

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Essex County Launches Animal Abuse Hotline

Elizabethtown, NY – January 5, 2018 – Essex County District Attorney Kristy Sprague has announced the launch of a new Essex County animal cruelty hotline for the public to report cases of suspected animal cruelty or neglect. According to Sprague, this includes abuse to any animal – pets, wildlife, and farm animals, all of which are protected under New York State law. “Law enforcement officers depend on tips from neighbors, community members, and passersby to intervene before it’s too late,” said Sprague. “Animals can’t advocate for themselves. We’re counting on the public to be their voice.” She urged county residents to call: 1-844-4RESQME or 1-844-473-7763, if they suspect an animal is in need and to widely share the hotline number on social media.

Sprague said that in addition to assault, animal cruelty includes failure to provide adequate shelter, water, food, or veterinary care. Essex County law also prohibits the long term chaining of a dog or confinement in small enclosures. All of these offenses, she said, can result in fines, forfeiture of the animal, and imprisonment.

The hotline connects the caller to county Emergency Response dispatchers, who will pass the information along to law enforcement – local police departments, the Sheriff’s Office, or the New York State Police. She urges people to call the hotline rather than report the problem to town officials or the local dog control officer. “Animal abuse and neglect are crimes that my office takes seriously. By using the hotline, we can be certain these calls will be properly handled.”

Both Sprague and Essex County Sheriff Richard Cutting urge county residents to call the hotline if they see an animal that has been left outside in frigid temperatures. “We are receiving numerous reports that animals have been left outside in this extreme cold and have suffered from exposure,” said Cutting. “We need people to report these incidents through the hotline so deputies can investigate as soon as possible.” Sprague emphasized that a plastic igloo or uninsulated dog house is not a proper shelter in the winter, particularly when temperatures plunge. She urges anyone who cannot properly care for a pet to seek assistance from their local animal shelter – the North Country SPCA in Elizabethtown or Tri-Lakes Humane Society in Saranac Lake.

Putting in place an animal cruelty hotline is one of the recommendations made by the former Essex County Animal Cruelty Task Force, which was disbanded by the Essex County Board of Supervisors in 2016. Sprague said her office is continuing to implement the recommendations made by the Task Force to combat animal cruelty in Essex County. “Crimes against animals are closely linked to crimes against people,” she said. “Where you find one, you often find the other,” she said. “Addressing animal cruelty as early as possible can save lives.”

Contact: Kristy Sprague, Esq./ (518) 873-3335/ [KSprague@co.essex.ny.us](mailto:KSprague@co.essex.ny.us)

###