ANIMALFOLKS 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

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Animal Folks works to establish Minnesota Companion Animal Board

Companion animals play an important role in the lives of many Minnesotans, and yet there is no state agency skilled or trained to address the health and well-being of these animals and those who care for them.

Minnesota's state government is currently structured to meet the needs of livestock for food and fiber production (Department of Agriculture), wildlife management (Department of Natural Resources), and animal diseases (Board of Animal Health).



During the 2019 Minnesota legislative session, Senator Carrie Ruud and Representative John Lesch introduced the Companion Animal Board bill, which will provide expertise in and oversight of companion animal issues in Minnesota. Animal Folks worked closely with these legislators and the Animal Humane Society to research the need, craft the language, and lobby the bill.

As Minnesota operates on a biennial legislative session, the CAB bill continued into the 2020 legislative session.

For more details about this bill, the board's duties, and the bill language, go to www.MNCAB.org.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Animal Folks is to protect animals and fight animal cruelty by creating a modern system of animal law enforcement 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. Animal Folks speaks regularly with local and national stakeholders, such as prosecutors, judges, law enforcement, veterinarians, and others, to gather input and discuss systemic ideas.

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

This mission of Animal Folks is supported by five primary programs: 1) Animal Cruelty Research; 2) Criminal and Civil Justice; 3) Animal Law Resources; 4) Legislative Action; and 5) Outreach & Communication.

PROGRAM GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PROGRAM 1: 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.

2019 Strategies and Actions

Animal Folks believes strongly in data transparency, where governmental agencies provide citizens, including news reporters, organizations, and others, access to information that allows people to be better informed on issues, knowledgeable of violations by licensees (for stronger consumer and animal protection), and insight about how government personnel may or may not enforce specific laws.

- **Data Requests: Minnesota Board of Animal Health** (BAH) — In recent years, the Board of Animal Health has denied data previously granted, pertaining to documents it collects and maintains and laws it is authorized to enforce. Among other issues, the BAH began denying data requests for documents, such as inspection reports and enforcement actions, pertaining to the Kennels and Dealers law (Minn. Stat. § 347.31-40), which licenses and inspects animal shelters in Minnesota and other organizations or businesses that meet the definition of kennel. (This law does not apply to commercial dog and cat breeding.)

  Even though this data is public, the BAH continued to deny data requests and also tried to create a state law making the data private. In 2019, Animal Folks testified against this bill, explaining that animal shelters want their inspection reports to remain public so donors and the community can be informed about their activities. The bill did not pass.

  Animal Folks persisted. After a year of correspondence with the BAH and the Data Practices Office of the Department of Administration, the BAH reversed their denials specific to the Kennels and Dealers law and provided the requested data to Animal Folks, adhering to the Data Privacy law. This data should now be available to all who request it.

- **Federal: USDA** — For years, Animal Folks has researched the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and its inspection and enforcement actions of commercial dog breeding facilities under the Animal Welfare Act. Animal Folks has witnessed the USDA's changes in policy to weaken enforcement procedures, such as adopting "teachable moments," where many violations are no longer cited on inspection reports. Examples: In a two year period (from 2016-2018), the number of cases initiated by the USDA *decreased* from 239 to 15. The number of written warnings issued by the USDA to licensees *decreased* from 192 to 30. Animal Folks submitted our concerns to the Office of Inspector General.



Breeding dog in former USDA-licensed MN dog breeding kennel.

PROGRAM 2: Criminal & 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.

2019 Strategies and Actions

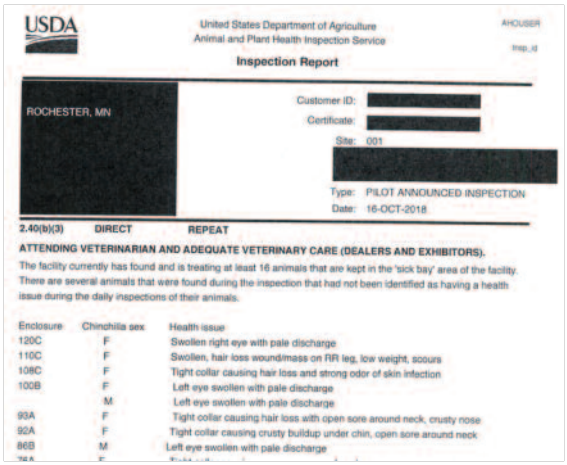
- **Complaint: Suspect Animal Cruelty** — In April 2019, Animal Folks filed a complaint against Moulton Chinchilla Ranch for suspected animal cruelty. Located in Fillmore County, this facility is reported to have over 500 chinchillas. Prior to the USDA redacting data from its inspection reports, Animal Folks had requested and received USDA reports showing numerous violations of the Animal Welfare Act by Moulton Chinchilla Ranch over multiple years. Examples of violations included:
  - deceased chinchilla...bloated, peeling skin, strong odor
  - deceased chinchilla seen on top of an enclosure...licensee had to peel the carcass off of the top of the cage
  - abscess under chin of chinchilla revealing embedded collar
  - multiple eyes swollen, sealed shut, crusty, pale discharge
  - hard bumps, moist under chin; could be due to impacted teeth
  - flies throughout the facility were excessive

  The above cites only a few examples noted in reports.

  While the sheriff office submitted the complaint and supporting documents to the County Attorney, the Fillmore County Attorney denied to file charges stating:

  "Since USDA has an investigative service which regularly inspects the Moulton Chinchilla operation...I must decline to pursue any criminal charges at this time...USDA appears to have a good process to review the allegations of maltreatment, most appropriate sanctions, or refer the matter for criminal charges... If USDA does refer the matter to my office for prosecution, we can review the matter for criminal charges at that time."

  
  USDA
  United States Department of Agriculture
  Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
  AHOUSER
  Inspection Report
  ROCHESTER, MN
  Customer ID: [redacted]
  Certificate: [redacted]
  Site: 001
  [redacted]
  Type: PILOT ANNOUNCED INSPECTION
  Date: 16-OCT-2018
  2.40(b)(3) DIRECT REPEAT
  ATTENDING VETERINARIAN AND ADEQUATE VETERINARY CARE (DEALERS AND EXHIBITORS).
  The facility currently has found and is treating at least 16 animals that are kept in the 'sick bay' area of the facility. There are several animals that were found during the inspection that had not been identified as having a health issue during the daily inspections of their animals.

Enclosure	Chinchilla sex	Health issue
120C	F	Swollen right eye with pale discharge
110C	F	Swollen, hair loss wound/mass on RR leg, low weight, scours
108C	F	Tight collar causing hair loss and strong odor of skin infection
100B	F	Left eye swollen with pale discharge
	M	Left eye swollen with pale discharge
93A	F	Tight collar causing hair loss with open sore around neck, crusty nose
92A	F	Tight collar causing crusty buildup under chin, open sore around neck
86B	M	Left eye swollen with pale discharge

  Top photo: A bloated chinchilla from USDA inspection report of Moulton facility. Bottom: Inspection report, partially redacted.

  Animal Folks submitted the cruelty complaint to the USDA; they did not refer the matter. The facility is still operating.

  The above illustrates the problem often faced with cases of suspected animal cruelty. This county attorney, rather than pursue Minnesota *criminal* statutes, deferred to federal regulatory law. The federal government does not enforce state criminal statutes. The county attorney assumed inspectors are protecting the animals or have "good" processes in place. In the above case, the violations had occurred for years with little or no consequences to the facility owner by the USDA. In our assessment, the violations met the definition of Minnesota animal cruelty. We have continued to pursue this case for the protection of the animals.

- **Lawsuit against USDA** — Animal Folks is a plaintiff in a lawsuit against the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for abruptly removing animal welfare documents from its website. In 2017, the case was dismissed. The coalition, led by the Animal Legal Defense Fund, appealed and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals overruled the District Court on August 29, 2019. For further details, go to: www.animalfolksmn.org/lawsuit-usda.html

PROGRAM 3: 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.

2019 Strategies and Actions

- **Animal Cruelty Training for Veterinarians** — In February 2019, Animal Folks hosted our fourth anti-cruelty training for Minnesota veterinarians at the Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) Annual Meeting. We welcomed 50 veterinarians for the full day training session (with multiple local and national speakers) and over 200 veterinarians at our one-hour session with Dr. Rachel Touroo of the ASPCA. Topics discussed during the session included identifying, documenting, and reporting animal cruelty, forensic photography, and what a prosecutor needs from a veterinarian.



Animal cruelty training held by Animal Folks for Minnesota veterinarians.

- **Animal Cruelty Training for Veterinarian Students** — Animal Folks begun a new project with veterinarians from the University of Minnesota to develop curriculum for veterinary students on animal cruelty and their role when facing a suspected animal cruelty case.
- **Model Animal Cruelty Policy for Law Enforcement** — Throughout 2019, Animal Folks continued our work on a model animal cruelty policy for use by law enforcement in Minnesota. Numerous interviews were conducted with individuals involved with the enforcement of animal cruelty cases, including police chiefs, sheriffs, officers, deputies, a retired judge, prosecutor, veterinarians, animal control officers, and humane agents. These interviews and other research gathered gave us the data needed to draft a model policy. This project continues into 2020 for review, feedback, and approval from authorities.

PROGRAM 4: 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.

2019 Strategies and Actions



- **Companion Animal Board Bill** — As highlighted on the cover page, in 2019 Animal Folks worked on creating the Companion Animal Board bill. The pet industry has grown to over $75 billion with many Minnesotans considering their pet to be a family member. Efforts continued to 2020.
- **Tracking of State bills** — Animal Folks tracks and records bills introduced at the Minnesota Legislature related to animal issues. This information and status of each bill is posted on the Animal Folks website.
- **Fur Free Minneapolis** — Animal Folks agreed to support the efforts of Fur Free Minneapolis, a nonprofit organization working to pass an ordinance to ban the sale and manufacture of new fur products in Minnespolis. This effort continued into 2020.

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.

2019 Strategies and Actions

- **Presentation: 2019 Conference on Crime and Victimization —** Ann Olson, Executive Director of Animal Folks, and Reese Frederickson, Pine County Attorney, spoke about animal cruelty as a public safety issue at the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) "Crime and Victimization" in Brainerd, Minnesota in May 2019. The issue of animal cruelty and the link to other violence against humans, such as domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse, had not been discussed at the OJP conference before this session.
- **Panel Discussion: COGI** — In June 2019, Ann Olson, Executive Director of Animal Folks, participated in a panel discussion of data privacy issues and access to information as it relates to the Board of Animal Health and their denials of data requests. This panel was hosted by the MN Coalition on Government Information (COGI).
- **Community Events** — To create awareness about animal cruelty, Animal Folks hosted booths at events in Minnesota, including the Walk for Animals in Golden Valley, Paws on Grand in St. Paul, the MN Animal Welfare Conference in St. Cloud, the Crime and Victimization Conference in Brainerd, and the MN Veterinary Medical Association Annual Meeting in Minneapolis.
- **Outreach** — To build relationships to support our mission, Animal Folks attended two conferences in 2019 on animal law and animal forensics: the Criminal Justice Institute Conference in Minneapolis and the Animal Legal Defense Fund Annual Conference in Seattle.



Animal Folks presenting at the OJP Crime and Victimization Conference.



Animal Folks holding a booth on Grand Avenue in St. Paul at Paws on Grand.

- **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 reflects our research on animal issues. Examples of 2019 topics included review of recent studies of animal sexual abuse; the opioid epidemic relating to use of pet medications by addicts; dogs left unattended in hot cars; state initiatives, such as New York City Council banning fois gras from restaurant menus; and federal laws, such as the Preventing Cruelty and Torture Act (PACT), allowing certain crimes to be charged as felonies. This research is used to generate awareness about general animal cruelty and promote a better understanding of issues in the animal community. In addition to providing information on specific animal topics, our emails and posts also include data on animal cruelty cases occurring throughout Minnesota.

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FINANCES

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

STATEMENT – Fiscal Year 2019 — January 1, 2019 - December 31, 2019

Support and Revenue	
Individual Contributions	$105,085
In-kind Contributions	$96,343
Corp/Fdtn Contributions	$28,072
Total Support and Revenue	**$229,500**

Expenses	
Program Services	$195,244
Fundraising	$15,157
Administration	$16,084
Total Expenses	**$226,485**

Balance Sheet – Fiscal Year 2019

Assets	
Cash	$62,041
Accounts Receivable	$4,451
Prepaid Expenses	$5,000
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	$1,696
Net Assets	**$69,796**

Program Services: Major Program Expenses*

Animal Cruelty Research	$66,672
Criminal & Civil Justice	$36,611
Animal Law Resources	$53,257
Legislative Action	$19,780
Outreach & Education	$18,924

* *Program expenses include $96,343 of in-kind service expenses representing professional expertise donated.*

GOVERNANCE

Animal Folks: Board of Directors

Reese Frederickson, esq.
John Kingrey, esq.
Pat Ormston
Cotton Wilson
Lisa Roberts, DVM
Kerry D'Amato
Marianne Settano-Shumaker, esq.
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
Arianna Pittman, Senior Researcher and Writer
Brittany DeVito, Databank Researcher
Megan Wright, Administrative and Database Manager
Chelsea Loch, Administrative Assistant
Mike Tincher, Design and Marketing
Jeff Moravec, Social Media and Public Relations
Heather Christopherson, Fund Development
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
Lena Atchan, Researcher
Bryan Lake, lobbyist