



ANIMAL RIGHTS EXTREMISTS

Background

- Animal rights extremists believe all animals—human and non-human—have equal rights of life and liberty and are willing to inflict economic damage on individuals or groups to advance this ideology.
- The Animal Liberation Front (ALF) is one of the most active groups in the animal rights movement. It was formed overseas in 1976 as a splinter group of the UK-based Band of Mercy.
- Animal rights extremists inflict economic damage on individuals or businesses they assess are exploiting or abusing animals. A small percentage of extremists condone violence, including vandalism, threats, harassment, arson, and bombings, to achieve their goals.
- Animal rights extremist groups are largely decentralized. For example, ALF has no formal membership and relies on like-minded individuals who claim “direct actions” on the group’s behalf.



Animal rights extremists graffiti

Threat to New Jersey: Low

Animal rights extremists in New Jersey present a low threat to the State, as there have been no reported incidents since 2006, when key members of Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) were convicted and received prison sentences of four to six years for inciting attacks on tertiary targets associated with Huntingdon Life Sciences.

- Animal rights extremists successfully urged lawmakers to sponsor bills preventing animal cruelty, eliminating the need for violence or harassment, largely achieving their objectives. In August 2013, Governor Chris Christie signed “Patrick’s Law” to increase penalties for animal abuse. The Pet Purchase Protection Act was also signed in February 2015 to prevent puppy mills—establishments that breed dogs, typically under inhumane conditions.
- Encouraged by animal rights groups, Governor Christie signed a bill in January 2018 shifting authority for investigating animal cruelty offenses in the State from the New Jersey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to task forces within each of the 21 county prosecutors’ offices. According to the bill (S3558), counties and municipal humane law enforcement officers would be appointed in each community.
- In November 2019, President Donald Trump signed into law the Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture (PACT) Act, which made several kinds of animal cruelty a federal felony. Under the PACT Act, a person can be prosecuted for crushing, burning, drowning, suffocating, or impaling animals or sexually exploiting them. Those convicted face federal felony charges, fines, and up to seven years in prison.



President Donald Trump signs the Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act on November 25, 2019.

New Jersey Nexus

- In 2006, six members of SHAC were convicted of “animal enterprise terrorism” under the Animal Enterprise Protection Act (AEPA). Following these convictions, Congress expanded AEPA into the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, successfully deterring animal rights extremists nationwide from targeting corporations for fear of being branded as domestic terrorists.
- Animal rights extremists have refocused their efforts on education and non-violent action, protesting animal testing at university laboratories and pharmaceutical companies. For example, Hugs for Puppies—a Philadelphia-based extremist group previously associated with SHAC—changed its name to the Humane League. The group now focuses on animal advocacy through public education and corporate campaigns.



Animal Liberation Front propaganda

Additional Resources

[2020 Terrorism Threat Assessment](#)