



2023-05

**NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION ACKNOWLEDGES
THAT ANIMAL CRUELTY IS A CRIME OF VIOLENCE**

WHEREAS, the National Sheriffs' Association has long recognized the seriousness of animal cruelty crimes, and petitioned the FBI to add these crimes as a separate category to the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS); and

WHEREAS, in response to the National Sheriffs' Association, as well as organizations such as the Animal Welfare Institute, the FBI approved adding animal cruelty offenses to NIBRS in 2014, and began collecting data on these crimes in 2016; and

WHEREAS, the FBI defines animal cruelty as “intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly taking an action that mistreats or kills any animal without just cause, such as torturing, mutilation, maiming, poisoning, or abandonment; and

WHEREAS, all 50 states and four territories have enacted felony animal cruelty statutes for first time offenders; and

WHEREAS, the National Sheriff's Association has been working since 2015 to build the capacity of law enforcement agencies to recognize that animal cruelty crimes can serve as a precursor to more violent crimes, as a co-occurring crime to other types of offenses, and as an interrelated crime to offenses such as domestic violence and elder abuse; and

WHEREAS, in 2018 the Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team recognized that animal cruelty, particularly when premeditated in nature, is a novel aggression warning behavior, and that the reporting, investigating, and prosecuting of animal cruelty cases may help minimize violent acts toward humans, including terrorism;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the National Sheriffs' Association recognizes that animal cruelty is a novel aggression warning behavior and that designating animal cruelty as a “violent crime” or “crime of violence” would improve public safety.