

# What to do when a cat, dog or horse is in trouble in Georgia



Laws that protect Georgia's dogs are complaint-based. This means any possible crime against a dog that has been witnessed must be reported to Law Enforcement for anything to be done.

1) CONTACT LAW ENFORCEMENT, which, depending on where you live should be either:

- the Animal Control Agency responsible for the area in which the situation is occurring, or
- the Police or Sheriff's Department for the area in which the situation is occurring.
- If a horse or horses are the issue, log a complaint on the GA Dept. of Ag website: [Reporting Animal Cruelty | Georgia Department of Agriculture](#)

2) PROVIDE LAW ENFORCEMENT WITH THE 4 "Ws": what, where, when and who, all the relevant information:

1. description of what you have witnessed,
2. address of situation,
3. dates it has occurred, and
4. pictures or video as evidence if you have either or both.
5. list of local animal ordinance violations or state laws being broken, if you know what they are.
6. Keep a record of your logged complaints (date, time, who you spoke to)
7. Follow up!

### 3) KNOW WHICH STATUTE OR ORDINANCE THAT IS BEING VIOLATED

You having that knowledge as a "reporter" ensures follow up and accountability by Law Enforcement. You can make them aware that YOU know what is being done is in fact against the law and you are going to hold them accountable. See the GA Municode website or your local government county or city website. [Georgia | Municode Library](#).

Know that even if a specific ordinance rule isn't being broken, Georgia has a state animal cruelty statute that covers inhumane situations, punishable by misdemeanor or felony charges, making the lack of a local ordinance rule no excuse for Law Enforcement not to act. Georgia also has a statute that makes abandoning an animal illegal. Georgia has a dogfighting statute but uses the animal cruelty statute to prosecute cockfighting.

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**Although companion animals are considered property under the law, they still have protections under Georgia state law** in Title 16 Crimes and Offenses and Title 4 Animals:

- Animal Cruelty criminal code (Title 16) [16-12-4 Cruelty to Animals](#)
- Dogfighting criminal code (Title 16) [16-12-37 Dogfighting](#)
- Code that specifically addresses (companion) animals & horses  
[Title 4 Animals](#):

Chapter 1 - General Provisions

Chapter 8 - Dogs

Chapter 10 - Dealers in Exotic Birds and Pet Birds

Chapter 11 - Animal Protection

Chapter 13 - Humane Care for Equines

Chapter 14 - Sterilization of Dogs and Cats in Shelters

Chapter 15 - Dog and Cat Reproductive Sterilization Support