



## NY State Police Academy Hosts NYSHA Training

Where was the safest place to be on June 29? The NYS Police Academy in Albany! Over 100 attendees, comprising NYS 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's day-long workshop 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's workshops had been on hold since late 2019, 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 horse 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 roster: Dr. Steven Naile, a well-known equine veterinarian, recently retired from the Equine Clinic at Oakencroft, and Jennifer McCanney, Esq., Executive Assistant District Attorney with the Albany County District Attorney's Office. They complemented seasoned NYSHA speakers, Harold Hovel, Ph.D. and retired NYS Police BCI Investigator Susan McDonough. The combined knowledge of these speakers provided a full day of excellent training.

Dr. Hovel led off with a discussion of the correlation between animal abuse and human violence. His years-long study of this phenomenon has resulted in his creating a comprehensive booklet on the topic, available as a free download on the NYSHA website. Investigator McDonough followed with an in depth exploration of the animal cruelty laws and an explanation of how to apply them to various cruelty cases based on her years of experience. Dr. Naile 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 horses to the quality of the hay and verifying any veterinary and farrier care the owner said the animals may have received. ADA McCanney, the closing speaker, drove home the point that the information presented throughout the day will help you make your case. All that you do in the course of an investigation and the way you do it determines the final outcome of the case.



*NYSP Lt. Jared Duffy, ADA Jennifer McCanney, Pat Valusek (NYSHA), Steven Naile, DVM, and Scott Neff (Division of Criminal Justice Services)*

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 elements to get the best outcome for a cruelty case. The animals cannot testify; thus, 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 court-ready forms that veterinarians can use to easily document animal evaluations. The packets 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 evals indicated it had been well worth it.

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## President's Message

Those of us who care about the well-being of horses, especially those trapped in the horse racing industry, are often reminded of what those equines can suffer at the hands of unscrupulous trainers. There have been instances of horses being abused by angry trainers, as well as numerous cases of horses illegally drugged to enhance performance. It appears that the quality of life for a racehorse means nothing in the race for financial glory.

A case in point -- according to news reports, trainer Amber Cobb was suspended for two years by the Delaware Thoroughbred Racing Commission for "improper or inhumane treatment" of an animal, along with conduct detrimental to racing. There were no details as to what that inhumane treatment actually was. In addition to the suspension, Cobb was ordered to attend an anger management program. Sadly, the suspension was subsequently reduced to two months. Also frustrating is news that the Pennsylvania State Horse Racing Commission issued its own ruling of a two-month suspension against the same trainer, based on the same evidence. Why the reduction? If what she did was so heinous as to merit a two-year suspension, why lower it to a mere two months? And furthermore, why wasn't Cobb charged under Delaware's animal cruelty laws that specify that it is a misdemeanor for anyone to subject any animal to cruel mistreatment or cruel neglect.

Cobb also caused problems at the Finger Lakes Racetrack in NYS where she was fined for "engaging in an altercation in a public area" and on another occasion for "addressing fellow licensees in an inappropriate manner." It seems this person should not be around horses or even horse people.

Not to be outdone, trainers Jason Servis and Jorge Navarro, along with 25 others affiliated with the racing industry, were indicted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of NY on charges of conspiring to administer performance enhancing drugs to racehorses over a period of several years. Numerous horses experienced injuries and some died as a result, while big profits were realized by the owners and others. The case appears to be going to trial in 2022. But again, I read nothing of animal cruelty charges, despite the fact that the drugs given to these horses resulted in injuries and death.

Folks, it appears that if these horses are not being beaten, they are being drugged, not to mention the cruel whipping they are subjected to in every race. We can only hope that in the drugging case, the federal charges hold firm and the perpetrators are sent to prison for a long time. That is more likely to happen because human animals were hurt financially by the fraudulent actions of the conspirators. However, when it comes to non-human animals being hurt by cruel treatment -- that behavior is not recognized by the industry or treated with the same seriousness. So rather than charging those responsible with cruelty in addition to the other penalties and charges, the cruelty is simply disregarded and charges ignored. You can bet that if trainers were being beaten or whipped or forcibly given illegal drugs, the outcomes would be far different.

Always be kind to animals,

Patricia Valusek

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## Our Voices in Albany

The past NY legislative session was a busy one for NYSHA. We have a team who has been working for years promoting legislation to protect NY racehorses from slaughter. A bill that accomplishes this plus some other racehorse protections, A.4154B (G. Pretlow) / S.1442B (J. Addabbo), finally passed the Assembly and the Senate! As of this date, the bill hasn't been sent to the Governor's desk, but we hope that the new Governor, Kathy Hochul, will sign it into law. By the time this newsletter reaches you, we may have an answer.

Another important bill passed that is also waiting to go the Governor's desk. It is A.5823A (L. Rosenthal) / S.5023A (M. Gianaris) which requires veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty by clients to the police or other appropriate agency and to turn over necessary records.

Check [nyshumane.org](http://nyshumane.org), Legislation tab, for our Chart to see if these bills are still pending. If so, please contact the Governor's office to support them. Thank you!

## In Memory of Beloved Ones

If you wish to remember a person or companion animal who has passed by sending a donation to NYSHA, his/her name will be listed on our new website page – In Memory of Beloved Ones. Your gift will help us continue our work to prevent cruelty to animals. We will notify the family of the departed one of your thoughtfulness.



*Celine Sayumi Tagami, Unsplash*

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## The World Around Us - Opossums

Cute, or ugly, welcomed or not, it's hard to disagree that the opossum is certainly one of our more interesting outdoor neighbors here in New York.

So, is it opossum or possum? Actually, in North America, it's an opossum. Though many refer to the Virginia opossum as "possum," a possum is a related marsupial located in Australia. The name "opossum" is derived from an Algonquian Indian word "apasum," meaning white animal. While there are over 65 species of possums, only one, the Virginia opossum, is native to North America. Weighing 4 to 15 pounds, it is our only marsupial.



Khai Dong, Unsplash

makes them a difficult host for some common diseases, including rabies. Opossums are eight times less likely to contract rabies compared to other mammals. Due to the peptide protein in their blood, they also have a high immunity to snake venoms and many poisons.

Opossums can carry a disease known as EPM (equine protozoal myeloencephalitis), a neurological disease horses may acquire by eating infected opossum feces. If you have horses, store their grain in covered bins, and deter opossums from the area.

Around for nearly 70 million years, the opossum has been able to adapt to environments ranging from forests to cities and everywhere in between. Affectionately known as "nature's little sanitizers," they are often welcomed by humans for their diet of bugs, rodents, rotted fruits, and most importantly, ticks. It's estimated that one opossum consumes 5,000 ticks each year. Opossums eat mostly at night, but can be seen foraging during the day, especially during the harsh winter months.

Having the shortest gestation period of any mammal, opossums give birth to up to 20 babies less than two weeks after mating. In the northern states, they have one litter per year, but those living in the warmer southern states have been known to have two or three litters annually. Soon after birth, these joeys, about the size of a grain of rice, travel to their mother's pouch. Only about half survive the journey. Between two and four months, the joeys leave the pouch and ride on their mother's back, and will venture on their own at six months.

The opossum has a lower body temperature than most mammals which

Hanging garden flags and windsocks, keeping a radio on, and putting pet hair and garlic around the proximity of your home, or barn, are some humane ways to keep opossums away.

Opossums are peaceful animals who are generally very shy and stay away from people and other animals. When feeling threatened, they may hiss, growl, and show their 50 very sharp teeth. When very frightened, they will feign sickness by drooling from their mouth and nose, or "playing dead." "Apparent death" occurs under extreme duress and is an involuntary reaction where the opossum loses consciousness and has no reflexes. When the threat is gone, the opossum regains consciousness and goes on his/her way.

So, cute or ugly, welcomed or not, it's best to enjoy opossums from a distance. However, should you come across an opossum who is injured or orphaned, please contact a wildlife rehabilitator, listed on NYSHA's website, or your local vet. Remember, everyone, and everything, in nature has beauty and value.

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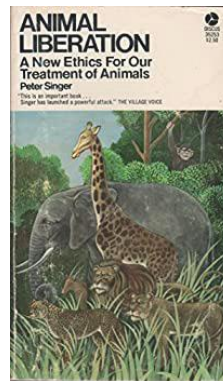
## Book Review – Animal Liberation

I clearly remember the moment I laid eyes on the book that would forever change my life. The year was 1977. I was in a bookstore in Greenwich Village, NY, appropriately looking for a book on the care of felines as I was working in the cat department of an animal shelter.

Instead, I stumbled upon a small paperback titled *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals*. The word ethics caught my attention. I read the first sentence. "This book is about the tyranny of humans over non-human animals." My heart skipped a beat.

I skimmed the table of contents ...Down on the Factory Farm ...Tools for Research ...Man's Dominion, etc. It was magical. The thoughts I held about animals had been validated because they were there in black and white. I carried my little treasure to the cashier and forgot all about my search for a cat book!

Published in 1975 by Peter Singer, an Australian philosopher, *Animal Liberation* would fast become known as the bible of the animal rights movement. Singer documents the suffering animals endure on factory farms and in research laboratories. If you care about animals, it's not easy to read. The numbers of animals brutally raised on factory farms is in the billions and the experiments that animals are used in are heinous and often for no result that can be extrapolated to humans.



But this is not a book written to expose these practices alone. What makes the book readable is the ethical arguments he so brilliantly gives the reader to ponder. "This tyranny has caused and today is still causing an amount of pain that can only be compared with that which resulted from the centuries of tyranny by white humans over black humans. This struggle is as important as any of the moral and social issues that have been fought over in recent years."

He is adamant that the reader understands that he or she does not have to love animals to support the basic moral principles he puts forth.

He even states he did not "love" animals. He simply wants them treated as independent sentient beings -- and not as a means to human ends.

Forty-six years have passed, and since then many books have followed a similar narrative making the case for animal rights. But Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* launched a movement and put animal rights on the global map. Everyone ought to read it and more importantly pass it on!

Lia Albo



## SPOTLIGHT: Mary Anne Kowalski

Mary Anne Kowalski, fierce advocate for animals and the environment, passed away this year. Comments from those who knew her included “force of nature” and “leaves a huge void in our community.”

Mary Anne held important positions in the NYS Department of Health, and after retiring, spent several years working on animal welfare causes in the Capital Region including as VP of Mohawk Hudson Humane Society Board of Directors. She later moved from the Albany area to Seneca County. She immediately began to work with environmental groups to protect the Finger Lakes and waterways going into the Lakes from industries that would add pollution and harm to the waters and wildlife.

Because her voice carried authority due to her strength in collecting and analyzing scientific data and government regulatory information about environmental issues, she was very persuasive about causes she fought for. Her facts and figures were considered unassailable.

Mary Anne was the spokesperson for an alliance of 11 organizations that appealed to the Seneca Co. IDA to preserve the old Seneca Army Depot as a wildlife conservation area, promoting an eco-tourism attraction for the region and ensuring the protection of the unique herd of white deer. Although the eco-tourism site didn't materialize, care was taken to whom the land was

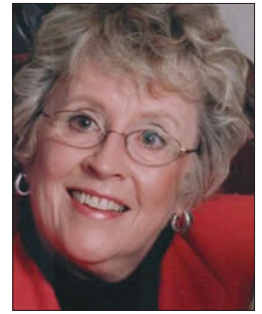


sold, and the white deer are now protected by the new land owner and the public currently can take tours through the Depot land to observe them.

Mary Anne became an activist against “puppy mills” after she inadvertently bought a Miniature Schnauzer from a disreputable breeder who met her at a Thruway stop to deliver the dog -- so she wouldn't see the conditions the poor animal came from. After the dog required expensive treatment for a number of health conditions, Mary Anne began monitoring dog breeding operations in the Finger Lakes and Albany areas.

She frequently spoke at local governmental meetings as a representative of NYSHA, exposing the reality of large scale breeding operations, where the dogs are often kept in small unsanitary cages, are improperly socialized, and produce multiple litters of puppies each year. She urged towns to prevent new puppy mills from coming in and assisted law enforcement agencies with the closure of many operations. Her wide reaching educational efforts included informing Hudson Valley Community College Animal Law students about these tragically inhumane businesses.

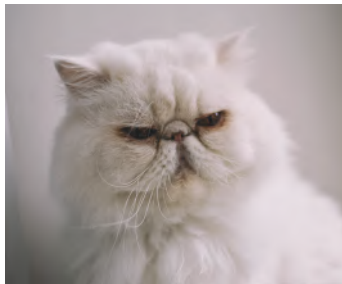
Those who knew Mary Anne say that she would want us not to mourn, but to continue her fight to protect animals and the environment.



## The Vet is In: Brachycephalic dogs and cats – cute but “smothering”

In the long history of human, canine, and feline evolution, our ancestors found certain dog and cat features to be so appealing that they selectively bred them for many generations to exaggerate their utility or their “cuteness,” with no regard as to whether the altered anatomy would prove beneficial or deleterious to a future family's companion animal. In the world of dog breeding, we created and physically altered the English Bulldog, French Bulldog, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Pug, Pekinese, and Boston Terrier, (to name a few: English Bulldogs are the most abnormal.) Similarly, we created Persian cats whose faces became increasingly flattened through selective breeding so as to exaggerate the brachycephalic (short-muzzled) shape of their skulls and their exceedingly narrow airways.

Though very appealing to humans, these breeds are plagued by the abnormal anatomy that comes from breeding for the flat-faced, no-nosed appearance, especially for dogs. The breeds cited above almost always show abnormal respiratory patterns and sounds that are not recognized as a health issue by the pet parents, but rather are seen as “cute.” However,



Maxim Mashnikou, Unsplash

an examination of the respiratory system may reveal an elongated soft pallet, everted laryngeal sacculles, narrowed nostril openings, all combining to make a dog or cat who has great difficulty in breathing, not to mention exercising. Many cases require surgical intervention.

The English Bulldog, being the most extreme canine breed for brachycephaly, has such a short nose, flattened face, and short bowed limbs that he/she literally cannot swim: he/she simply cannot

keep the nostrils open above the water level, thereby permitting water to drain into his/her lungs no matter how much he/she struggles. Note: this rarely is mentioned by the breeder eager to sell pups.

NYSHA hopes that breeders will be encouraged to stop breeding the dogs and cats with extreme brachycephalic features to reduce the suffering the animals must experience. We encourage our readers not to acquire these animals who have been bred in this extreme form, so as to reduce the demand and the breeding.

### HUMANE REVIEW

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