

## 2025: Banning new puppy mill permits in Winona County

For anyone following Animal Folks over the years, you know that we did not and would not give up on our efforts to stop the growth of large dog breeding facilities (puppy mills) in Winona County.

Winona County has been known as the “Puppy Mill Capitol of Minnesota” due to the high number of dog breeding operations the county had permitted.



The efforts to stop this permitting and protect dogs and puppies finally happened in 2025.

On March 11, 2025, the Winona County Board voted (3-2) to ban future permits for commercial dog breeding facilities in Winona County. The goal: To protect dogs from harm by not providing further permits for the mass production of puppies.

Animal Folks worked with residents in Winona County on these efforts for years. Their calls, emails, letters to the editor, yard signs, petitions, and attendance at multiple hearings made the difference. A huge thanks to three commissioners (Greg Olson, Chris Meyer, and Wayne Voegeli) who took the time to understand the issue and voted yes to ban future permits for commercial dog breeding facilities.

The mass production of puppies to sell to pet stores and brokers nationwide is an outdated and cruel business model. Dogs are not and have never been production animals. Winona County recognized this fact and placed the welfare of dogs first.

### OUR MISSION

The mission of Animal Folks is to protect animals and fight cruelty through constructive and sustainable reforms of the Minnesota criminal and civil justice systems.

### OUR POSITIONING

Public safety and crime prevention.

### WHO WE SERVE

Animals in Minnesota. We also serve Minnesota residents who believe animals should be treated humanely and authorities who are involved in the enforcement of animal law.

### SYSTEM REFORM

Animal Folks accomplishes its mission through a systems-thinking approach. This strategic approach focuses on the development of long-term, sustainable solutions across multiple disciplines to improve the enforcement of animal law and protection of animals.

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## OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Our five program areas include: 1) Animal Cruelty Research; 2) Legislative Action; 3) Outreach and Communication; 4) Animal Law Resources; 5) Criminal and Civil Justice. Depending on funding and need, projects may vary each year.

## PROGRAM GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### PROGRAM 1: Animal Cruelty Research

**GOAL:** To research animal cruelty cases and issues, and provide credible Minnesota-specific data to the public, elected officials, agencies, and organizations.

#### 2025 Strategies and Actions



- **Feral, free-roaming, and community cats:** The issue of feral, free-roaming, and community cats is complex. It is an issue that, in most situations, is addressed by volunteers who coordinate Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) teams to stop cat overpopulation—often, at their own expense—and protect animals from harm or death. It is also a controversial issue, where others are concerned about harm to wildlife from the cats. Animal Folks has researched this issue to better understand the challenges. The care of these cats has become a crisis, and is another example of where ‘system change’ is needed. The Companion Animal Board bill, when passed, can lead discussions on what is needed statewide and work to provide solutions.

- **Puppy mills:** Core to our initiatives at Animal Folks is research. One aspect of this research is continually gathering data on puppy mills and pet stores in Minnesota. In 2025, we presented new data to supporters. Example: The largest breeder in Minnesota, named A.J. Angels and located in Morrison County, reported 803 dogs and puppies on 02-12-25. (For multiple years prior, this breeding operation had over 1,000 dogs and puppies. Her mother-in-law, the prior owner, had 1,752 dogs/puppies.) A puppy broker in New Prague, MN named Verified Puppy was cited for verbally abusing and threatening a USDA inspector on 04-30-25, leading to a 5-day suspension of their federal license. Another breeder, Tim and Rebecca Stille, in Faribault, MN, was cited by the USDA for multiple violations of the Animal Welfare Act, including strong odor and lack of sanitation, lack of annual veterinary exams, lack of vaccinations, and more. (The MN Board of Animal Health does not provide breeder data to the public for review.) This data is used in informational packets to pass humane laws.



## PROGRAM 2: Legislative Action

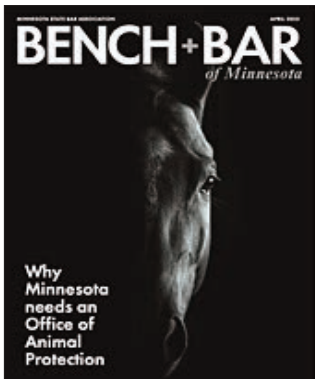
**GOAL:** To lead and support state and local legislative efforts, including crafting humane laws, lobbying, and advocacy, that protects animals and lays a foundation for system reform.

### 2025 Strategies and Actions

2025 was a disturbing year for the MN Legislature and all citizens of Minnesota. In June of 2025, Rep. Melissa Hortman, her husband Mark, and their beloved dog Gilbert were killed in a tragic shooting at their home. Senator John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette, were also shot by the same man in their home. We all were saddened by these senseless acts. Like many Minnesotans, Animal Folks is opposed to violence against animals and people. These incidents will not be forgotten and will have a lasting impact on the Legislature and state.



The 2025 legislative session started on January 14, 2025 and adjourned May 19, 2025.



- **Office of Animal Protection (OAP) bill S.F. 1163/H.F. 1816** — The Office of Animal Protection bill was re-introduced during the 2025 legislative session. Animal Folks lobbied the bill and engaged advocates. Legislators understood the need, harm to animals, and the link between animal cruelty and human violence. The bill was granted a hearing in the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety committee but was not heard in the Senate State and Local Government committee. *Of note:* We worked to amend the “Crime of Violence” section from the bill so it could progress on its own. Intent: To include animal cruelty (chapter 343) as a Crime of Violence under Minn. Stat. sec. 624.712. This amendment was approved at the hearing; it did not pass the conference committee. Learn more: [mnoap.org](http://mnoap.org)

- **Companion Animal Board (CAB) bill S.F. 2415/H.F. 2490**— The Companion Animal Board bill was also re-introduced in 2025. Efforts were targeted at separating “pet issues” from agricultural oversight to allow pet welfare to be led by pet experts. Learn more: [mncab.org](http://mncab.org) *Of note:* In 2025, the Office of Legislative Auditor was directed to audit the Board of Animal Health (BAH) for its oversight of companion animals (pets). The board administers two “pet laws” (dog and cat breeder law and kennels and dealers law). Audit to continue into 2026.



- **Winona County: Commercial dog breeder ordinance** — As highlighted on the front page of this report, Animal Folks, with the help of residents and three Winona County commissioners, was able to ban future (new) puppy mills from obtaining dog breeding permits. The importance of this action is significant. If we all truly want to stop puppy mills and the mass production of puppies, we must start at the source—stop commercial breeders from obtaining permits locally so they cannot set up this type of business. A full review and history of this issue in Winona County can be found at: [speakupwinonacounty.org](http://speakupwinonacounty.org)

## PROGRAM 3: Outreach and Communication

**GOAL:** To educate the public on animal law and animal cruelty issues, and enhance communication and cooperation between various stakeholders involved in the enforcement of animal law.

### 2025 Strategies and Actions

- **Minnesota Animal Welfare Conference — May 15.** Hosted by the Tri-County Humane Society, individuals and organizations from throughout Minnesota met to discuss animal welfare needs.
- **Office of Justice Conference (OJP) on Crime and Victimization — June 5.** Animal Folks hosted a booth at the OJP conference where we discussed the link between animal cruelty and human violence.
- **Minnesota Continuing Legal Education (MNCLE) Animal and Pet Law — July 23.** Animal Folks' executive director Ann Olson with Stacy Bettison, attorney, spoke at the MN CLE's seminar about animal cruelty and animal law.



- **Minnesota State Fair — August 21-September 1.** Animal Folks was proud to host a booth again at the Minnesota State Fair. Thousands of people visited the booth, and each year we gather 2,000+ petitions in support of our two legislative initiatives (state bills). Thousands of BE KIND TO ANIMALS buttons and decals were distributed.
- **Minnesota Sheriffs' Association (MSA) Conference — December 8-9.** Animal Folks hosted a booth at the MSA conference. We spoke with sheriffs throughout Minnesota, making connections about animal cruelty cases.
- **Tiger Encounter. Multiple dates in Minnesota.** A traveling animal act, called Tiger Encounter, brought tigers to Minnesota county fairs in 2025. Photo shows woman and child feeding adult white tiger, posing safety risks. Animal Folks sent out action alerts asking Carlton County to cancel this exhibit and establish a policy that recognizes tigers are wild animals needing a natural habitat — not to be used for entertainment.



## PROGRAM 4: Animal Law Resources

**GOAL:** To foster professionalism and competency by providing training, resources, and support to Minnesota authorities responsible for the enforcement of animal law.

### 2025 Strategies and Actions

- **Minnesota Judge's Criminal Benchbook —** Each year, Animal Folks updates the Animal Cruelty Chapter for the Minnesota Judge's Criminal Benchbook, published by MN Continuing Legal Education.

## PROGRAM 5: Criminal and Civil Justice

**GOAL:** To report suspected or known animal cruelty (or related crimes against animals) and provide input to criminal and civil cases throughout the legal process, including assistance to human and animal victims.

### 2025 Strategies and Actions

**Animal cruelty cases:** Each year in Minnesota, there are numerous cruelty (and civil) cases impacting animals. For some cases, Animal Folks will attend hearings and trials, and post notifications. Case examples:

- **State of Minnesota vs. Edward August Erickson** — Evie, a beautiful German wirehaired pointer, died at Autumn Breeze Kennel on July 10, 2023. Edward Erickson, dog trainer and owner of the kennel, was charged with felony animal cruelty for the death of Evie. Trial was held September 15-17, 2025, where Erickson was found not guilty. Animal Folks attended the trial and prior hearings. Video was presented showing Evie had been tied to the side of a kennel by her neck and hind end; struggling to get free, Evie rolled upwards and hung upside-down by the leashes. She died. The trauma and fear experienced by Evie was clear. Other evidence was presented by former employees describing past abusive methods by the trainer, including “placing shock collars on dogs’ ears and on their groin and holding the shock button to inflict pain and teach the dog a lesson.” Dogs would “at times blow their anal glands, pee themselves or try to bite because of the pressure from being shocked.” Other bad acts witnessed and presented to the court: Erickson would stomp on the butt of dogs and/or kick them in the chest to force submission until they obeyed commands; hold dogs down or spit in their face to show dominance. As the defense attorney stated: Dog training in Minnesota is like “the old wild west” with no licensing and regulation. Animal Folks, as with many other Minnesotans, is disappointed in the verdict. This case illustrates why training is needed to build good trial advocacy in cruelty cases.



- **Assurance of Discontinuance: Bold North Frenchies** — Working with 30+ consumers who had purchased sickly bulldogs from Bold North Frenchies (owners Ali and Mark Holman), Animal Folks filed a complaint with the Minnesota Attorney General’s Office against this breeder for violation of consumer protection laws. In 2025, the MN Attorney General’s Office reached an agreement with Bold North Frenchies where they would dissolve and stop breeding dogs in Minnesota. We thank the Attorney General’s office for taking action.
- **Miscellaneous animal cruelty cases** — Throughout the year, Animal Folks tracked numerous other cases of cruelty involving all types of animals and crimes in multiple counties throughout Minnesota.

STATE OF MINNESOTA	DISTRICT COURT
COUNTY OF HENNEPIN	FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
	Case Type: Other Civil (Consumer Protection)
	Court File No. _____
In the Matter of Bold North Frenchies L.L.C., Ali Holman, and Mark Holman,	<b>ASSURANCE OF DISCONTINUANCE</b>
WHEREAS, this Assurance of Discontinuance (“Assurance”) is entered into pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 8.31, subd. 2b, between the State of Minnesota, through its Attorney General, Keith Ellison (“Attorney General”) and Bold North Frenchies L.L.C., Ali Holman, and Mark Holman (collectively, “BNF”);	
WHEREAS, the Attorney General received reports indicating that BNF was failing to provide mandatory disclosures to purchasers of certain dogs sold to retail customers and that dogs were being delivered that were seriously ill;	
WHEREAS, the Attorney General attempted to investigate those allegations and discovered that BNF had kept little to no paperwork regarding their breeding of dogs, veterinary care of those dogs, or sale of those dogs;	

# FINANCES

Animal Folks is proud to be a Charities Review Council Meets Standards® organization and a Gold Guidestar participant.



## STATEMENT – Fiscal Year 2025 — January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025

### Support and Revenue

Individual Contributions	\$185,498
In-kind Contributions	\$192,730
Government Grants	\$ -
Corp/Fdtn Contributions	\$ 54,350
Program Service Revenue	\$ -
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>\$432,578</b>

### Expenses

In-kind Expenses	\$192,730
Program Services	\$156,904
Fundraising	\$ 24,405
General/Admin	\$ 30,636
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$404,675</b>

### Balance Sheet – Fiscal Year 2025

#### Assets

Cash	\$116,581
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#### Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$ -
Credit Card(s) Balance	\$ 2,861

<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$113,720</b>
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### Program Services: Major Program Expenses

Animal Cruelty Research	\$ 31,381
Criminal & Civil Justice	\$ 34,519
Animal Law Resources	\$ 23,536
Legislative Action	\$ 48,640
Outreach & Education	\$ 18,828

## GOVERNANCE

### Animal Folks: Board of Directors

Reese Frederickson  
 John Kingrey  
 Marianne Settano Shumaker  
 Rose Surma  
 Karen Lundquist  
 Ann Olson

### Our Team

Ann Olson, Founder and Executive Director  
 Arianna Pittman, Senior Researcher and Writer;  
 Social Media and Newsletter Manager  
 Jessie Lyons, Administrative and Database Manager;  
 Animal Cruelty Databank, Project Manager  
 Megan Helling, Manager, Public Policy and Advocacy  
 Stacy Bettison, Press Consultant  
 Kathy Mock, Public Policy Consultant  
 Brittany Devito, Researcher  
 Mike Tincher, Design and Marketing

## VALUES

Our actions are guided by our values:  
 Nonviolence, Respect, Ethics,  
 Credibility, and Innovation

## THANKS

Thank you to all the talented volunteers, advocates, and donors who support Animal Folks.