



VERMONT  
HUMANE  
FEDERATION

# 2015 Annual Report

*The Vermont Humane Federation (VHF) is a strong, unified network of organizations and individuals dedicated to promoting the welfare of animals.*

## ADOPTIONS

While Maddie's Fund chose not to offer their Pet Adoption Days event again in Vermont this year, VHF members were recognized for their ongoing efforts to save animal lives by being offered a one-time granting opportunity from their Board of Directors. VHF members were offered a grant equal to 50% of the grant money they received during the 2014 event. Several shelters received funding to support a variety of innovative programs like pet transports, behavior training & enrichment, unusual medical needs, expanded cat and dog housing, fuel-efficient ventilation, and staff training.



Maddie's  
Fund

## ANIMAL CRUELTY RESPONSE

### Statewide Multi-Disciplinary Task Force

On July 1, 2015, a **new state law** went into effect that prohibits and creates felony penalties for the possession of animal fighting paraphernalia—making Vermont's animal fighting law one of the strongest in the country! It also made various changes to the state's forfeiture statutes, and created an [Animal Cruelty Task Force](#) to improve the State's response to animal cruelty complaints (see also "Public Policy" below). The VHF had solid representation on the Task Force, with VHF Board member Joanne Bourbeau selected as chair at their first meeting on August 4, 2015. Deb Loring from Spring Hill Horse Rescue was selected to represent livestock humane officers, and Erika Holm from the Central Vermont Humane Society was selected to represent domestic animal humane officers.

The legislature tasked this **diverse group** with studying and making recommendations concerning:

1. training for humane agents, animal control officers, law enforcement officers, and prosecutors;
2. the development of uniform response protocols for receiving, investigating, and following up on complaints of animal cruelty, including sentencing recommendations;
3. the development of a centralized data collection system capable of sharing data collected from both the public and private sectors on substantiated complaints of animal cruelty and outcomes;
4. funding the various responsibilities that are involved with an animal cruelty investigation, including which State agencies should be responsible for any State level authority and oversight; and
5. any other issue the Task Force determines is relevant to improve the efficiency, process, and result of animal cruelty response actions in Vermont.

The Task Force submitted its [report](#) and recommendations to the **House** and **Senate** Committees on Judiciary on January 15, 2016, and hopes it will be used as a roadmap for future positive change in the fight against animal cruelty here in Vermont.

### **Direct Response**

The VHF coordinated and led multi-agency responses during two high-profile animal cruelty investigations last year. In February, more than 60 dogs were surrendered in a State Police investigation in Eden, VT, which required volunteers and equipment to not only identify and move the animals, but shelter them for several days and later transfer them to adoption agencies throughout VT and NH. The criminal case is still pending for defendant Carol Merchant, but co-defendant Russell Goodell pleaded no contest to and was convicted on two counts of misdemeanor animal cruelty in September.



In December, 14 horses were seized by the Northfield Police Department in an ongoing investigation. The VHF assisted on-site while warrants were served on two separate occasions, arranged for long-term foster care of the horses, and raised more than \$11,000 for their care.

### **Training**

Thirty-seven people went through one or more levels of the animal cruelty investigation training in September. The workshops received high marks from attendees (especially the hands-on portions), who represented local police departments, county sheriffs, state police, veterinarians, shelters/rescues, animal control officers, and prosecutors.



*"This is some of the most relevant, well-presented and helpful training I've attended . . . I deeply appreciate the quality of instruction, the skills and experience of the trainers, and the venues. Thank you for your great work on this program."—Phil Lovely*

### **EQUINE WELFARE COALITION**

In 2015, the VHF revised its equine welfare coalition grant application to better reflect the broad array of equine services our grant program supports—including hay and feed, sterilization, euthanasia, and other medical care. Last year the VHF awarded \$2,148 in grants to 7 individual horse owners with a total of 15 horses. We provided hay bank grants (11 horses), castration grants (2 horses), and a grant for humane euthanasia (2 elderly and infirmed horses).

In August, the VHF's Equine Welfare Coalition (VEWC) also coordinated and led a "meeting of the minds" of Vermont's horse rescue community at the Vermont Technical College to discuss the state's equine rescue needs, resources and other issues. During 2014, complaints of cruelty to dogs was the highest at 1,207. Complaints involving horses were second highest at 593. Besides animal cruelty issues, the group also focused on funding and liability issues, and the need for quarantine facilities to address disease issues and stray livestock. As a result of the meeting, the group created a private rescue resource page to share information and expertise, including horses available for adoption, inquiries from people looking for horses or other large animals, and organizational needs that could benefit from the sharing of ideas and resources.

A smaller group followed up by drafting [H. 697](#), a legislative proposal later sponsored by Rep. Sarah Buxton (Windsor-Orange-1) in 2016 that make significant improvements to the state's horse shelter laws.

By meeting and exchanging ideas we hope the rescue community at large will be better prepared to tackle the many complex issues that face them.

## **PUBLIC POLICY**

S. 102, a bill which adds felony penalties for possessing or transporting animal fighting training equipment, was signed by the Governor in July! Recognizing that animal



fighting rings are highly organized and regularly involve large amounts of money, S. 102 also provides for the forfeiture of assets which are often gained from illegal animal fighting, and makes provisions for the payment of animal care expenses before any of these proceeds are



distributed to law enforcement agencies. In addition, the bill created an Animal Cruelty Task Force to make recommendations to the legislature on animal cruelty training, response protocols, funding and data collection. A special thank you to bill sponsors and champions Sen. Dick Sears (D-Bennington) and Sen. Tim Ashe (D/I-Chittenden)!

The House and Senate Agriculture Committees both took testimony last year on H. 146, the bill to make improvements to the sheltering requirements for outdoor dogs. An agreement was ultimately reached by the House and Senate to create an Animal Shelter Working Group for the purpose of making recommendations to their agriculture committees regarding the appropriate statutory standards and requirements for the adequate shelter of animals. The group, which included the Vermont Humane Federation, the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association, and the Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs, was led by Rep. John Bartholomew (D-Windsor-1) and reported back to the legislature in January, 2016 with [H. 512](#). The bill addresses several deficiencies in the current sheltering requirements for animals who live most of their lives outdoors.

## **DISASTER RESPONSE**

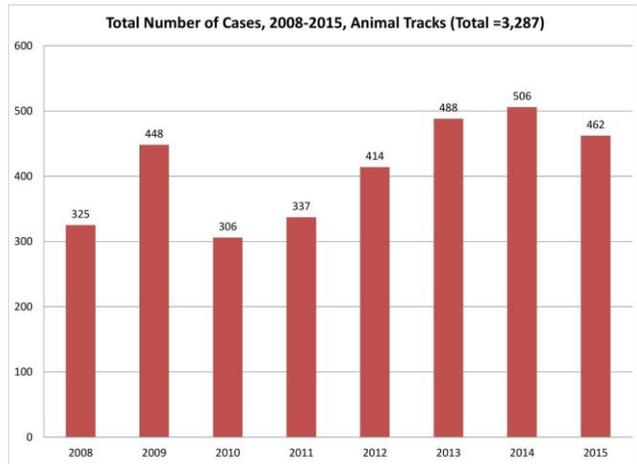
VHF members the Humane Society of Chittenden County and the Windham County Humane Society both stepped up to help develop and support new chartered subsidiary disaster response teams in their respective service areas. Thanks to a generous \$5,000 grant from the ASPCA, the [Vermont Disaster Animal Response Team](#) (VDART) was able to train and outfit teams with response vests, badges, and some terrific new outreach materials. VDART also tabled and spoke to emergency managers at this year's Vermont Emergency Management Conference about the importance of [planning for pet owners](#).



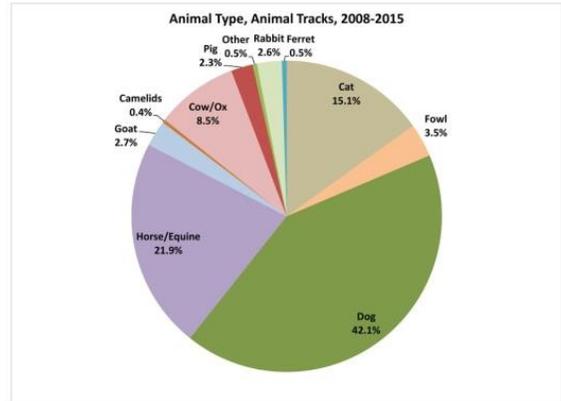
## **SPAY/NEUTER**

The Vermont Spay Neuter Incentive Program (VSNIP) will get a much-needed boost in funding with an additional \$1 surcharge in dog license fees approved in the state budget in 2015. VSNIP is a critically important program for families that need assistance ensuring their pets can be sterilized, but like similar programs across the country, it's underfunded and runs out of money prior to the end of each fiscal year due to the high demand.

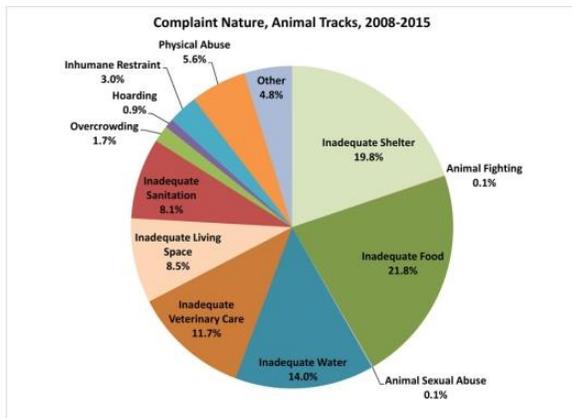
# ANIMAL CRUELTY STATISTICS (2008-2015)



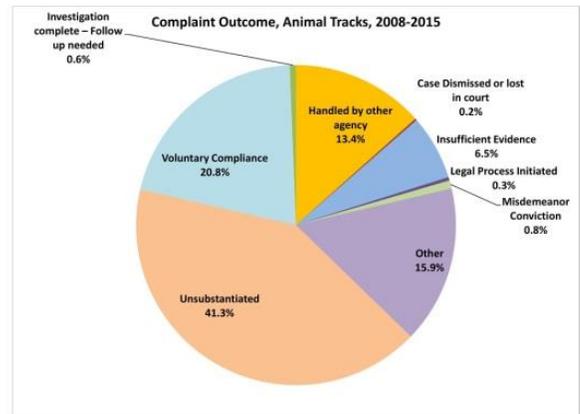
Vermont Humane Federation, 2015



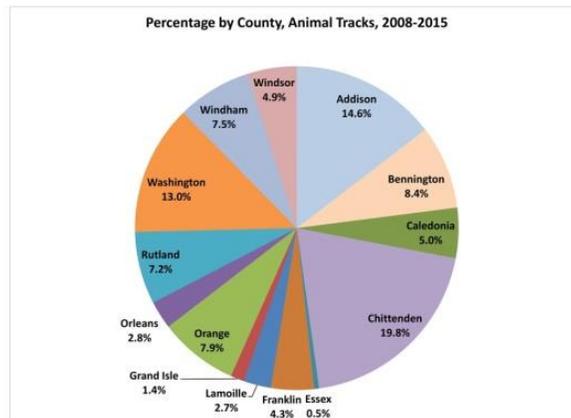
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