

A PROPOSED UNIVERSAL CHARTER

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION

OF THE RIGHTS OF DOGS

*A proposed universal charter of animal dignity, welfare, and
human responsibility*



PROPOSED TEXT · 32 ARTICLES · IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

MARIE SESHAT LANDRY

LANDRY INDUSTRIES INC. · MONCTON, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA

LANDRYINDUSTRIES.CA · MARIELANDRYSPYSHOP.COM

VERSION 1.0 · OCTOBER 2026

CONTENTS

	PREAMBLE	3
I	Fundamental Principles	3
II	Physical Health and Essential Needs	5
III	Relationships, Protection, and Responsibility	7
IV	Breeding, Commerce, Work, and Public Life	8
V	Rights in Emergencies and Institutional Settings	10
VI	Human Duties and Public Accountability	11
VII	Implementation and International Cooperation	13
	FINAL PROCLAMATION	15
	IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK	16
	ADOPTION PACKAGE AND LEGAL STATUS	20
	NOTES AND CREDITS	20

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF DOGS

PREAMBLE

We, affirming the shared responsibility of humanity toward all living beings, proclaim this Universal Declaration of the Rights of Dogs as a common ethical standard and a framework for the development of effective legal protections throughout the world.

- ◆ *Recognizing* that dogs are sentient animals capable of experiencing pain, fear, pleasure, distress, comfort, and social attachment;
- ◆ *Acknowledging* that scientific understanding of canine behaviour, cognition, and welfare establishes the importance of meeting dogs' physical, psychological, and social needs;
- ◆ *Recalling* the profound and varied relationships between dogs and human societies, including companionship, assistance, work, rescue, and service;
- ◆ *Concerned* by the continuing realities of cruelty, neglect, abandonment, irresponsible breeding, exploitation, homelessness, and the suffering caused by inadequate care;
- ◆ *Affirming* that a dog's worth is not determined by breed, pedigree, usefulness, appearance, age, health, ability, ownership status, or economic value;
- ◆ *Recognizing* that protecting dogs requires both compassionate individual conduct and effective public institutions, enforceable standards, accessible veterinary care, and accountable governance;
- ◆ *Understanding* that the rights articulated herein must be exercised alongside proportionate measures to protect public safety, other animals, ecosystems, and the legitimate interests of communities;

We therefore declare the following rights and principles as a universal standard toward which all individuals, communities, organizations, and governments should strive.

PROCLAIMED

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF DOGS

CHAPTER I

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

ARTICLE 1 INHERENT DIGNITY AND MORAL CONSIDERATION

1. Every dog is a sentient living being whose welfare matters in its own right.
2. Every dog shall be treated with compassion, respect, and consideration for its physical and psychological well-being.
3. No dog shall be considered disposable solely because it is unwanted, inconvenient, unprofitable, old, disabled, ill, or unable to perform a particular function.
4. The interests of dogs shall receive meaningful consideration in all decisions that substantially affect their lives.

ARTICLE 2 EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

1. The protections of this Declaration apply to every dog, irrespective of breed, size, colour, sex, age, ancestry, disability, health, temperament, origin, ownership status, or economic value.
2. No dog shall be subjected to unnecessary suffering or denied essential care on the basis of these characteristics.
3. Where differences in age, health, disability, behaviour, or circumstance require different forms of care, appropriate and proportionate measures shall be taken to meet each dog's needs.
4. Breed-specific characteristics shall not substitute for an individualized assessment of a dog's health, behaviour, circumstances, and welfare.

ARTICLE 3 THE RIGHT TO LIFE AND PROTECTION FROM ARBITRARY KILLING

1. Every dog shall be protected against unlawful killing and killing carried out for reasons incompatible with humane treatment.
2. Euthanasia, where necessary, shall be undertaken by a qualified professional or other person legally authorized and appropriately competent, in accordance with applicable law and humane veterinary standards.
3. Decisions concerning euthanasia shall prioritize the dog's welfare, including the relief of otherwise unmanageable suffering, and shall not be based solely on convenience, age, disability, or economic value.
4. Public authorities shall establish safeguards against cruel killing and ensure that any lawful exceptions are clearly defined, necessary, proportionate, and subject to appropriate oversight.

ARTICLE 4 FREEDOM FROM CRUELTY AND UNNECESSARY SUFFERING

1. Every dog has the right to protection from torture, deliberate abuse, violent punishment, and acts or omissions that cause unjustifiable suffering.

2. Physical punishment, intimidation, deprivation, and training methods that cause significant pain, fear, or distress shall be prevented through appropriate welfare standards and legal protections.
3. No dog shall be forced to participate in animal fighting, abusive entertainment, or other activities involving cruelty or substantial avoidable suffering.
4. Individuals and institutions responsible for dogs shall take reasonable measures to prevent injury, illness, fear, distress, and other foreseeable harms.

CHAPTER II**PHYSICAL HEALTH AND ESSENTIAL NEEDS**

ARTICLE 5 THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE NUTRITION AND CLEAN WATER

1. Every dog shall have regular access to clean drinking water and sufficient, nutritionally appropriate food.
2. Feeding practices shall account for a dog's age, size, health, activity, and individual needs.
3. Deliberate starvation, prolonged deprivation of water, and feeding practices that cause preventable suffering shall be prohibited.
4. Authorities shall promote accessible guidance on canine nutrition and establish appropriate standards for commercial breeding, boarding, shelters, and other facilities responsible for dogs.

ARTICLE 6 THE RIGHT TO SHELTER, COMFORT, AND REST

1. Every dog shall have access to safe, clean, and suitable shelter that protects it from extreme temperatures, precipitation, hazardous conditions, and other environmental threats.
2. Dogs shall be provided with adequate space, comfortable resting areas, appropriate sanitation, and opportunities for uninterrupted rest.
3. Confinement shall not be so restrictive, prolonged, or unsuitable as to compromise a dog's physical health or psychological welfare.
4. Tethering, kennelling, and other forms of restraint shall be subject to safeguards concerning duration, equipment, supervision, movement, and environmental conditions.
5. Appropriate emergency arrangements shall be established for dogs affected by disasters, extreme weather, displacement, and other crises.

ARTICLE 7 THE RIGHT TO VETERINARY CARE

1. Every dog shall receive reasonable and appropriate veterinary care to prevent, diagnose, and treat illness, injury, pain, and other conditions affecting welfare.
2. Responsible guardians and institutions shall take reasonable steps to obtain timely professional assistance when a dog is injured, seriously ill, or experiencing significant distress.

3. Preventive care, including vaccination, parasite control, dental care, and reproductive health management, shall be provided according to individual needs and recognized veterinary guidance.
4. Pain management and humane treatment shall form an integral part of veterinary care.
5. Governments and communities should promote affordable access to veterinary services, particularly for vulnerable households and dogs without stable guardians.
6. Nothing in this Article shall prevent necessary emergency treatment, humane population management, or proportionate public-health measures consistent with applicable law and veterinary evidence.

ARTICLE 8 THE RIGHT TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

1. Every dog shall have regular opportunities for physical activity, exploration, and movement appropriate to its age, health, abilities, and individual needs.
2. Exercise and access to outdoor environments shall be provided in ways that account for safety, weather, disability, and local conditions.
3. Prolonged confinement without adequate opportunities for movement and stimulation shall be prevented.
4. Restrictions necessary to protect the dog, other animals, people, or the environment shall be proportionate, humane, and no more restrictive than reasonably necessary.

ARTICLE 9 THE RIGHT TO PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

1. Every dog shall receive care that recognizes its capacity to experience fear, distress, comfort, pleasure, and social attachment.
2. Dogs shall be protected from prolonged isolation, chronic fear, excessive stress, and avoidable exposure to conditions that undermine their psychological welfare.
3. Care practices shall take account of individual behavioural needs and the importance of predictable, safe environments.
4. Training and behaviour modification shall prioritize humane, evidence-informed methods that support learning and minimize fear and distress.
5. Dogs exhibiting behavioural difficulties shall, where reasonably possible, receive appropriate assessment and support rather than automatic abandonment or punishment.

ARTICLE 10 THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS NATURAL BEHAVIOURS

1. Every dog shall have reasonable opportunities to engage in species-typical behaviours, including sniffing, exploring, playing, resting, chewing appropriate objects, and social interaction.
2. Dogs shall be provided with suitable environmental enrichment and mental stimulation.
3. Opportunities for interaction with other dogs or animals shall be based on individual temperament, health, socialization, and safety.

4. Activities, working conditions, and training regimes shall not systematically prevent essential behaviours or impose demands incompatible with a dog's welfare.

CHAPTER III**RELATIONSHIPS, PROTECTION, AND
RESPONSIBILITY**

ARTICLE 11 THE RIGHT TO HUMANE GUARDIANSHIP

1. Dogs shall be cared for by responsible persons or institutions capable of meeting their essential needs.
2. Guardianship shall entail duties of protection, nutrition, shelter, veterinary attention, humane handling, and appropriate supervision.
3. Dogs shall not be treated merely as objects of entertainment, status, profit, or convenience.
4. Legal systems should recognize that, although domestic dogs may be subject to ownership and guardianship laws, their status as sentient beings warrants protections beyond those afforded to ordinary inanimate property.
5. Guardians shall make decisions with due regard for a dog's health, welfare, established relationships, and long-term interests.

ARTICLE 12 THE RIGHT TO SOCIAL CONNECTION AND EMOTIONAL SECURITY

1. Dogs shall have reasonable opportunities to develop and maintain safe, positive relationships with people and, where appropriate, other animals.
2. A dog's established social bonds and emotional needs shall be considered in decisions concerning relocation, adoption, rehoming, and institutional care.
3. Separation from a familiar guardian or companion shall be avoided where practicable when it would cause significant and preventable distress, unless separation is necessary for protection, treatment, or another legitimate welfare purpose.
4. Dogs shall not be subjected to neglectful isolation or deprived of meaningful human interaction for prolonged periods.

ARTICLE 13 PROTECTION FROM ABANDONMENT

1. Abandonment that exposes a dog to danger, deprivation, or avoidable suffering shall be prohibited.
2. Guardians who can no longer care for a dog shall take reasonable steps to arrange safe transfer of care through a suitable person, animal welfare organization, shelter, or other lawful service.
3. Governments and communities should support accessible rehoming services, temporary fostering, pet-retention assistance, and other measures that prevent avoidable surrender and homelessness.

4. Dogs shall not be abandoned because of age, illness, disability, behavioural challenges, or changes in a guardian's circumstances when humane alternatives are reasonably available.

ARTICLE 14 THE RIGHT TO RESCUE, REHABILITATION, AND REHOMING

1. Dogs found abandoned, lost, neglected, or in danger shall be afforded appropriate protection and humane assistance.
2. Rescue and shelter organizations shall provide adequate food, water, shelter, sanitation, veterinary attention, and opportunities for behavioural and social enrichment.
3. Decisions concerning rehabilitation, placement, and adoption shall prioritize welfare, compatibility, safety, and the dog's individual needs.
4. Dogs shall not be subjected to indefinite institutional confinement without periodic review of their welfare and prospects for suitable placement.
5. Euthanasia shall not be used as a substitute for reasonable efforts to prevent overcrowding, improve placement, provide treatment, or develop humane population-management strategies.
6. Humane euthanasia may be justified where severe suffering cannot reasonably be relieved or where a properly supported assessment establishes circumstances in which no safe and humane alternative is feasible, subject to applicable law and professional standards.

ARTICLE 15 SPECIAL PROTECTION FOR VULNERABLE DOGS

1. Puppies, pregnant and nursing dogs, elderly dogs, dogs with disabilities, and dogs suffering from illness or injury shall receive care appropriate to their particular vulnerabilities.
2. Dogs with behavioural or psychological needs shall be treated with patience and supported through appropriate assessment, training, and treatment.
3. No dog shall be denied humane care solely because its needs require additional time, resources, or accommodation.
4. Guardians, breeders, shelters, veterinary professionals, and public authorities shall take reasonable measures to prevent avoidable suffering among vulnerable dogs.

CHAPTER IV

BREEDING, COMMERCE, WORK, AND PUBLIC LIFE

ARTICLE 16 PROTECTION FROM ABUSIVE BREEDING PRACTICES

1. Dog breeding shall be conducted with primary regard for the health, welfare, and behavioural needs of the dogs involved.

2. Breeding practices that predictably produce severe inherited disease, structural impairment, or substantial avoidable suffering shall be discouraged and, where warranted, restricted or prohibited by law.
3. Breeding dogs shall receive appropriate veterinary care, suitable living conditions, adequate rest, and protection from repeated pregnancies that compromise their welfare.
4. Puppies shall be raised in conditions that support appropriate health, socialization, and development.
5. Breeders shall maintain accurate records and provide prospective guardians with relevant information concerning health, ancestry where known, care requirements, and foreseeable risks.
6. Commercial incentives shall not override the welfare of breeding dogs or their offspring.

ARTICLE 17 PROTECTION IN TRADE, TRANSPORT, AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

1. The sale, purchase, transport, boarding, exhibition, and commercial use of dogs shall be subject to standards that protect health and welfare.
2. Dogs shall not be transported in conditions that expose them to avoidable injury, extreme temperatures, dehydration, severe stress, or prolonged deprivation of essential needs.
3. Commercial operators shall provide appropriate facilities, trained personnel, veterinary arrangements, and traceable records.
4. Misrepresentation, unlawful trafficking, and commercial practices involving cruelty or serious neglect shall be subject to effective prevention and enforcement.
5. Governments should cooperate across borders to combat illegal trade and improve the traceability and welfare of dogs in commercial supply chains.

ARTICLE 18 PROTECTION OF WORKING, SERVICE, AND ASSISTANCE DOGS

1. Dogs employed in assistance, rescue, detection, security, herding, therapy, or other working roles shall enjoy all the protections of this Declaration.
2. Working duties shall be appropriate to the dog's health, abilities, training, and welfare.
3. Adequate rest, hydration, nutrition, veterinary care, safe equipment, and protection from excessive workloads shall be ensured.
4. Training and deployment shall use humane methods and avoid unnecessary pain, fear, or distress.
5. Dogs shall be retired from work when continued duties would materially compromise their welfare.
6. Appropriate retirement arrangements should provide for continued care, suitable rehoming, or other humane long-term protection.

ARTICLE 19 RESPONSIBLE PUBLIC SAFETY AND COEXISTENCE

1. Protecting dogs shall be consistent with protecting human safety, the welfare of other animals, public health, and ecological integrity.

2. Dogs shall be managed responsibly through appropriate supervision, identification, training, containment, and veterinary care.
3. Public authorities shall respond to genuine risks using evidence-informed, individualized, and proportionate measures.
4. Restrictions or interventions shall take account of the actual circumstances and behaviour of the dog, the seriousness of the risk, and feasible alternatives.
5. Population-control policies shall prioritize humane, sustainable approaches, including responsible guardianship, sterilization where appropriate, accessible veterinary services, and prevention of abandonment.
6. Indiscriminate killing or other unnecessarily cruel population-control practices shall not be accepted as substitutes for effective, humane public policy.

ARTICLE 20 IDENTIFICATION, TRACEABILITY, AND LOST DOGS

1. Governments should establish accessible and reliable systems for identifying and reuniting lost dogs with their guardians.
2. Identification requirements, including microchipping or registration where adopted, shall be implemented with appropriate safeguards, accessibility, and respect for applicable privacy law.
3. Authorities and shelters shall take reasonable steps to locate guardians before permanently transferring or disposing of a found dog, subject to lawful emergency and welfare exceptions.
4. Records and identification systems should support the prevention of theft, abandonment, illegal trade, and irresponsible breeding.

CHAPTER V

RIGHTS IN EMERGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS

ARTICLE 21 PROTECTION DURING DISASTERS AND EMERGENCIES

1. Dogs affected by fires, floods, storms, conflicts, evacuations, and other emergencies shall be included in appropriate preparedness and response planning.
2. Emergency arrangements should address evacuation, temporary shelter, food, water, veterinary care, identification, and reunification.
3. Humanitarian responses should, where reasonably practicable, accommodate the safe preservation of human-animal bonds.
4. Emergency conditions shall not justify avoidable cruelty or the abandonment of reasonable welfare safeguards.

ARTICLE 22 STANDARDS FOR SHELTERS AND INSTITUTIONAL CARE

1. Shelters, boarding facilities, breeding establishments, veterinary facilities, and other institutions responsible for dogs shall operate according to appropriate welfare standards.
2. Such institutions shall maintain suitable accommodation, sanitation, ventilation, nutrition, supervision, veterinary arrangements, and behavioural enrichment.
3. Overcrowding and resource shortages shall be addressed through preventive planning, responsible intake practices, partnerships, and public support.
4. Institutions shall maintain accurate records of admissions, health, treatment, transfers, and outcomes as required by law.
5. Appropriate inspection, reporting, and complaint procedures shall support accountability and the early identification of welfare failures.

ARTICLE 23 PROTECTION IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

1. Dogs shall be protected from unnecessary or unjustifiable suffering in scientific research, testing, and educational activities.
2. Where dogs are used in legally authorized research, institutions shall comply with applicable ethical review, veterinary oversight, and animal welfare requirements.
3. Scientifically valid alternatives that avoid or replace the use of dogs shall be pursued wherever reasonably available.
4. Any permitted use shall apply principles of replacement, reduction, and refinement,¹ with particular attention to minimizing pain, distress, and lasting harm.
5. Educational activities involving dogs shall prioritize humane handling, safety, and the dog's welfare.

CHAPTER VI**HUMAN DUTIES AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY**

ARTICLE 24 THE DUTIES OF INDIVIDUALS AND GUARDIANS

1. Every person responsible for a dog has a duty to act in its best interests and meet its essential needs.
2. Prospective guardians should consider their ability to provide appropriate care throughout the dog's expected lifetime.
3. Guardians shall take reasonable precautions to prevent foreseeable harm to their dogs, other animals, and people.
4. Individuals who witness suspected cruelty or serious neglect should be able to report their concerns through accessible and appropriate channels.

5. Communities shall promote responsible guardianship through education, practical assistance, and respect for the welfare of dogs.

ARTICLE 25 THE DUTIES OF GOVERNMENTS AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

1. Governments should recognize dogs as sentient beings in legislation and public policy, consistent with their constitutional and legal systems.
2. States should establish or strengthen laws addressing cruelty, neglect, abandonment, irresponsible breeding, unlawful trade, and other serious threats to canine welfare.
3. Public authorities should provide appropriate powers, resources, training, and oversight for the enforcement of animal welfare laws.
4. Laws should include proportionate penalties, effective investigation procedures, and appropriate safeguards for the removal and protection of dogs in dangerous circumstances.
5. Governments should support accessible veterinary services, humane shelters, responsible population management, and public education.
6. Animal welfare policies should be informed by scientific evidence, veterinary expertise, practical experience, and meaningful consultation with affected communities.

ARTICLE 26 EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

1. Education about canine welfare, behaviour, and responsible guardianship should be encouraged at all appropriate levels.
2. Public information should address humane handling, dog bite prevention, safe interactions, health care, adoption, breeding, and the prevention of abandonment.
3. Veterinary professionals, educators, researchers, animal welfare organizations, and community groups should be encouraged to collaborate in improving standards of care.
4. Public campaigns should promote compassion without encouraging unsafe interactions or disregarding legitimate human and environmental concerns.

ARTICLE 27 PARTICIPATION, ADVOCACY, AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

1. Individuals and organizations should be free, subject to generally applicable law, to advocate for improved canine welfare and stronger legal protections.
2. Governments should provide accessible mechanisms for reporting suspected cruelty and institutional failures.
3. Good-faith reporting of animal welfare concerns should receive appropriate legal protection against retaliation, consistent with due process and applicable law.
4. Public authorities should encourage responsible civic participation in the development, monitoring, and evaluation of animal welfare policies.

ARTICLE 28 ENFORCEMENT AND ACCESS TO REMEDIES

1. The rights articulated in this Declaration should be translated into clear legal duties wherever they are incorporated into domestic law.
2. Legal frameworks should provide effective mechanisms for investigation, intervention, veterinary assessment, protective custody where lawful, and appropriate judicial or administrative review.
3. Enforcement decisions should be timely, evidence-based, proportionate, and attentive to the welfare of the dog concerned.
4. Guardians and institutions should have access to fair procedures when enforcement action is taken, without compromising urgent measures necessary to protect an animal from imminent harm.
5. Governments should collect and publish appropriate data on cruelty reports, enforcement actions, shelter outcomes, and other indicators of canine welfare, subject to privacy and other applicable legal safeguards.

CHAPTER VII**IMPLEMENTATION AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION****ARTICLE 29 NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION**

1. States are encouraged to review existing legislation and policies against the principles set out in this Declaration.
2. Governments should establish measurable priorities, assign institutional responsibilities, and allocate reasonable resources for implementation.
3. National and local authorities should cooperate with veterinary bodies, animal welfare organizations, researchers, and communities to develop practical standards.
4. Implementation should account for local conditions and available resources while maintaining the fundamental principle that avoidable cruelty and serious neglect must be prevented.
5. Where legal protections are inadequate, governments should pursue progressive reform through legislation, regulation, judicial development where appropriate, and public policy.

ARTICLE 30 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

1. States and international organizations should cooperate to address cross-border trafficking, unlawful trade, disease risks, disaster response, and other challenges affecting dogs.
2. Governments should exchange scientific knowledge, effective regulatory practices, and humane approaches to canine population management.

3. International cooperation should support capacity-building, veterinary education, shelter development, and assistance to communities with limited animal welfare resources.
4. International standards should be developed in consultation with relevant scientific, veterinary, legal, and animal welfare experts.

ARTICLE 31 SCIENTIFIC REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

1. Canine welfare standards should be informed by the best available scientific evidence concerning sentience, health, behaviour, cognition, and environmental needs.
2. Governments and relevant institutions should periodically review policies in light of new evidence and practical experience.
3. Research intended to improve canine welfare should be encouraged, provided it is conducted ethically and respects applicable protections.
4. Uncertainty concerning particular welfare questions should invite careful evaluation and proportionate precaution, rather than an assumption that suffering is unimportant.

ARTICLE 32 INTERPRETATION AND SAFEGUARDS

1. This Declaration shall be interpreted in a manner that promotes the dignity, health, safety, and welfare of dogs.
2. Nothing in this Declaration shall require conduct that violates legitimate public safety obligations, applicable public health protections, or the welfare of other animals.
3. Any limitation on a dog's freedom or other welfare interest shall be justified by a legitimate purpose, supported by relevant evidence where practicable, and proportionate to the circumstances.
4. Where several reasonable courses of action are available, preference should be given to the course that best protects the dog's welfare while respecting the legitimate interests of others.
5. Nothing in this Declaration shall be interpreted to diminish protections already afforded to dogs under applicable law.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF DOGS

FINAL PROCLAMATION

We affirm that the measure of a humane society lies, in part, in how it treats those living beings that depend upon its care and protection.

Dogs have accompanied humanity through generations of work, companionship, service, and shared life. Their dependence upon human decisions creates responsibilities that cannot be discharged through affection alone, but require knowledge, consistent care, accountable institutions, and enforceable protections.

We therefore call upon individuals, families, communities, educational institutions, veterinary professionals, businesses, animal welfare organizations, and governments to uphold the principles of this Declaration.

Let cruelty be challenged wherever it occurs.

Let neglect be met with effective prevention and intervention.

Let laws reflect the realities of animal sentience and welfare.

Let scientific knowledge guide our practices, and compassion inform our decisions.

Let every dog, regardless of circumstance, be afforded the opportunity to live with safety, humane care, and dignity.

Adopted as a proposed universal ethical charter for the protection and welfare of dogs,
and offered as a foundation for public commitment, legal reform, and international
cooperation.

ANNEX

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

1 PURPOSE AND LEGAL STATUS

This Declaration is proposed as a universal ethical and policy framework. It is not, by itself, a legally binding international treaty. Its provisions would acquire legal force only through relevant legislation, regulations, treaties, or other recognized legal instruments.

Its implementation should pursue two complementary objectives:

- ◆ **Ethical adoption:** establish a widely shared standard of respect, compassion, and responsibility toward dogs.
- ◆ **Legal implementation:** translate the principles into enforceable duties, institutional responsibilities, protections, and remedies.

2 FIVE IMPLEMENTATION PILLARS

Pillar I LEGAL RECOGNITION AND PROTECTION

Governments should review and, where necessary, reform laws concerning animal cruelty, neglect, abandonment, breeding, transport, trade, veterinary care, and shelter standards.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ◆ Recognize canine sentience in appropriate legislation.
- ◆ Define prohibited conduct and minimum standards of care.
- ◆ Establish proportionate penalties and procedures for protecting dogs at risk.
- ◆ Provide effective complaint, investigation, and review mechanisms.
- ◆ Clarify the duties of guardians, breeders, commercial operators, and public institutions.

Pillar II PREVENTION AND ACCESSIBLE CARE

Prevention is generally preferable to intervention after harm has occurred.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ◆ Expand access to affordable veterinary care.
- ◆ Promote responsible breeding and adoption.
- ◆ Support identification, reunification, and humane population management.
- ◆ Develop pet-retention assistance for guardians facing financial or housing hardship.
- ◆ Establish disaster preparedness and emergency shelter arrangements.

Pillar III EDUCATION AND CULTURAL CHANGE

Education should combine compassion with evidence-based information about canine needs and behaviour.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ◆ Integrate age-appropriate animal welfare education into school and community programmes.
- ◆ Provide practical guidance on nutrition, exercise, health, training, and safe interactions.
- ◆ Train animal care professionals and enforcement personnel.
- ◆ Promote public awareness of responsible guardianship and the prevention of abandonment.

Pillar IV INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Institutions entrusted with dogs must demonstrate that they meet recognized welfare standards.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ◆ Establish licensing or registration systems where appropriate.
- ◆ Conduct risk-based inspections of regulated facilities.
- ◆ Maintain reliable records of care, treatment, transfers, and outcomes.
- ◆ Provide accessible reporting channels for suspected violations.
- ◆ Publish aggregate performance information and evaluate enforcement effectiveness.

Pillar V RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Policies should evolve with scientific understanding and practical experience.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ◆ Support research into canine health, behaviour, welfare, and humane care.
- ◆ Share effective laws, training resources, and regulatory practices across jurisdictions.
- ◆ Cooperate against unlawful trafficking and cross-border exploitation.
- ◆ Assist regions with limited veterinary and animal welfare infrastructure.
- ◆ Review standards periodically in consultation with relevant experts and communities.

3 SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION TIMETABLE

PHASE	INDICATIVE PERIOD	MAIN OBJECTIVE
PHASE 1	First 12 months	Build support, assess existing protections, consult stakeholders, and establish baseline data
PHASE 2	Years 1–3	Introduce priority legal reforms, strengthen care systems, and launch education programmes

PHASE	INDICATIVE PERIOD	MAIN OBJECTIVE
PHASE 3	Years 3–5	Expand enforcement capacity, improve institutional accountability, and evaluate outcomes
PHASE 4	Years 5 and beyond	Review evidence, address remaining gaps, and strengthen international cooperation

These periods are illustrative planning targets, not established legal deadlines. Governments may adjust them according to their circumstances and responsibilities.

4 PROPOSED INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

Implementation should be evaluated through transparent measures rather than declarations of intent alone.

AREA	EXAMPLE INDICATOR
LEGAL PROTECTION	Coverage and enforcement of animal welfare legislation
CRUELTY PREVENTION	Rates and outcomes of substantiated cruelty and neglect cases
VETERINARY ACCESS	Availability and affordability of essential veterinary services
RESPONSIBLE GUARDIANSHIP	Rates of identification, reunification, and responsible adoption
SHELTER WELFARE	Health outcomes, length of stay, overcrowding, and welfare assessments
BREEDING STANDARDS	Compliance with applicable licensing and health requirements
PUBLIC EDUCATION	Reach and measured effectiveness of welfare education
EMERGENCY READINESS	Inclusion of dogs in disaster preparedness and response plans
ACCOUNTABILITY	Timeliness of investigations and completion of corrective actions

Indicators should be interpreted carefully. For example, an increase in cruelty reports may reflect improved public awareness and reporting access rather than an actual increase in cruelty. Baseline data, consistent definitions, and independent evaluation are therefore important.

5 GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Implementation should involve cooperation among:

- ◆ National, regional, and local governments.
- ◆ Veterinary and animal health authorities.
- ◆ Animal welfare and rescue organizations.
- ◆ Scientific and academic institutions.
- ◆ Responsible breeders and commercial operators.
- ◆ Dog guardians and members of the public.
- ◆ Legal professionals and relevant international organizations.

Each participating jurisdiction should designate appropriate coordinating bodies, establish public reporting arrangements, and periodically review progress.

6 PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement should be guided by five standards:

1. **Prevention:** intervene early when practical measures can prevent suffering.
2. **Proportionality:** match interventions to the severity, urgency, and evidence of the problem.
3. **Consistency:** apply clear standards without arbitrary discrimination.
4. **Accountability:** document decisions and provide appropriate oversight and review.
5. **Welfare first:** prioritize the dog's immediate safety and longer-term well-being while respecting due process and public safety.

7 ADOPTION AND ENDORSEMENT

Organizations, communities, institutions, and individuals may endorse this Declaration as a statement of commitment. Governments may use it as a reference when reviewing legislation and policy.

An endorsement should ideally identify:

- ◆ The endorsing organization or institution.
- ◆ The date of endorsement.
- ◆ The actions the endorser intends to undertake.
- ◆ The person or body responsible for implementation.
- ◆ The process for reviewing progress.

Endorsement should not be represented as creating legal obligations where none exist under applicable law.

CLOSING COMMITMENT

A universal declaration becomes meaningful through action. Its success should be measured not only by the number of signatures it receives, but by **reductions in preventable suffering, improvements in canine welfare, stronger accountability**, and the development of societies in which dogs are treated as sentient beings deserving of protection and care.

FOR PUBLIC CIRCULATION

ADOPTION PACKAGE AND LEGAL STATUS

ADOPTION PACKAGE

To prepare this charter for public circulation, an adoption package should contain:

- ◆ A concise, public-facing declaration of principles.
- ◆ The full 32-article charter and implementation framework.
- ◆ A model resolution that organizations, municipalities, and other institutions can formally adopt.
- ◆ A signature and endorsement page.
- ◆ A legal review guide explaining how jurisdictions can translate the principles into enforceable law.

NOTE ON LEGAL STATUS

One important distinction should remain clear throughout: this is a proposed declaration, not an existing United Nations instrument or a statement of currently enforceable universal legal rights.² Its purpose is to provide a principled, evidence-informed foundation for advocacy, institutional commitments, and future legal reform.

NOTES

1. The principles of replacement, reduction, and refinement (the “3Rs”) were introduced by W. M. S. Russell and R. L. Burch in *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique* (London: Methuen, 1959) and are now widely accepted internationally as a framework for ethical decision-making on the use of animals in research and teaching.

2. Earlier civil-society instruments illustrate this distinction. The Universal Declaration of Animal Rights was proclaimed by the International League of Animal Rights and affiliated leagues at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 15 October 1978, and a revised text was later submitted to UNESCO; it has never been formally adopted by UNESCO or the United Nations. A separate proposal, the Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare, has been promoted by animal welfare organizations as a prospective intergovernmental agreement.

MARIE SESHAT LANDRY

CEO & Founder, Landry Industries Inc. · Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada

LandryIndustries.ca · MarieLandrySpyShop.com · ORCID 0009-0008-5027-3337

Universal Declaration of the Rights of Dogs — Proposed Text, Version 1.0 · October 2026