



## MAC Expanded the Legal Rights of Companion Animals in 2021

Maine Animal Coalition joined with Maine Friends of Animals to draft and push through the Maine Legislature **LD 535 An Act for the Well-being of Companion Animals upon the Dissolution of Marriages**. The lead sponsor of the bill was Portland's Senator Ben Chipman. Maine is now one of only five states that require judges to consider the well-being of companion animals in the divorce process.

Factors a judge may consider when deciding who should be awarded a companion animal are who has taken care of the pet prior to the divorce and who is best able to take care of the pet in the future. Judges may also consider emotional attachments of family members, especially children, to the animal. Other considerations include domestic violence between the divorcing parties, any history of animal abuse or other unsafe conditions for the animal.

The statute defines "companion animal" as "an animal kept primarily for companionship rather than as a working animal, service animal or farm animal kept for profit."

Prior to the passage of the bill, judges often did consider the well-being of companion animals, but they were not required to. Also, since most Mainers getting divorced are not represented by an attorney, it made sense to codify the practice for all to know their legal rights. This is particularly important for divorces involving domestic violence where all too often companion animals are used to control others.

This bill was initiated by Maine Animal Coalition because of our particular focus on establishing legal rights for nonhuman animals. In general, the law considers animals mere personal property to be treated like furniture, toasters, etc. Slowly animals are acquiring more protections from our legal system.

Admittedly, the pace of change is slow. But we take hope from the fact that in the United States during most of the 1800's slaves were the property of their "masters", married women were treated legally as property of their husbands, and children were the property of their parents and denied the protection of the government.

# In 2021 MAC Followed a Very Busy Session of the Maine Legislature

In 2021 MAC followed over 70 animal related bills in the first regular session of Maine's 130th Legislature and kept its members and email subscribers abreast of upcoming public hearings. Consequently, MAC and its followers submitted written testimony and spoke at public Zoom hearings either for or against numerous important bills.



The new beaver bill now allows the Commissioner of DIF&W to authorize the killing of "nuisance" beavers by landowners. Previously only a DIF&W agent could kill beavers.

The Maine Legislature passed many bills in 2021 that aided animal welfare. Examples of favorable bills are MAC's and MFOA's **An Act to Provide for the Well-being of Companion Animals Upon the Dissolution of Marriages**, HSUS's **An Act to Ban the Sale of Cosmetics that Have been Tested on Animals** and **An Act to Define Intentional Balloon Releases as Litter**.

Two bills that passed that could easily lead to abuse of wildlife are **An Act to Allow the Commissioner of IF&W Rule Making Authority to Establish a Bear Season Framework and Bag Limits** and **An Act Regarding Nuisance Beavers**.

The new bear hunting law was opposed by animal advocates because it continued the inhumane practices of hunting bear with dogs, setting bait and trapping. It also gives the Commissioner of DIF&W more control over bear hunting and will likely lead to more bears being killed.

Bills that did not pass but were broadly supported by animal advocates include **An Act to Ban Hunting with Ammunition That Contains Lead** and The Coyote Center's **An Act to Control the Means of Hunting Coyotes**.

**An Act to Ban Hunting with Ammunition That Contains Lead** was broadly supported because lead poisons wildlife, waterways, people and their pets. (California already bans such ammunition for hunting purposes.) Those opposed were hunters who said non lead ammunition is too expensive and ammunition is already in short supply. DIF&W opposed the bill in favor of educating hunters.

The coyote bill would have eliminated night hunting, the use of bait, and hunting with dogs. Sportsman's Alliance of Maine's David Trahan testified against the coyote bill because it "would eliminate all effective means to control the coyote population." MAC's Beth Gallie provided written testimony that current laws were cruel and violated the hunting concept of "fair chase" and are ineffective in controlling coyote populations.

# MAC Opposed Right to Food Amendment

In late summer and fall of 2021 Maine Animal Coalition campaigned against a ballot question to amend the Maine Constitution to include a “right to food... of their own choosing.”

Specifically, Constitution, Art. I, §25 states: **All individuals have a natural, inherent and unalienable right to food, including the right to save and exchange seeds and the right to grow, raise, harvest, produce and consume the food of their own choosing for their own nourishment, sustenance, bodily health and well-being, as long as an individual does not commit trespassing, theft, poaching or other abuses of private property rights, public lands or natural resources in the harvesting, production or acquisition of food.**

MAC’s president Beth Gallie was the chair of the political action committee - No On Three - The Right to Food is Wrong for Maine Committee. MAC also donated \$2,000 for advertising.

MAC opposed the amendment because eating the food of one’s own choosing is not a Maine value. For example, by custom we do not eat cats, dogs, or horses.

California has gone beyond relying on tradition and has outlawed these practices and added foie gras to the list. Sadly, with the passage of the Right to Food amendment, Maine will not be able to do this.

MAC also opposed the Right to Food constitutional amendment because it is vague and invites court challenges to a myriad of animal welfare, food safety, environmental and zoning laws. The result is that a small number of judges may determine our food policies.



Using state constitutions to defeat animal welfare reforms is on the rise. For example, both North Dakota and Missouri have passed “Right to Farm” constitutional amendments to protect the right “to engage in farming and ranching practices.” (Fortunately, in 2016 animal activists, dubbing such amendments as “Right to Harm,” defeated a proposed “Right to Farm” amendment in Oklahoma.)

Currently the NRA has launched a campaign to amend state constitutions to include a “Right to Hunt.” So far twenty-six states have adopted “Right to Hunt” amendments.

One good thing that came from our efforts to defeat ballot question three is that Maine’s animal advocacy groups worked together for a common cause.

A special thank you must be given to Wayne Pacelle, head of Animal Wellness Action, for his advice and financial support of the campaign. No doubt in the future we will put to use what we learned from the campaign.

**To follow MAC’s activities, sign up for our emails on the front page of MAC’s website [www.maineanimalcoalition.org](http://www.maineanimalcoalition.org).**

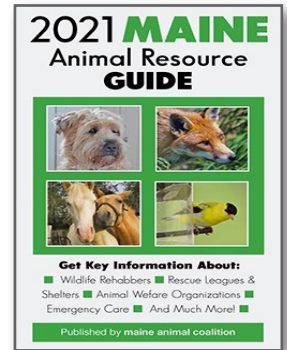


## MAC Answered Your Calls and Emails!



In 2021 MAC answered over 250 phone calls and numerous emails from Mainers seeking advice. Common concerns were what to do about an injured animal (seagulls!), where to adopt or surrender an animal, lost and found animals, how to report suspected animal abuse, where to get help with veterinary bills, and various animal law issues.

Most answers to questions that we are asked can be found in MAC's **Maine Animal Resource Guide**. The Guide is on our website and may be downloaded for free. The 9<sup>th</sup> edition includes interactive links to make finding resources easier. A list of pet food pantries has also been added to the Guide.



## The Pandemic Knocks Out Our Veg Fest



MAC's 17<sup>th</sup> annual Veg Fest was cancelled due to the pandemic. Veg Fest was scheduled to take place on October 30<sup>th</sup> at the East End Community School. The virus, however, picked up steam, making a traditional Veg Fest too risky.

The Boston Veg Fest was held electronically and currently can be watched online. The theme was "Bringing the World to Boston" with a roster of international speakers. The two-and-a-half-hour program is a real treat.

## Changes Afoot for MaineShare



On October 21st, MaineShare and friends gathered at Viles Arboretum to celebrate its past and January 1, 2022 affiliation with Maine Initiatives! MAC has been fortunate to have been a part of MaineShare almost from its beginning. At the party we donated \$200 to MaineShare as a token of our appreciation.

Follow us!



## Join Us!

If you appreciate our work, please join us! MAC memberships costs \$30 for individuals and \$40 for families. Your support will help us maintain our current programs. And you will also receive a free subscription to VegNews Magazine as a membership benefit.

An even larger donation will help us grow Veg Fest, sponsor animal protection legislation, and provide vegan materials and programs to more Maine communities.

There are multiple ways to donate. You may donate online at our website or complete the form on this newsletter's back page and mail a check to us. Or you could donate stocks directly to MAC's brokerage account.

You may also donate to us at your workplace via MaineShare. If your workplace does not offer MaineShare, contact us and we may be of assistance.



## VegNews News

The award winning VegNews magazine describes itself as “the ultimate source for all things vegan.” Check out their website.

A one year subscription to VegNews Magazine cost \$22, but is free with a \$30 membership to Maine Animal Coalition.

## MAC Annual Financial Report

1/1/2021—12/31/2021

### Income

Individual Contributions	\$ 8,956.06
Refunds	\$ 344.11
Sales	\$ <u>180.87</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	\$ 9,481.04

### Expenses

Program	\$ 5,965.36
Operating	\$ <u>1,442.91</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$ 7,408.27

### Total Assets

(cash)

January 1, 2021	\$ 8,194.67
December 31, 2021	\$ 10,267.44

### Liabilities

	\$ 0.00
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### Total Net Assets

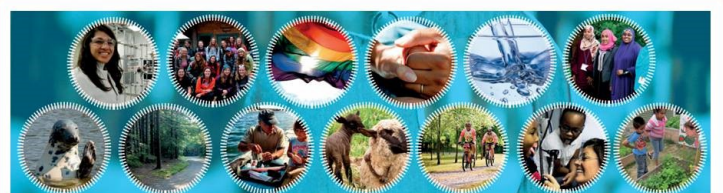
\$ 10,267.44

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**MAINE ANIMAL COALITION**

Maine Animal Coalition is dedicated to the elimination of animal abuse and exploitation through education, advocacy and example. For more information about MAC and our programs, visit our website at [www.maineanimalcoalition.org](http://www.maineanimalcoalition.org). Phone (207) 773-2215 Email [mac@maineanimalcoalition.org](mailto:mac@maineanimalcoalition.org)

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