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TESTIMONY ON OHIO S.B. 393
Presented by Vicki Deisner, State Government Affairs, Animal Welfare Institute
Before the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee
Wednesday, April 15, 2026

Chairman Manning, Vice-Chairman Reynolds, Ranking Minority Member Hicks-Hudson and distinguished members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am Vicki Deisner, State Government Affairs Advisor for Animal Welfare Institute (AWI). AWI would like to thank Senators Manning and Timken for their commitment to sponsoring this important legislation. AWI respectfully urges this committee to support S.B. 393.

Bestiality is at its core an antisocial psychological problem, and it is a form of animal abuse regardless of the human perpetrators' beliefs or intentions. Bestiality is more than a cultural taboo – it is a serious offense that exploits animals physically and psychologically, often times killing them, and is closely tied to violence and sexual abuse toward humans.

Animal abuse is a recognized indicator of future violence and is a common and violent crime in domestic violence situations. When we were working on passing OH's pet protective orders, we worked with many domestic violence shelters and social workers who alerted us to the issue of bestiality, the high occurrence in domestic violence situations, and the impact on families. At the 5th National Animal Cruelty Prosecution Conference, held by the American Prosecutor's Association, one of the presenters, Dr. Melinda Merck, a veterinary forensics specialist, stated that in 25% of domestic violence situations bestiality occurs, and if no mental intervention is done when the offender is young, as an adult they will exhibit anti-social behavior throughout their lives.

One of the social workers that helped us on the passage of Oh's bestiality law was Sue Lane, formerly with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Commission, who directed a Sex Offender Program for Henry, Defiance, Fulton, Williams, and Paulding counties. She also was called to perform polygraphs for sex offenders throughout Ohio.

In six polygraphs that Sue Lane shared – there was a trend of young offenders sexually abusing animals along with children. All six offenders started early in life, and some as early as six, seven and eight. Some of them had sex with the family's dogs – one offender stating it continued for the duration of six years for 288 times. One offender abused the pet cat. Other offenders had sex with sheep, cows, and one offender had sex between the ages of 9-15 with chickens, cows and a horse. The chickens all died from the assault. Yet this offender, as well as the others, went on to assault siblings, neighborhood children, and children in their schools. One child who was assaulted was 4 years old.

Jenny Edwards, of the Chandler Edwards law enforcement research center, cited several specific cases of Ohio adult offenders. She describes bestiality as not just an act of animal cruelty, but rather as an act of sexual assault and exploitation. "In our experience, perpetrators behave more like pedophiles or rapists than animal abusers," Edwards stated. "They train their companion animals, photograph them in sexual situations, collect and share animal photography, talk about their encounters with other animal sex abusers in private chat rooms, seek out their victims, and trespass or break intro properties in order to gain access."

Noting that these encounters often result in injury or death to the animal, Edwards noted that the problem of animal sex abuse is growing. One Internet site for zoophiles has more than 10,000 followers online at any given moment and 22 pages of posts from individuals in Ohio seeking animals for sex or offering their animals to others. Ohio cases Edwards had been involved in include:

- Kevin Ballard, charged with animal cruelty in April, 2014 after raping an 8-month old puppy.
- Robert Walder, charged in March, 2013 with eight counts of rape of child under 15 for allegedly forcing his daughter to remove her clothes, get down on her knees and submit to Walder's placing a dog on her back to sodomize her.

"Bestiality, particularly when experienced as a child, has been shown to be the single largest risk factor and strongest predictor of increased risk for committing child sexual abuse," Edwards stated. She cited statistics indicating that in 400 arrests where an animal was involved in a sexual contact, 35% involved child sexual assault or exploitation. In 37.3% of arrests, offenders had prior histories of bestiality, child sexual abuse, domestic violence, rape, substance abuse, public indecency, and homicide.

Ohio S.B 393 expands the scope and penalties beyond the original law to include creating or possessing material depicting sexual conduct with an animal. Section

959.99 (D) raises the penalty to a felony of the fifth degree for violation of Sec. 959.21 (B) that states 'No person shall knowingly engage in sexual conduct with an animal or knowingly possess, sell, or purchase an animal with the intent that it be subjected to sexual conduct.' In addition, Sec. 959.99 (D) states that 959.21 (C) that states 'No person shall knowingly organize, promote, aid, or abet in the conduct of an act involving any sexual conduct with an animal' is guilty of a misdemeanor of the fifth degree. In addition, Sec. 2007.322 addresses the creation or possession of materials depicting sexual conduct with an animal, and states such a violation that involves a minor is a second degree felony. This is critical as these issues continue, as covered by the Akron Beacon Journal in March of this year:

Macedonia man sentenced on sex abuse, bestiality, explosives charges
A 27-year-old Macedonia man who reportedly threw explosives at a neighbor will serve 10 to 11½ years in prison for a slew of charges across two separate incidents, including counts of child sex abuse and bestiality. Sean Washington pleaded guilty in the 2024 incident to illegal use of a minor in nudity-oriented material or performance and several other charges that are all felonies. In the 2025 incident, he pleaded guilty to two felony counts of grand theft of a motor vehicle and one misdemeanor count of cruelty to animals. Summit County Common Pleas Court Judge Christine Croce designated Washington as a Tier III sex offender. He is required to register with the local sheriff every 90 days for the rest of his life after release from prison. [Akron Beacon Journal]

For all of the aforementioned reasons, AWI respectfully urges the Senate Judiciary Committee to support S.B. 393. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, .

Vicki Lee Deisner, Esq.
Government Affairs OH – Animal Welfare Institute