Center for Animal Law
Past Events

Center for Animal Law
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Characterized by academic rigor and community outreach, DePaul Law's Center for Animal Law examines local, state, federal and international policies relating to the rights and welfare of animals. Combining theory with practice, the center serves as a resource for the legal protection of animals by promoting both the enforcement of existing laws and the enactment of new laws designed to ensure and improve animal welfare.

The center's CLE-certified educational panels and seminars cover companion animals, wildlife, and marine life. They provide important information to the general public about protecting themselves and their pets and how they can become an active supporter of these issues. Guest speakers represent a variety of fields, including attorneys, journalists, advocates, legislators, and representatives from the Chicago metropolitan area. Topics have included state and federal animal welfare laws, factory farming, dog fighting, puppy mills, animals in entertainment and tort valuation of animals.

The Center for Animal Law at DePaul was established in April 2002 through a gift from Dr. Florence Wissig Dunbar (JD, DePaul University). Recognizing that animals are defenseless and in need of compassion and protection, the center's Dunbar Program supports law students and lawyers in the field of animal law, in addition to sponsoring the training and education of humane investigators, animal welfare advocates and others working in the animal protection field.

Visit our website for additional information.
2018 – 2019

*HSUS in Illinois: Turning Compassion into Legislative Action (October 2018)*

This presentation by Marc Ayers, Illinois State Director of the Humane Society of the United States, provided a brief overview of the HSUS and recapped major legislative achievements. Topics included the recent ban on ivory sales in Illinois, as well as potential changes to bobcat hunting laws in the state. He also discussed additional pending and future legislation to be introduced over the fall and spring legislative sessions in the Illinois General Assembly. For more information, click here.

2017 – 2018

*DePaul Center for Animal Law presents Housing Law and Companion Animals (April 2018)*

For its 2018 Spring Seminar, the DePaul Center for Animal Law examined issues involving housing law and companion animals. Our speakers looked at the rights and responsibilities of pet owners and landlords. Topics included: emotional support animals, insurance requirements, Chicago’s Residential Landlord and Tenant Ordinance, and Home Owner Association law. For more information, as well as video, click here.

*Humane Lobbying: Using the Legislative Process on Behalf of Animals (November 2017)*

Co-sponsored with the National Anti-Vivisection Society

Lobbying is an effective means by which advocates can have their voices heard and effect change at all levels of government. But with it comes unique challenges and ethical considerations. The first part of this lunchtime panel discussion looked at the unique roles that lawmakers and lobbyists each play in advancing legislation. Specific attention was paid to the recent passage of the *Research Dog and Cat Adoption Law*. The second part of the discussion examined the ethical issues pertaining to lobbying and legislating in the State of Illinois. Leading this discussion will be lobbyist Dave Marsh, who was instrumental in shepherding the Research Dog and Cat Bill through the Illinois General Assembly, along with the bill’s sponsor, State Senator Linda Holmes (D-Aurora). For more information, as well as video, click here.

2016 – 2017

*DePaul Center for Animal Law Presents “Animal Shelters” (April 2017)*

This seminar explored the myriad of legal, ethical, and financial issues affecting animal shelters, locally and nationally. Among the topics covered were: the operations of a public animal shelter (*Chicago Animal Care
and Control), the operations of a non-profit animal shelter (Tree House Humane Society), and the recently proposed ordinance to make all Chicago animal shelters "no-kill." It also analyzed the recently decided lawsuit between ALDF and Animal Care and Control regarding FOIA requests for records related to animal treatment. For more information, click here.

*DePaul Center for Animal Law Presents “Companion Animal Valuation” (October 2016)*

This panel examined the realities and the difficulties in obtaining a valuation of companion animals after their injury or death due to another's negligence or actions. **Professor Margit Livingston** (DePaul University College of Law), author of "The Calculus of Animal Valuation: Crafting a Viable Remedy" (82 Neb. L. Rev. 783 (2004)), explored the historical development of animal valuation as a legal concept. **Anna Morrison-Ricordati** (AMR Law Group, LLC) provided an analysis of Illinois statutes and cases involving animal valuation (including those where emotional distress was factored into the allowed damages) and offered practice pointers for attorneys representing litigants in these suits. For more information, click here.

**2015 - 2016**

*Companion Animals and the Law II: Protecting Our Pets (2015-2016)*

For the 2015-2016 academic year, the Center for Animal Law continued its look at companion animal issues with the series Companion Animals and the Law II: Protecting Our Pets. Its four topics were:

- **Animal Hoarding (April 2016)** – An analysis of another of animal law's biggest topics – animal hoarding – with speakers having backgrounds in law, psychology, and animal protection efforts. For more information click here.

- **Dog Court/Breed Specific Legislation (March 2016)** – An analysis of what happens to complainants following a dog bite incident with a focus on the Chicago municipal code, followed by a look at the controversial science behind breed specific legislation. For more information click here.

- **The Dangers of Dog Fighting (November 2015)** – An analysis of one of the most hot button issues in all of animal law - dog fighting – with speakers looking at it from legal, advocacy, and sociological perspectives. For more information click here.

2014 - 2015


For the 2014-2015 academic year, the Center for Animal Law looked at regulatory issues relating specifically to companion animals, particularly those throughout Chicago. Its four topics were:

- **Dog Bites (March 2015)** – An analysis of strict liability dog bite laws in Illinois, which included lawyers informing attendees about preparing for these lawsuits as well as protecting oneself and one's pet from liability. For more information click here.

- **Trap Neuter Return Programs (January 2015)** – An analysis of “TNR” programs, which is considered a humane method for controlling the feral cat population by spaying/neutering them and having them monitored by a trained feral-neighborhood cat caregiver. For more information click here.

- **Puppy Mills (October 2014)** – An analysis of the practice of commercially breeding dogs in inhuman conditions that are harmful to the animals' emotional and physical health. For more information click here.

- **Puppy Lemon Laws (September 2014)** – An analysis of laws that provide legal recourse to individuals who purchase animals from dealers and who later discover that their pet is injured or ill. For more information click here.

2013 - 2014

Free Film Screening: "Maximum Tolerated Dose" (April 2014)

The National Anti-Vivisection Society (NAVS) and the DePaul Center for Animal Law, in recognition of World Day for Animals in Laboratories, presented a free screening of "Maximum Tolerated Dose," a feature-length documentary from Decipher Films that charts the lives of both humans and non-humans who have experienced animal testing first-hand. A reception with "Maximum Tolerated Dose" director Karol Orzechowski followed. For more information click here.

Pirates or Protesters? The Institute of Cetacean Research v. Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (February 2014)
The center hosted a discussion on *The Institute of Cetacean Research v. Sea Shepherd Conservation Society*, an international lawsuit regarding whale hunting that received attention due to its connection to the popular American non-scripted television show “Whale Wars.” The plaintiff, a Japanese research foundation that hunts whales, sued the defendant, an American non-profit organization of eco-activists that is best known for starring in "Whale Wars," over interfering with their activities. The panel featured Harris & Moure, pllc, attorneys Charles Moure and Rebecca Millican who represent Sea Shepherd. Paul Watson, the founder of Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, appeared via SKYPE. They analyzed how the ruling may affect international maritime law, the future of the group, and the actions of other ecological-focused protesters. For more information click here.

*Fall All-Day Symposium: Animals as Food: The Legal Treatment of Animals in Contemporary Agribusiness and Factory Farming (October 2013)*

The legal, moral and ethical issues surrounding animals in contemporary food production and distribution were the focus of the DePaul Center for Animal Law's 2013 fall all-day symposium. Over the past several years this topic has received significant attention because of books such as "Fast Food Nation" and "Eating Animals," documentaries like "Food, Inc." and "Forks Over Knives," and the release of undercover footage depicting modern slaughterhouse conditions. At the same time, consumer interest about where food comes from and the value of organic eating and non-meat diets is at an all-time high. To reflect these concerns, the center presented panels on the raising and slaughtering of farm animals, AG-GAG laws, food labeling, and the success in banning certain food products. Gary Francione served as luncheon speaker. For more information click here.

*Drug Sniffing Dogs and the Fourth Amendment (October 2013)*

In early 2013, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled on two different cases involving drug sniffing dogs. The first, *Florida v. Harris*, decided unanimously that if the police can show that a drug sniffing dog satisfactorily earned certification or completed a training program, the dog's alert can provide probable cause to search a vehicle. The subsequent case, *Florida v. Jardines*, said that using drug sniffing dogs at the front door of a house where the police suspected drugs constitutes a search under the Fourth Amendment and thus requires a warrant. The panel examined the background of the cases, the implications to criminal investigations, and the practical training and applications of police dogs. For more information click here.

2012 - 2013
Non-Profit Litigation, Paid Plaintiffs and the Endangered Species Act: A Look at ASPCA’s Settlement with Feld Entertainment (April 2013)

The center hosted a panel discussing the various issues related to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' $9.3 million settlement with Feld Entertainment, the owners of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey® Circus. The hour-long presentation examined non-profit organizations bringing suit against large corporations, legal ethics in using allegedly paid plaintiffs, public relations concerns, and related topics. For more information click here.

Spotlight on Animal Crimes: A Discussion with Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart (March 2013)

This lunchtime talk featured Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart discussing the Chicago Police Department Animal Crimes Unit, animal welfare issues within Chicago and related topics. For more information click here.

Fall All-Day Symposium: Examining the Legal Protection of Animals Used in Entertainment (October 2012)

The focus of this symposium was the legal protection of animals used for entertainment purposes, including movies and television, magic shows, dog fighting, circuses, and horse racing. The four panels (plus keynote speaker Gary Francione) examined these topics through a filter of the ethical responsibilities involved in using animals for entertainment purposes, legal liability for the misuse of animals, the history of the field of animal law in entertainment and what happens to animals after they "retire." For more information click here.

2010 and Prior

Revisiting the Fine Line between Freedom of Speech and Obscenity (2010)

This symposium examined the recent United States Supreme Court decision in United States v. Stevens, in which the Court held that a federal law banning the distribution of so-called "crush" videos was unconstitutional as an undue restraint on free speech under the First Amendment. Speakers discussed in detail the basis for and the ramifications of the Court's holding and also suggested other legislative approaches to regulating videos depicting the actual killing of small animals that would
pass constitutional muster. The event attempted to convey the horrendous nature of the crush video industry while exploring regulatory solutions respectful of free speech concerns.

*Prosecuting and Representing Animal Abusers and Caring for Their Victims (2008)*

This symposium delved into the legal intricacies of prosecuting and defending those charged with animal cruelty or animal neglect. It focused on the criminal prosecution of football star Michael Vick, who was ultimately convicted and sentenced for his activities in running a dog fighting operation on his property. Panelists also discussed the outcome for the dogs rescued from Vick's operation and noted that many were successfully rehabilitated and placed in private homes. The symposium drew attention to outcomes for other than euthanasia, the typical end for fighting dogs.

*Companion Animal Hoarding (2008)*

This event featured policymakers, states' attorneys, psychologists, and academics who have been involved with the issue of pet hoarding. Pet hoarding appears to be a growing problem in the U.S., and law enforcement has faced challenges in keeping up with the increased number of cases. Particularly discouraging is the huge recidivism rate for companion animal hoarders and the limited effectiveness of judicial prohibitions on future pet ownership. The speakers discussed the dimensions of this problem as well as possible approaches to finding more effective solutions to it.

*Menu Foods Pet Poisoning Litigation (2007)*

This program examined the causes and ramifications of the distribution of tainted pet food throughout the U.S. by Menu Foods in 2007. The speakers emphasized the need for proper government oversight of pet food manufacturing and also explored the proper valuation of companion animals in tort. They noted that the current legal standard for valuing companion animals is fair market value—a standard that arguably grossly undervalues animals as companions to humans and an integral part of the family unit. The participants debated the pros and cons of changing the valuation standard to provide for greater damages awards in cases where pets have been injured or destroyed and illuminated the policy concerns surrounding the valuation issue.

*Fall All-Day Symposium: Punishment and Sentencing of Animal Abusers (2006)*
This symposium focused on criminal penalties imposed on those convicted of animal cruelty or animal neglect. The speakers discussed the increased criminalization of activities injurious to domestic animals and noted the deterrent effect of augmented fines and prison terms. They also explored some creative punishments, such as that imposed by one state court judge who ordered the defendant to spend a night outside without food, water, or shelter. The symposium increased awareness of the need to set appropriate penalties to deter and punish animal abuse.