

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7696



Introduced by Representative LEILA M. DE LIMA

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING THE ENFORCEMENT AND OVERSIGHT OF ANIMAL
WELFARE LAWS BY ESTABLISHING ANIMAL WELFARE DESKS IN ALL
POLICE STATIONS AND CREATING AN ANIMAL WELFARE OMBUDSMAN
UNIT FOR OVERSIGHT AND MONITORING PURPOSES, PROVIDING FUNDS
THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In 1998, Republic Act No. 8485, otherwise known as "The Animal Welfare Act of 1998," as amended by Republic Act No. 9147 and Republic Act No. 10631, recognizes the need to protect and promote the welfare of all animals in the Philippines and criminalizes the torture, neglect, maltreatment, subjection of dogs or horses to dogfights or horsefights, procurement for torture, among others, of any animal, and the killing of any animal other than cattle, pigs, goats, sheep, poultry, rabbits, carabaos, and horses, except in specific circumstances provided for by the law.

However, despite the existence of the aforementioned laws aimed at protecting animals from unnecessary pain, cruelty cases continue to proliferate throughout the country, with some even gaining virality on social media platforms. Often, the most common response or comment to these videos is to "tag" or call the attention of well-known animal welfare and rights organizations like the Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) and the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). While the virality of these videos, coupled with efforts from civil society, has at times led to convictions, the absence of an institutionalized mechanism to respond to cases of animal cruelty places too much burden on civil society organizations who do not have the capacity or resources to respond to all cases of animal cruelty nationwide.

For instance, in 2011, Filipino couple Dorma "Chita" Ridon and Vicente Ridon were arrested in Burgos, La Union, for the production, circulation, and sale of "crush

videos” after initially going into hiding upon the exposé of their illegal activities by the media and animal welfare and rights organizations.¹ “Crush videos,” considered a form of sexual fetish, show how young girls, either clad in lingerie or bikini, crushing small animals with their boots or stiletto shoes.² The animals include dogs, cats, rabbits, monkeys, snakes, frogs, and other animals that buyers of “crush videos” would request.³ In July 2015, the San Fernando City, La Union Regional Trial Court (RTC) found spouses Ridon guilty beyond reasonable doubt for three counts of violation of Sec. 6 of RA 8485 and sentenced each of them to suffer the penalty of imprisonment of two years and a fine of P5,000 for each count.⁴ The case demonstrates that apt penalties are possible when cases are properly documented and pursued. However, this case also exposes a persistent enforcement vacuum: the case advanced because PETA Asia, after receiving an initial tip, notified the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and worked closely with authorities to build the case, even offering a reward of P100,000.00 for information on the couple when they went into hiding prior to their arrest.

Most recently, just last December 2025, a video of an American bully named Axle being repeatedly struck with a hard stick by Erwin Faguinney went viral.⁵ Fanguinney, a Sadanga municipality local government employee, was allegedly enraged after Axle urinated on his foot in a gathering at Barangay Poblacion for the distribution of relief assistance.⁶ Axle later died from the attack after sustaining multiple head and body injuries.⁷ Despite the existence of the video footage that had gone viral online, two (2) earlier filings were rejected by the prosecutor’s office due to insufficient evidence.⁸ Only when the PAWS intervened to call for witnesses, amid reports that Axle’s owner had supposedly received settlement money from the suspect, was the case at its third filing finally accepted.⁹

The cases above demonstrate the invaluable role civil society, particularly animal welfare and rights organizations, play in ensuring that the proper enforcement of current laws that recognize the rights and protect the welfare of animals. However, as cases continue to build up, even civil society organizations have admitted their inability due to limited capacity and resources to address all cases brought to their

¹ Frialde, M. (5 August 2011). Couple behind 'crush videos' arrested in La Union. PhilStar Global. Retrieved from <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2011/08/05/713018/couple-behind-crush-videos-arrested-la-union>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Department of Justice. (21 July 2015). DOJ sends human traffickers and animal torturers to jail. Retrieved from https://www.doj.gov.ph/news_article.html?newsid=11RdtVfkPmt_V6j-X_K2tNSCqLgzcoU6ZleCTzn_hg0.

⁵ Visaya, V. Jr. (18 December 2025). Man in dog-killing video faces rap for animal cruelty. Inquirer.net. Retrieved from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2156079/man-in-dog-killing-video-faces-rape-for-animal-cruelty>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

attention. Thus, there is a need for the State to institutionalize a predictable, nationwide reporting and first-response pathway, so that victims and witnesses have a mechanism to seek help directly from law enforcement, without heavy reliance on interventions by civil society organizations.

To address these gaps, this bill seeks to create Animal Welfare Desks in all police stations, with trained Animal Welfare Officers (AWOs) manning the desks, to provide a dedicated, accessible, and immediate mechanism for reporting cases of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment. Moreover, to reinforce accountability within law enforcement, this bill likewise creates an Animal Welfare Ombudsman Unit (AWOU) under the Philippine National Police (PNP) to provide centralized oversight, monitor compliance, review complaints of non-enforcement or neglect of duty, and ensure uniform and effective implementation of animal welfare laws nationwide. Through this bill, justice for all animals subjected to cruelty may be made achievable, accessible, and enforceable to every Filipino.

In the current and previous Congresses, several bills seeking to amend and strengthen the Animal Welfare Act have been filed, containing various proposals on how the State may better respond to animal cruelty cases. The bill's proposal to create Animal Welfare Desks was a result of several consultations with animal welfare and rights organizations like PETA.

To better operationalize the State's constitutional and jurisprudential mandate, early approval of this measure is requested.


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Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

1 SECTION. 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Animal Welfare
2 Enforcement Act.”
3

4 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to protect and
5 promote the welfare of animals, recognizing their intrinsic value and their role in
6 agriculture, security, companionship, biodiversity, and cultural heritage. Consistent
7 with Article II, Section 16 of the 1987 Constitution and the Supreme Court’s ruling in
8 *Resident Marine Mammals of the Protected Seascape Tañon Strait v. Secretary*
9 *Angelo Reyes* (G.R. No. 180771, April 21, 2015), the State acknowledges its
10 constitutional duty to safeguard animals as legitimate stakeholders in justice and
11 welfare.
12

13 SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, these terms are defined
14 as follows:
15

16 a) *Animal Welfare Desk* is a designated unit within every police station tasked
17 with receiving, documenting, and acting upon complaints and reports involving animal
18 welfare violations;
19

1 b) *Animal Welfare Officer* is a police officer assigned to the Animal Welfare
2 Desk, trained in the enforcement of animal welfare laws and humane handling of
3 animals;

4
5 c) *Animal Welfare Laws* refer to Republic Act No. 8485, as amended by
6 Republic Act No. 10631, Republic Act No. 9147, and other related statutes,
7 ordinances, and regulations;

8
9 d) *Cruelty*, as defined under Republic Act No. 8485, refers to any act that
10 causes unnecessary pain, suffering, or death to an animal.

11
12 SEC. 4. *Establishment of Animal Welfare Desks*. – There shall be established
13 in every police station nationwide an Animal Welfare Desk, which shall:

- 14
15 1) Serve as the primary receiving unit for complaints and reports of animal
16 cruelty, neglect, illegal slaughter, and wildlife trafficking;
17 2) Ensure proper documentation of cases and immediate referral, when
18 appropriate, to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), Department of Environment
19 and Natural Resources (DENR), and Local Government Units (LGUs);
20 3) Provide assistance to complainants and coordinate with rescue groups,
21 animal shelters, and veterinary offices for urgent interventions;
22 4) Maintain a record of all animal welfare cases handled by the police station;
23 and
24 5) Display visible signage informing the public that animal welfare complaints
25 may be filed at the police station.

26
27 In cases involving wildlife, the Animal Welfare Desk shall immediately
28 coordinate with the DENR or its field offices and, where applicable, the Palawan
29 Council for Sustainable Development, without delaying initial documentation or urgent
30 response, consistent with Republic Act No. 9147.

31
32 SEC. 5. *Powers and Functions of the Animal Welfare Desk*. – The Animal
33 Welfare Desk shall have the following powers and functions:

34
35 1) *Mandatory Intake*. Receive, record, and act upon complaints of animal
36 welfare violations. Refusal to receive or to document complaints is prohibited, and any
37 unjustified refusal or delay shall constitute neglect of duty, without prejudice to
38 administrative or criminal liability under existing laws;

39
40 2) *First Response*. Ensure immediate action within twelve (12) hours for cases
41 involving imminent danger to animals, including coordination for rescue, evidence
42 preservation, and securing of the scene when necessary;

1 3) *Preliminary Fact-Finding*. Conduct preliminary fact-finding in coordination
2 with the BAI, DENR, and LGUs, in accordance with their respective jurisdictions;

3
4 4) *Evidence Preservation*. Take reasonable steps to preserve evidence,
5 including photographs, videos, witness statements, veterinary records, and, when
6 applicable, custody or documentation of the animal concerned, in accordance with
7 chain-of-custody standards to be set in the implementing rules and regulations (IRR);

8
9 5) *Rescue and Turnover*. Facilitate the rescue and turnover of animals suffering
10 from cruelty or neglect to the appropriate authority, shelter, or veterinary facility;

11
12 6) *Monitoring and Reporting*. Monitor compliance with animal welfare laws
13 within the jurisdiction and submit quarterly reports to the PNP Headquarters and, once
14 constituted, the Animal Welfare Ombudsman Unit. Such reports shall include the
15 number of complaints received, actions taken, referrals made, and case outcomes,
16 subject to applicable data privacy and confidentiality laws;

17
18 7) *Public Education*. Undertake community education and awareness
19 campaigns on animal welfare laws; and

20
21 8) *Complainant Guidance*. Provide immediate guidance to complainants on
22 their rights and remedies under existing laws.

23
24 SEC. 6. *Training and Capacity-Building*. – The Philippine National Police (PNP),
25 in coordination with the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), the Department of
26 Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and accredited animal welfare
27 organizations, shall conduct mandatory training programs for all designated Animal
28 Welfare Officers (AWOs), including:

- 29
30 (a) humane handling of animals;
31 (b) investigation and documentation of cruelty cases;
32 (c) wildlife protocols and RA 9147 coordination;
33 (d) coordination with rescue groups and veterinary practitioners; and
34 (e) public communication skills.

35
36 SEC. 7. *Creation of the Animal Welfare Ombudsman Unit*. - There is hereby
37 created within the Philippine National Police (PNP) an Animal Welfare Ombudsman
38 Unit (AWOU), which shall serve as the national oversight, monitoring, audit, and
39 complaints body for the enforcement of Animal Welfare Laws by all PNP units.

40
41 The AWOU shall operate as a national support unit under the supervision of the
42 Chief PNP, and shall:

- 43
44 a) Monitor and audit the performance of Animal Welfare Desks nationwide;

- b) Develop uniform standards, reporting systems, and response benchmarks for Animal Welfare Desk Officers;
- c) Maintain a centralized Animal Welfare Enforcement Registry, subject to existing data privacy laws;
- d) Coordinate with the BAI, DENR, DOJ, LGUs, and accredited animal welfare organizations;
- e) Submit annual reports to the Chief PNP, the DILG, and Congress; and
- f) Such other duties and functions as may be necessary to carry out the objectives of this Act, or as may be assigned by the Chief PNP, consistent with existing laws and its mandate herein.

The Chief PNP shall determine the Unit's organizational structure and staffing in accordance with existing laws and budgetary regulations.

SEC. 8. *Funding.* – The initial funding for the establishment of Animal Welfare Desks shall be charged against the appropriations of the PNP. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued operation of the Animal Welfare Desks and AWOU shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Philippine National Police (PNP), in consultation with the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Local Government Units (LGUs), and accredited animal welfare organizations, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations, including first-hour response checklists, evidence preservation templates, and wildlife coordination standard operating procedures (SOPs), to implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, presidential proclamations, letters of instruction, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

SEC. 12. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved,