



**VOTERS FOR
ANIMAL RIGHTS**

786 Jefferson Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11221
vfar.org

2021 New York City Council Candidate Questionnaire

About Us

Launched in 2017, Voters For Animal Rights (VFAR) is a New York based 501c(4) grassroots multi-issue animal advocacy organization that is building political power for animals. In 2020, VFAR helped elect our former board member, Jabari Brisport, to the New York State Senate. In 2019, VFAR led the successful campaign to ban foie gras in NYC, to stop wild bird poaching and to establish an Office of Animal Welfare within the Mayor's Office. In 2017 we led the campaign to ban the use of wild animals in circuses in NYC. We look forward to working with you to win more victories for animals and make New York City a leader in compassionate public policy.

Our mission is to help elect candidates who support animal protection, lobby for stronger laws to stop animal cruelty, and hold elected officials accountable to humane voters. VFAR mobilizes public concern for animals through the political process. We know that animal protection is not only a moral issue but a bi-partisan political issue as well. Over 90% of Americans believe that animals need protection from abuse and exploitation. To that end, we organize humane voters to support candidates that care about animals. If you support animals, then we want to support you! There are over 60,000 humane voters throughout New York state, hundreds of which are volunteers for VFAR who are ready to knock on doors, make phone calls and get out the vote to elect people who will stand up for animals. We deliver the vote – for the animals and for you.

As an example, here is our [animal-friendly voter guide](#) from the 2020 NYS General Elections.

Endorsement Process

Candidates seeking VFAR's endorsement for the 2021 New York City Council primary elections are required to fill out this questionnaire, which will be posted on our website. Submit to w_oof@vfar.org by **November 27, 2020**. Please let us know if you need more time.

Questions

If you have any questions about the topics in our questionnaire, please don't hesitate to reach out to allie@vfar.org and david@vfar.org. We are happy to help you better understand animal protection policy, and we're happy to advise your campaign.

Candidate Contact Information & Campaign Information



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Email: [REDACTED]

Campaign Manager: **Leanna Ballester** Pronouns: **She/Her** Cell Phone: [REDACTED]

Candidate Name: **Brandon West** Pronouns: **He/Him** Cell Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

District #: **39th** Borough: **Brooklyn**

Neighborhoods In Your District: **Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, Columbia Waterfront, Gowanus, Park Slope, Windsor Terrace, Borough Park, and Kensington**

Party: **Democratic** Office Sought: **New York City Council**

Incumbent/Challenger/Open Seat: **Open Seat**

Name of Campaign Committee: **Friends of Brandon West for Council**

Campaign Field Office Address: **N/A**

Campaign Website: **westforcouncil.com**

Social Media Handles (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram): all three are **@brandonwestnyc**

Occupation or Employer: **Campaign Manager, Voting Rights & Democracy, Center for Popular Democracy**

Organizational Affiliations (if any) :

CWA- NewsGuild - 2.5 years (current co-chair of unit at Center for Popular Democracy)

New Kings Democrats - 6 years (2 years as VP of Policy, 2 years and President)

Citizens Union (2011-2015)

Participatory Budgeting Project (co-facilitator in 2012-2013)

Brooklyn Movement Center (1 year)

DSA Central Brooklyn (3 years)



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Endorsements (if any): **New York City Democratic Socialists of America**

Personal Initiatives

1. Do you feel that promoting the humane treatment of animals should be a priority for the New York City Council?

Yes, absolutely. As humans, we tend to prioritize our own welfare as being of the utmost importance, but the universe surely doesn't rank life this way. We depend on animals for our survival, many of us adopt domesticated animals to provide us with love and companionship, and yet we have so little concern for their well-being and their right to live safe, happy, healthy lives. We must condemn both the violence and oppression we inflict on each other, and what we do to other living creatures, especially those who have no ability to fight back. If we're going to remake this city into a more inclusive and compassionate place, we need to value a // life.

2. What achievements or advocacy for animals are you most proud of, e.g. supporting humane legislation, adopting a shelter pet, volunteering with an animal rescue organization, supporting any national or local animal protection orgs, living a plant-based (vegan or vegetarian) lifestyle, etc.? Did you grow up with or currently live with any companion animals?

While my housing situations as an adult hasn't allowed me to adopt any animals, as a child I had fish and even an ant farm, which gave me an appreciation and respect for the tiniest amongst us, observing how they live, what they need, how they are programmed to survive. My goal is to have a large professional formicarium in the future.

After college, I began a vegetarian diet at home, which I hope to expand to outside of the home as well. I wanted to reduce the amount of meat I consume both because of the cruelty of the meat industry, as well as because of the impact on climate change. These two issues are inextricably linked, and I believe, stem from the same value of respecting and caring for all living things, and understanding that we are all connected - what we do to animals and nature, we do to ourselves. It is hard to imagine that people who run slaughterhouses or factory farms are not changed by the impact of the daily cruelty they inflict on the animals they keep, in the same way that correctional officers are damaged by working in the prison system.

3. What animal issues will you prioritize and lead on as a member of the New York City Council? How would you work to empower the animal advocacy community to reach new success and growth into the 2022-2025 term, and ensure that New York is on the forefront of animal protection?



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VFAR's agenda includes creating a Department of Animal Protection within NYC Government. As a policy professional and an activist, this particular proposal feels critically important to help usher in a larger pro animal rights agenda. I would support this legislation, and further advocate for adequate funding and enforcement so that the institution has actual power and is not just symbolic. With that foundation, I can foresee a path to achieving a number of long overdue and critical changes to protect and respect the rights of animals, such as banning puppy mills and the sale of fur within the city.

4. Do you have, or would you consider developing, a platform on animal protection issues and posting the information onto your campaign website to outline your positions? If you receive an endorsement from VFAR, will you promote our endorsement on your website and social media pages?

I don't currently have a platform, but I would want to develop one. Ideally, I and my team would want to partner directly with VFAR and other groups you all would recommend to develop that platform together. That would ensure that we are targeting the right issues, proposing the right solutions, and would allow for the relationship building that will be so critical to working together in the future.

5. Will you commit to designating a member of your staff to handle animal issues?

Yes. Given the neglect of animal rights at the city and state level, it makes sense to have a designated staffer who will know the issues and be prepared to advocate passionately for them.

6. Do you believe that the pursuit of animal rights is part of a broader vision of social justice? Please explain your answer.

Yes. I addressed this in part in the previous question, but I absolutely believe the rights of animals are part and parcel of a just and compassionate world. Peter Singer writes, "What we must do is bring nonhuman animals within our sphere of moral concern and cease to treat their lives as expendable for whatever trivial purposes we may have." I believe this is absolutely necessary, not only to reduce and eventually eliminate the unnecessary cruelty we inflict on non-human animals, but to restore our own humanity in the process. We know that animals experience physical and emotional pain. We know they mourn their dead and cry on their way to slaughter, but the vast majority of Americans remain completely indifferent to that suffering. Imagine if we treated every life as if it mattered. Would we still have kids in cages at the border? Would we still have thousands living on the street or packed into crowded and unsafe shelters? We are so far from that world that I can only speculate, but I have to believe that honoring the rights and lives of animals would transform human life as well, because it is a constant exercise in empathy and compassion, muscles that too few of us use.



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In our society so many of our systems are undergirded by cruelty and designed for the sole purpose of generating profit & pleasure for a select few. Whether that's the prison industrial complex, sweatshop labor, wildlife poaching, or factory farms, a society and life that is defined and dependent on cruelty will only ever be cruel. We have to transform these foundational systems and beliefs, including that animals are expendable and insignificant, to have any hope at creating a just world.

Positions on Legislation and Policy

1. New York City's Companion Animals

A. Increased Funding for ACC and Independent Animal Rescue Organizations

Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC) is a non-profit organization contracted with the New York City Department of Health to manage New York City's three full-service municipal animal shelters located in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island, as well as two admissions centers located in the Bronx and Queens. ACC is an open admission shelter required by law to accept every animal brought through its doors and cannot turn away any animal like most other shelters, whether arriving due to homelessness, family crisis, abuse, or abandonment. ACC relies on public funding for operational costs necessary to save and find homes for these animals in need, but resources are needed to ensure that these facilities always have sufficient capacity, staff and other resources to increase adoptions, perform spay and neuter operations, provide pet retention services and other efforts to ensure a successful and humane NYC shelter system.

Do you pledge to allocate funding to maintain ACC and other non-profit animal rescue organizations?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

The treatment of domestic animals is disgusting and unacceptable. We must ensure that shelters, particularly these open admission shelters, have the resources and support they need to care for these innocent creatures and to control the population so that more animals are not born into the world only to suffer themselves. Frankly that seems like the least we can do.



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Also note: The Official Campaign Cat of the West for Council Campaign, Harriet, came from the ACC on Linden Boulevard. She is a furry queen!

B. Trap Neuter and Release (TNR) of feral cats

Tens of thousands of stray and feral cats, collectively called community cats, live in the outdoor spaces of New York City. They live in groups called colonies, and they establish themselves near human activity — in backyards, around businesses, in parking lots, etc. — attracted by a food source such as trash or rodents. Community cats have no legal guardian, though many people care for them by feeding and sometimes providing outdoor shelter. These cats are not socialized to humans. They are timid and fearful around people and are not suited for adoption. Because most of these cats are not suited to living indoors, bringing them to a shelter is not the humane answer. Taking them to a shelter also doesn't solve the population problem — if cats are simply removed from an area, others will soon move in and breed. This is called the "Vacuum Effect."

The most humane and effective approach to managing the growing population of community cats is Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). In TNR, entire colonies of community cats are trapped, sterilized, vaccinated, ear tipped, and returned to their territory of origin. TNR halts reproduction and many of the nuisance behaviors associated with unneutered cats, such as yowling, fighting, and marking territory. The cats are healthier, free from the stresses of mating and motherhood. TNR also includes colony management to ensure the cats' well-being and their peaceful coexistence with the rest of the community. Community cat programs not only provide life-saving options for cats who might otherwise be euthanized when admitted to a shelter but also can stabilize, and even reduce over time, the population of community cat colonies. Such efforts require support and funding and rely on many thousands of volunteer hours and out-of-pocket expenses incurred by dedicated New Yorkers.

Do you pledge to support increasing funding to programs that support these community cat operations?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

If we are to improve and protect the lives of animals in our city, we need long term solutions. TNR is a straightforward way of ensuring that feral cats can live their lives in peace, as well as control the population. This is a policy that would benefit everyone and increased funding should absolutely be pursued. Additionally, the City should have and promote to the development community a service for TNR and relocation of cat colonies that are facing displacement by construction.

2. Pursuing a More Humane City: Education, Health Care, and Social Services



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A. Pet-Friendly Housing

As New York City continues to experience a housing affordability crisis with high displacement rates, housing must be accessible to people with companion animals. Keeping people and companion animals together reduces the burden on animal shelters and allowing New Yorkers to stay in their homes. This is a particularly significant concern for especially vulnerable populations such as low-income families, the elderly, and victims of domestic violence. Housing legislation and policy should expand affordable pet friendly housing options as well as the ability of those experiencing homelessness and victims of domestic violence to seek refuge in shelters with their pets.

Would you support and vote for legislation soon to be introduced (Brannan, Cabrera) which would preserve the right of individuals over the age of 62 to not be denied housing on the basis of having a companion animal?

YES / NO - YES

Additional comments:

Yes and it should be expanded to everyone, not just seniors. Domesticated animals cause no harm to homes. There can be no serious argument as to why they should not be allowed. In addition, many people have pets not only to give these precious animals a home, but to improve their own lives and seek companionship and comfort. Animals have proven to be therapeutic for everyone, from seniors, to veterans, to children. All people benefit from their love and their presence, and they in turn have the right to good homes. Denying people housing on this basis and potentially forcing them to have to give up a beloved pet (who will surely end up euthanized), is unnecessary and cruel.

B. Homeless Services Accommodations for Companion Animals

Currently, shelters provided by or under contract with the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) do not allow or accommodate pets. Individuals seeking shelter are forced to abandon their animals to be admitted, and thus, often choose to live on city streets. More info [h ere](#) and [h ere](#).

Would you support and vote for [Intro 1483](#) (Levin), which would require the DHS, in collaboration with the Department of Social Services, to develop a plan to accommodate pets of homeless individuals and families with the objective of providing pet-friendly shelters and identifying other temporary pet care arrangements that would allow homeless pet-owners to keep their companion animals?

YES / NO - YES



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Would you support and vote for [Intro 1484](#) (Levin), which would require DHS to report, on a monthly basis, information on the placement or disposition of companion animals that belong to people who enter homeless shelters?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

Again, this is a straightforward and humane policy. People are deeply attached to their pets (and vice versa), often seeing them as family members. In addition to the trauma of losing their homes, we should not be forcing them to give up their pets to an uncertain future. Evictions have begun in New York and our already swelling homeless population will tragically get even higher, which also means that the number of pets who suddenly find themselves in shelters will also go up. The animals will be terrified and confused, the shelters will be strained, and their owners will be devastated. These two bills, and perhaps strengthening the second so there is an easier way for folks to keep track of their pets, would be a service to New Yorkers human and non-humane, and may ultimately even save the city money as they will not have to euthanize or keep animals in shelters for long periods but can instead engage with animal rights groups to coordinate temporary housing and foster care.

C. Fulfilling New York's Humane Education Mandate

Section 809 of the New York State Education Law requires instruction in the "humane treatment and protection of animals ... in every elementary school under state control or supported wholly or partly by public money of the state." Although there is a penalty for non-compliance, the legislation has remained unenforced, and many educators and administrators are unaware of this statutory requirement. [More info](#).

Would you support and vote for [Intro 1465](#) (Dromm), which would require the Department of Education to report on humane animal treatment instruction in public elementary schools?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

Respect and compassion for all life begins with our educational system. We have to teach students at a young age to love animals, to be anti-racist, to think and care about more than



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just themselves. Teaching it at a young age will greatly increase the chances of them growing into overall more compassionate and caring adults.

D. Animals Used for Experimentation: School Hatching Projects

Principals and school teachers should end the use of bird-hatching projects and replace them with learning activities that teach life processes without the use of live animals. School classroom incubation and hatching projects of baby chicks and ducks is cruel and leads to the abandonment and death of countless young birds each year. Once the eggs develop and the cute baby birds grow up, schools realize that they have no plan for the adult birds. These hatching-project birds are deprived of a mother hen to raise them, which may lead to developmental issues. The birds are often abandoned in city parks where they cannot survive on their own or dumped at local animal shelters and rescues who are already overburdened with unwanted animals.

Hatching projects encourage the view that animals are disposable objects instead of living creatures requiring a lifetime of care and commitment. Humane alternatives have been developed by the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), HEART, and other humane educators. More info [here](#).

Would you support and vote for legislation that would prohibit New York City schools from using mail-ordered eggs, live baby chickens and ducks for classroom projects?

YES / NO - YES

Would you co-sign a letter urging the NYC Schools Chancellor to ban the use of eggs, live baby chickens and ducks for classroom projects?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

This is a completely cruel and unnecessary practice. This should absolutely be banned and I will support a ban with enforcement and non-compliance provisions.

E. Fireworks

The booming sounds of fireworks are terrifying and overwhelming for pets and wildlife, as well as for veterans with PTSD, children on the autism spectrum, and survivors of gun violence. [According to the ASPCA](#), more dogs get lost on the Fourth of July than any other day of the year due to panicking and running off. On July 5th shelters notoriously have increased numbers of frightened lost pets. Additionally, baby birds and other infant wildlife become orphaned and starve to death as their



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parents panic from the sounds and take off. Wildlife are known to race into the road to escape the sounds, resulting in dangerous car collisions. A solution that has been instituted in many cities in Europe and Canada are silent fireworks. Silent fireworks deliver the same beautiful cascading colors but without the daunting decibels and startling explosions. Read more [h ere](#).

Would you support and vote for legislation that would require all fireworks displays to be of the silent type?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

I would support this, but would like to explore how enforcement would work, realistically so the goals can be achieved. I would also be interested in having my office support an accompanying or preceding public education campaign, so that people understand the impact of fireworks on animals and the need for silent fireworks.

3. Animals Used For Food

A. Factory Farms

As the global COVID-19 pandemic exposes the [d angers inherent](#) in our highly concentrated food system, [l egislation](#) introduced by Senator Cory Booker, co-sponsored by Senator Elizabeth Warren, as well as its [H ouse companion](#), introduced by Rep. Ro Khanna, would place a moratorium on new and expanding factory farms and provide a transition for farmers who want to transition out of operating a factory farm. The scale, density, and practices associated with Large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) aka Factory Farms are heinously cruel to animals and present a range of public health, worker safety, and environmental problems.

Would you support and vote for a New York City Council resolution calling on Congress to adopt [S .3221](#)/[H .R.6718](#), legislation to end factory farming?

YES / NO - YES

The Green New Deal is a set of policy proposals that seeks to transform our energy system to 100% renewable energy while creating jobs needed to solve the climate crisis, and ensuring a just transition for workers and vulnerable communities, and has the potential to improve the welfare of countless animals, wild and domestic. The Green New Deal calls for massive investments in weatherization, public transportation, modern infrastructure and high-speed broadband, reducing emissions throughout the world, transitioning to sustainable farming, conserving public lands as wildlife habitat, as well as holding the fossil fuel industry accountable for our current environmental crises.



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Do you support the [New York State](#) and/or [federal Green New Deal legislation](#)?

YES / NO - YES, both NYS Green New Deal (the Climate and Community Leadership Protection Act) and federal GND are an absolute must if we are to save life on this planet. We need bold and immediate action that addresses both environmental policy as well as human and animal welfare, racial justice, labor.

Do you believe the Green New Deal does enough to address the impact of CAFOs?

YES / NO - NO

Would you support and vote for [Res. 1151](#) (Constantinides) calling on corporate and government entities operating in New York City to divest from agricultural industries that benefit from deforestation and the acceleration of global warming?

YES / NO - YES

What do you believe the NYC Council should do to end factory farming?

Additional Comments:

The biggest thing Council can do is pressure the administration to end any contracts that support these farms. We can also call attention to the money their lobbyists put into state and local government.

B. Live Animal Slaughter Markets and Transportation

There are 80+ slaughterhouses and live animal markets in NYC – more than any other U.S. city. [These facilities in New York are functionally no different than the live animal markets abroad where Coronavirus started.](#) In addition to horrific treatment of animals in these facilities (tiny cages, no vet care, severely limited food and water), these facilities pose a significant health and safety hazard to the community affecting the quality of life for neighborhood residents. Blood, feces, urine, body parts, and feathers are routinely found on our public sidewalks and streets due to the unsanitary conditions associated with slaughterhouses. Many of these slaughterhouses are located close to schools and playgrounds. Of critical concern, these facilities are rarely if ever inspected by regulators, and despite the animal cruelty and other impacts of these facilities, there is no meaningful oversight.

Especially in light of COVID-19 and the threat of pandemics that are believed to originate from crowded, unsanitary animal markets, would you support and vote for legislation to increase



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regulations, inspections and reporting requirements for live animal markets and other facilities in New York City where live animals are kept, and increased penalties for health code or animal cruelty violations?

YES / NO - YES, this clearly impacts not only the welfare of these animals but the health of the community. The existence of slaughterhouses and live animal markets are inherently cruel, but at a minimum we must enforce standards that reduce the cruelty of the conditions they are kept in and killed under, as well as the impact on the local community.

Would you support and vote for legislation that would require licensed slaughterhouses in New York City to have video recording systems in all areas with live animals?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

This seems like a good way to regulate without incurring the job losses that would be caused by a total shutdown.

C. Shipments of Live Animals

Small animals such as chicks are regularly shipped through the US Postal Service. This terribly cruel practice is tragically routine. They are not provided with any food and water, and many animals suffer terribly or perish during transit. It is not uncommon for thousands of animals to be transported this way in the same shipment. The result is that animals often [arrive at their destinations dead](#).

Would you support and vote for legislation that bans or restricts the shipment of live animals into New York City through the mail?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

I would absolutely support such legislation, and would also want to think again about how we can best educate the public about these issues and work with state lawmakers on this.

D. Restaurants

Would you support and vote for [Intro. 1405](#) (Dromm), which would offer clarity for consumers who wish to avoid animal-derived food products and allergens?



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This legislation would require the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to establish a food protection course and certification program for restaurants to demonstrate compliance with food allergen safety, and require restaurants to post a sign for customers on food allergen awareness. The bill would also establish a voluntary certification program for food service establishments who advertise themselves as capable of accommodating certain dietary restrictions, such as gluten-free, nut-free, vegetarian, and vegan, among others.

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

New Yorkers have a variety of health and ethical reasons for dietary restrictions, and we need robust systems to ensure their safety and encourage more plant-based food production and sale.

E. Aquatic Animals

There is widespread scientific consensus that aquatic animals such as fish, lobsters, octopus, squid, and other marine life can experience pain and suffering. Cruel and neglectful treatment of all animals, including aquatic animals, is a misdemeanor under New York State law. See, N.Y. Agric. & Mkts. Law § 353. New York courts have held that intentionally causing extreme pain to a pet fish is a felony. See, *People v. Garcia*, 29 A.D.3d 255, 257, (App. Div. 1st Dept.). In spite of this prohibition, commercially farmed aquatic animals live in filthy, barren tanks so overcrowded they can barely swim and where they are victims of disease outbreak, rough handling, and months to years of psychological deprivation.

Would you support legislation to establish minimum animal welfare standards for procurement of aquatic animal products by city agencies relating to the following production practices?

- YES/NO** Extreme overcrowding - YES
- YES/NO** Barren tanks unlike their natural habitats - YES
- YES/NO** Deprivation of food for several days during transport - YES
- YES/NO** Being slaughtered while fully conscious - YES

Additional Comments:

I support laws that minimize cruelty of any form. New York City has an opportunity to set real standards for the state and for other cities for the treatment of animals, including those being raised for food. It is also clear that in addition to the abuse, this is a public health hazard for



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the people who ultimately consume the fish, which presents an opportunity to engage those who may not be committed to or moved by the plight of animals.

4. Protecting and Coexisting with Urban Wildlife

A. WildlifeNYC

New York City is home to an immense diversity of urban wildlife. Our five boroughs are home to hundreds of species, including geese, deer, squirrels, ducks, raccoons, opossum, coyotes, hawks, eagles, whales, dolphins, seals, turkeys, beavers, bats, pigeons, rats, migratory birds, and so many more. While many animals inhabit New York year round, other species pass through on their annual migrations. The City has initiated a program, WildlifeNYC, aimed to promote awareness, tolerance, coexistence, and understanding of the wild critters we are so fortunate to share our city with.

Will you support funding for the continuation and expansion of New York City's WildlifeNYC program?

YES / NO - yes

Additional Comments:

Yes! This is another policy extension of core values of compassion, respect, and care for each other and for the world around us, that have the potential to help shift to a culture where more people react from a place of compassion than from a place of violence. Additionally, it's important especially for children who don't have the opportunity to experience animals in the wild to understand and respect these creatures!

B. Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation

New Yorkers often come in contact with injured wildlife and have no idea what to do. There is only one brick and mortar wildlife rescue facility in New York City, the Wild Bird Fund. There is no centralized administration of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, or reliable information for what New York City residents should do when they encounter injured wildlife. Because of the limited information on the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's website, independent volunteer licensed rehabilitators are called upon to respond to emergencies and provide care to wild animals in need on a near daily basis. There is much more that New York City can do to support this vital service.

Would you support increased city funding for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation facilities and services?



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YES / NO - YES

Would you support establishing city-funded wildlife emergency response units as an alternative to untrained police officers responding to such situations?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

Yes I am surprised to learn that this doesn't exist already! This seems completely common sense and necessary, considering the frequency of wildlife injuries in the city. Also, I broadly support having trained support services for animals, for those struggling with mental health issues, for victims of abuse (human and animals), and to dramatically narrow the tasks which police officers perform to those that they are actually trained to handle.

C. Canada geese in NYC parks

After the 2009 "Miracle on the Hudson", Mayor Bloomberg set forth on a policy of hiring USDA Wildlife Services, a federal agency notorious for inhumane wildlife killing practices, to exterminate Canada geese and goslings in New York City parks. This policy was always wrongheaded. Mayor de Blasio was elected on a promise to pursue alternative non-lethal approaches to Canada goose management. The current administration cancelled the contract with USDA Wildlife Services that compensated USDA to kill geese, instead opting for a non-lethal form of population control known as egg oiling. However, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which leases and controls the city's airports, has continued to contract with USDA to exterminate geese, and Mayor de Blasio has allowed the Port Authority and USDA to access city parks to do so. USDA Wildlife Services has killed hundreds of geese in New York City parks every summer for the past 10 years, decimating the local population. The regional population of Canada geese is significantly reduced and should now be stabilized exclusively through non-lethal management practices going forward.

Will you call for a complete end to killing of Canada geese in New York City parks, and demand that the Port Authority and USDA Wildlife Services pursue exclusively non-lethal methods of wildlife management in areas within the City's jurisdiction?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

One incident should not have justified a policy of extermination and cruelty. Clearly there are other ways to deal with the presence of Canada geese, and I am curious in fact how the



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Canadian government deals with them, probably more humanely. There is no serious rationale for continuing to slaughter them. I remember when this was done years ago in Prospect Park, and feeling such outrage and frustration.

D. Staten Island Deer

In the past decade, white-tailed deer have taken up residence on Staten Island, believed to have swum across from increasingly developed areas of neighboring New Jersey. The City first responded by implementing conflict reduction efforts, including measures like increased traffic signage, a reduction of the speed limit, and the inclusion of white-tailed deer in New York City's [WildlifeNYC program](#) aimed at educating New Yorkers about coexistence and tolerance with urban wildlife. In May 2016, the City took a bold and unprecedented step of implementing a non-lethal deer management program that sought to stabilize the deer population by performing vasectomies on bucks. Over the past few years, vasectomies have been performed on more than 1,500 bucks that have stabilized and reduced the total deer population and have reduced conflicts caused by their presence.

Despite these encouraging results, some have pushed for a "controlled hunt" of Staten Island's deer. Controlled hunts require killing some number of deer every year, which often leads to a bounce-back effect that ultimately increases the population. In addition to the cruelty involved, annual culls are unlikely to achieve any long-term reduction in the deer population or actually address any of the conflicts associated with their presence.

Will you support continuing the City's deer management program that has successfully stabilized and reduced the population of deer on Staten Island humanely and effectively?

YES / NO - YES

Will you oppose lethal management of deer on Staten Island, including a "controlled hunt"?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

We are not the only species with the right to this land, which was after all inhabited by the Lenape and other tribes prior to Europeans. We should implement humane laws and ban such cruel practices as "controlled hunts," regardless of what the motivation is. It is especially inexcusable when there are non lethal alternatives.

E. Raccoons



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Even though the incidence of rabies has been [extremely rare](#) in New York City, with only one human case over the last 50 years, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) requires that any raccoons brought to Animal Care Centers (ACC) be immediately euthanized, regardless whether they are sick or injured or healthy. Every year, hundreds of healthy raccoons are brought into ACC, usually by police officers responding to nuisance complaints, and killed instead of being assessed and potentially released or rehabbed.

Would you join VFAR in calling on the DEC to allow healthy raccoons to be rehabilitated and/or released when suitable?

YES / NO - YES

Would you support establishing alternative protocols for emergency responders such that healthy raccoons are not brought to ACC?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

Being susceptible to disease surely shouldn't mean we have the right to kill them.

F. Rats

Historically, rat control invariably relies on cruel and imprecise extermination methods - poison bait, glue and snap traps, and more recently dry ice and drowning devices. Needless to say, these methods have failed to achieve lasting impacts on New York's total rodent population for decades (if not centuries). The Department of Health's Rat Academy [public education](#) on nonlethal rat management methods, debuting nearly 10 years ago, has been shown to be effective. [Feral cats](#) are also a potential way to manage rat populations.

Would you support a comprehensive humane rat control program that would be focused on prevention, deterrence and infrastructural improvements?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

I think many New Yorkers would welcome humane ways of managing the rodent population. Rats are also known to be intelligent and therefore have an inner life. Let's respect that and not torture them just for existing.



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5. Animals Used for Fashion: Fur

Fur farms breed and confine animals in tiny, filthy cages where they suffer intense stress and unimaginable cruelty. They are beaten, bludgeoned, electrocuted, and skinned alive. Trapping animals in the wild is no better — animals are trapped in cruel leg hold traps where they can suffer for days in excruciating pain — starving, until a trapper returns to shoot or bludgeon them to death. Coyotes are known to attempt to chew off their own legs trying to break free. Many other animals are unintentionally caught and killed in these traps, including household pets. California has enacted a ban on the sale of fur. Several countries such as Norway, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Japan, and the U.K. have taken steps to close fur farms, and Israel is on the verge of [banning the entire fur trade](#). With public awareness and innovative alternatives on the rise, many popular designers have stopped using all animal fur. There are ethical alternatives to fur which are not only stylish and warm but environmentally friendly. More info [here](#).

Would you cosponsor and vote for [Intro 1476](#) (Johnson) that would ban the sale of new apparel products using real animal fur?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

With so many alternatives available there is no reason for anyone to wear real fur. This is a cruel and absolutely unacceptable practice. So many of the reasons animals are tortured - clothing, cosmetics, shampoos, leather goods - are unjustified. Fur at least is widely recognized as a cruel and outdated practice. I would also want to ensure that “faux fur” products are truly synthetic.



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6. Animals Used in Entertainment:

A. Carriage Horses

Advocates have long called out the poor working and living conditions for horses used for NYC carriage rides. Despite common belief, the horses do not live in Central Park, they are forced to travel through NYC traffic to get to and from Central Park. Despite improvements implemented over the years, the horses are often made to work long days - sometimes in extreme weather conditions, and they can go weeks without any opportunity for daily turnout. Over the course of the past three decades, there have been countless incidents and accidents involving New York City carriage horses. As recently as March 2020, a [1 2-year-old horse named Aisha was euthanized after collapsing in Central Park](#), a tragic incident that was captured on video camera by a horrified pedestrian. Many horses have died on the streets of NYC or been sent or sold to slaughter once they are unable to continue working. Carriage horse operations have resumed after a temporary hiatus for COVID-19.

Would you cosponsor and vote for legislation to ban horse carriages in New York City?

YES / NO - YES

Would you cosponsor and vote for legislation to enact stronger protections for all working horses in New York City, including a mandatory retirement age and restrictions on sales of exhausted horses to “kill buyers”?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

I believe the writing has been on the wall that the carriage horses are kept in poor living conditions. No one who sees them could think that they are happy or that they are well, and we must do better than that. All living things deserve a chance to live with dignity and comfort, and certainly horses, as gentle as they are, deserve that too. What I suggest is that we transition away from carriage horses in a just way. Just as we want to treat carriage horses with real compassion and respect, we must also treat the folks who are in the business with the same compassion and respect. We need *g uaranteed* job training and job placement for these workers and a timeline that ensures we achieve both sets of goals in realistic but timely manner. Mandating improved standards should have been an option, but as we've seen often, strong standards are often not followed and enforcement difficult.

B. Rodeos



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While New York State has limited the use of animals in circuses and other entertainment, rodeos have been left unregulated despite the display of similar, and in many cases more egregious, acts of cruelty. Rodeos typically include an event called “calf roping” where baby calves are shocked with electric prods, forcing them to run as soon as the holding chute opens, only to be “clotheslined” with a rope and tied at the legs. Panicked calves are routinely injured or killed during these performances. Rodeos also continue to use flank straps or bucking straps, which are tightly fastened around the animal’s abdomen and may be used with sharpened spurs to cause pain to the animal, encouraging them to buck more violently. Rodeos are responsible for causing death or serious injury to countless animals, all for the sole purpose of entertainment and showmanship.

Would you cosponsor and vote for legislation which would prohibit these practices at rodeos?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

These are sick practices. If there is a role that the City Council can play in prohibiting the torture of animals for entertainment I would support that.

C. Captive Wildlife, Zoos and Aquariums

The Bronx Zoo currently has two wild-born female Asian elephants, Happy and Patty. Happy, has been confined alone for over fourteen years in a small enclosure that contains a one-acre outdoor yard, barren corrals, and an industrial holding facility. In the winter months, when it’s too cold for her to be outside, she is confined to an industrial cement structure that is lined with windowless, barred cages. Happy has been documented engaging in unnatural behavior indicative of distress and suffering. Scientists who are experts in elephant cognition and behavior have attested that the Bronx Zoo cannot meet Happy’s biological and psychological needs. There has been a longstanding campaign for the Bronx Zoo to close its elephant exhibit and send Happy to an elephant sanctuary.

Would you join VFAR and other advocates in demanding that the Bronx Zoo close its elephant exhibit and release Happy and Patty to an elephant sanctuary?

YES / NO - YES

Through extensive study and observation, scientists have found that elephants are self-aware, autonomous animals. In other words, they are cognitively, emotionally, and socially complex beings who have the capacity to exercise free will and make choices about how to spend their days and live their lives, just as human beings do. The right to liberty protects an individual’s autonomy and ensures that she cannot be imprisoned (held in an environment that deprives her of her autonomy) or exploited (displayed, used for entertainment, or forced to breed).



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Would you support legislation that would recognize and protect elephants' right to liberty?

YES / NO - YES

Additional Comments:

This is incredibly sad. We have to find other ways of exposing children to wild animals, ways that don't include penning them up alone or parading them for exhibition. Children should not be taught that other species are there for their entertainment, regardless of the conditions of their confinement and where they are naturally meant to be. Who even knows if these elephants can be rehabilitated, after all they have been through?

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE

DATE