

# OPPORTUNITIES IN ANIMAL LAW



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# Opportunities in Animal Law

The Animal Legal Defense Fund is a non-profit organization that works to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system.

## **Part 1: Law Student Opportunities**

### **Animal Law Clerkship Program**

Each summer, fall, and spring several promising law students are given the opportunity to learn more about animal law by participating in the Animal Legal Defense Fund Clerkship Program. Positions are available with our Criminal Justice Program, where the primary focus is on criminal cases involving animal cruelty, and our Litigation Program, where the primary focus is on civil animal law issues. Postings can be found here: [www.aldf.us/clerkships-internships-fellowships](http://www.aldf.us/clerkships-internships-fellowships).

### **Animal Law Scholarship Program**

Each year, the Animal Legal Defense Fund awards a limited number of “Advancement of Animal Law Scholarships” to student chapter members entering their second or third year of law school who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to animal law and the Animal Legal Defense Fund’s mission while in law school, and anticipate participating in the field after graduation. Awards are in the amount of \$1,000 or \$5,000. The application guidelines can be found here: [www.aldf.org/advancement-of-animal-law-scholarship/](http://www.aldf.org/advancement-of-animal-law-scholarship/).

### **Publishing Opportunities**

Because animal law intersects with most traditional legal fields, there are myriad publishing opportunities in academic law journals. However, there are currently eight journals with an animal law focus:

- Animal Law eJournal (Syracuse University College of Law)
- Animal Law Review (Lewis & Clark Law School)
- Global Journal of Animal Law (Åbo Akademi University Department of Law, Finland, available online)
- Journal of Animal & Environmental Law (University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law)
- Journal of Animal & Natural Resource Law (Michigan State University College of Law)
- Mid-Atlantic Journal on Law & Public Policy (Maryland State Bar Association [MSBA] Animal Law Section and the annual MSBA Animal Law Symposium)
- Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy (Taylor & Francis)
- Stanford Journal of Animal Law & Policy (Stanford Law School, available online)

## **Animal Legal Defense Fund Email Lists**

Students can subscribe to the Animal Legal Defense Fund's Law Student eNewsletter and receive information about:

- Employment, internship, and volunteer opportunities
- Grants and scholarships
- Educational opportunities
- Upcoming animal law events
- Writing contests
- Case updates
- Chapter project ideas

## **Animal Legal Defense Fund Law Student Membership**

The Animal Legal Defense Fund offers a special membership for law students (dues are \$15 per year, but this fee is waived for members of active student chapters). The application can be found here: [www.aldf.us/law-student-application](http://www.aldf.us/law-student-application). Membership benefits include:

- The Animal Legal Defense Fund's quarterly print newsletter, *The Animals' Advocate*
- One issue of *Animal Law Review* – the first animal law journal, run by Lewis & Clark Law School students

We also offer a complimentary one-year Animal Legal Defense Fund attorney membership to recent law graduates. The application can be found here: [www.aldf.org/free-membership](http://www.aldf.org/free-membership).

## **Animal Legal Defense Fund Action Alerts**

Students can also sign up for Animal Legal Defense Fund Action Alerts and receive urgent updates on cases around the country and actions they can take to help win justice for animals. Letters, emails, and phone calls from concerned members of the public often make the crucial difference for animals in cases of criminal animal cruelty and proposed legislation. Students can sign up for these lists here: [www.aldf.org/signup](http://www.aldf.org/signup).

## **Student Animal Legal Defense Fund (SALDF)**

SALDF chapters are law student organizations that are affiliated with the Animal Legal Defense Fund and share its mission – to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. Within recent years, interest in the growing field of animal law has been steadily expanding.

By way of comparison, there were only 12 SALDF chapters in 2000. As of December 2016, there are 215, including chapters at the top ten U.S. law schools. There are also many international chapters. Many scholars compare animal law today to the emergent environmental law

movement in the 1970s. Today's SALDF members will be instrumental in advancing legal protections for animals as tomorrow's animal protection lawyers, prosecutors, and judges.

The steps required to form an SALDF chapter vary depending on each law school's requirements for student groups, but the process is very easy. The Animal Legal Defense Fund has created materials to help with the process, including sample by-laws, chapter requirements, and a step-by-step guide to forming a chapter. These materials can be found here: [www.aldf.org/start](http://www.aldf.org/start).

SALDF chapters find many creative ways to contribute to the animal law movement: working with their school to add an animal law course to the curriculum (more than 160 law schools in the U.S. and Canada have offered such a class; a list of law schools that have offered an animal law course can be found here: [www.aldf.org/animal-law-courses/](http://www.aldf.org/animal-law-courses/)), inviting speakers to talk about various issues, screening films, tabling to raise awareness about animal protection issues, and so on. More project ideas can be found here: <http://www.aldf.us/saldf-project-ideas>.

Through the Animal Legal Defense Fund's student chapter grants program, established SALDF groups can apply for funding to support animal law projects that advance the Animal Legal Defense Fund's mission, as well as travel to animal law conferences and competitions. Events like the annual Animal Law Conference and the National Animal Law Competitions are invaluable educational and networking opportunities for students interested in animal law. The SALDF grants program provides support to chapter members by helping with travel costs associated with attending these events. The grant guidelines and application can be found here: [www.aldf.org/grants](http://www.aldf.org/grants).

Because animal law intersects with many other areas of the law, there are countless opportunities for collaboration with other student groups when seeking to organize a speaker panel or other event. Here are just a few examples:

- Environmental Law Society: Factory Farming and Water/Air Pollution
- National Lawyers Guild or Constitutional Law Society: Civil Liberties, Animal Rights Activism, and the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act
- Women's Law Society: Link Between Domestic Violence and Animal Cruelty
- Human Rights/Immigration Law Society: Slaughterhouses and Human Rights Abuses
- Criminal Law Society: Animal Cruelty Prosecution or Activist Defense
- International Law Society: Wildlife

For help forming a SALDF chapter, email Student Programs Attorney Kelly Levenda at [klevenda@aldf.org](mailto:klevenda@aldf.org) or visit [www.saldf.org](http://www.saldf.org).

### **Free Materials**

- Tabling materials (brochures, newsletters, stickers, posters, etc.) for chapters.

- “Animal Law & the Curriculum” packet and other resources for course advocacy.

### **The Center for Animal Law Studies at Lewis & Clark Law School**

In 2008, a historic collaborative effort between the Animal Legal Defense Fund and Lewis & Clark Law School (L&C) in Portland, Oregon, brought about the creation of the Center for Animal Law Studies (CALs): [http://law.lclark.edu/centers/animal\\_law\\_studies](http://law.lclark.edu/centers/animal_law_studies).

The Center for Animal Law Studies, in collaboration with the Animal Legal Defense Fund, is an academic and scholarly program dedicated to:

1. Training future leaders for careers in animal law and public policy;
2. Conducting high-quality, independent legal research that advances the field of animal law;
3. Developing innovative recommendations and legal strategies relating to animal law within administrative, legislative, litigation and other settings;
4. Creating a scholarly environment where students, regardless of particular point of view, feel included and respected; and
5. Ensuring that the interests of animals are always considered as the field develops.

CALS provides essential services for law students under the guidance of experienced animal law professors and Animal Legal Defense Fund attorneys. The history between the Animal Legal Defense Fund and L&C is long and rich with both institutions acting as leaders in the animal law field. L&C has been a leader in animal law since the early 1990s and currently offers the most extensive program in animal law studies. For this reason, it made perfect sense for Animal Legal Defense Fund and L&C to join forces through the creation of the CALs, a first-of-its-kind venture.

### **The L.L.M. Program at Lewis and Clark Law School**

In 2012, L&C began to offer the world’s first advanced legal degree in animal law. For more information about the LL.M. Program, contact Director Natasha Dolezal at [ndolezal@lclark.edu](mailto:ndolezal@lclark.edu).

## **Part 2: Legal Professional Opportunities**

### **Graduation and Beyond**

Because interest in animal law is growing much faster than the animal law job market, we encourage students interested in animal law to “keep your options open.” The unfortunate reality is that a lot of students who go to law school to practice animal law will not be able to find paying positions in the field when they graduate. So stay open to the possibility of practicing some other kind of law that may involve animal protection indirectly, such as: environmental law, family law, free speech law, or criminal law. Or consider doing animal law as a pro bono side project. One way to do this is to join the Animal Legal Defense Fund’s Animal

Law Program and become part of our growing volunteer attorney network. Our attorney members help with:

- Research and writing,
- Citation checking,
- Filing *amicus* briefs,
- Litigating cases, and
- Assisting prosecutors with animal cruelty cases.

There are a number of ways to forge a career in animal law if you keep an open mind and entrepreneurial spirit. Besides doing pro bono work for Animal Legal Defense Fund, other options include:

- **Staff Attorney** – Work for an animal protection organization.
- **Private Practitioner** – Devote your practice to a variety of animal related issues, including veterinary malpractice, landlord/tenant issues, trusts for companion animals, and custody disputes.
- **Lobbyist** – Use your degree to advocate for animal-friendly legislation.
- **Prosecutor** – Work within the criminal justice system to enforce animal cruelty laws.
- **Pro Bono Work** – Practice and promote animal law pro bono work within your firm through the Animal Legal Defense Fund’s Animal Law Program.

### **Litigation Fellowship with the Animal Legal Defense Fund Animal Law Institute**

The Animal Legal Defense Fund’s Animal Law Institute offers a Litigation Fellowship. The Institute is a world-class, first-of-its-kind program that, by training classes of promising litigators in strategic impact litigation, will further Animal Legal Defense Fund’s mission to protect the lives and advance the interests of all animals. The Fellow will learn to develop state and federal strategic impact litigation and legislation to better the lives and legal status of animals. The Fellow will operate as part of a team, but will ultimately be responsible for the innovation and success of his or her projects while developing litigation skills. The model applicant must have earned a J.D. within the past three years, excelled in school, earned strong work references, and have a sincere and proven interest in animal protection. The primary focus of this fellowship is on civil animal law issues, but Fellows will be exposed to criminal anti-cruelty cases as well. If there is an opening, the posting can be found here: [www.aldf.us/clerkships-internships-fellowships](http://www.aldf.us/clerkships-internships-fellowships).

### **Academic Fellowship with the Harvard Animal Law & Policy Program**

The Harvard Law School Animal Law & Policy Program is committed to analyzing and enhancing the treatment of animals in the legal system. The Animal Law & Policy Academic Fellowship is a two-year full-time residential program designed to identify, cultivate, and promote promising animal law scholars early in their careers. They specifically look for recent graduates, junior

academics, and mid-career practitioners who are committed to pursuing publishable research that will make a significant contribution in the area of animal law. For more information on future Fellowship opportunities, contact: [alpp@law.harvard.edu](mailto:alpp@law.harvard.edu)

### **Animal Legal Defense Fund Animal Law Program Attorney Membership**

The Animal Legal Defense Fund would not be able to use the law to advance the interests of animals without the support of legal professionals nationwide. Attorneys can join our volunteer attorney network by completing an application found at [www.aldf.org/attorney-membership-application/](http://www.aldf.org/attorney-membership-application/). Membership benefits include:

- The Animal Legal Defense Fund’s quarterly print newsletter, *The Animals' Advocate*
- One issue of the scholarly journal, *Animal Law Review*
- Email updates on animal law related:
  - Cases & news,
  - Educational opportunities
  - Events such as conferences & academic symposiums,
  - Volunteer opportunities, and
  - Employment opportunities at various law firms & non-profit organizations across the country.

To request more information about Animal Legal Defense Fund’s Animal Law Program, please email [alp@aldf.org](mailto:alp@aldf.org).

### **New Law Graduate Attorney Membership Application**

The Animal Legal Defense Fund supports and encourages dedication to the field of animal law by offering free attorney memberships in our Animal Law Program to recent law school graduates for one year. We also invite new graduates to join our volunteer attorney network. New law graduate attorney members will also receive the membership benefits offered to our attorney members. Find the application for new graduates here: [www.aldf.org/free-membership](http://www.aldf.org/free-membership).

### **Animal Legal Defense Fund Action Alerts**

Attorney members can also sign up for Animal Legal Defense Fund Action Alerts and receive urgent updates on cases around the country, and what they can do to help win justice for animals. Letters, emails, and phone calls from concerned members of the public often make the crucial difference for animals in cases of criminal animal cruelty and proposed legislation. You can sign up for these lists here: [www.aldf.org/signup](http://www.aldf.org/signup).



## Law Professional Resources

The Animal Legal Defense Fund has numerous resources for law professionals interested in the field of animal law: <http://aldf.org/resources/law-professional-law-student-resources/law-professionals/>. Examples of the type of assistance available are included below.

- *Animal Law Instructors:* The Animal Legal Defense Fund's Animal Law Program works closely with law students and law professionals to advance the emerging field of animal law. Moving toward the day when animal law is part of the curriculum at every law school, the Animal Law Program collaborates with students, faculty, and school administrations to facilitate the development of animal law courses. Animal Legal Defense Fund provides comprehensive resource guidance to individuals interested in teaching animal law, including casebooks, sample exams, and syllabi, and articles of interest.
- *Law Firm Pro Bono Coordinators:* The Animal Legal Defense Fund partners with pro bono coordinators interested in developing animal law volunteer opportunities at their firms. The practice of animal law allows for increasingly more opportunities to set precedent and develop cutting-edge legal theories. The Animal Legal Defense Fund works with many of the largest law firms in the country.
- *Bar Association Animal Law Sections and Committees:* The Animal Legal Defense Fund works with bar association members interested in forming committees and/or sections that deal exclusively with animal law. Contact information for regional, state, and national animal law sections and committees, including the American Bar Association Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section Animal Law Committee, can be found here: [www.aldf.org/bar](http://www.aldf.org/bar).
- *Animal Legal Defense Fund Blog:* The Animal Legal Defense Fund Blog features summaries of animal law cases brought by Animal Legal Defense Fund and our legislative and criminal justice work. Additionally, the blog highlights important legal cases and developments at the state, federal, and international level. More information can be found here: [www.aldf.org/blog](http://www.aldf.org/blog).

## Legal Resources

The Animal Legal Defense Fund has many legal resources for animal advocates on our website. Here are two examples (a full list can be found on our website here: <http://aldf.org/resources/>):

- *Animal Protection Laws of the United States of America & Canada:* This is the must-have resource for lawyers, law professors, law students, legislators, other legal professionals, and anyone who wants the most comprehensive animal protection laws collection of its kind available: <http://aldf.org/resources/advocating-for-animals/animal-protection-laws-of-the-united-states-of-america-and-canada/>

- *Annual U.S. & Canadian Animal Protection Law Rankings*: The Rankings Report assesses the strength and comprehensiveness of each jurisdiction’s animal protection laws. The ranking is based on a detailed comparative analysis of the animal protection legislation of each jurisdiction, province or territory. Each jurisdiction is attributed a numerical ranking based upon its cumulative score and is grouped into a top, middle, or bottom tier. <http://aldf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Rankings-Report-2015.pdf>

## **The Practice of Animal Law**

The following is a collection of articles you may find helpful in considering the practice of animal law.

### **Animal Law and Your Practice**

By Pamela Hart

Michael Vick. Hurricane Katrina. Pet food recall. These events have magnified the gap between how the legal system treats animals and the significant role that animals play in people’s lives. As a result, more and more attorneys are using their legal expertise to close this gap in the rapidly emerging field of animal law.

During the past several years, animal law has gained a stronger foothold in the mainstream legal arena. This shift is reflected both in academia and in legal practice. For example, in 2000 there were only nine animal law courses being offered at ABA-accredited law schools. Currently there are more than 100 such courses. Similarly, in 2000 there were 12 Student Animal Law Defense Fund (SALDF) chapters. Currently, there are more than 140 SALDF chapters across the United States and Canada.

Not only has there been a surge in the interest in animal law at the academic level, but attorneys are now finding ways to incorporate animal law into their legal practices. This relatively new phenomenon highlights the ways in which animal law intersects with “traditional” areas of the law, such as tort, contract, criminal, and constitutional law. Examples of this intersection include animal custody disputes in divorces or separations; veterinary malpractice cases; housing disputes involving “no pets” policies and discrimination laws; damages cases involving the wrongful death or injury to a companion animal; and enforceable trusts for companion animals.

At first blush, this overlap may not appear obvious, but one need only reflect on the cases that have made the headlines during the past few years to realize that the complex and dynamic field of animal law is here to stay. The intersection of animal law with other areas of law, along with the recognition of the special bond between humans and animals, provides a vast array of opportunities for making money while practicing animal law. The following examples suggest ways in which animal law can be incorporated into a legal practice:

- **Estate planning.** Animal lovers or not, most Americans probably shared a similar reaction when they learned that Leona Helmsley had left \$12 million to her dog, Trouble. This was an extreme example of estate planning for companion animals, but more and more clients are looking for ways in which their non-human loved ones can be taken care of after their passing. Currently, 38 states and the District of Columbia allow for companion animal trusts. This area of the law offers a unique opportunity to provide cutting-edge legal advice and expertise to your new and existing trust and estate planning clientele.
- **Custody disputes.** Another area of practice with enormous potential for providing animal law expertise involves custody disputes over companion animals. With the divorce rate on the rise, statistics show divorcing couples are willing to invest time and resources to negotiate over who gets custody of Fido or Fluffy. In fact, courts are increasingly ruling on what should happen to companion animals in divorce cases, including which partner should get custody.
- **Tort claims.** An increasing number of companion animal guardians are bringing tort claims against those who either intentionally or negligently harm their beloved family members. These cases include, but are not limited to, claims against veterinarians, groomers, kennel operators, neighbors, and police officers who shoot dogs. Although such claims have not yet yielded the high-dollar judgments seen in human tort claims, progressively more judgments are being made in favor of companion animal guardians.
- **Free speech cases.** First Amendment free speech cases for animal activists who have been denied the right to protest or leaflet present another avenue for practitioners to offer their legal services. Both the federal and state laws have attorney fees provisions. (See 42 U.S.C. § 1988; Cal. Code Civ. Proc. § 1021.5.) Moreover, attorney fees can be negotiated as part of a settlement. These cases have the potential to offer a stable source of income for legal practitioners.
- **Animal law courses.** Of the 200 ABA-approved law schools in the United States, more than 100 currently offer animal law classes and seminars. These classes are taught mainly by adjunct professors—usually prominent animal law practitioners from the local community. If you live reasonably near one of the remaining 100 law schools, you have an opportunity to teach animal law.

The above examples are not meant to be exhaustive, and with the growth in animal law showing no signs of stopping, there will be increasingly more opportunities to engage in this dynamic and cutting-edge area of the law. Additionally, for lawyers who feel saddened, frustrated, and outraged when confronted with headlines such as those involving Michael Vick, Hurricane Katrina, or the pet food recall, practicing animal law offers a unique and meaningful way to merge your profession with your passion for animals.

Pamela Hart is director of the Animal Law Program at the Animal Legal Defense Fund ([aldf.org](http://aldf.org)) a national non-profit organization that works to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. Additionally, she is a lecturer in law at the University of Chicago, teaching the first animal law course offered there. You may reach Pamela Hart at [pdhart@aldf.org](mailto:pdhart@aldf.org).

This article is reprinted with permission from *GP Solo*, Volume 26, Number 5, July/August 2009.

## **Making Animal Law Your Career\***

by Joyce Tischler, Animal Legal Defense Fund founding director

In a recent article on CareerBuilder.com, entitled “10 Hot Jobs for 2007,” the #2 listed job was “Animal Defense Lawyer.” That elicited laughter from some of the attorneys who are currently trying to make a living in the still nascent field of animal law. A growing number of law students and attorneys want to become animal law specialists, but the supply of jobs lags behind the demand and most attorneys consign animal work to their pro bono hours. I spoke with some of our colleagues and the news from the front is: there is good reason to have hope. Where are all of those “hot” animal law jobs? They are out there, but not necessarily where you might think.

### **Working for Animal Protection Agencies**

In the twenty-six years since I began practicing animal law, the landscape has changed markedly. In 1980, there were about a half dozen attorneys employed by animal protection organizations. Today, most of the large national and an increasing number of regional and local animal protection groups employ lawyers in a variety of capacities, as litigators, lobbyists, corporate counsel and program staff. Some groups offer one year fellowships to recent law graduates, as well as clerkships and internships for law students. The Animal Legal Defense Fund, Physician’s Committee for Responsible Medicine, ASPCA and PETA all employ staff attorneys. The Humane Society of the U.S. employs ten attorneys in its Animal Protection Litigation unit and an additional twenty work elsewhere within the agency.

### **Working for Governmental Agencies**

Some aspiring animal lawyers would not consider working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Land Management, or a state fish and wildlife agency, for fear that they would be sanctioning the exploitation of animals. However, consider that working for such agencies provides a good education about the application of the relevant law and would enable you to offer a perspective that might not otherwise be heard within the agency. In some governmental positions, you don’t have to leave your values at home.

In her “free” time, Leslie Hamilton is a partner in a new law firm that focuses on animal law. In her “paying job” with a county Corporation Counsel, Hamilton provides legal counsel to the county human services department, yet she has been able to focus on a surprising amount of animal law. For example, when the local humane society, under contract with the county, seizes an animal based on an alleged violation of the anti-cruelty law, the owner is notified of their right to contest the seizure. Within the scope of her paid position, Hamilton files a petition, asking the court to transfer ownership of the animal to the humane society. When the local City Attorney brings a dangerous dog case, the Board of Health holds an administrative hearing. Hamilton is assigned to serve as the attorney for the Board of Health, to advise the Board on matters of law and to draft the Board’s decisions. Hamilton has been able to transfer the knowledge that she has gained in child custody proceedings to help the local humane society develop similar forms for use in animal protection proceedings: notice of seizure, notice

of protective custody and abatement. She has also worked on several cases where evidence developed during an animal neglect investigation was used in a related child protection or public health enforcement matter. Hamilton advises the county department of land and water resources, where she has recently drafted ordinances regulating some aspects of confined animal feeding operations located within the county. Every municipality of any size has some animal law work. Those who choose this route can find out where the “animal” work is and offer to handle it. You may be surprised at how much animal related work you will be engaged in.

### **Teaching Animal Law Classes and Seminars; Starting an Animal Law Clinic**

Of the 194 ABA approved law schools in the U.S., over 70 currently offer animal law classes and seminars. These classes are taught mainly by adjunct professors- usually prominent animal law practitioners from the local community. If you live reasonably near one of the remaining 124 law schools, you have an opportunity to teach animal law. Animal Legal Defense Fund provides resources and advice on how to start an animal law class as well as how to start a clinic, so if this interests you, contact Pamela Hart ([pdhart@aldf.org](mailto:pdhart@aldf.org)). For a listing of animal law classes and bar association animal law sections, check the Animal Legal Defense Fund web site: [aldf.org](http://aldf.org), Animal Law Program.

### **Attorneys in Private Practice**

The sharpest increase in the number of paid animal law practitioners has been in the private sector. I spoke with Adam Karp of Seattle, WA, Corey Evans and Geneva Page of San Francisco and Howard Crystal of Meyer Glitzenstein & Crystal in Washington, DC, who provided a variety of practical ideas:

- *Specialize.* These practitioners agree that if you try to cover all aspects of animal law, you will be dabbling and are less likely to provide meaningful service to your clients. For example, Karp focuses on personal injury and custody cases; when he gets calls about trusts for companion animals, he refers them to an animal law attorney who does estate planning.
- *Statutory attorneys’ fee provisions.* Evans and Page handle First Amendment free speech cases for animal activists who have been denied the right to protest or leaflet. Both the federal and state laws have attorneys’ fees provisions (See, 42 U.S.C. Sec. 1988; Cal. Code Civ. Proc. Sec. 1021.5) and attorneys’ fees can be negotiated as part of a settlement. These cases offer a stable source of income for their business. Evans and Page also handle California Public Records Act claims (See, Cal. Gov. Code Sec. 6250 et seq.), where an animal activist requests records and is either denied access or provided with inadequate records. In California, where they practice, attorneys’ fees are mandatory, if the filing of the lawsuit causes the release of any requested records.
- *Charge an hourly rate, even if it is significantly reduced.* Taking cases on a contingency or pro bono basis is a primary cause of burnout among animal law practitioners.

- *Stake out new territory.* Select a metropolitan area of a state in which there are no or few other animal law practitioners.
- *Advertise that you practice animal law.* Additionally, write articles for bar association news publications, trade journals and publications of animal control agencies and humane societies.
- *Network.* Participate in local, state and the ABA animal law sections. If your state Bar association doesn't have an animal law section yet, form one. Contact Pamela Hart (e-mail address, above) for Animal Legal Defense Fund's Bar Section Starter Kit.

**One Thing Leads To Another**

Both Jane Hoffman and Meena Alagappan started by volunteering for the New York City Bar Association's Committee on Legal Issues Pertaining to Animals ("NYC Bar Committee"). Alagappan's volunteer work led her to get a Masters degree in Animals and Public Policy from Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine, which led her to become a paid consultant for the Animal Welfare Trust. And, that led her to become the Executive Director of HEART, Humane Education Advocates Reaching Teachers, a new nonprofit agency whose mission is "to inspire and empower educators to implement humane education into school curricula and programs." Alagappan cautions that "a lot of what I've done, I've not been paid for, but you can create your own position and direction."

Jane Hoffman is a founding member of the NYC Bar Committee, while her law practice focused on executive compensation and estate planning. Her volunteer efforts led Hoffman and her Bar colleagues to form a not-for-profit that is "working with the City of New York toward the day when no NYC dog or cat ... is killed merely because he or she does not have a home." Their group, called the Mayor's Alliance for New York City's Animals, has over 100 participating members, including shelters and rescue groups, and Hoffman now serves as its Executive Director. Relationships that were formed through her pro bono Bar work helped her to raise the funds needed to implement the agency's ten year strategic plan. She advises: "create your own opportunities by putting yourself in places where those opportunities will become apparent to you." Both Alagappan and Hoffman stated that their training and experience as attorneys helps them in various aspects of their new jobs.

**Be Proactive**

The field of animal law is young, but it is growing fast. Each of the colleagues I interviewed is building a career that enables him or her to help and protect animals, in ways that are exciting and innovative. These interviews have opened my eyes to new possibilities. The key to finding those "hot" jobs is to be creative, flexible and, most of all, entrepreneurial.

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 \*An edited version of this article appeared in the American Bar Association TIPS Animal Law Committee Newsletter, Winter 2007, at 20-22.

Joyce Tischler is the Founding Director of the Animal Legal Defense Fund (Animal Legal Defense Fund). The author wishes to thank the following colleagues for graciously sharing their insights: Meena Alagappan, Sarah Babcock, Howard Crystal, Corey Evans, David Favre, Bee Friedlander, Leslie Hamilton, Jane Hoffman, Adam Karp, Stacy Lilly, Jonathan Lovvorn, Gilda Mariani and Geneva Page.

## **Q&A with an Animal Legal Defense Fund Staff Attorney about Pursuing a Career in Animal Law**

Animal Legal Defense Fund Staff Attorney Matthew Liebman answered a few questions for the *Brandeis University Law Journal* about the Animal Legal Defense Fund and working in animal law. In this interview, Matthew offers some insights for undergraduates who are interested in pursuing careers in this field.

### **Q: How did you get involved in animal protection law?**

**A:** I've always had affection for animals, but my real interest in animal issues started in high school when I got a little parrot named Chaplin as a pet. (I have since learned the horrors of the pet trade and would never again purchase an animal from a pet store.) My relationship with Chaplin was pretty formative, and it really opened my eyes to the complexity and individual personality of each animal. I remember realizing one day how strange it was to have so much compassion for this bird while I ate other birds! So I became a vegetarian in high school in 1995. When I got to college, I read Peter Singer's book *Animal Liberation*, which got me thinking about animal issues in a deeper and more philosophical way. I majored in philosophy and wrote my thesis on animal ethics through a postmodernist lens. I considered pursuing a PhD in philosophy with a continuing focus on philosophies of animality, but I decided I could probably do more good for animals as an attorney. So I went to Stanford Law School and became involved with the Animal Legal Defense Fund. After I graduated, the Fund offered me a position, which I jumped on.

### **Q: How can students become most effectively involved in animal welfare? Do you have any advice for those interested in studying animal protection law?**

**A:** Students can become active by educating their peers on animal protection issues, volunteering with local animal rights groups or shelters, and attending protests and demonstrations. Law students in particular can join their schools' Student Animal Legal Defense Fund chapters; we have student chapters at 149 law schools. These groups find all kinds of creative ways to contribute to the animal law movement: getting their school to add an animal law course (as 119 law schools now do), inviting speakers to talk about various issues, screening films, raising money for local rescue organizations, and so on.

My advice to students interested in animal law is "Keep your options open." Interest in animal law is growing much faster than the animal law job market. The unfortunate reality is that a lot of students who go to law school to practice animal law will not be able to find paying positions in the field when they graduate. So stay open to the possibility of practicing some other kind of law that may implicate animal protection indirectly: environmental law, family law, free speech law, criminal law. Or consider doing animal law as a *pro bono* side project. I certainly don't want to discourage anyone from becoming an animal protection attorney, but I also don't want people to have unrealistic expectations. I do think the field of animal law will continue to grow,

even if not quite as quickly as the number of interested students.

**Q: In my experience, people generally assume that being an animal lawyer is not a financially viable career path. As someone who is involved in this field, do you think there is an increasing career potential in animal protection law?**

**A:** Like all public interest lawyers, animal protection lawyers don't get the kind of salaries that those who work for large corporate firms get. I have classmates who make three times what I make. But obviously we're not in it for the money, and we do make a living. Law students who are interested in public interest law should seriously consider attending a school with a strong loan repayment program. Law school is very expensive, and paying off your loans on a public interest salary is almost impossible without some kind of assistance. So ask your prospective law schools what kind of loan relief they offer to graduates who practice public interest law. I certainly couldn't meet my loan payments if Stanford didn't have a robust loan repayment assistance program.

**Q: What do you feel are the biggest advancements made in animal law in recent years?**

**A:** Probably the single biggest advance is the growth of animal law as a legitimate discipline within law schools. Every new idea faces the challenge of making itself heard, and I think we've come a long way in doing that for animal law. The Animal Legal Defense Fund has worked hard to support law students and law professors who are interested in its study and, as a result, the numbers of student chapters and animal law courses have grown drastically in the last decade. Animal law has become a respectable focus, and some of the most esteemed names in law have shown an interest in it: Richard Delgado, Alan Dershowitz, Angela Harris, William Kunstler, Martha Nussbaum, Richard Posner, Cass Sunstein, Larry Tribe. There are now several casebooks and law journals dedicated to animal law, marking it as a real field of academic inquiry.

On the litigation side of things, we've won some important cases. In *Animal Legal Defense Fund v. Woodley*, we used a little-known North Carolina law to rescue hundreds of dogs from a breeder and hoarder who kept the animals in unimaginably inhumane conditions. We've increased the amount of farmed animal cases we bring, drawing attention to the cruelties associated with the production of meat, eggs, and dairy products. On the legislation side, we've worked to strengthen animal cruelty laws nationwide, and heavily supported California's Proposition 2, which will phase out some of the cruelest forms of intensive confinement for farmed animals.

**Q: You are currently co-authoring a book on comparative and international animal law, an area that I once tried to research, and could find nearly nothing on. Do you think the efforts aimed at international animal protection are going to be a growing movement?**

**A:** There is definitely an increasing interest in animal issues globally. A lot of animal protection advocates are realizing that corporate globalization makes it impossible for them to restrict their focus to their own locale. For example, the animal research industry has begun



outsourcing projects to China, where animals are cheaper, regulations are lax, and animal rights activists are muzzled by authoritarian limits on protest. Networks are starting to develop between activists and attorneys around the world, so as the industries are globalizing, so too is the animal protection movement. And some of the most interesting and progressive policies are arising in places you wouldn't expect: Bolivia recently banned the use of animals in circuses; the tiny European nation of San Marino banned all animal research; India banned the captivity of elephants in circuses and zoos; New Zealand essentially banned all research on great apes, and several other countries followed. These are exciting developments.

**Q: Do you think the laws that currently exist provide enough leverage for lawyers to adequately pursue animal protection cases?**

**A:** Existing animal laws are woefully inadequate. The federal Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act, which is supposed to minimize suffering during slaughter, does not apply to birds, which make up ninety percent of the animals killed for food. The federal Animal Welfare Act, which is supposed to protect animals in laboratories, does not cover rats and mice, which make up ninety percent of the animals used in research. And most state animal cruelty laws exempt animals used in research and raised for food. So the laws we have cover only a tiny portion of the suffering humans inflict on animals. Large-scale industrial exploitation of animals is routine and, in most cases, completely legal.

That said, I do believe there are some favorable laws that provide opportunities to improve the lives of animals. Despite the shortcomings I just mentioned, the Animal Legal Defense Fund has litigated and won plenty of cases over the years in which we've saved hundreds and hundreds of animals from deplorable conditions. So there are certainly opportunities to use existing laws to help animals, but there is no question we need more of them.

The relationship between law and society is complicated, but generally, law follows social change; it rarely produces social change. So unless we have a grassroots movement that changes the prevailing cultural denigration of animal interests, we're going to have a hard time winning significant legal victories. But the good news is that society is much further along that path than the existing laws might suggest: polls show that most people see their companion animals as family members, even though the law sees them as mere property. So the legal system is struggling to keep up with rapidly changing social attitudes toward animals. If we can continue to make social progress, I'm optimistic that legal progress will follow.

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