

Animal Cruelty Cases in Connecticut (2011-2021)

By: Michelle Kirby, Senior Legislative Attorney
July 14, 2022 | 2022-R-0123

Issue

Summarize Connecticut's primary animal cruelty statute ([CGS § 53-247](#)) and the outcome of cases brought under it from 2011 through 2021. (This report updates OLR Report [2019-R-0154](#).)

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.

According to the judicial branch, from 2011 through 2021, 3,348 cases 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. (Also note that the statistics for 2020 are an anomaly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

Of the 1,257 cases dismissed during this period, 1,087 (86%) were dismissed after the offender successfully completed a diversionary program, such as the [Accelerated Rehabilitation Program](#).

Animal Cruelty Statistics

3,348 - Total cases brought under the animal cruelty statute from 2011 through 2021

95% of the cases were for persons charged with the cruelty to animal offense under [CGS § 53-247\(a\)](#)

Procedural outcomes:

- 43% - not prosecuted (nolled)
- 37% - dismissed
- 18% - guilty
- 2% - not guilty

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

Source: Judicial Branch

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 exhibition fighting for amusement or gain;
2. possess, keep, or train an animal with the intent that it fights 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 animals 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 2011 through 2021. 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, 2011 Through 2021

Violation Description	CGS §	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	308	367	222	329	346	329	173	352	346	101	292	3,165
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	1	5	7	0	12	5	4	7	11	8	5	65
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of animal fighting	53-247(c)	11	0	0	0	48	36	2	0	3	1	0	101
Intentionally injuring a police animal or dog	53-247(d)	1	1	1	4	1	5	0	0	1	0	3	17
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		321	373	230	333	407	375	179	359	361	110	300	3,348

Source: Judicial Branch

Case Outcomes

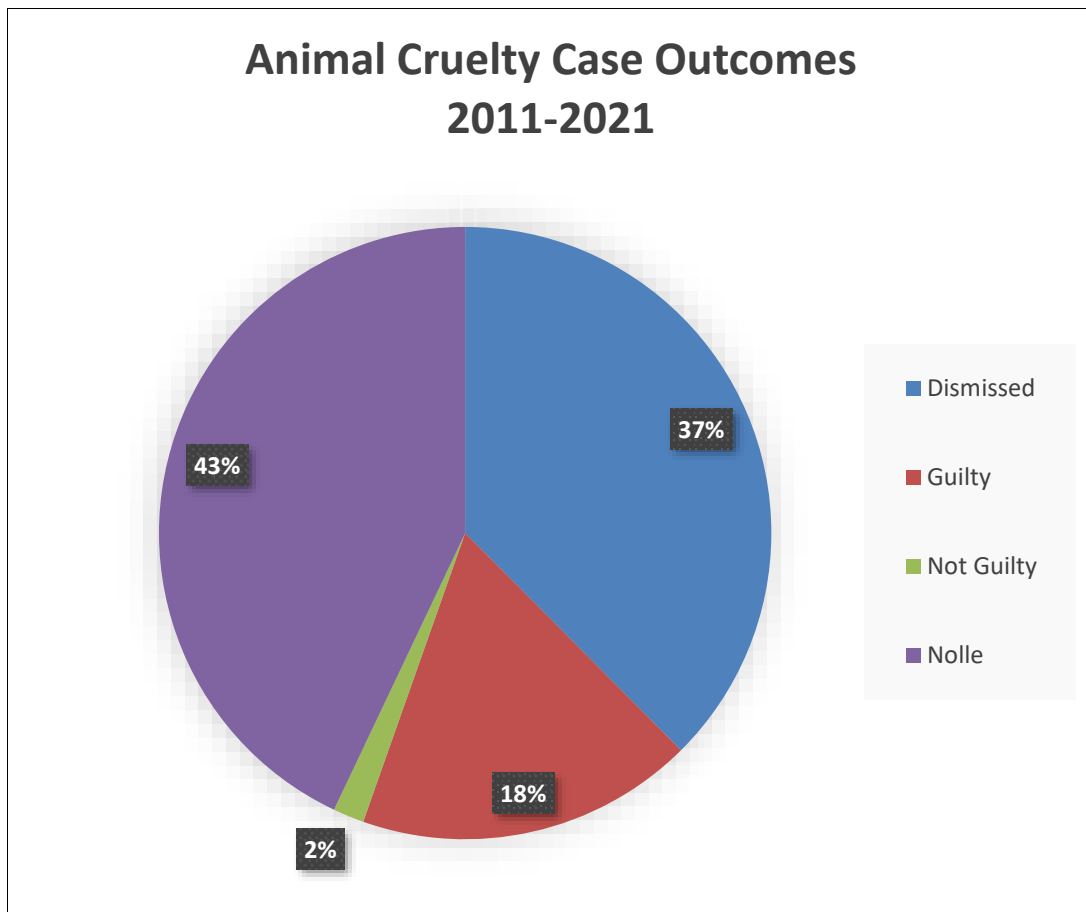
Table 2 and Figure 1 show the aggregated procedural outcome of animal cruelty offenses, by year, from 2011 through 2021. As the table shows, during this period approximately 43% of the offenses were nolle, 37% were dismissed, 18% resulted in guilty findings, and 2% resulted in not guilty findings. (OLR Report [2016-R-0226](#) summarizes the court procedure for animal cruelty cases.)

Table 2: Procedural Outcome of Animal Cruelty Offenses, 2011-2021

Finding	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Dismissed	89	87	81	116	208	110	79	130	169	45	143	1,257
Guilty	65	89	56	48	73	87	34	41	52	12	41	598
Not Guilty	0	0	1	48	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	55
Nolle	167	197	92	121	124	178	66	184	140	53	116	1,438
Total	321	373	230	333	407	375	179	359	361	110	300	3,348

Source: Judicial Branch

Figure 1: Procedural Outcome of Animal Cruelty Offenses, 2011-2021



Attachment 1 shows the total procedural outcomes of each statutory type of animal cruelty offense for each year, 2011-2021.

Attachment 1: Procedural Outcomes for Each Year

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						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
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						
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 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

Attachment 1 (continued)

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 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						
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 animal fighting	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		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

Attachment 1 (continued)

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
2019						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	165	46	0	135	346
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	1	6	0	4	11
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of animal fighting	53-247(c)	3	0	0	0	3
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		169	52	0	140	361

Attachment 1 (continued)

2020						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	40	10	0	51	101
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	4	2	0	2	8
Knowingly engaging in the exhibition of animal fighting	53-247(c)	1	0	0	0	1
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		45	12	0	53	110
2021						
Violation Description	CGS §	Dismissed	Guilty	Not Guilty	Nolle	Total
Cruelty to animals	53-247(a)	140	37	0	115	292
Malicious or intentional cruelty to animals	53-247(b)	2	3	0	0	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)	1	1	0	1	3
Intentionally killing a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team	53-247(e)	0	0	0	0	0
Total		143	41	0	116	300

Source: Judicial Branch

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