

Crimes Relating to Animals; Conviction and Sentencing_HB89_Favorable_Joy Wilson

As a Certified Animal Control Officer in the State of Maryland, I strongly support House Bill 89; Crimes Relating to Animals; Conviction and Sentencing.

My responsibility to the citizens and animals of this state is to ensure that in cases with large numbers of animals, each one is recognized as an individual victim. On multiple occasions I have encountered animal hoarding and/ or animal fighting cases that did involve a large number of animals. The perpetrators in these cases would inflict harm, suffering, abuse and/ or aggravated cruelty to every animal in their care or custody.

One case of note involved the starving of twenty (20) horses with one being deceased upon our arrival. Another case involved eleven (11) dogs being kept secluded in the woods in order to hide the training and maintenance of game fighting dogs.

In each of these cases a charge was filed for every animal in Circuit Court. Misdemeanor animal cruelty on conviction is subject to imprisonment not exceeding 90 days or a fine not exceeding \$1,000 or both. Felony animal cruelty on conviction is subject to imprisonment not exceeding 3 years or a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or both.

If House Bill 89 does not pass, cases such as these would have the sentencing merged meaning that someone could abuse, harm, neglect, or cruelly treat one (1) animal or twenty (20) animals and be sentenced the same.