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## SUPPORT ANTI-BESTIALITY LEGISLATION

### A Bill to Make Animal Sexual Abuse Illegal in New Mexico

New Mexico is one of only two states where sexual abuse of animals is **not** a crime. This dangerous gap allows for the proliferation of cruel, harmful acts—which are also strongly linked to child sexual abuse, child pornography, and other violent and exploitative crimes.

#### WHAT IS BESTIALITY?

Bestiality, also referred to as **animal sexual abuse**, is any sexual act that occurs between a person and an animal. People often assume that the incidence of bestiality is exceedingly rare; however, it occurs throughout the United States, including New Mexico. Incidents frequently go undetected or unreported.

#### DO ANY CURRENT LAWS OUTLAW BESTIALITY OR RELATED BEHAVIOR?

**Currently, there are no statutes in New Mexico law to prohibit the sexual abuse of an animal by a person.** For that reason, offenders may be charged with crimes that ignore the sexual nature of the offense, such as animal cruelty, disorderly conduct, or trespass—or they face no consequences at all.

Notably, because New Mexico's state and local animal cruelty laws often rely primarily on demonstrable injury or neglect, many instances of bestiality—which may leave no visual signs of physical injury or only internal injuries—will not lead to cruelty charges.

#### HOW WOULD AN ANTI-BESTIALITY LAW HELP PROTECT CHILDREN AND OTHERS?

Outlawing bestiality in New Mexico will provide a tool for health professionals, law enforcement, and the courts to address this and prevent other behavior that harms society. **Bestiality has been linked to other criminal and deviant behavior including child sexual abuse and child pornography** (Edwards, 2019); **interpersonal violence** (Holoyda, 2020); **human sex trafficking, online sexual exploitation, and necrophilia**. In addition, incidents may involve other paraphilic or antisocial behavior, such as pedophilia, voyeurism, and various forms of addiction.

Over half of all animal sex offenders have a prior criminal history, including robbery, theft, assault, and other criminal sex acts. **About one-third of animal sex offenders also sexually abuse children or adults. Another third of offenders who do not commit contact offenses collect child pornography** (Edwards, 2019). In addition, bestiality offenders often commit cross-over crimes suggesting that these offenders may be more likely to reoffend or exhibit escalating behavior over time.

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