer Canine Service and Rescue Teams

Under [CGS § 53-247\(d\)](#), intentionally injuring (1) an animal performing its duties under a peace officer's supervision or (2) a dog performing its duties as a member of a volunteer canine search and rescue team is a class D felony, 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, imprisonment for up to 10 years, or both.

Animal Cruelty Offenses by Statute and Year

Number of Offenses

Table 1 shows the number of animal cruelty offenses committed from 2007 through 2017. As the table shows, 95% of the offenses were violations of the animal cruelty statute that specifically prohibits people from using or treating animals in harmful ways ([CGS § 53-247\(a\)](#)). (The other subsections penalize people who intentionally, knowingly, or maliciously abuse animals in specific ways.)

Table 1: Animal Cruelty Offenses by Statute, 2007 through 2017

<i>Violation Description</i>	<i>CGS §</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	323	356	286	252	308	367	222	329	346	329	173	3,291
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	14	3	4	2	1	5	7	0	12	5	4	57
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals	53-247(c)	0	0	11	2	11	0	0	0	48	36	2	110
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog	53-247(d)	2	6	1	0	1	1	1	4	1	5	0	22
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		339	365	302	256	321	373	230	333	407	375	179	3,480

Source: Judicial Branch

Case Outcomes

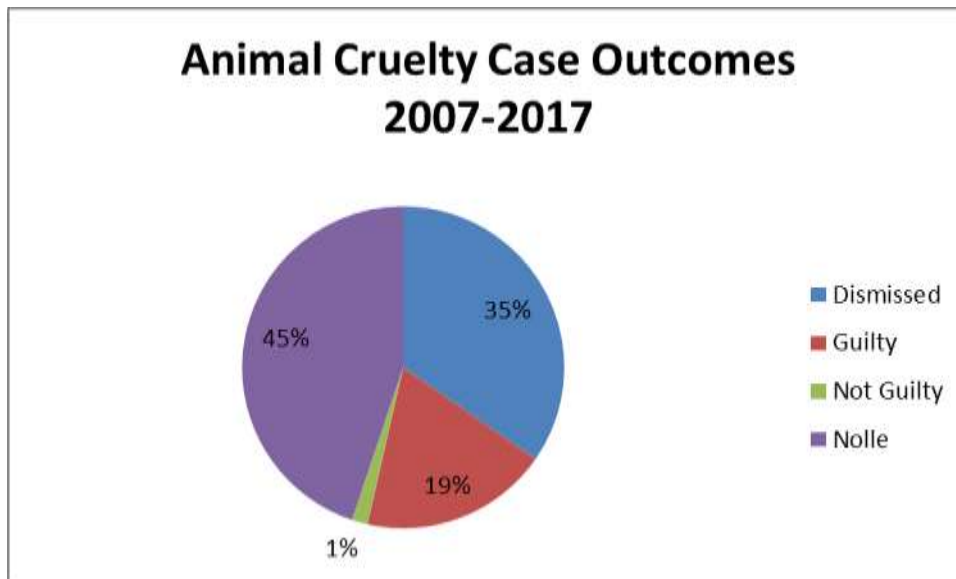
Table 2 and Figure 1 show the aggregated procedural outcome of animal cruelty offenses, by year, from 2007 through 2017. As the table shows, during this period 46% of the offenses were nolle, 34% were dismissed, 19% were dismissed, 19% resulted in guilty findings, and 1% resulted in not guilty findings. (OLR Report [2016-R-0226](#) summarizes the court procedure for animal cruelty cases.)

Table 2: Procedural Outcome of Animal Cruelty Offenses, 2007-2017

<i>Finding</i>	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Dismissed	146	107	100	83	89	87	81	116	208	110	79	1,206
Guilty	54	38	66	48	65	89	56	48	73	87	34	658
Not Guilty	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	48	2	0	0	55
Nolle	138	217	136	125	167	197	92	121	124	178	66	1,561
Total	339	365	302	256	321	373	230	333	407	375	179	3,480

Source: Judicial Branch

Figure 1: Procedural Outcome of Animal Cruelty Offenses, 2007-2017



Attachment 1 shows the total procedural outcomes of each statutory type of animal cruelty offense for each year, 2007-2017.

Attachment 1: Procedural Outcomes for Each Year

2007						
<i>Violation Description</i>	<i>CGS §</i>	<i>Dismissed</i>	<i>Guilty</i>	<i>Not Guilty</i>	<i>Nolle</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	146	49	1	127	323
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	0	4	0	10	14
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals	53-247(c)	0	0	0	0	0
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(d)	0	1	0	1	2
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total		146	54	1	138	339
2008						
<i>Violation Description</i>	<i>CGS §</i>	<i>Dismissed</i>	<i>Guilty</i>	<i>Not Guilty</i>	<i>Nolle</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	106	35	2	213	356
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	0	1	1	1	3
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals	53-247(c)	0	0	0	0	0
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(d)	1	2	0	3	6
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total		107	38	3	217	365
2009						
<i>Violation Description</i>	<i>CGS §</i>	<i>Dismissed</i>	<i>Guilty</i>	<i>Not Guilty</i>	<i>Nolle</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	100	53	0	133	286
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	0	2	0	2	4
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals	53-247(c)	0	11	0	0	11
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(d)	0	0	0	1	1
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total		100	66	0	136	302

Attachment 1 (continued)

2010						
<i>Violation Description</i>	<i>CGS §</i>	<i>Dismissed</i>	<i>Guilty</i>	<i>Not Guilty</i>	<i>Nolle</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	82	46	0	124	252
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	0	1	0	1	2
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals	53-247(c)	1	1	0	0	2
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(d)	0	0	0	0	0
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total		83	48	0	125	256
2011						
<i>Violation Description</i>	<i>CGS §</i>	<i>Dismissed</i>	<i>Guilty</i>	<i>Not Guilty</i>	<i>Nolle</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	77	64	0	167	308
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	1	0	0	0	1
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals	53-247(c)	11	0	0	0	11
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(d)	0	1	0	0	1
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total		89	65	0	167	321
2012						
<i>Violation Description</i>	<i>CGS §</i>	<i>Dismissed</i>	<i>Guilty</i>	<i>Not Guilty</i>	<i>Nolle</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	87	86	0	194	367
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	0	2	0	3	5
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals	53-247(c)	0	0	0	0	0
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(d)	0	1	0	0	1
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total		87	89	0	197	373

Attachment 1 (continued)

2013						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	81	53	0	88	222
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	0	3	1	3	7
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals	53-247(c)	0	0	0	0	0
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(d)	0	0	0	1	1
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total		81	56	1	92	230
2014						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	116	47	48	118	329
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	0	0	0	0	0
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals	53-247(c)	0	0	0	0	0
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(d)	0	1	0	3	4
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total		116	48	48	121	333
2015						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	174	48	2	122	346
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	2	9	0	1	12
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals	53-247(c)	32	15	0	1	48
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(d)	0	1	0	0	1
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	208	73	2	124	407

Attachment 1 (continued)

2016						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	84	81	0	164	329
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	1	2	0	2	5
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals	53-247(c)	25	0	0	11	36
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(d)	0	4	0	1	5
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	110	87	0	178	375
2017						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	77	32	0	64	173
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	1	2	0	1	4
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of fighting animals	53-247(c)	1	0	0	1	2
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(d)	0	0	0	0	0
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	79	34	0	66	179

Source: Judicial Branch

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