

New Animal Welfare System Now In Force In Ontario

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TORONTO —Yesterday, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services (PAWS) Act came into force, creating the first fully provincial government-based animal welfare enforcement system in Canada. Ontario now has the strongest penalties in Canada for people who violate animal welfare laws.

"People care about the welfare of animals and so does our government," said Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. "We committed to creating a strong, new system to protect animals, and we have delivered on that promise."

Effective January 1, 2020, Ontario will:

- Implement the new model with more inspectors to provide province-wide coverage, including those with specialized expertise in livestock, zoos, aquariums and equines.
- Enable courts to impose the highest financial penalties for offenders in Canada.
- Update prohibitions and obligations, such as barring the return of dog fighting equipment to a person convicted of an offence and harming or attempting to harm a service animal or one that works with peace officers.
- Establish new oversight of inspectors that offers increased transparency and accountability, as well as a one-window complaints mechanism for the public.
- Establish a multi-disciplinary advisory table made up of a wide range of experts, including veterinarians, agriculture representatives, academics, animal advocates and others to provide ongoing advice to the ministry.

Transitional regulations have been put in place to ensure animals are protected while long-term regulations are developed through consultation, including through the multi-disciplinary table.

The province has established a toll-free number, 1-833-9-ANIMAL (264625) for people to report concerns about animal distress or abuse. This call centre is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.