

NCVMA POSITION STATEMENT

REPORTING CASES OF ANIMAL ABUSE

Veterinarians are charged not only in providing for the health and welfare of animals, but also for the community in which the animals live. We are in a position to observe and evaluate situations in which animals are being abused, either unintentionally as a result of ignorance, or intentionally as a result of cruel and malicious efforts on the part of an individual(s). As cited in the AAHA position statement on Animal Welfare, “Intentional forms of animal abuse can be indicators of other forms of violence. Studies have shown that there is a correlation between animal abuse and other forms of family violence, including child abuse, spousal abuse and elder abuse.” (www.aahanet.org)

We, as veterinarians, are encouraged to take an active role in detecting, preventing and reporting suspected cases of intentional animal abuse. It is recommended that accurate and detailed documentation be made when dealing with such cases (www.avma.org/issues/policy/animal_welfare/abuse.asp).

North Carolina is one of thirty seven states that have no laws protecting veterinarians who, in good faith, report suspected cases of intentional animal abuse which may also be indicative of domestic violence.

The NCVMA supports the adoption of laws recommending, under limited circumstances, veterinarians to report suspected cases of intentional animal abuse. These laws should exempt and provide immunity to veterinarians from civil and criminal liability for reporting such cases in good faith and in so doing exempt them from any disciplinary action.