



The Newsletter of the New York State Humane Association

NY State Police Academy Hosts NYSHA Training

Where was the action place to be on June 29? The NY State Police Academy in Albany! Over 100 attendees, comprising NY State Troopers from various barracks, police officers from many municipal police departments, and deputies from numerous Sheriff's Departments, along with several interested civilians – all attended NYSHA day-long workshops on investigating Animal Cruelty. The workshop was co-sponsored by the NY State Police and the Division of Criminal Justice Services that has been supporting NYSHA's training programs for years.

As a result of the COVID pandemic, NYSHA workshops had been on hold since late 2020, so there was a growing need for this training, and the NY State Police reached out to NYSHA to provide it. Though the workshop presented instruction on investigating all types of animal crimes, a focus was placed on recognizing and addressing canine cruelty and neglect, as the State Police had informed NYSHA that they were receiving many calls on these situations.

This workshop introduced two additional expert presenters to the NYSHA team: Dr. Susan Nails, a well-known equine veterinarian, recently retired from the Equine Clinic at Olinburgh, and Jennifer McCann, Esq., Executive Assistant Director Secretary with the Albany County District Attorney's Office. They complemented seasoned NYSHA speakers, Harold Hood, Ph.D., and retired NY State Police BCJ Investigator Susan McDonough. The combined knowledge of these speakers provided a full day of excellent training.

Dr. Hood led off with a discussion of the correlation between animal abuse and human violence. He went through a study of the phenomenon, has resulted in his creating a comprehensive checklist on the topic, available as a lay download on the NYSHA website. Investigator McDonough followed with an in-depth explanation of the animal cruelty laws and an explanation of how to apply them to various cruelty cases based on her years of experience. Dr. Nails opened the afternoon session by explaining what to look for when investigating equine cruelty, examining every aspect of the scene from the physical condition of the horse to the quality of the hay and verifying any veterinary and foster care the owner and the animals may have received. MSJ McCann, the closing speaker, drew from the police that the information presented throughout the day will help you make your case. All that you do is to create an investigation and the way you do it determines the final outcome of the case.



NYSP's, José Digby, MSJ, Jennifer McCann, the NYSHA's, Susan Nails, DVM, and Sara Pugh (Division of Criminal Justice Service)

For example, the quality of the photos and the video, the careful collection of the evidence, and the interviews with the defendants, are all crucial. Attention must be paid to all details to get the best outcome for a cruelty case. The animals cannot testify that, you as the officer must be the one who tells their story for them.

In addition to the information from the speakers, the attendees received a packet full of information to use in their investigations, ranging from examples of search warrants to use in animal cruelty cases to interview forms that investigators can use to easily document animal violations. The packet also contained copies of all the speakers' presentations for future reference.

The evaluation forms indicated that the attendees were impressed with the training, with comments such as, "Comprehensive and thorough," "Should be offered more often," "It was a great training, I appreciated the level of knowledge of the speakers." It may not have been the most pleasant way to spend a summer day, but the work indicated it had been well worth it.