



FAQS:

Enforcement of Animal Abuser Registries

● WHAT IS AN ANIMAL ABUSER REGISTRY?

An animal abuser registry is a public list, maintained by federal, local or state governments, of criminals who have been tried and convicted of cruelty to animals.

● WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF AN ANIMAL ABUSER REGISTRY?

Animal abuser registries are an important tool to help law enforcement and the pet care community identify and keep these convicted felons from harming animals again.

● WHAT ARE POINT-OF-SALE (POS) VERIFICATIONS FOR ANIMAL ABUSER REGISTRIES?

An animal abuser registry with point-of-sale verification requires retail pet store employees and animal shelter volunteers—many of whom are young and working at their first job or retired and supplementing their income—to check if customers are listed as animal abusers before processing a pet adoption. If the customer is on the registry, the store or shelter is responsible for confronting and turning away these individuals—or the store or shelter could face fines or legal prosecution.

● WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT POINT-OF-SALE VERIFICATIONS NOT BE PART OF AN ANIMAL ABUSER REGISTRY?

Point-of-sale verifications put hardworking and innocent employees in the line of fire of a proven criminal who could cause severe harm to them or others if provoked. Without the authority of being a law enforcement professional, it is difficult for retail staff to confront determined individuals. Situations can quickly escalate, such as confrontations that have occurred regarding mask requirements during the coronavirus pandemic. If a convicted animal abuser is confronted when attempting to obtain a pet at a retail pet store or shelter, they could turn violent. Animal abusers are statistically proven to be more likely to harm both humans and animals. They are five times as likely to harm a person,¹ are often associated with child abuse² and domestic violence,³ and the likelihood they will abuse an animal again is nearly 100 percent.⁴

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● HOW SHOULD ANIMAL ABUSER REGISTRIES BE ENFORCED?

Law enforcement professionals should always be responsible for enforcing animal abuser registries because they are trained to handle volatile and dangerous people and situations. More effective ways to enforce these registries, without endangering innocent store employees or shelter volunteers, include:

- Requiring states to regularly follow up with the abusers on the registry, providing law enforcement the opportunity to expertly identify and appropriately punish cases of abuse.
- Having the state frequently distribute the names and pictures of registry offenders to stores and shelters to share with employees and volunteers, who would be instructed to contact authorities if they see someone on the list attempting to obtain a pet.
- Establishing a federal abuser database maintained by the federal government using the statistics that the FBI already tracks. This national focus would also prevent convicted animal abusers from moving out of the jurisdiction to avoid being listed.

^{1,4} Arluke, Arnold & Levin, Jack & LUKE, CARTER & Ascione, Frank. (1999). The Relationship of Animal Abuse to Violence and Other Forms of Antisocial Behavior. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence-J INTERPERS VIOLENCE*. 14. 963-975. 10.1177/088626099014009004.

² DeViney, E., Dickert, J., & Lockwood, R. (1983). The care of pets within child abusing families. *International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems*, 4(4), 321-329.

³ David Crary, "Program Links Domestic Abuse, Pets," Associated Press, 11 Mar. 2001.

