



Anti-Cruelty Laws Protect All Cats

Intentionally killing a cat is a criminal offense in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, **regardless of ownership**. Anti-cruelty laws apply to all cats—companion, abandoned, lost, and feral.

Anti-cruelty laws are among many types of laws designed to protect society from violent people. In fact, anti-cruelty laws, first enacted in the late 1800s, were established to protect animals from human violence, **irrespective of ownership**. These laws led to the creation of child abuse laws and then, in the 20th century, elder abuse laws. The common denominator in all of these laws is protection from a violent person. Scientific research now provides a nuanced understanding of the **link between different types of violence**. An aggressive individual who lashes out in response to conflict is a threat to society, whether the victim is a child, a spouse, or an animal. Intentionally killing a cat is a violent act. That fact doesn't change because the animal isn't wearing a collar.

No individual is entitled to act contrary to the law simply because that person's opinion differs from the collective judgment of the legislature.

Anti-cruelty laws protect all cats. That protection is not—and as a practical matter, cannot be—based on ownership status. We wouldn't want such distinctions to be made anyway, because like many criminal laws, these laws exist to protect all of us from aggressive individuals. We are a nation of laws, not of violence. For this to hold true, we must remain vigilant against every act of violence, inflicted on any victim—even when the victim is a cat.