

Is Animal Cruelty a Misdemeanor or a Felony?

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[Animal cruelty](#) is a charge that umbrellas several different definitions of crimes within the state of Florida. Animal cruelty charges can include animal neglect, felony or misdemeanor animal cruelty, and even animal fighting. All of these charges are extremely serious and can cost you prison time and expensive fines upon conviction.

Animal Cruelty in Florida

The three types of animal cruelty charges are animal neglect, felony and misdemeanor animal cruelty, and animal fighting.

- Animal Neglect – animal neglect is considered to be the unlawful deprivation of necessities like food, water, or shelter. Animals must be provided with a reasonable amount of exercise and a change of air if they are confined according to Florida law. This kind of neglect can be charged as a first-degree misdemeanor punishable by a maximum of one year in prison and a \$5,000 fine.
- Misdemeanor Animal Cruelty – this crime is usually defined as the unlawful and unnecessary overloading, tormenting, mutilating, or killing of an animal. This crime is usually a first-degree misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in prison and a \$5,000.
- Felony Animal Cruelty – you can be charged with felony animal cruelty if you committed an act to an animal that results in cruel death or excessive or repeated infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering. This crime is extremely serious and can be punishable by up to 5 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.
- Animal Fighting – Animal fighting is unfortunately very common in South Florida. The law prohibits a person from “baiting, breeding, transporting, selling, owning, possessing, or using any wild or domestic animal for the purpose of fighting.” The most common types of fighting especially in the state of Florida are dog fighting and cock fighting. It is also a crime to bet on or knowingly attend an animal fight. This is a third-degree felony punishable by up to 5 years in prison.

Animal Cruelty Criminal Defense

If you have been [accused of animal cruelty](#), be very cautious because the State of Florida has been known to

charge multiple counts of each offense depending on the number of animals involved in the crime. A [criminal defense lawyer](#) is the first person you should call after being arrested on animal cruelty charges.

A criminal defense lawyer is able to conduct a thorough investigation into your case and receive testimony from veterinarians and other animal owners. There are several additional effective defense strategies that a criminal defense lawyer can employ to help you get through this process with minimal damage.

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