

ASSOCIATION OF PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS
+ ANIMAL LEGAL DEFENSE FUND PRESENT

15th National Animal Cruelty Prosecution Conference

Three days of forensic science, digital evidence, and trial practice for prosecutors and investigators.

Nov 4 – 6, 2026

VENUE

AC Hotel Vancouver Waterfront

ADDRESS

333 W. Columbia Way, Vancouver, WA 98660

SESSIONS

17 across three days

CREDIT

Up to 13.50 CLE

Day 01 Wednesday, November 4

5.00 CLE

8:00 –
9:00 AM

Registration & Continental Breakfast

9:00 –
10:00 AM

Opening, Welcome & Introductions

Nikki Parisi, CEO, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, Washington, DC · **Lora Dunn**, Director, Criminal Justice Program, Animal Legal Defense Fund · **Hon. Nathan Vasquez**, District Attorney, Multnomah County District Attorney's Office, Portland, OR · **Laurel Smith**, Prosecuting Attorney Elect, Clark County Prosecutor's Office, Vancouver, WA

10:00 –
11:15 AM

Animal Distress and Suffering

1.00 CLE

Opening keynote exploring how animals experience distress and suffering, and why this matters to prosecutors and investigators in building a compelling case.

Dr. Frank McMillan, DVM, Author

11:15 –
11:30 AM

Break

11:30 AM –
12:30 PM

Speaking the Same Language: Investigator and Prosecutor

1.00 CLE

Strategies for building effective communication and partnership between law enforcement investigators and prosecutors from the outset of a case.

Sheriff Sam Cogen, Baltimore City Sheriff's Office, Baltimore, MD · **Sherwin Figueroa Safir**, Unit Chief, Animal Crimes Unit, Nassau County District Attorney's Office, Mineola, NY

12:30 –
1:45 PM

Lunch – Provided

Day 01 continues on the next page →

1:45 –
2:45 PM

Animal Crime Scene Processing & Hoarding

1.00 CLE

Practical approaches to processing large, complex animal crime scenes, from documentation and evidence collection to report writing, with a focus on hoarding cases and lessons learned for prosecution.

Amy Taylor, Investigator, Animal Law Unit, Virginia AG's Office, Richmond, VA · **Jake Kamins**, Animal Cruelty Resource Prosecutor, Senior Assistant Attorney General, Oregon Department of Justice, Corvallis, OR

2:45 –
3:00 PM

Break

3:00 –
4:00 PM

Updates in Forensic Veterinary Science in Animal Cruelty Cases

1.00 CLE

An update on the latest developments in forensic veterinary science and how they are transforming animal cruelty investigations and prosecutions.

Dr. Melinda Merck, DVM, Forensic Veterinarian, Founder, Veterinary Forensics Consulting, LLC, Denver, CO
Dr. Laura Niestat, DVM, Forensic Veterinarian, ASPCA

4:00 –
5:00 PM

Animal Fighting: Digital Evidence

1.00 CLE

Leveraging digital evidence in animal fighting cases, including surveillance footage, cell phone data, and social media, with practical tips for both investigators and prosecutors.

Laurn Day, Senior Assistant Statewide Prosecutor, Florida Office of the Attorney General, Orlando, FL

5:30 –
7:00 PM

Reception

ALL ATTENDEES

Day 02

Thursday, November 5

6.50 CLE

8:00 –
9:00 AM

Registration & Continental Breakfast

9:00 –
10:00 AM

Finding the Line: Distinguishing Between Lawful and Unlawful Animal Killings

1.00 CLE

An examination of where the law draws the line between lawful and unlawful animal killings, with practical guidance for investigators and prosecutors navigating these often-complex determinations.

David Rosengard, Managing Attorney, Criminal Justice Program, ALDF, Saint Helens, OR · **Dr. Kris Otteman**, ABVP Shelter Medicine Practice, CAWA, Contract Forensic Veterinarian, ALDF; President, Victim to Verdict, Vancouver, WA

10:00 –
11:00 AM

Entomology in Animal Cruelty Cases

1.00 CLE

A case-based exploration of how forensic entomology can be used in animal cruelty investigations and prosecutions, including establishing time of death and conditions of neglect.

Dr. David Rivers, Ph.D., Entomologist, Department Chair & Professor, Loyola University Maryland

11:00 –
11:15 AM

Break

Day 02 continues on the next page →

11:15 AM –
12:15 PM

Nowhere to Turn: A Case Study of Neglected Dogs and Puppies

1.00 CLE

Scott Halloran, Assistant Attorney General, Environmental Protection Division, Washington State Attorney General's Office, Seattle, WA

12:15 –
1:15 PM

Lunch — Provided

1:15 –
2:15 PM

For Your Situational Awareness

1.00 CLE

A combined session covering illegal bush tracks, data in animal cruelty cases, and a national legislative update, providing prosecutors with the awareness and context needed to stay ahead of emerging issues.

Nancy Blaney, Director, Government Affairs, Animal Welfare Institute, Washington, DC · **Kathleen Wood**, Staff Attorney, Criminal Justice Program, ALDF, Portland, OR · **Jessica Chapman**, Staff Attorney, Criminal Justice Program, ALDF, Portland, OR

2:15 –
3:15 PM

Discovery: Practical Strategies for Animal Cruelty Cases

1.00 CLE

A practical session on discovery obligations, challenges, and best practices in animal cruelty prosecutions, with a focus on common pitfalls and how to avoid them.

Lynsey Legier, Staff Attorney, Animal Protection Division, MSPCA, Boston, MA · **Erin Aiello**, Assistant District Attorney, Northwestern DA's Office, Northampton, MA

3:15 –
3:30 PM

Break

3:30 –
5:00 PM

Voir Dire in Animal Cruelty Cases

1.50 CLE

An interactive session using improv techniques to sharpen voir dire skills specific to animal cruelty cases, helping prosecutors identify juror bias and build a more receptive panel.

Michelle Welch, Sr. Assistant Attorney General, Virginia Office of the Attorney General, Richmond, VA

Dinner on your own — the Waterfront district is a short walk along the Columbia.

8:00 –
8:30 AM

Registration & Continental Breakfast

8:30 –
9:30 AM

Working with Nonprofits and Rescue Partners for Successful Outcomes — Dos and Don'ts

1.00 CLE

A candid conversation about what works, and what doesn't, when prosecutors and law enforcement collaborate with animal shelters, rescue organizations, and nonprofit partners.

Emily Lewis, Criminal Justice Program Managing Attorney, ALDF, Portland, OR · **Linda Fielder**, Animal Cruelty Investigations Manager, ALDF, Portland, OR · **Madeline Bernstein**, President, spcaLA, Los Angeles, CA

9:30 –
10:30 AM

Ethics: Artificial Intelligence in Animal Cruelty Prosecution

1.00 CLE

A discussion of ethical duties for prosecutors in animal cruelty cases, including how to use AI and pitfalls to avoid amid evolving technology, media attention, and public pressure. Real-world scenarios will guide discussion.

Jill Hollander, Deputy District Attorney, Fulton County DA's Office, Atlanta, GA · **Elaine Fehrs**, Assistant District Attorney, Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, Milwaukee, WI

10:30 –
11:30 AM

Closing Session — Model Practices and Where Do We Go From Here?

A closing session highlighting model prosecution practices and charting the path forward for continued growth, collaboration, and advocacy in animal cruelty prosecution.

Hon. Reese Frederickson, County Attorney, Pine County Attorney's Office, MN

11:30 AM

Adjourn

MCLE & Continuing Education

APA is qualified as a Multiple Activity Provider for the state of California. California prosecutors requiring MCLE credit must have their name badge scanned each morning and afternoon; credit cannot be provided for days that are not scanned. Participants from other states may submit independently to their licensing body. Certificates of attendance are sent post-event and list total CLE earned.

Evaluation

Scan to complete the end-of-conference evaluation and request a certificate of attendance.

QR