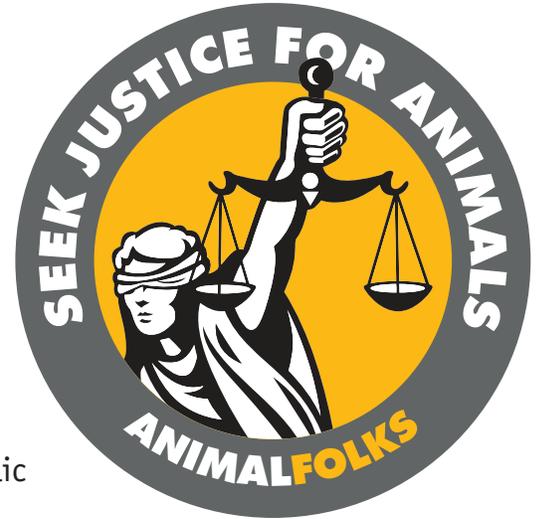


Understanding the legal system for animal justice

Animal cruelty is an ongoing occurrence in Minnesota that can traumatize both animals and people.

This trauma is not only about physical harm but also the emotional distress and frustration people experience when they don't know who (which authorities) to turn to or what to expect from the criminal process.

Animal Folks provides information about animal cruelty and the legal system in Minnesota. This may include answering basic questions, such as where to file a complaint, or educating the public on the details of a case, such as interim conditions, probation, or type of hearing. We provide information and education so citizens can better understand the "system" and seek justice.



Animal Folks also tracks specific cases and provides updates in regard to charging, conviction, and sentencing, as well as encouraging action through writing letters (respectfully) to prosecutors or other authorities or attending hearings or trials to show support for animal protection. In addition to cruelty cases, human victims may also need help understanding civil laws, including consumer protection, licensing, veterinary medicine, and more. Animal Folks can provide that information.

How the law works for animals and human victims in Minnesota may not be common knowledge for everyone. But we believe information and education make us all better advocates.

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.

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

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

PROGRAM GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PROGRAM 1: Criminal and Civil Justice

GOAL: To report suspected or known animal cruelty (or related crimes against animals) and provide information and education on criminal and civil cases and the legal process.

2024 Strategies and Actions

- **Animal cruelty and civil cases:** 2024 had numerous criminal and civil cases impacting animals in Minnesota. Animal Folks featured some of these cases in our newsletter with alerts for hearings or trials, if people wanted to attend. From a young boy's beloved therapy dog shot and killed, to hundreds of cats kept in decrepit, hoarding conditions, to man arrested for illegal drugs, child abuse, and animal torture, Animal Folks tracks and analyzes these cases for use in legislative efforts and development of training materials.



- **Suspected violation of multiple laws:** Example:

In 2024, Animal Folks received calls from people in Minnesota and multiple other states about a dog breeder named Bold North Frenchies, owner Ali Holman. These consumers had purchased bulldogs from this breeder and the animal arrived at their homes sickly; some puppies died soon after. Animal Folks assisted the consumers by testifying at a city council meeting, asking for denial of the breeder's request for a local license. (It was denied.) Animal Folks also compiled stories from 23+ consumers and met with the MN Attorney General's

Office to request an investigation of this breeder for violation of consumer protection laws. Consumers were also directed to file complaints with the Board of Veterinary Medicine (breeder was suspected of acting as a veterinarian without a license) and Board of Animal Health (breeder suspected of operating without a state license). Actions still pending. Kudos to the consumers for their persistence and outreach to the press. In addition to protecting animals, cases such as this allow us to see which agencies are responsive.

PROGRAM 2: 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.

2024 Strategies and Actions

- **Minnesota Judge's Criminal Benchbook** — This is an ongoing project for Animal Folks. Each year we update the Animal Cruelty Chapter for the Minnesota Judge's Criminal Benchbook, published by MN Continuing Legal Education.
- **Animal Cruelty Training for Veterinary Students** — Another ongoing initiative. Animal Folks has continued to provide training on animal cruelty for senior veterinary students at the University of Minnesota.

PROGRAM 3: Legislative Action

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

2024 Strategies and Actions

- **November Elections** — Elections were a big part of 2024, impacting who was elected to local, state, and federal governments. Animal Folks shared information about where to vote, what candidates were running for office (and who won), and how to be involved with animal issues. At the state level, election results and court decisions shaped the MN Senate and MN House. Both bodies had to deal with split power, resulting in shared authority. For the 2025-2026 legislative session, Democrats eventually won control of the MN Senate and the MN House remained split with committees requiring co-chairs. The election results and subsequent legislative processes would greatly impact the introduction of bills and hearings.
- **Office of Animal Protection (OAP) bill** — Animal Folks vigorously lobbied the Office of Animal Protection bill during the 2024 session. Bill was granted hearings in both the Senate and House but did not get funded. An Office of Animal Protection (to be under the Department of Public Safety) was a new “idea” at the Legislature. Legislators understood the need, the harm to animals, and the link between animal cruelty and human violence. Lobbying and advocacy continued during the interim months in preparation for 2025. Learn more: mnoap.org
- **Companion Animal Board (CAB) bill** — In 2024, Animal Folks continued lobbying the Companion Animal Board bill at the MN Legislature. The chairs of the Agriculture committees did not grant the bill a hearing—a key problem. Strategic efforts are targeted at separating “pet issues” from agricultural oversight. Companion animals (pets) are not agricultural products and change is needed to allow pet welfare to be led by pet experts. Extensive advocacy was also conducted during the interim months. Learn more: mncab.org
- **Humane Pet Store ordinances** — In 2024, Animal Folks, as part of a coalition of animal welfare organizations, lobbied targeted Minnesota cities to adopt an ordinance that would prohibit pet stores from selling puppies from puppy mills and instead “go humane.”
- **Winona County: Puppy mill ordinance** — Animal Folks continued to work hard with Winona County residents to address the problem of commercial dog breeding facilities (puppy mills) in Winona County. These are large-scale kennels that mass produce puppies and sell to pet stores. 2024 was filled with multiple hearings before the county board and planning commission. In November 2024, the county board agreed to pursue a ban on future kennel permits, placing it on the agenda for 2025. Good news coming in 2025. Updates posted on: speakupwinonacounty.org



PROGRAM 4: 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.

2024 Strategies and Actions

- **Katie K9 — February 4.** Animal Folks was invited to speak during the Katie K9 radio show. Katie K9 is well-respected in the animal community and we thank her for this opportunity to speak about animal protection.
- **Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) Conference — April 16-17.** Animal Folks hosted a booth at the MCPA conference to promote our state animal protection bills and talk with many law enforcement officers. A key concern expressed by many officers was community cats and how best to handle the care of these animals.
- **Ruff Start Rescue's Tails & Trails event - May 11.** Animal Folks was excited to attend and host a booth at Ruff Start Rescue's outdoor event, educating people about animal protection.
- **Office of Justice Conference (OJP) on Crime and Victimization — May 21-22.** Animal Folks hosted a booth at the OJP conference where we met with many victim advocates, social workers, and other attendees who understood the link between animal cruelty and human violence and shared their stories.
- **Minnesota Sheriffs' Association (MSA) Conference — June 11-12.** Animal Folks hosted a booth at the MSA conference. We spoke with sheriffs throughout Minnesota and were told about numerous animal cruelty cases. One common theme heard from rural counties was abuse of horses and the need for resources.



- **Minnesota State Fair — August 22-Sept 2.** Animal Folks was proud to host a booth again at the Minnesota State Fair. It was so much fun to meet and greet people from all over Minnesota who care about animals. Thousands of people visited the booth, asking questions, sharing stories, and taking free buttons, **BE KIND TO ANIMALS** decals, and flyers. In 2024, we also promoted our two legislative initiatives (state bills). Over 2,000 people signed the petition in support of animal protection and welfare, representing every Senate and House district in Minnesota. These petitions are then submitted to legislators during the legislative session.
- **Tri-County Animal Humane Society (TCHS) "Woofstock" event — September 7.** Animal Folks hosted a booth at the TCHS event (a walk). Weather was perfect, as was the event! We met animal advocates from the tri-county area and gathered new supporters for animal protection.

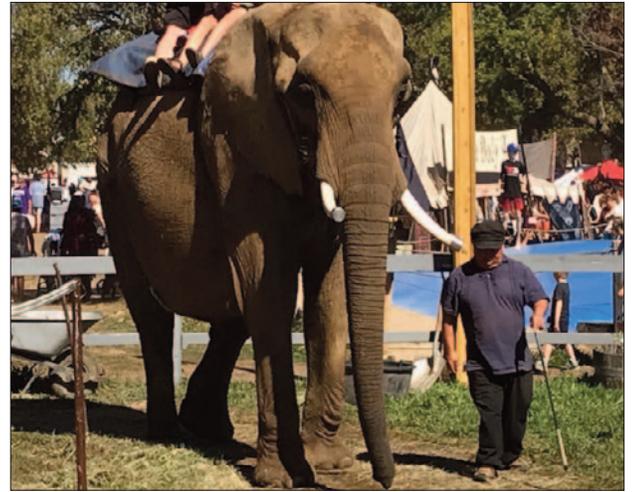
PROGRAM 5: Animal Cruelty Research

GOAL: To research animal cruelty cases and issues pertaining to crimes against animals, and provide credible Minnesota-specific data to the public, agencies, and organizations.

2024 Strategies and Actions

Animal Folks researches a variety of topics and animal issues to build data when pursuing initiatives. Examples:

- **Elephants** — For years, the Minnesota Renaissance Festival in Shakopee has used elephants to provide “elephant rides” to visitors. Elephants are highly social animals and, in the wild, walk for miles every day within social groups. At the Festival, these animals are forced to endure monotonous and repetitive behaviors—walking in small circles every day giving rides. Research shows the elephants are “owned” by Mark Swain who runs Trunks and Humps (located in Texas) and transports the elephants to fairs and events across the nation. As seen in photo, bullhooks are used to control elephants’ movements. Animal Folks opposes these rides and the treatment of these animals and supports protests of this event.
- **Animal Races** — Marketed as a family-friendly event, Canterbury Downs, located in Shakopee, holds an “Extreme Race Day” where people are encouraged to ride ostriches, camels, and zebras for amusement. Research shows ostriches, as one example, are not meant to carry the weight of a human on their spine. These races place enormous stress on their joints, bones, muscles, and tendons, causing painful injuries. Animal Folks opposes these races.
- **Dog Welfare** — Excessive noise (i.e., barking), lack of proper lighting, lack of wholesome exercise and socialization, poor nutrition, and other factors can negatively impact dogs in breeding kennels. This health data was submitted to local elected officials in Minnesota in our efforts against puppy mills.
- **Wallabies, Sloths, Porcupines, Fish, Pigs, and More** — SeaQuest in Roseville had kept numerous animals, including wallabies (photo at right), a sloth, reptiles, hundreds of fish and birds, and other animals, confined in the basement of the Rosedale mall to entertain people who wanted to feed these animals. Research showed this business was licensed for years by the USDA and MN Department of Natural Resources, without focus on the mental and behavioral health of the animals. Thanks to citizens advocating for the animals, SeaQuest (national chain) filed for bankruptcy and closed its doors.



FINANCES

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



STATEMENT – Fiscal Year 2024 — January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024

Support and Revenue

Individual Contributions	\$152,143
In-kind Contributions	\$172,178
Government Grants	\$ -
Corp/Fdtn Contributions	\$ 60,450
Program Service Revenue	\$ -
Total Support and Revenue	\$384,771

Expense

In-kind Expenses	\$172,178
Program Services	\$126,026
Fundraising	\$ 25,768
General/Admin	\$ 28,981
Total Expenses	\$352,953

Balance Sheet – Fiscal Year 2024

Assets

Cash	\$ 85,857
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Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$ 120
Credit Card(s) Balance	\$ 3,395

Net Assets	\$ 82,342
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Program Services: Major Program Expenses

Animal Cruelty Research	\$ 37,808
Criminal & Civil Justice	\$ 28,986
Animal Law Resources	\$ 18,904
Legislative Action	\$ 25,205
Outreach & Education	\$ 15,123

GOVERNANCE

Animal Folks: Board of Directors

Reese Frederickson
 John Kingrey
 Marianne Settano Shumaker
 Rose Surma
 Karen Lundquist
 Ann Olson
 Advisor: Cynthia Erickson

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 & Advocacy
 Kathy Mock, Public Policy Strategist
 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.