

**§4011. Cruelty to animals**

**1. Cruelty to animals.** Except as provided in subsection 1-A, a person, including an owner or the owner's agent, is guilty of cruelty to animals if that person:

A. Kills or attempts to kill any animal belonging to another person without the consent of the owner or without legal privilege; [PL 1995, c. 490, §20 (RPR).]

B. Except for a licensed veterinarian or a person certified under Title 17, section 1042, kills or attempts to kill an animal by a method that does not cause instantaneous death; [PL 1995, c. 490, §20 (RPR).]

C. Is a licensed veterinarian or a person certified under Title 17, section 1042 and that person kills or attempts to kill an animal by a method that does not conform to standards adopted by a national association of licensed veterinarians; [RR 1997, c. 2, §33 (COR).]

D. Injures, overworks, tortures, torments, abandons or cruelly beats or intentionally mutilates an animal; gives drugs, including but not limited to, a scheduled drug as defined in Title 17-A, section 1101, subsection 11, to an animal with an intent to harm or intoxicate the animal; gives poison or alcohol to an animal; or exposes a poison with intent that it be taken by an animal. The owner or occupant of property is privileged to use reasonable force to eject a trespassing animal; [PL 2019, c. 437, §4 (AMD).]

E. Deprives an animal that the person owns or possesses of necessary sustenance, necessary medical attention, proper shelter, protection from the weather or humanely clean conditions; [PL 1997, c. 456, §5 (AMD).]

F. Keeps or leaves a domestic animal on an uninhabited or barren island lying off the coast of the State during the month of December, January, February or March without providing necessary sustenance and proper shelter; [PL 1999, c. 254, §11 (AMD).]

G. Hunts, traps or sells for the purpose of hunting any animal, except as permitted pursuant to chapter 202-A and Title 12, Part 13, and excluding humane trapping of animals for population control efforts or animal control pursuant to this Part; [PL 2013, c. 115, §15 (AMD).]

H. Injects, inserts or causes ingestion of any substance used solely to enhance the performance of an animal by altering the animal's metabolism to that animal's detriment, including but not limited to excessive levels of sodium bicarbonate in equines used for competition; [PL 2007, c. 702, §10 (AMD).]

I. Kills or tortures an animal to frighten or intimidate a person or forces a person to injure or kill an animal; or [PL 2007, c. 702, §11 (AMD).]

J. Confines an animal in a building, enclosure, car, boat, vehicle or vessel of any kind when extreme heat or extreme cold will be harmful to its health. [PL 2007, c. 702, §12 (NEW).]

[PL 2019, c. 437, §4 (AMD).]

**1-A. Animal cruelty.** Except as provided in paragraphs A and B, a person is guilty of cruelty to animals if that person kills or attempts to kill a cat or dog.

A. A licensed veterinarian or a person certified under Title 17, section 1042 may kill a cat or dog according to the methods of euthanasia under Title 17, chapter 42, subchapter IV. [PL 1995, c. 490, §21 (NEW).]

B. A person who owns a cat or dog, or the owner's agent, may kill that owner's cat or dog by shooting with a firearm provided the following conditions are met.

- (1) The shooting is performed by a person 18 years of age or older using a weapon and ammunition of suitable caliber and other characteristics to produce instantaneous death by a single shot.
- (2) Death is instantaneous.
- (3) Maximum precaution is taken to protect the general public, employees and other animals.
- (4) Any restraint of the cat or dog during the shooting does not cause undue suffering to the cat or dog. [PL 1995, c. 490, §21 (NEW).]

[PL 1995, c. 490, §21 (NEW).]

**2. Affirmative defenses.** It is an affirmative defense to this section that:

- A. The conduct was performed by a licensed veterinarian or was a part of scientific research governed by accepted standards; [PL 1987, c. 383, §3 (NEW).]
- B. The conduct was designed to control or eliminate rodents, ants or other common pests on the defendant's own property; [PL 2007, c. 702, §13 (AMD).]
- C. The conduct involved the use of live animals as bait or in the training of other animals in accordance with the laws of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Title 12, Part 13; or [PL 2007, c. 702, §14 (AMD).]
- D. The animal is kept as part of an agricultural operation and in compliance with best management practices for animal husbandry as determined by the department. [PL 2007, c. 702, §15 (NEW).]

Evidence of proper care of any animal shall not be admissible in the defense of alleged cruelty to other animals.

[PL 2007, c. 702, §§13-15 (AMD).]

**SECTION HISTORY**

PL 1987, c. 383, §3 (NEW). PL 1995, c. 490, §§20,21 (AMD). RR 1997, c. 2, §33 (COR). PL 1997, c. 456, §§4-6 (AMD). PL 1997, c. 690, §44 (AMD). PL 1999, c. 254, §§11-13 (AMD). PL 1999, c. 765, §9 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 425, §§1-3 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 617, §9 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 414, §§B14,15 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 414, §D7 (AFF). PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF). PL 2007, c. 702, §§10-15 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 115, §15 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 437, §4 (AMD).

The State of Maine claims a copyright in its codified statutes. If you intend to republish this material, we require that you include the following disclaimer in your publication:

*All copyrights and other rights to statutory text are reserved by the State of Maine. The text included in this publication reflects changes made through the Second Regular Session of the 131st Maine Legislature and is current through January 1, 2025. The text is subject to change without notice. It is a version that has not been officially certified by the Secretary of State. Refer to the Maine Revised Statutes Annotated and supplements for certified text.*

The Office of the Revisor of Statutes also requests that you send us one copy of any statutory publication you may produce. Our goal is not to restrict publishing activity, but to keep track of who is publishing what, to identify any needless duplication and to preserve the State's copyright rights.

PLEASE NOTE: The Revisor's Office cannot perform research for or provide legal advice or interpretation of Maine law to the public. If you need legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.