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VVMA Position Statement

Compensatory Value for Animals Beyond Their Property Value

The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association recognizes and supports the long-standing legal classification of animals as property. However, the VVMA recognizes that, in some lawsuits, economic compensation may exceed an animal's fair market value, which is the traditional measure of damages for property, in order for the owner to be made economically whole.

In determining the economic loss associated with an animal, courts should consider, when appropriate, the purchase price, age and health of the animal, breeding status, pedigree, special training, and any particular economic utility the animal has provided to the owner. It may also be appropriate to award reasonable and necessary veterinary expenses for the care of the animal's injury or sickness that was caused by the defendant during the incident in question.

Any extension of available remedies beyond economic damages would be inappropriate and ultimately harm animals by reducing the availability of affordable veterinary care services. Therefore, the VVMA opposes the potential recovery of non-economic damages.

The VVMA acknowledges the awarding of punitive damages when warranted in accordance with the State of Vermont's punitive damage law.

Adopted by the Executive Board on November 11, 2020