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NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS THE INVESTIGATION OF ANIMAL CRUELTY AND THE OFTEN-RELATED CRIMES TO HUMAN VICTIMS

WHEREAS, in 2016, the FBI included Animal Cruelty in the National Incident Based Reporting System (Code 720) as a Crime against Society; classified with crimes like arson, burglary, and other property crimes; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement should recognize, when responding to calls and during investigations, that many people consider pets as a part of their family in today's society; and

WHEREAS, victims of violence may not leave their situation, even if their children have a shelter/resource to leave, if their pets have to remain in the home. Oftentimes, the pets are used to manipulate and coerce the victim in returning to the abuser; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary for law enforcement officers to be familiar with crimes against people and animals, and aware of animal abuse signs that can be used as tools in their investigations; and

WHEREAS, training should be mandatory to cover the animal cruelty statutes as well as the link to crimes against people, including, but not limited to, domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, sex offenses, and human trafficking; and

WHEREAS, animal sports such as dogfighting and cockfighting have links to other crimes including, but not limited to, narcotics, gambling, firearms, and often involve large asset forfeitures; and

WHEREAS, relationships should be established with local shelters, rescues, and/or veterinarians in order to gain assistance with housing animals for victims of crimes; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement officers should work in conjunction with animal control officers, if applicable, not only in investigations of animal cruelty, but also in recording data for the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS); and

WHEREAS, in order to encourage the reporting of animal abuse crimes, toll-free phone, text, or online reporting mechanisms should be established and maintained, and incentives and rewards offered to people who share information that leads to animal abuse arrest(s); and

WHEREAS, the US House and Senate passed the Farm Bill in 2018, which includes several protections for animals, including but not limited to, expanding federal domestic violence protections to include pets at risk and authorizes grants to help domestic violence shelters accommodate pets or arrange for pet shelter; and clarifies that federal prohibitions on animal fighting apply consistently across all U.S. jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, animal abusers may not be aware that there are consequences to their behaviors, it is recommended that law enforcement agencies create educational and community awareness campaigns in partnership with local and/or national animal advocacy groups that address their community needs and implement court-mandated humane training for convicted abusers.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that, in order to more deeply engage the nation's Sheriffs and deputies and enhance their response in the investigation and prosecution of animal cruelty, the National Sheriffs' Association hereby supports law enforcement education and investigation of animal cruelty in conjunction with animal control agencies and humane enforcement organizations throughout the United States;

AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the National Sheriffs' Association urges the nation's state, local, and federal law enforcement; prosecutors; and animal control agencies and investigators to join with the nation's Sheriffs in working collaboratively to more effectively combat animal abuse, which may also include other members of the family.