

## Statement of Principles

*As a national association dedicated to supporting and enhancing the effectiveness of prosecutors in their efforts to create safer communities, ensure justice, and uphold public safety, the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA) hereby submits this statement of principles regarding the prosecution of animal cruelty crimes:*

- Animals are sentient beings with the undeniable capacity to suffer pain.*
- Every state's criminal code recognizes animals' capacity to suffer, with 49 states identifying certain acts of animal cruelty as felonies.*
- There is a direct link between the criminal acts of animal abuse and interpersonal violence including murder, child abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse.*
- Under-enforcement of animal cruelty laws is directly correlated to a host of corrosive societal ills – such as animal fighting in gangs and the harming or killing of companion animals in domestic violence situations.*
- Animal cruelty, both active and passive, is a crime of violence, and as such requires a prosecutor's full attention, with the accompanying allocation of resources to hold the offenders accountable and achieve just results.*
- Prosecutors, in exercising their professional discretion, should give animal cruelty cases priority and make certain they are handled in the same professional manner as other crimes of violence.*