

Animal Cruelty Cases in Connecticut (2008 - 2018)

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Issue

Summarize Connecticut's primary animal cruelty statute ([CGS § 53-247](#)) and the outcome of cases brought under it from 2008 through 2018. (This report updates OLR Report [2018-R-0111](#).) **This report has been updated by OLR Report [2022-R-0123](#).**

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. In 2013 the legislature amended this statute, classifying certain violations as class D felonies without changing the prison terms or fines ([PA 13-258 \(§ 114\)](#)).

According to the judicial branch, from 2008 through 2018, 3,500 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.

Animal Cruelty Statistics

3,500 - Total offenses brought under the animal cruelty statute from 2008 through 2018

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

Procedural outcomes:

- 46% - not prosecuted (nolled)
- 34% - dismissed
- 18% - guilty
- 2% - not guilty

(These numbers are based on charges with verdicts and include attempt, accessory, and conspiracy.)

Source: Judicial Branch

Of the 1,190 cases dismissed during this period, 1,013 (85%) were dismissed after the offender successfully completed a diversionary program, such as the [Accelerated Rehabilitation Program](#).

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, knowingly engaging in the exhibition of animal 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 sustenance, 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 up to one year in prison, a fine of up to \$1,000, 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.

A class C felony is punishable one to 10 years in prison, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both.

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

Animal Cruelty Offenses by Statute and Year

Number of Offenses

Table 1 shows the number of animal cruelty offenses committed from 2008 through 2018. 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, 2008 through 2018

<i>Violation Description</i>	<i>CGS §</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>2018</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	356	286	252	308	367	222	329	346	329	173	352	3,320
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	3	4	2	1	5	7	0	12	5	4	7	50
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of animal fighting	53-247(c)	0	11	2	11	0	0	0	48	36	2	0	110
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog	53-247(d)	6	1	0	1	1	1	4	1	5	0	0	20
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		365	302	256	321	373	230	333	407	375	179	359	3,500

Source: Judicial Branch

Case Outcomes

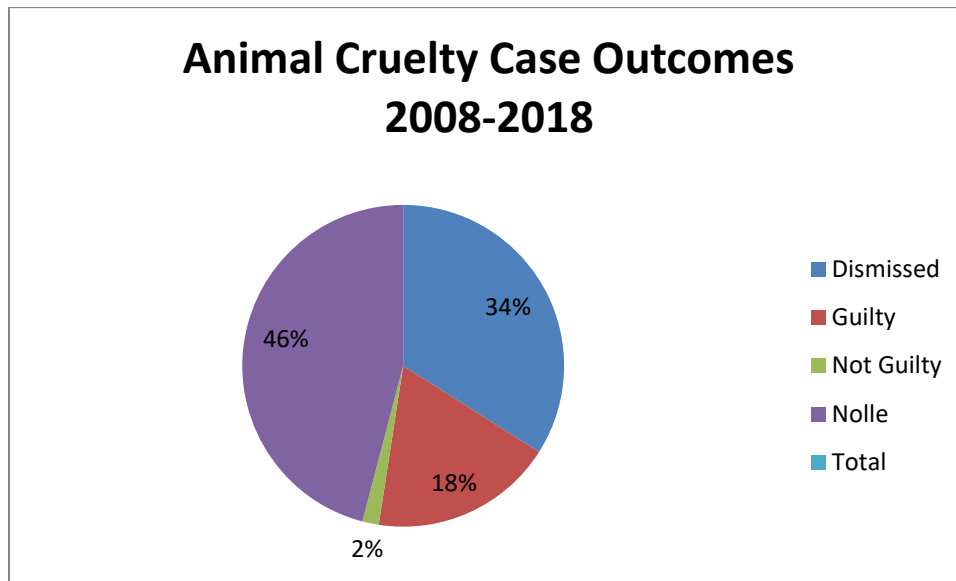
Table 2 and Figure 1 show the aggregated procedural outcome of animal cruelty offenses, by year, from 2008 through 2018. As the table shows, during this period 46% of the offenses were nolle, 34% were dismissed, 18% resulted in guilty findings, and 2% resulted in not guilty findings. (OLR Report [2016-R-0226](#) summarizes the court procedure for animal cruelty cases.)

Table 2: Procedural Outcome of Animal Cruelty Offenses, 2008-2018

<i>Finding</i>	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Dismissed	107	100	83	89	87	81	116	208	110	79	130	1,190
Guilty	38	66	48	65	89	56	48	73	87	34	41	645
Not Guilty	3	0	0	0	0	1	48	2	0	0	4	58
Nolle	217	136	125	167	197	92	121	124	178	66	184	1,607
Total	365	302	256	321	373	230	333	407	375	179	359	3,500

Source: Judicial Branch

Figure 1: Procedural Outcome of Animal Cruelty Offenses, 2008-2018



Attachment 1 shows the total procedural outcomes of each statutory type of animal cruelty offense for each year, 2008-2018.

Attachment 1: Procedural Outcomes for Each Year

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 animal fighting	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						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
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 animal fighting	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
2010						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
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 animal fighting	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						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
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 animal fighting	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 animal fighting	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
2013						
<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)	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 animal fighting	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						
<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)	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 animal fighting	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						
<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)	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 animal fighting	53-247(c)	32	15	0	1	48
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a	53-247(d)	0	1	0	0	1

volunteer canine search and rescue team						
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total		208	73	2	124	407
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 animal fighting	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		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 animal fighting	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		79	34	0	66	179
2018						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	129	39	2	182	352
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	1	1	2	3	7
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of animal fighting	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	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		130	40	4	185	359

Source: Judicial Branch

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