

Observations on Philippine Animal Welfare Law^[*]

by: Adrian Kenneth N. Mallari^[**]

“He who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men.

We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals.”

- Immanuel Kant, *Philosopher*

I. Introduction

The Philippines is internationally recognized for having some of the most comprehensive environmental laws, such as the Clean Air Act (Republic Act No. 8749), Clean Water Act (Republic Act No. 9275), and the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act (Republic Act No. 11038). These laws highlight the country's commitment to protecting nature and wildlife. However, despite these strong environmental protections, laws concerning animal rights, particularly those safeguarding domesticated animals such as pets and livestock have seen little to no significant improvement over the years. While the Animal Welfare Act of 1998 and its amendments have provided a legal framework against animal cruelty, the persistent rise of abuse cases suggests that existing measures namely Republic Act No. 8485, as amended by Republic Act No. 10631 remain lacking.

The lack of a specialized enforcement units, weak penalties, and limited awareness in the public consciousness contribute to this growing issue. Animal cruelty remains rampant, protected by laws that are weak on paper and even weaker in practice.

This article argues that the Philippine animal welfare laws are structurally deficient in ways that extend beyond low penalties, reflecting institutional marginalization, conceptual underdevelopment, and a disconnection from criminological evidence and constitutional principles of state responsibility.

II. The Philippines' Environmental Laws vs. Animal Welfare Laws

The Philippines' environmental laws are often seen as strong examples of legal protection and enforcement. For instance, the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act (Republic Act No. 9147) imposes penalties of up to ₱1,000,000 in fines and up to 12 years of imprisonment for killing or trading endangered species. Likewise, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act (Republic Act No. 9003) enforces strict waste disposal rules, with fines ranging from ₱300 to ₱1,000,000 and possible jail time for repeat or serious violations.^{[1][2]}

By comparison, the laws protecting domesticated animals, especially pets, are noticeably less strict. The Animal Welfare Act (Republic Act No. 8485, as amended by RA 10631) carries much lighter penalties.

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[**] Editor-in-Chief, Paulinian Law Journal (2025-2026 A.Y.); J.D. Student, Saint Paul School of Professional Studies. B.S. Computer Science, Systems Technology Institute (2013).

[1] See REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9147, Available at: https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2001/ra_9147_2001.html

[2] See REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9003, Available at: https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2001/ra_9003_2001.html

Fines range from ₱30,000 to ₱250,000, with imprisonment of just 6 months to 3 years for acts of cruelty. Environmental cases also tend to have higher conviction rates, helped by specialized enforcement agencies like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Environmental Management Bureau. On the other hand, animal welfare cases often suffer from lower conviction rates and inconsistent prosecution.^{[3][4]}

This clear gap in penalties and enforcement shows the need to strengthen animal welfare laws. Domesticated animals deserve legal protection that truly holds offenders accountable and helps prevent cruelty, not just in principle but in practice.

III. Current Philippine Laws on Animal Welfare

A. Republic Act No. 8485 (Animal Welfare Act of 1998)

Republic Act No. 8485, or the Animal Welfare Act of 1998, was the Philippines' first major legislative effort to address animal cruelty and abuse. It mandates the provision of adequate care, shelter, and sustenance to all animals under human custody and penalizes acts of maltreatment or neglect. However, the law initially imposed weak penalties, with fines ranging from ₱1,000 to ₱5,000 and imprisonment of six months to two years, making enforcement largely ineffective. For years, this minimal deterrent allowed abusers to go unpunished, and most cases either stalled or were dismissed during preliminary investigation.

B. Republic Act No. 10631 (Amendments to the Animal Welfare Act)

In 2013, Republic Act No. 10631 amended RA 8485 to strengthen penalties, broaden the definition of cruelty, and extend coverage to more species and situations, including abandonment and organized forms of abuse. The amendment raised penalties up to ₱250,000 and imposed maximum imprisonment terms of three years. It also authorized the Bureau of Animal Industry to enforce regulations and oversee compliance with animal welfare standards.

In practice, the implementation of these provisions relies heavily on local government units. In 2024, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) issued Memorandum Circular No. 2024-126, which reiterated the duties of LGUs under RA 8485, as amended by RA 10631. The circular directs cities, municipalities, and barangays to designate Animal Welfare Enforcement Officers, establish Animal Welfare Desks within local police stations, and coordinate with the Department of Agriculture, the Philippine National Police, and accredited non-governmental organizations in responding to animal cruelty complaints and enforcing the law.^[5]

Despite these improvements, the amended law remains hindered by a lack of institutional enforcement. Unlike environmental laws that benefit from dedicated agencies and special courts, animal welfare violations are handled by general police units with limited training. While the 2024 conviction of a foreign national in Manila for killing a stray dog suggests incremental progress, such cases remain rare.^[6]

[3] See REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8485, Available at: https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1998/ra_8485_1998.html

[4] See REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10631, Available at: https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2013/ra_10631_2013.html

[5] See M.C. No. 2024-126 Aug. 29, 2024 https://www.dilg.gov.ph/PDF_File/issuances/memo_circulars/dilg-memocircular-202494_1c1d0e2882.pdf

[6] See Philstar Global, "Korean gets 2 years in prison for killing dog," by: Evelyn Macairan, Available at: <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/12/04/2404895/korean-gets-2-years-prison-killing-dog> Accessed: 10/25/2025

IV. Recent Cases of Animal Cruelty

A. The Case of “Erica” the Aspin

In March 2024, a Korean national stabbed an aspin named Erica multiple times inside a restaurant in Malate, Manila, using a kitchen knife. The incident was witnessed by customers and caught on CCTV. The dog died from her injuries. The aggressor, Jung Seongho, claimed self-defense, alleging the dog had attacked him. However, the court found him guilty beyond reasonable doubt under the Animal Welfare Act and sentenced him to two years of imprisonment and a ₱100,000 fine. This was one of the rare instances where a conviction was secured. Despite the outcome, the case illustrates how such acts of cruelty often go unpunished unless backed by undeniable evidence and public scrutiny.^[7]

B. Mall Security Guard Incident

In July 2023, a security guard at a mall in Quezon City was filmed throwing a puppy off a footbridge, killing it instantly. Despite clear video evidence, legal proceedings moved slowly, and the penalties imposed were minimal compared to the severity of the act. This case underscores the leniency of Philippine animal welfare laws and how public visibility does not always lead to meaningful accountability.^[8]

C. The Case of “Killua”

In March 2024, a golden retriever named Killua was beaten to death by a neighbor in Pili, Camarines Sur, in an incident caught on CCTV. Despite footage showing the dog being struck repeatedly, the suspect claimed self-defense, arguing that the animal had become aggressive. The case was dismissed by the provincial prosecutor due to "insufficient evidence," sparking public outrage. This case reveals significant flaws in the prosecution of animal cruelty cases, particularly the ambiguous definition of cruelty under the Animal Welfare Act and the low threshold for invoking self-defense. It also highlights how the burden of proof is often shifted to the complainant, even when video evidence is available, and reflects a troubling pattern of prosecutorial reluctance and weak investigative follow-through. Ultimately, Killua's case illustrates how legal loopholes and discretionary inaction undermine animal welfare protections and perpetuate a culture of impunity.^[9]

D. The Subic Stray “Tiger” Case

In March 2025, a community stray dog known as Tiger was brutally killed by a market vendor in Subic, Zambales. The incident was witnessed by residents and reported by animal welfare organizations, prompting the filing of charges under the Animal Welfare Act. In a rare outcome, the Municipal Trial Court convicted the accused and imposed imprisonment and a monetary fine. While the conviction was celebrated as a breakthrough, the relatively light penalty imposed underscores the limited deterrent effect of existing penalties under the law.

[7] See GMA News, “Korean man sentenced to jail time, P100K fine for killing dog,” March 6, 2024. Available at: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/metro/928990/korean-man-sentenced-to-jail-time-p100k-fine-for-killing-dog/story/> Accessed: 10/26/2025

[8] See Inquirer, “PAWS files criminal complaint vs. mall guard for throwing puppy to death,” by: Tetch Torres-Tupas Available at: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1801874/paws-files-criminal-complaint-vs-mall-guard-for-throwing-puppy-to-death> Accessed: 10/26/2025

[9] See Senate Bill No. 2458 See Rappler, “Killua’s owner sues ‘killer’ of golden retriever,” by: Jairo Bolledo Available at: <https://www.rappler.com/philippines/killua-owner-sues-golden-retriever-killer/> Accessed: 10/28/2025

This case shows that convictions are attainable when evidence and community cooperation are present, yet it also exposes how penalties under the law remain insufficient in addressing the severity of animal cruelty.^[10]

E. Makati Community Cat Killings

In early 2025, a community cat in Makati City's Ayala Triangle Gardens was caught on CCTV being kicked to death by a foreign national, sparking public outrage and calls for legal action under the Animal Welfare Act. The incident occurred on January 4, 2025, and police announced plans to file cruelty charges after reviewing footage showing the cat being kicked, resulting in its death. Despite eyewitnesses and video evidence, witnesses initially declined to file complaints, forcing the Makati City Police to act as nominal complainant. The Bureau of Immigration later arrested the suspect for overstaying his visa, though criminal prosecution under the Animal Welfare Act is still pending. This case demonstrates how even clear visual proof does not always translate into immediate accountability and shows enforcement challenges in holding offenders liable under existing animal protection laws.^[11]

V. Systemic Sources of Abuse: Abuse by Backyard Breeders and the Dog Meat Trade

Backyard breeding, though widespread across urban and peri-urban areas of the Philippines, continues to operate in legal gray zones. These breeders typically lack permits, veterinary oversight, and compliance with basic animal welfare standards. Animals are kept in cramped, unhygienic cages, often exposed to extreme heat, untreated wounds, and unregulated inbreeding. This unprofessional and profit-driven environment leads to a host of welfare issues, including malnutrition, genetic deformities, and the unchecked transmission of diseases such as canine distemper and parvovirus. Numerous animal welfare organizations have reported that puppies produced in these conditions are sold online or in informal markets without vaccinations or proper documentation, resulting in health risks for both the animals and potential owners. Moreover, the unchecked increase in pet populations, driven in part by these operations, contributes directly to the volume of stray animals in cities and provinces, straining government and NGO rescue efforts and increasing cases of abandonment, cruelty, and road-related deaths.^[12]

In parallel, the illegal dog meat trade persists in various regions despite being explicitly prohibited by Republic Act No. 9482 (Anti-Rabies Act of 2007), which bans the slaughter and consumption of dogs except in limited cultural contexts. The law criminalizes the collection, sale, and transport of dogs for meat, but enforcement remains uneven. In provinces such as Benguet, La Union, and parts of the Cordillera Administrative Region, reports continue to

[10] See GMA News, "Dog stabbed to death by vendor in Subic," March 26, 2025. Available at: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/regions/940671/dog-stabbed-to-death-by-vendor-in-subic/story/> Accessed: 10/28/2025

[11] See Manila Bulletin, "Cat dies after being kicked by foreign national in Makati park," by: Patrick Garcia Available at: https://mb.com.ph/2025/3/7/cat-dies-after-being-kicked-by-foreign-national-in-makati-park?fbclid=IwY2xjawOvbc5leHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFPaXBGcEEyaUhwQ3FnNzIQc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHsDRq_VTTcN6PrDnx-rs6zCaeo059fuLIH0Oi3_ugpNcAeeJdApStUrbz6BS_aem_vSzLzL0ocXtWgm10-lb_vQ Accessed: 10/28/2025

[12] See PAWS International, Buyer Beware: The Problem with Puppy Mills and Backyard Breeders, Available at: <https://www.paws.org/resources/puppy-mills/#:~:text=Animals%20in%20puppy%20mills%20are,or%20unsanitary%20food%20and%20water>. Accessed: 11/11/2025

surface of stolen dogs being sold for slaughter. Dogs are typically captured using wire snares or forcibly taken from homes and streets, then transported in overcrowded sacks or cages without food, water, or ventilation. They are slaughtered through inhumane methods, often beaten or stabbed in public markets without veterinary supervision. While law enforcement agencies, in partnership with groups such as the Animal Kingdom Foundation and the Philippine National Police, have conducted occasional raids resulting in arrests and rescues, prosecution rates remain low, and penalties imposed have not been consistently deterrent.^{[13][14]}

The persistence of both backyard breeding and dog meat trading shows the systemic gaps in enforcement, public awareness, and clarity in the laws. The current Animal Welfare Act lacks specific provisions regulating small-scale breeders, and RA 9482's exceptions for “customary practices” have been criticized for being overly vague, potentially enabling exploitation of cultural exemptions. The situation is compounded by insufficient training among local law enforcement and prosecutors in handling animal-related offenses, which are often deprioritized in favor of more conventional criminal cases. As such, these unregulated practices not only represent widespread cruelty but also undermine broader public health and safety goals, particularly in relation to rabies control, animal related disease prevention, and humane population management.

VI. Animal Cruelty as a Predictor for Future Violent Behavior

Research has consistently demonstrated that animal cruelty is not an isolated form of deviant behavior, but is frequently correlated with subsequent acts of interpersonal violence, including homicide, physical assault, sexual violence, and domestic abuse.^[15] Studies in criminology and behavioral science indicate that individuals who engage in cruelty toward animals are statistically more likely to escalate to violence against humans, particularly when early acts of abuse go unaddressed. From a legal standpoint, the failure to intervene at this stage represents a missed opportunity for early prevention, allowing patterns of violent behavior to develop with minimal scrutiny or consequence.

Animal cruelty also carries significant secondary harms, particularly for children who witness such acts. Exposure to violence against animals has been shown to produce lasting psychological and behavioral effects, including desensitization to suffering and an increased likelihood of replicating abusive behavior.

[13] See The Cordillera Review, *From Main Ritual to Main Course: Dogs, Dog Meat, and the Igorot Trope*, by: Iö Mones Jularbal “As notions of influence move from colonial to more modern cultural understandings, the ritual sacrifice of dogs has moved also from areas of ceremonial worth to back-alley Igorot eateries, as dog meat found itself being incorporated into the Cordillera highland menu.” Available at: <https://thecordillerareview.upb.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2-Jularbal-21-De.pdf> Accessed: 12/15/2025

[14] See Animal Welfare Institute, *AWI Investigates Illegal Dog Meat Trade in Philippines and Thailand*, by: Rosalyn Morrison, “Investigators have documented the existence of at least 25 dog meat restaurants and four slaughterhouses in Baguio, seven dog meat traders in Laguna and Batangas provinces, and two slaughterhouses in Pangasinan province. Unfortunately, there are also many more underground entities involved in the industry throughout the northern provinces.” Available at: <https://awionline.org/awi-quarterly/2013-summer/awi-investigates-illegal-dog-meat-trade-philippines-and-thailand> Accessed: 12/15/2025

[15] See Research Gate, Candelaria, Hannah. (2024). *The Ethical Implications of Animal Cruelty: Analyzing Judiciary Measures and Cases in the Philippines*. 10.13140/RG.2.2.10740.97927. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/380874495_The_Ethical_Implications_of_Animal_Cruelty_Analyzing_Judiciary_Measures_and_Cases_in_the_Philippines Accessed: 12/15/2025

Studies suggest that children who witness animal cruelty, especially when perpetrated by family members or close acquaintances, are significantly more likely to engage in abusive conduct themselves.^[16] This dynamic reinforces the intergenerational transmission of violence and underscores the role of animal cruelty as both a predictor and facilitator of broader social harm.

Viewed through this lens, animal welfare law functions as a preventive tool against escalating violence, and its weak enforcement undermines not only animal protection but also broader interests in crime prevention, child protection, and public safety.

VII. Analysis

Despite the Philippines' reputation for strong environmental legislation, its legal regime concerning animal welfare, particularly for domesticated animals remains fundamentally underdeveloped. This inconsistency exposes a critical legal paradox: while environmental statutes such as the Clean Air Act (RA 8749), Clean Water Act (RA 9275), and Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act (RA 9147) enjoy robust enforcement mechanisms and institutional support, animal welfare laws continue to operate in a fragmented, underfunded, and loosely enforced framework.

At the core of this imbalance lies the Animal Welfare Act of 1998 (RA 8485) and its amendment, RA 10631 (2013). While Republic Act No. 8485, as amended by Republic Act No. 10631, represents the Philippines' primary statutory response to animal cruelty, its doctrinal structure reveals significant weaknesses that continue to undermine effective prosecution. Although RA 10631 expanded the definition of cruelty and increased the range of penalties, the statute remains largely penal in form but underdeveloped in substance.

First, the law does not provide a sufficiently precise or operational definition of "cruelty." While acts such as torture, neglect, and abandonment are generally prohibited, the statute leaves substantial room for interpretation, particularly in cases involving alleged self-defense or claims of animal aggression. This ambiguity has allowed respondents to invoke justification defenses with minimal evidentiary burden, as demonstrated in cases such as *Killua*, where despite CCTV footage, prosecutorial authorities dismissed the complaint for "insufficient evidence." The absence of statutory presumptions such as a rebuttable presumption of cruelty when abuse is captured on video places an onerous burden on complainants and discourages enforcement.

Second, RA 8485 does not clearly provide a provision which requires a mental state for criminal liability, contributing to doctrinal irregularity in its enforcement. As a special penal law, the Animal Welfare Act is characterized as *malum prohibitum*, such that liability generally attaches upon the voluntary commission of the prohibited act.

[16] See *Animals and Society*, "participants who had witnessed animal cruelty were more likely to have abused animals frequently. Further, those who witnessed either a friend or family member hurt or kill an animal, were significantly more likely to engage frequently in animal abuse, in comparison to those who witnessed another individual perpetrate such an act." An Investigation into the Association between the Witnessing of Animal Abuse and Adolescents' Behavior toward Animals, by: Kelly L. Thompson and Eleonora Gullone, pg. 226 Available at: <https://www.animalsandsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/thompson.pdf> Accessed: 12/15/2025

Under established Philippine doctrine, criminal intent or *dolo* is not an essential element of offenses of this nature, and good faith or absence of malicious intent does not ordinarily excuse the offender. Notwithstanding this, courts and prosecutors have at times required proof of intent, recklessness, or motive in animal cruelty cases, resulting in dismissals even where the commission of the prohibited act is undisputed. This departure from the regulatory character of the statute weakens its deterrent function and stands in contrast to the more consistent treatment of environmental offenses, which are enforced primarily to prevent harm and protect public welfare rather than to assess subjective culpability.

Third, enforcement architecture remains weak, even after RA 10631 empowered the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI). The BAI's mandate is primarily focused on livestock and agricultural productivity rather than companion animal welfare. In 2024, the Department of the Interior and Local Government issued Memorandum Circular No. 2024-126, directing local government units to designate Animal Welfare Enforcement Officers, establish Animal Welfare Desks in police stations, and coordinate with the BAI, the PNP, and accredited NGOs in investigating and enforcing animal welfare laws. While this circular clarifies local responsibilities and provides a framework for coordination, its impact is limited by uneven implementation, lack of resources, and minimal training for enforcement officers. As a result, compliance continues to depend heavily on public attention and media coverage, rather than systematic legal mechanisms.

Moreover, criminal penalties remain lenient relative to the harm involved. Although RA 10631 increased the maximum fine to ₱250,000 and imprisonment to three years, most violations result in suspended sentences, plea deals, or outright dismissals, as evidenced in the Killua case. Even when prosecutions succeed, as in the rare conviction of a foreign national for killing a stray in the Case of Erica and the Case of Tiger, these outcomes are exceptions rather than the rule and typically arise only when there are video evidence and public outrage.

In comparison, environmental violations can trigger fines in the millions, imprisonment of up to 12 years, and administrative closures of non-compliant facilities. These sanctions are enforced through Environmental Management Bureaus and Special Environmental Courts. This disparity reveals not only a legal gap but also a hierarchy of protection in which animal welfare and protection is structurally deprioritized.

The situation is further complicated by legal ambiguities and enforcement loopholes. One example is the vague cultural exception in RA 9482 (Anti-Rabies Act), which is often used to justify dog meat trading in Northern Luzon. This tolerance, combined with weak local implementation, enables continued cruelty and undermines national policy objectives on rabies control and animal related disease prevention. Similarly, the absence of regulation over backyard breeding allows unscrupulous breeders to operate without oversight, contributing to animal overpopulation, neglect, and abandonment. These consequences in turn strain limited shelter resources and lead to further acts of cruelty.

From a criminological and constitutional standpoint, the failure to meaningfully penalize animal cruelty also ignores growing empirical evidence that violence against animals is a

reliable predictor of future interpersonal violence as studies have shown that perpetrators of animal abuse often escalate to more serious crimes, including domestic violence, child abuse, and even homicide. According to Thompson and Gullone (2016), adolescents who witness or commit acts of animal cruelty, especially within familial or peer settings, are significantly more likely to exhibit violent tendencies later in life. This suggests that animal welfare law should not only be viewed through the lens of ethics or regulation, but also as a matter of public safety and preventative justice.

The State's failure to meaningfully address animal cruelty also raises constitutional concerns, albeit indirectly. While animals are not recognized as rights-holders under the 1987 Constitution, the persistence of animal cruelty and the State's inconsistent response to it has demonstrable implications for human dignity, public safety, and social welfare.

Article II, Section 11 of the Constitution provides that the State "values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights." Contemporary criminological research has increasingly established a link between animal cruelty and subsequent violence against humans, including domestic abuse, child maltreatment, and other serious offenses. When the State systematically fails to investigate or prosecute animal cruelty, despite clear evidence and foreseeable risks, it may also be neglecting its duty to protect vulnerable human populations from preventable harm.

This argument does not seek to extend constitutional rights to animals, but to recognize animal cruelty as an early indicator of broader patterns of violence, placing animal welfare enforcement within the State's police power to maintain public order and safety. The analogy to *Oposa v. Factoran* ^[17] is instructive, as it underscores the State's duty to address harms whose full consequences manifest over time, a duty undermined when animal cruelty is tolerated or trivialized.

Accordingly, the failure to institutionalize effective animal welfare enforcement may be viewed not merely as legislative oversight, but as a form of constitutional neglect one that permits foreseeable harm to persist under the guise of prosecutorial discretion and administrative inertia.

It is within this context that recent legislative initiatives must be understood. The passage of Senate Bill No. 2458 (2023), later consolidated as SB 2975 (2025), reflects a growing recognition of these structural deficiencies. The bill proposes the creation of an Animal Welfare Bureau with regulatory and enforcement powers, as well as procedural innovations such as Animal Protection Orders and community-level implementation. While this measure represents a significant step forward, its effectiveness will depend on resolving key issues, including the scope of coverage, transitional enforcement mechanisms, regulatory differentiation for grassroots rescuers, and adequate resourcing for local government units and enforcement bodies.

[17] See *Oposa v. Factoran* G.R. No. 101083, 1993, Available at: https://lawphil.net/judjuris/juri1993/jul1993/gr_101083_1993.html

VIII. Conclusion

In summary, the existing animal welfare framework in the Philippines remains inadequately enforced, weakly institutionalized, and insufficiently aligned with prevailing criminological insights and constitutional principles. Reform efforts should not be limited to the enhancement of penal sanctions but must also address the structural and normative deficiencies that impede effective implementation. As the foregoing cases illustrate, animal welfare legislation continues to lag behind the country's more developed environmental protection regime. Sustainable reform therefore requires a reconceptualization of animal welfare as a legitimate concern of justice and public order, coupled with institutional mechanisms that ensure consistent enforcement and meaningful accountability.

IX. Recommendations

These recommendations come from the perspective of a law student and animal welfare advocate, not from someone with deep technical experience in policymaking or law enforcement. They are based on reading cases, following news reports, and observing how animal cruelty complaints are usually handled, rather than on insider knowledge of government processes.

First, there is a clear need for better understanding of animal welfare laws among police officers, prosecutors, and barangay officials. Many cases appear to fail early because the law is unfamiliar or treated as unimportant. Basic training or short orientations, even if simple, could already help prevent cases from being dismissed too quickly.

Second, prosecutors would benefit from clearer direction on how to handle animal cruelty cases. From a student's point of view, it is confusing to see cases dismissed even when there is video or witness evidence, often because intent or self-defense is raised too easily. Clearer guidance could help ensure that evidence is taken seriously.

Third, animal welfare groups should be seen as partners, not outsiders. In many cases, these groups are the first to respond, take photos or videos, and help care for injured animals. Right now, their role depends too much on personal connections or informal arrangements. Better coordination with local authorities would make investigations stronger and more consistent as encouraged in Memorandum Circular No. 2024-126, this would greatly strengthen investigations and improve case outcomes.

Lastly, even small changes could improve enforcement. Assigning specific officers or prosecutors to handle animal welfare cases, even on a part-time basis, could help avoid delays and repeated mistakes. These are modest steps, but they show that animal cruelty cases deserve attention and follow-through.

These recommendations are not exhaustive solutions. Rather, they reflect the urgent need for consistent and effective enforcement so that Philippine animal welfare laws function as intended, ensuring both animal protection and broader public safety.