ANIMALFOLKS 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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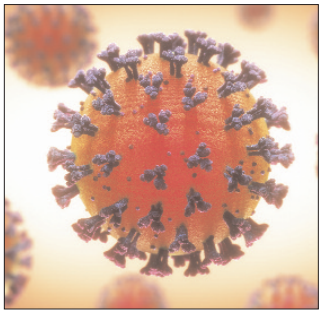
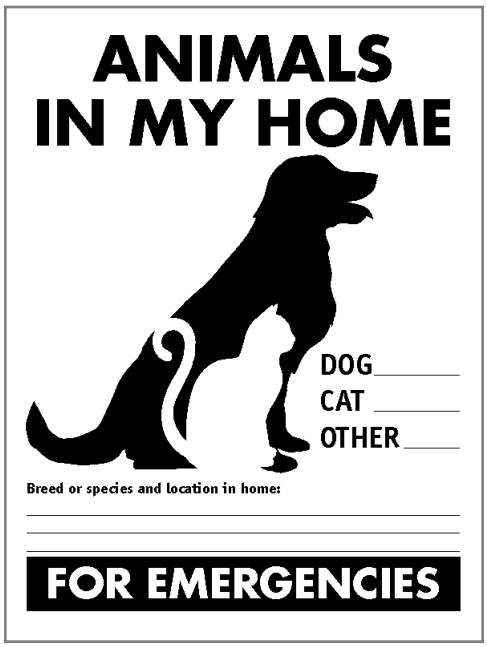
The Year of the Pandemic and Social Unrest



2020 was a challenging year for so many people, businesses, organizations, and government. Between COVID-19, social unrest, and elections, Minnesota and the nation struggled and juggled to adapt and change.

As with other nonprofits, Animal Folks made the necessary adjustments to our staff, operations, and projects in order to address funding needs, support our mission of system reform, and continue to protect animals.

In the early months of COVID, we prepared and promoted a "COVID-19 Pet Care Plan." This plan was written after speaking with veterinarians and emergency personnel. Its purpose: To plan ahead for the care of pets and to prevent transmission of the virus. The plan included (and still does) identifying a caregiver, setting up a pet emergency kit, self-isolating at home if tested positive, and activating the plan if you live alone and must be hospitalized. All of this information, plus a list of resources, was posted on the Animal Folks website and promoted through emails and Facebook. A more comprehensive list of resources was also prepared and submitted to the MN Chiefs of Police Association and MN Sheriffs' Association.



During 2020, Animal Folks worked hard on numerous projects — some ongoing and some new. Examples are provided in this report.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Animal Folks is to protect animals and fight animal cruelty by working to modernize the animal law enforcement system in Minnesota.

OUR POSITIONING

Public safety and crime prevention.

WHO WE SERVE

Animals in Minnesota. We also serve Minnesota residents who believe animals should be treated humanely and authorities who are involved in the enforcement of animal law.

SYSTEM REFORM

Animal Folks accomplishes its mission through a systems-thinking approach. This strategic approach focuses on the development of long-term, sustainable solutions across multiple disciplines to improve the enforcement of animal law and protection of animals.

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Our five program areas remain the same year to year: 1) Animal Law Resources; 2) Animal Cruelty Research; 3) Legislative Action; 4) Criminal & Civil Justice; and 5) Outreach & Communication. Depending on funding and need, projects may vary each year within these areas.

PROGRAM GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PROGRAM 1: Animal Law Resources

GOAL: To foster professionalism and competency by providing training, resources, and support to Minnesota authorities responsible for the enforcement of animal law.

2020 Strategies and Actions



- **Animal Cruelty Training for Veterinarian Students** — In 2020, Animal Folks launched a new project: Animal cruelty training for senior veterinary students at the University of Minnesota. Partnering with veterinarians at the University, Animal Folks developed curriculum for the students which included a presentation and group discussion (for building critical thinking skills) on animal cruelty and Minnesota law related to mandated reporting and the veterinarian's role when facing a suspected animal cruelty case. This first teaching session started in October 2020 and continued into 2021. To **support system reform**, this training will be ongoing with sessions for veterinary students in future years.
- **Animal Cruelty Training for Veterinarians**
  Our animal cruelty training for veterinarians **illustrates our mission of system reform** — where sustainable and long-term changes are being met. *For the fifth year*, Animal Folks presented animal cruelty training for Minnesota-licensed veterinarians at the Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) Annual Meeting. During the full day session, Animal Folks hosted multiple speakers on multiple topics, including:
  - MN-Licensed Veterinarians: Mandated Reporters, Julia Wilson, DVM, ED of MN Board of Veterinary Medicine
  - When Animal Cruelty Reaches the Courts, Reese Frederickson, esq., Pine County Attorney
  - Veterinarians' Response to Animal Cruelty: Recognizing, Reporting and Forensic Documentation, Alison Liu, DVM, ASPCA New York Animal Hospital
  - Hurting Without Hitting: Emotional Abuse and Neglect Parts I and II; Franklin McMillan, DVM, Director of Well-Being Studies, Best Friends Animal Society
  - The Link: Violence Against Humans and Animals, Ann Olson, Executive Director, Animal Folks

PROGRAM 1: Animal Law Resources (continued)

2020 Strategies and Actions

- **Model Animal Cruelty Policy for Minnesota Law Enforcement** — In 2020, the Model Animal Cruelty Policy for Minnesota Law Enforcement was completed and submitted to the MN Chiefs of Police Association and MN Sheriffs' Association for final review and acceptance.

This is another example of system reform.

A policy helps Police Chiefs and Sheriffs set direction for their staff and presents guiding principles on how to respond to specific crimes and Minnesota laws. These leadership principles are especially needed for the serious crime of animal cruelty.

Through our research, we learned that most policies for the crime of animal cruelty, if they exist, are dated. Current "policy" text is primarily written for animal control duties, much of which has nothing to do with the investigation of animal cruelty or enforcement of Minnesota Statutes Chapter 343 (Prevention of Cruelty to Animals).
To prepare this new model policy, Animal Folks conducted numerous interviews with individuals involved with the enforcement of animal cruelty cases, including police chiefs, sheriffs, officers, deputies, judge, prosecutors, veterinarians, animal control officers, and humane agents.

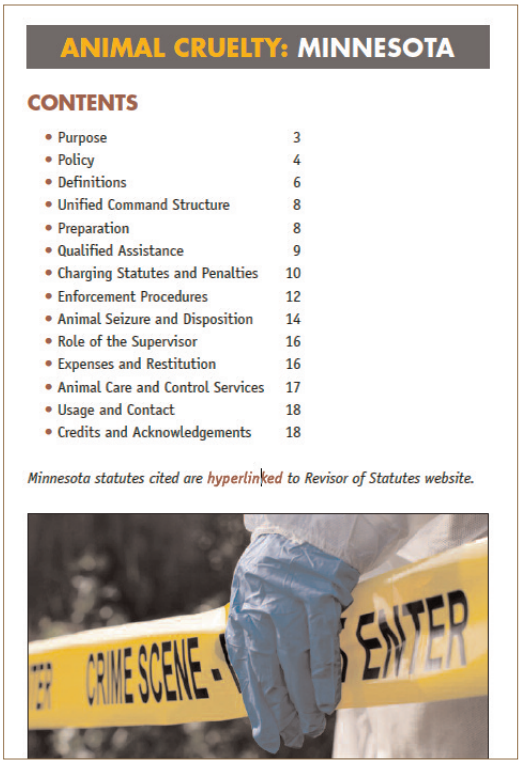
The broad features of the policy are:

- The recognition that all animals are sentient beings who can feel pain and distess and can experience other kinds of physical, mental, and emotional suffering.
- The understanding that animal cruelty is a violent crime and is often linked with other violent crimes against people and property.
- The realization that there is an indisputable need to protect animals from cruelty through law enforcement approaches that reasonably ensure their care and welfare.
- The proposition that, to foster the efficient and effectiveness of law enforcement responses to instances of animal cruelty, it is necessary that there be useful guidelines for investigations and other actions, as well as for coordination among agencies and personnel charged with the duty of enforcing animal cruelty laws.

This policy sets a foundation for investigative procedures.

This project continues into 2021 for continued promotion, distribution, and feedback.





PROGRAM 2: Animal Cruelty Research

GOAL: To research animal cruelty cases and issues pertaining to crimes against animals, and provide credible Minnesota-specific data to the public, agencies, and organizations upon request.

2020 Strategies and Actions



- **Animal Cruelty Databank: Continued Coding and File Collection —** One ongoing and core project for Animal Folks is the collection and maintenance of animal cruelty cases in Minnesota called the Animal Cruelty Databank. As stated in past reports, the goal of this multi-county study is to capture the nature and prevalence of animal cruelty in Minnesota. These cases are used for:
  - academic purposes (i.e, assessing how cases progress through the court, severity of punishment, sentencing conditions) and
  - functional purposes (i.e., cases used in training and to support initiatives for the improved enforcement of animal law).

  In 2020, we also obtained cases where the animal cruelty charges were dismissed. These "dismissed" cases are critical to include for analysis; many reflect some of the worst cases of violence. Example: A woman may be abused by the husband or boyfriend who also harmed or killed the beloved pet. The abuser was charged and convicted of a different crime (i.e., domestic abuse, terroristic threats) with a higher penalty; the animal cruelty charge was dismissed. Both crimes still occurred.

PROGRAM 3: Legislative Action

GOAL: To lead and support state and local legislative efforts, including crafting of humane laws, lobbying, and advocacy, that protects animals and lays a foundation for systemic reform.

2020 Strategies and Actions



- **Veterinary Immunity Bill** — The Veterinary Immunity bill became law in 2020! In the 2017-2018 Minnesota legislative session, Animal Folks worked with legislators to introduce this issue and bill. The Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association supported the bill and, in 2019-2020, worked to get the bill passed into law. This law now provides civil and criminal immunity for veterinarians when they, in good faith, report suspected animal cruelty. **This is system reform.**
- **Companion Animal Board Bill** — In 2020, Animal Folks continued lobbying the Companion Animal Board (CAB) bill. The need: Minnesota state government is structured around livestock and wildlife — with nothing for companion animals. The CAB will provide the needed expertise for companion animal welfare issues. Efforts continue in the 2021-2022 legislative session.
- **Humane Pet Store Bill** — Some pet stores in Minnesota still buy puppies from puppy mills and sell these animals to consumers. (Most pet stores have stopped this inhumane practice.) To stop the puppy mill-pet store pipeline, Animal Folks testified for the Humane Pet Store bill before the MN Legislature. Efforts continue in 2021-2022.

PROGRAM 4: Criminal and Civil Justice

GOAL: To investigate and report suspected or known animal cruelty (or related crimes against animals) and provide input to criminal and civil cases throughout the legal process.

2020 Strategies and Actions



Photo of Frodo, victim of animal cruelty

- **Animal Cruelty: The Case of Frodo** — Due to COVID, many court cases were postponed in 2020, including cases involving animal cruelty.

A hearing for the animal cruelty case of Frodo, however, was held on September 16, 2020 at the Washington County Courthouse. Face masks and social distancing were required. Animal Folks attended this hearing and submitted a Community Impact Statement, documenting why animal cruelty is a violent crime and places the community at risk.

Frodo, an 8-year-old Bichon Frise, was owned and loved by Gemma Barry (permission given to use her name). Ms. Barry, a 73-year-old resident of Washington County, had rented a room in her home to a man who ended up abusing Frodo. The injuries were so severe that Frodo had to be euthanized.

We are highlighting this case because we have used it in our trainings. This case illustrates what happens when all stakeholders involved with an animal cruelty case work together and act responsibly per the law. Specifically:

- The Sheriff's Office responded in a timely manner and documented the appropriate evidence;
- The veterinarians conducted a thorough examination (and forensic necropsy), documenting the medical findings;
- The prosecutor understood the severity of the crime and filed the appropriate charge.

Because the evidence was clearly documented and the case was effectively prosecuted, the man pleaded guilty to felony animal cruelty (Minn. Stat. sec. 343.21.1). He was sentenced on this charge.

PROGRAM 5: Outreach & Communication

GOAL: To educate the public on animal law and cruelty issues, and enhance communication and cooperation between various stakeholders involved in the enforcement of animal law.

2020 Strategies and Actions

- **Presentation: 2020 Conference on Crime and Victimization** — For the third year, Ann Olson, Executive Director of Animal Folks, and Reese Frederickson, Pine County Attorney, spoke at the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) "Crime and Victimization" conference, held online due to COVID. As the primary audience was social workers, victim advocates, and mental health professionals, our presentation focused on animal cruelty and the link to violence against humans, such as domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse.
- **Community Events and Outreach** — Due to COVID, in-person events and conferences were cancelled in 2020. Animal Folks did attend (thanks to ZOOM) numerous online conferences and webinars related to animal issues, animal cruelty, and public safety.
- **Outreach** — Animal Folks creates and sends monthly emails to our database as well as making regular posts on Facebook and our website. Emails and posts reflect our research on animal issues.

FINANCES

Animal Folks is proud to be a Charities Review Council Meets Standards® organization and a Gold Guidestar participant.

STATEMENT – Fiscal Year 2020 — January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020

Support and Revenue	
Individual Contributions	$75,238
In-kind Contributions	$65,296
Government Grants	$800
Corp/Fdtn Contributions	$42,540
Total Support and Revenue	**$183,874**

Expense	
Program Services	$144,936
Fundraising	$15,816
Administration	$15,000
Total Expenses	**$175,752**

Balance Sheet – Fiscal Year 2020

Assets	
Cash	$79,404
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	$1,486
Net Assets	$77,918

Program Services: Major Program Expenses

Animal Cruelty Research	$46,380
Criminal & Civil Justice	$14,494
Animal Law Resources	$57,974
Legislative Action	$12,295
Outreach & Education	$13,793

GOVERNANCE

Animal Folks: Board of Directors

Reese Frederickson
John Kingrey
Pat Ormston
Cotton Wilson
Marianne Settano-Shumaker
Rose Surma
Ann Olson
Advisor: Cynthia Erickson

VALUES

Our actions are guided by our values: Nonviolence, Respect, Ethics, Credibility, and Innovation

THANKS

Thank you to the talented volunteers, advocates, and donors who support Animal Folks with our work.

Our Team

Ann Olson, Founder and Executive Director
Kathy Zurcher, Strategist/Systems-Thinking
Megan Wright, Administrative and Database Manager
Arianna Pittman, Senior Researcher and Writer
Lena Atchan, Researcher
Brittany DeVito, Databank Researcher
Chelsea Loch, Administrative Assistant, Databank
Mike Tincher, Design and Marketing
Jeff Moravec, Social Media and Public Relations
Tim Puffer, Fund Development
3M pro bono team: Ann Kulprathipanja Gallagher, Heather Sumter, Deb Monturiol, Mycki Kosloski, Kari Brunner, Sandra Nowak
Ryan Patrick and Imani Jaafar, Policy Consultants