

# Hartford Courant

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## Animal abuse up 37% since 2023

State lawmakers seek crackdown and 'basic standards of decency'

By Christopher Keating  
Hartford Courant

With animal abuse cases up by 37% in Connecticut over the past two years, lawmakers are looking at potentially increasing the penalties in an attempt to reduce the abuse.

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal

is pushing for legislation on a bipartisan basis with Sen. John N. Kennedy, a conservative Republican from Louisiana, for an issue with impact nationwide.

"Here's a really startling statistic," Blumenthal told reporters Monday outside the Connecticut Humane Society in Newington. "Ten million animals die every year in the United States as a result" of abuse.

Blumenthal and James Bias, executive director of the humane society, both said the problem extends beyond animals.

"It is important to note that there is a link — and it has been established — between those who abuse animals who also go on to abuse not only more animals, but people within their family and those around them," Bias said.

Overall, an estimated 70% of animal abusers commit domestic abuse, Blumenthal said.

"The way we treat animals is a measure of who we are and our basic humanity," Blumenthal said. "But it is also a sign of cruelty and abuse of others in our families. That's why we need tougher,

stronger enforcement of the existing laws, as well as the penalties that really exact a measure of sacrifice from abusers. ... We want to crack down on shameful, inhumane breeders, dealers, researchers, as well as individual pet owners who violate basic standards of decency."

The federal crackdown would include "the ability to seek license suspensions and revocations, civil penalties, and forfeiture authority to seize and remove animals experiencing harmful treatment," according to details on the bill.

### Possible reasons

One aspect of abuse is failing to feed an animal properly, which can be related to tough economic times for some pet owners when the costs become unsustainable.

A large bag of quality dog food, for example, is now getting close to \$100, Bias said. As a result, the humane society has run a food pantry for retirees and those on fixed incomes, and the society maintains a building that is filled

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## Hartford has a new police chief

City council appoints James Rovella for 'trustworthy leadership'

By Justin Muszynski  
Hartford Courant

The Hartford City Council has confirmed the appointment of James Rovella as the city's next police chief more than a decade after he previously took the position and later moved on to ultimately serve as commissioner of the state department that oversees Connecticut State Police.

"Over the past five months, Interim Chief James Rovella has demonstrated the steady hand and trustworthy leadership our city needs during this critical time for public safety," Mayor Arunan Arulampalam said in an email correspondence on Tuesday.

"Chief Rovella's deep roots in Hartford, combined with his extensive experience and commitment to our community-first policing model and data-driven violence prevention strategies, leave him extremely qualified to lead the Hartford Police Department and to help us build a safer, stronger Hartford for all our residents."

Rovella's confirmation as chief comes after he went before the city's Committee of the Whole on Aug. 20, outlining his goals and taking questions on how he planned to run the department. Some of the priorities he discussed included recruitment and community engagement.

"So my task will be to, as I look forward to attrition, I have to match and be prepared for that attrition years down the road," Rovella said during the virtual meeting. "So I have to continue to hire folks."

He added that anticipated retirements would allow others within the department opportunities for

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The Donaghue, at 525 Main St. in Hartford. UConn's Hartford campus is using a portion of the studio apartments as dorm rooms for students. AARON FLAUM/HARTFORD COURANT

## City rolls out new college housing

By Kenneth R. Gosselin  
Hartford Courant

In applying to the University of Connecticut, Amy Casazola was pleased being selected for the downtown regional campus — her first choice — but she couldn't say the same about not getting into housing on the main campus in Storrs.

"I was a little upset that I didn't get to do housing in Storrs, but then they offered me housing (in Hartford), and I took it," Casazola said. "I was, like, afraid of missing out, but there's nothing to miss out on. There are so many things to do here."

Casazola, a first-year student from Newington, is among the first 38

It's a taste of what's to come with another planned for 2026

students — three of them residence hall assistants — to live in student housing near the Hartford campus on Front Street. Her comments came after ceremonies Tuesday marking the opening of a newly-converted apartment building on Main Street opposite city hall that is providing temporary student housing.

A permanent residence hall for up to 200 students is being constructed four blocks to the north on Pratt Street and is expected to open in the fall of 2026.

City and UConn officials said UConn students living in downtown

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## Israel targets Hamas leaders in Qatar

Officials reportedly survive; US says it warned Gulf nation

By Josef Federman and Jon Gambrell  
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Israel struck the headquarters of Hamas' political leadership in Qatar on Tuesday as the group's top figures gathered to consider a U.S. proposal for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. The strike on the territory of a U.S. ally marked a stunning escalation and risked upending talks aimed at winding down the war and freeing hostages.

The attack angered Qatar, an energy-rich Gulf nation hosting thousands of American troops that has served as a key mediator between Israel and Hamas throughout the 23-month-old war and even before. It condemned what it referred to as a "flagrant violation of all international laws and norms" as smoke rose over its capital, Doha.

The United States said Israel alerted it before the strike. But American officials sought to distance the U.S. from the attack. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters that Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff passed along a warning to the Qataris. She said President Donald Trump believes the Israeli strike

was an "unfortunate incident" that didn't advance peace in the region. She said Trump spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and "made his thoughts and concerns very clear."

Hamas said in a statement its top leaders survived the strike but that five lower-level members were killed, including the son of Khalil al-Hayya — Hamas' leader for Gaza and its top negotiator — and the head of al-Hayya's office. Hamas, which has sometimes only confirmed the assassination of its leaders months later, offered no immediate proof that al-Hayya and other senior figures had survived.

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Smoke rises from an explosion reportedly caused by an Israeli strike Tuesday on Hamas' political wing in Doha, Qatar. UGC

### Strokes can cause debilitating damage

Two UConn researchers have found a way to limit it. **CONNECTICUT, Page 3**

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