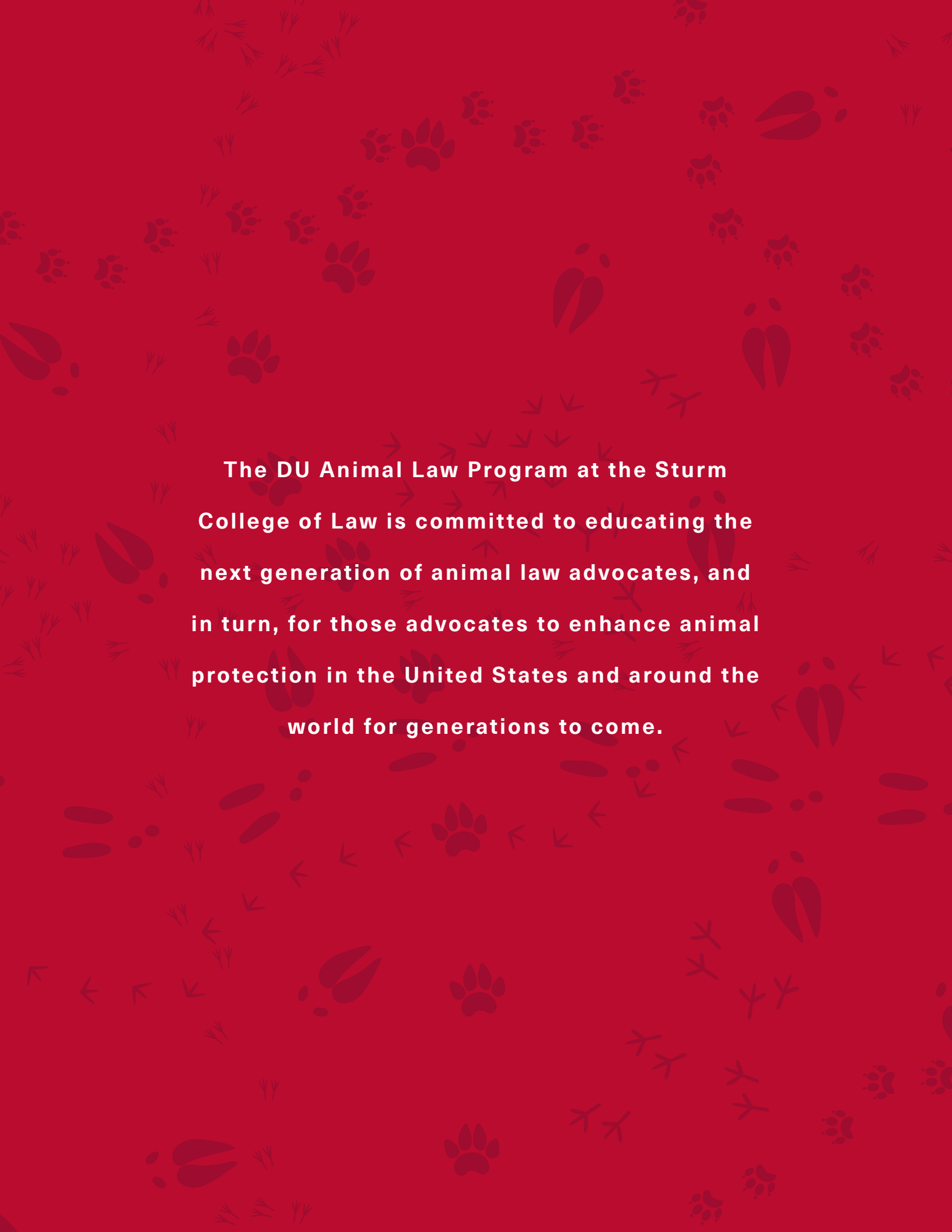


Fall 2025 – Summer 2026

ANNUAL REPORT



Animal Law Program
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER



**The DU Animal Law Program at the Sturm
College of Law is committed to educating the
next generation of animal law advocates, and
in turn, for those advocates to enhance animal
protection in the United States and around the
world for generations to come.**

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WELCOME

FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR AND MANAGER



Faculty Director,
Justin Marceau



Program Manager,
Jess Beaulieu

The University of Denver's Animal Law Program at the Sturm College of Law had a milestone year in 2025–2026, deepening its role as one of the nation's leading centers for animal law scholarship, advocacy, and education. Over the past year, the Program expanded its course offerings and continued to build the pipeline of lawyers equipped to address the legal challenges facing animals in our communities and legal systems.

Through directed research, the collaborations with the Institute for Animal Sentience and Protection, and hands-on experiential opportunities, students engaged directly with the pressing issues shaping this rapidly growing field – from wildlife protection to companion animal welfare to the intersection of

animal law with environmental and social justice. This report reflects on the people, partnerships, and progress that defined the Program's work this year, and looks ahead to the opportunities on the horizon.

The Animal Law Program and the Brooks Institute for Animal Rights Law and Policy continue their collaboration of producing a catalogue of emerging animal law and policy related scholarly research, with Research Fellow Kai Wu compiling and curating the Animal Law Scholarship Digest, a high-level overview of current developments in animal law research.

For Program Director Marceau, this academic year has been marked by significant scholarly output, new research initiatives, and continued leadership in the animal law field.

His new book, *Empirical Animal Law*, is forthcoming. The book challenges long-held assumptions about which animal law reforms help animals and which reforms harm animals. Drawing on original empirical studies and a broad interdisciplinary body of research, the book tests whether familiar tools of advocacy such as incremental reforms, criminal prosecutions, litigation, and protest really reduce animal suffering. Moving beyond moral intuition and ideology the book reveals how people perceive animal harm, which messages and messengers persuade, and when well-intentioned strategies may backfire. With chapters on factory farming reforms, criminal punishment, litigation strategy, protest backlash, and moral framing, *Empirical Animal Law* offers the first comprehensive, data-driven account of how animal law operates in practice and calls for a new empirically informed movement. The book is co-authored with Janice Nadler (Northwestern University, Illinois) and David A. Dana (Northwestern University, Illinois).

Building on his interest in the political dimensions of animal protection, Program Director Marceau is now leading an empirical study investigating when and under what circumstances conservatives are drawn to animal

protection causes. This project grew out of a series of media interviews he gave on the subject over the past year, in which he explored the surprising and often underexamined overlap between conservative political values and support for animal welfare. The forthcoming study aims to bring rigorous empirical methods to a question that has largely been the subject of speculation and anecdote.

Program Director Marceau, together with co-author Steffen Seitz, had an article on aiding and abetting liability and animal rights activism accepted for publication in the *Yale Law Journal*. The article addresses timely questions at the intersection of criminal law and social movement advocacy. He also contributed a chapter to the *Oxford Handbook on Animal Law*, further cementing his role as a leading scholarly voice in the field. Program Director Marceau shared his research and expertise through faculty talks at several law schools this year, including the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and the University of Illinois, engaging with fellow scholars and students on his current work.

Program Director Marceau was a moderator and commentator at the 2026 Brooks Annual Workshop for Scholars (BAWS), which provided participants with the opportunity to read and engage with draft projects by other scholars with the aim of improving the ultimate publishable works.

Beyond his scholarship, Program Director Marceau continued his commitment to animal protection through service on the boards of directors of multiple nonprofit organizations, including the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) and the Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP), helping guide strategy and policy for two of the field's leading advocacy organizations. Additionally, he helped lead search committees to fill leadership roles in multiple animal protection charities.

Additionally, Both Program Director Marceau and Program Manager Beaulieu attended the 2026 Brooks Congress, hosted by the Brooks Institute for Animal Rights Law and Policy. The title of this enlightening event was “Advancing Animal Law – New Horizons, Fresh Perspectives, Impactful Synergies,” and topics included 2025 legal developments – year-in-review, year-in-preview; strategic litigation – reflecting on experiences, moving towards greater impact; scholarship and academics – in service of legal practice and advocacy; and bolstering and expanding legal practice.

After much demand from members of our community, the Animal Law Program launched the DU Executive Certificate Animals Forward: Advancing Interspecies Justice. Despite growing awareness, there is no accessible, interdisciplinary training pipeline for animal advocacy professionals, and limited legal literacy among frontline advocates and sanctuary leaders. With no comparable university program in the region, Animals Forward fills this gap by bridging academia and real-world impact together to create a pipeline for systemic change. Led by Co-Directors Jess Beaulieu and Pablo Perez Castello, the program provides participants with the theoretical tools and practical skills to transform how society treats animals – across law, policy, advocacy, and public perception.

Program Manager Beaulieu continues to incorporate her practical experiences into her academic work, teaching and working with students and fellows who are interested in researching free-living animal matters. She oversaw research into prairie dog protection issues and general traditional wildlife management issues in a changing world. As a Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commissioner, she continues to advocate for reforming outdated wildlife management practices, and drawing upon her expertise in wildlife law, is working on a research project that analyzes true public trust obligations.

She also continues Program efforts to encourage youth to pursue a career in the field of animal law and policy. This year, CBR Youth Connect invited her, on behalf of the Animal Law Program, to speak at a career fair at Denver

School of Science and Technology: Elevate Northeast High School. The goal of the event was to expose students to the wide range of animal-related fields and careers in an engaging, hands-on way. Program Manager Beaulieu spoke with students about her work, career path, and experiences in an interactive setting.

To further her academic credentials, Program Manager Beaulieu was invited to attend the DU Center for a Regenerative Future's "Teaching and Learning for Resilience and Regeneration" in June 2026. The program is for faculty and staff who are interested in developing their knowledge, skills, and abilities related to supporting themselves and their students in navigating the growing ecological crises. Participants engaged in training designed to increase knowledge about regenerative pedagogy as well as best practices for social-ecological learning in their courses and programming. Topics included creating safe, brave, emergent, and engaging spaces to navigate challenging and complex topics and emotions; integration of global environmental change into different subject and program areas, using trauma-informed pedagogy; regenerative approaches to teaching and learning that promote holistic well-being; taking a place-based approach to teaching and learning; and tools and strategies for developing resilience and adaptation skills in the face of a polycrisis.

Also, in June 2026, Program Manager Beaulieu attended the 2026 Wild Animal Welfare Summit at NYU. The aim of the two-day summit was to connect scholars and other experts with an interest in wild animal welfare and discuss current and future research, including opportunities for collaboration. The summit included lightning talks, group discussions, breakout sessions, and addressed topics including evidence regarding sentience, cognition, and other morally significant capacities in wild animals; how human activities – such as agriculture, urbanization, and conservation – affect the welfare of wild animals; and what moral, legal, and policy frameworks should guide our treatment of wild animals, and what practical interventions can improve their welfare at scale.

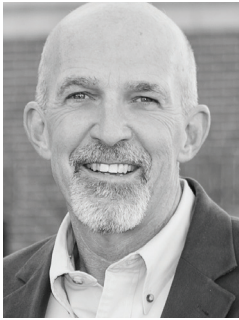
Finally, Program Manager Beaulieu was accepted to join the Institute for Universal Rights, Health & Justice's inaugural Leadership Program from June 1–July 10, 2026. The virtual 6-week program explored how the moral and legal recognition of rights influences individual and public health outcomes in our more-than-human world, and how a consistent commitment to justice offers opportunities to address complex, interlinked challenges such as violence and conflict, chronic and infectious disease risks, and environmental threats.

None of our work happens in isolation. The achievements detailed in this report are the product of a dedicated community – faculty who continue to push the boundaries of animal law scholarship, students who bring energy and passion to every project, and alumni and partners whose support sustains the Program's growth year after year. As we look toward the 2026–2027 academic year, the Animal Law Program remains committed to preparing the next generation of advocates and thinkers to meet the evolving legal and ethical questions surrounding beyond human animals with rigor, compassion, and creativity. And of course, none of this would be possible without the support of our donors, particularly the Brooks Institute for Animal Rights Law & Policy, and the Sturm College of Law's administration, to which we are grateful. We thank everyone who has been part of this past year's journey, and we invite you to stay engaged as the Program continues to grow!



ANIMAL LAW PROGRAM

AFFILIATED FACULTY ADVANCEMENTS



Phil Tedeschi



Wyatt Sassman



Sarah Schindler

The Animal Law Program's Affiliated Faculty produce a wide array of original research, and are committed to advancing some of the major animal law discussions of our time. Here is a selection of their recent work:

Professor Phil Tedeschi gave several incredible talks covering our relationship with beyond human animals. Those talks included *Centering Sentience in Animal-Assisted Services: Shaping Human Attitudes and Actions*, International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations, Netherlands; *Advancing Interspecies Justice*, University of Denver Library Association, University of Denver, Colorado; *The Unspoken Bond*, Documentary Film, KTFFILMS, University of Denver, Colorado; Celebration for Jane Goodall, Governor's Residence, Colorado; *Responding to Animal Cruelty, Research, and Intervention Developments*, Denver Animal Protection and Humane Law Enforcement, Colorado; *Keynote: Healing Bonds: The Role of Support Animals in Permanent Supportive Housing*, Saint Francis Center Annual Gala, Colorado; and *Shared Spaces: Reciprocity and Vulnerability in Human-Animal Relationships*, Tel Aviv University, Israel. Additionally, Phil co-authored *Together: How Animals Can Support Growth and Healing*, a chapter that explores the profound role of beyond human animals in healing from post-traumatic stress, positioning the human-animal bond as a central element of recovery. He also contributed to a commentary, *Human-Animal Interactions: Sentience Centered Practice in Animal Assisted Service-An Animals Forward Approach*, which advocates for a paradigm shift in animal-assisted services (AAS) human-centric model to a sentience-centered practice. The commentary argues that ethical AAS must formally recognize beyond human animals as sentient participants, not tools.

Professor Wyatt Sassman has a forthcoming casebook, *Natural Resources Law* (West Academic Publishing, 4th ed., expected 2026), co-authored with Jan G. Laitos, and published the article *What's Left of Environmental Democracy?*, 49 HARV. ENV'T'L L. REV. 461 (2025). He also gave a number of presentations including Introduction to Scholarship, Association of American Law Schools Clinical Conference, New Law School Clinical Teachers Workshop, Washington, DC; *The Conditions of Equal Participation*, Sutton Colloquium on Global Perspectives on Equal Participation as a Democratic Value, University of Denver, Colorado; *Hot Topics in Land Use Law*, RMLUI 2026 Western Spaces | Western Places Conference, University of Denver, Colorado; and *What Does Emancipatory Environmentalism Really Look Like? Charting Paths to a Sustainable Political Economy*, Association of Law and Political Economy Conference, University of Richmond School of Law, Virginia.

Professor Sarah Schindler published *Progressive Property and Animal Law* in the University of California, Davis Law Review. This article seeks to bring progressive property scholarship and animal law scholarship into conversation with each other. It argues that progressive property scholarship should expand its coverage beyond human flourishing to address beyond human animals as property, and that animal law scholarship should recognize that being defined as property does not necessarily preclude rights for beyond human animals. You can find a copy [here](#).

EVENTS

The Animal Law Program engaged students by hosting renowned animal-law scholars and practitioners for in-person and virtual educational and networking opportunities.

EVENING SPEAKER SERIES



Copaganda: How the Police and the Media Manipulate Our News

September 3, 2025: Alec Karakatsanis, award-winning civil rights lawyer, introduced the concept of “Copaganda.” He defines Copaganda as a special kind of propaganda employed by police, prosecutors, and news media that stokes fear of police-recorded crime and distorts society’s responses to it. Every day, mass media manipulates our perception of what keeps us safe and contributes to a culture fearful of poor people, strangers, immigrants, unhoused people, and people of color. Alec’s talk explored the role of liberal institutions – the news media, nonprofits, academic institutions, etc. – in the rise of authoritarianism.



Out of the Cages: Advocacy for Dogs, Cats, and Primates Locked in Labs

October 16, 2025: with few exceptions, U.S. law allows virtually any abuse – no matter how painful or unnecessary – to be inflicted on the estimated 100 million animals locked in research laboratories. This includes even the most charismatic species, such dogs, cats, and nonhuman primates, who attract heightened public concern. This presentation examined the legal gaps, emerging policy strategies, recent legislative and advocacy successes, and the ongoing challenges associated with ending the use of these animals in harmful experiments.

Lab Dog: An Evening with Melanie Kaplan and John Ramer

March 16, 2026: the Animal Law Program joined the Animal Activist Legal Defense Project to host a conversation with Melanie Kaplan and John Ramer about animal testing, especially its effects on dogs. Melanie Kaplan is the author of *Lab Dog*, a memoir about a former research beagle named Hammy and an investigative account of how and why animals – particularly dogs – are used in testing and biomedical research. John Ramer is the executive director of Kindness Ranch, a sanctuary and place of rehabilitation for animals who have been used in laboratory research.

LUNCHTIME ANIMAL LAW CAREER TALK SERIES

Animal Law Program Information Session

August 26, 2025: the Animal Law Program hosted an information session with students to discuss the Fall 2025 semester, upcoming events, and other exciting program updates.



Prairie Dogs in Peril: How Students Can Help Protect a Keystone Species

September 30, 2025: Prairie Protection is a nonprofit dedicated to advocating for the preservation and restoration of prairie communities across the Western region, ensuring the vitality of grassland habitats and the diverse wildlife they sustain. Through grassroots activism, they prioritize the protection of prairie dogs and their associated plant and wildlife communities, striving for a harmonious balance between conservation efforts and sustainable development. During this presentation, students learned about the threats prairie dogs face as well as ways they could help protect them.



Caught between a Farmhouse and a Factory: How Science Uncovers the Traps of Animal Agriculture

October 14, 2025: the world is consuming more animal protein, taking a toll on animals and the environment. Advocates propose reforming animal agriculture in myriad ways, which can often conflict with one another. Industrialization promises to become more efficient and reduce greenhouse gas emissions over time, but often at the cost of concentrating local pollution sources and harming animal welfare. Meanwhile, more naturalistic farming methods – like organic and regenerative – aim to remediate environmental damage, yet struggle to meet global demand. During this talk, Matthew Hayek, an environmental scientist and Associate Professor at New York University's Department of Environmental Studies, used the latest research to unpack the efficacy and constraints of these systems, sorting through issues of scale, biology, and physics. Beyond the data, he challenged attendees to imagine what the future of our food system really looks like, and what a protein-demanding world really means for animals and landscapes.

From Law Student to Legislator: A Lunchtime Chat with Mike Barlow-Roach

October 20, 2025: Mike Barlow-Roach, Sturm College of Law J.D. '25, discussed how the DU Animal Law Program set him up to run for State Representative as a pro-animal candidate. Mike covered topics like writing the Cruelty Free Colorado bill with the Animal Law Program and working to pass it with Colorado legislators, bill ideas for the future once elected, and his experiences while running for office.



Beef with Adjectives: Animal Agriculture, Greenwashing, and the Marketing of Self-Critique

November 13, 2025: Dr. Vasile Stănescu, an associate professor of communication and a leading scholar in critical animal studies, examined how the animal agriculture industry has responded to growing environmental concern by adopting increasingly sophisticated forms of greenwashing – including self-critique. Drawing on rhetorical and legal analysis, Dr. Stănescu examined how terms such as “natural,” “pasture-raised,” and “sustainably sourced” function less as meaningful disclosures and more as tools of misdirection – designed to deflect criticism while leaving industrial practices largely intact. Through corporate case studies (including Cargill, Tyson, and Chipotle), the talk explored how marketing strategies exploit regulatory ambiguity and public concern to construct an illusion of reform. In doing so, it raised broader questions about the role of language in concealing environmental harm and the legal frameworks that allow such practices to persist.



Visiting Scholar Talk: Akimune Yoshida

January 29, 2026: visiting scholar Akimune Yoshida, a researcher from Hitotsubashi University (Japan), gave a lecture to students about the status of beyond human animals under Japanese law.



Sanctuary Stories: Film Screening | Photos | Q + A

February 3, 2026: the Animal Law Program held a collaborative event with Sanctuary Doc which included a mid-day screening of short films, photojournalism stories, and a Q&A. Two award-winning films were screened and animal photojournalists Thomas Machowicz and Diana Hulet shared behind-the-scenes stories. They look for acts of compassion for animals amid some of the world’s greatest challenges. Attendees explored how storytelling can support meaningful change, sometimes in partnership with advocacy and legal efforts, and often simply by bearing witness.

Reimagining Animal Agriculture: Collective Action for Systemic Change

February 11, 2026: from polluted environments to degraded communities to animal suffering, the impacts of industrial animal agriculture are intertwined, and so are the solutions. In this presentation, Wendy Kerner, attorney and executive director of Ecological Consultants for the Public Interest (ECPI), a nonprofit working to transform animal agriculture into a more just, humane, and regenerative system, discussed how ECPI collaborates at the grassroots level using the SEPAL framework (Science, Empowerment, Policy, Arts, and Law) to challenge one of the planet's most harmful systems and advance just alternatives. She was joined by Tyler Lobdell, senior attorney with Food & Water Watch, who shared efforts to reform the permitting process for CAFOs in Colorado.



By Any Means Necessary: Law, Legislation, Corporate Policy, & the Fight for Farmed Animals

February 23, 2026: factory farming is an extinction-level risk to our planet – and it didn't happen by accident. It was built and protected through legislation, regulation, and corporate power, creating a system that externalizes harm while concentrating profit and control. In this talk, Matthew Dominguez, U.S. Executive Director of Compassion in World Farming, explored how advocates fight for farmed animals by using every legitimate lever available: litigation, legislation, corporate policy, and campaigns that force change in our society. The

talk highlighted three strategic fronts: The EATS Act, a major legislative push that illustrates how factory farming interests use federal law to roll back or preempt state-level protections; Food Not Feed, a campaign exposing the inefficiency and economics behind U.S. factory farming; and Compassion's work to reform the food system, showing how targeted legal and corporate strategies can drive change that benefits animals, humans, and the planet. Ultimately, the talk argued that factory farming is not just a moral issue, it is a system of power with weak points that we must attack, and law students have a unique role in the future of this fight.



Saving Animals by Applying Pressure through Protest

February 24, 2026: the Animal Law Program cohosted an event with the Animal Activist Legal Defense Project to discuss saving animals through protest with Chrys Liptrot, co-founder and CEO of the International Council for Animal Welfare (ICAW), a nonprofit organization that focuses on advancing institutional animal welfare policy in key geographies globally, and Penimah Tehilah, executive director of Animal Activism Collective (AAC), an organization dedicated to equipping aspiring activists with the skills, knowledge, and experience nec-

essary to effectively fight for animals. In 2025, both ICAW and AAC achieved significant success by pressuring businesses to cease both selling foie gras and also working with companies that sell fur. During this event, Chrys and Penimah discussed their work and the success of pressure campaigns to achieve social change.



The Joyful Case for Going Vegan

March 9, 2026: experts agree that going vegan is a powerful ingredient of the cure for what ails us: climate change, diseases of affluence, antibiotic resistance, future pandemics, and a morally indefensible food system. But nobody wants to take the medicine. Why? It's partly because going vegan is perceived as a life-negating obligation obsessed with policing things one can't do. Matt Halteman, professor of philosophy at Calvin University, offered a transformed vision of vegan-living by pivoting from obligation to opportunity, focusing on what we gain: an abundant and healthful diet, innovative style, expanded consciousness of the lives of others, genuine interspecies kinship, and increased hope for social justice and environmental sustainability.



Beyond the Label: What PETA's Cage-Free White Paper Reveals

April 2, 2026: Amber Canavan, Associate Director of Vegan Campaigns at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), discussed the findings of PETA's latest paper on the failures of cage-free eggs and detailed PETA's action plan for advocating for farmed animals. Consumers choose "cage-free" eggs believing they're supporting a kinder food system, and many animal advocates have spent significant time and resources working on cage-free policies and laws, yet PETA's recent paper raises serious questions that the

reality behind the label falls far short of both consumer and animal advocates' expectations. The paper raises serious concerns that the animal rights movement has sunk vast amounts of resources into questionable welfare improvements that do nothing to reduce the number of animals who are raised and killed for food while at the same time, both battery cage facilities and cage free facilities have grown in tandem with each other. Amber critically examined the ethics of everyday food choices and considered more effective paths toward reducing animal suffering.

Animal Law Think Tank Presentation

April 7, 2026: as part of Sturm College of Law's Student Think Tank Series, Program Manager Beaulieu discussed the Animal Law Program with incoming DU law students.



The Methane Majors: Climate and Animal Agriculture

April 8, 2026: Daina Bray, a clinical lecturer and senior research scholar in Law with the Law, Ethics & Animals Program at Yale Law School, joined the Animal Law Program to examine climate and animal agriculture. Over two dozen lawsuits have been filed in U.S. courts against fossil fuel companies by state and local government plaintiffs alleging climate harms and deceptions. But there are other central actors beyond these “Carbon Majors” that contribute heavily to the warming climate. Prominent among them is the animal agriculture sector, a significant emitter of greenhouse gases overall and an especially important source of potent methane and nitrous oxide emissions. Daina discussed how over the last several years, the animal agriculture industry is starting to face serious legal challenges – in U.S. courts and in courts around the world – grounded in its role in driving climate change.



COMMUNITY EVENT SERIES



Luvin Arms Gala

September 13, 2025: Program Director Marceau and Program Manager Beaulieu represented the Animal Law Program at Luvin Arms Animal Sanctuary's 10th Annual Gala. During the event, Program Manager Beaulieu was invited to speak on behalf of her resident enrichment partner, Chamomile the turkey.



Volunteer Day at Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center

September 27, 2025: the Animal Law Program hosted a volunteer day at Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. Volunteers work to beautify the Center's grounds and help maintain a safe space for the wild patients in its care. They play a crucial part in supporting efforts to protect local wildlife at Colorado's largest wildlife rehabilitation center. We helped the Center get its outdoor enclosures ready for the winter and the day consisted of cleaning animal condos, setting up enrichment, and completing other yard work to help staff.



Volunteer Day at Luvin Arms Animal Sanctuary

October 11, 2025: the Animal Law Program hosted a volunteer day at Luvin Arms Animal Sanctuary during which we met the resident animals and helped clean their spaces.

Vendor at Luvin Arms 2025 Fall Fest

October 18, 2025: the Animal Law Program was a vendor at Luvin Arms Fall Fest, an event that celebrates the incredible work of Luvin Arms and raises awareness about the importance of animal welfare. Luvin Arms is a refuge for abused or neglected farmed animals, including cows, pigs, turkeys, chickens, horses, goats, donkeys, sheep, and ducks.

Animal Careers Mini Career Fair at DSST High School

March 13, 2026: CBR Youth Connect invited Program Manager Beaulieu, on behalf of the Animal Law Program, to speak at a career fair at Denver School of Science and Technology: Elevate Northeast High School. The goal of the event was to expose students to the wide range of animal-related fields and careers in an engaging, hands-on way. Program Manager Beaulieu spoke with students about her work, career path, and life experiences in an interactive setting.

Earth Day Community Outreach Presentation

April 4, 2026: Program Manager Beaulieu and Institute for Animal Sentience and Protection Fellow Casey Hamrick were invited to speak at an Earth Day Community Outreach event. The two discussed the impacts of industrial animal agriculture and why they spell disaster for animals, people, and the planet.



Vendor at Luvin Arms 2026 Spring Fest

April 18, 2026: the Animal Law Program was a vendor at Luvin Arms Spring Fest, an event that celebrates the incredible work of Luvin Arms and raises awareness about the importance of animal welfare.

SYMPOSIUMS



The Truth and Transparency Symposium for Interspecies Justice

September 11–12, 2025: the Animal Law Program collaborated with the Institute for Animal Sentience and Protection to host The Truth and Transparency Symposium for Interspecies Justice. From a legal lens informed by social science, this Symposium explored interspecies justice and the role of investigative truth-telling in a capitalist system that obscures animal exploitation and its ecological consequences. The Symposium also explored strategies for documenting the emotional, cognitive, and social experiences of beyond human animals in ways that advance interspecies justice in public policy, challenge dominant narratives, and cultivate a deeper sense of moral responsibility in society. Through the Symposium, we aimed to reimagine how law, science, and advocacy can converge to protect truth and promote systemic change for the benefit of all sentient beings.



The Harmful Effects of Noise Pollution on People and Animals

April 9, 2026: the Animal Law Program collaborated with Quiet Communities, a nonprofit that promotes quiet as a valuable natural resource and works to reduce harmful noise and related pollution, to host a symposium on The Harmful Effects of Noise Pollution on People and Animals. This hybrid event brought in renowned experts to discuss how noise pollution can severely impact the lives of beyond human animals, and explore how noise pollution affects communication among them, shedding light on the ecological consequences, among other related issues.

DU INSTITUTE FOR ANIMAL SENTIENCE AND PROTECTION

The Institute for Animal Sentience and Protection (IASP) is a joint initiative between the Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW) and the Sturm College of Law (SCOL). IASP combines the shared goals of expanding understanding of the cognitive and emotional capabilities of nonhuman animals while advancing legislation to ensure their protection.

This interdisciplinary collaboration between GSSW and SCOL allows scholarship and research to be applied in legislation to meet critical community needs concerning animal protection.

Currently our draft mission statement is the following:

The Institute for Animal Sentience & Protection (IASP) is dedicated to advancing the understanding, recognition, and ethical treatment of animals as sentient beings deserving of legal and moral consideration. Grounded in scientific research, ethical philosophy, and legal advocacy, we believe that sentience—the capacity for consciousness, emotional experience, and reciprocal social engagement—is a shared trait among humans and other animals, necessitating moral recognition and their protection under law.

In Summer 2025 and throughout the 2026 academic year, IASP has been working with colleagues in the Human-Animal Interaction field to explore the significance and ethical imperative to consider animal sentience in the field. In partnership with the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO), the IASP Sentience Working Group established and published a declaration that has now been formally adopted by IAHAIO. This also resulted in several in-person, virtual, and written comments addressing the significance of animal sentience as a new moral imperative in this field of study. This commentary advocates for a paradigm shift in the animal-assisted services (AAS) human-centric model to a sentience-centered practice. Grounded in the 2025 Global Declaration of Animal Sentience in Animal-Assisted Services, and

bolstered by scientific consensus on animal consciousness, we argue that ethical AAS must formally recognize animals as sentient participants, not tools. Current legal frameworks, particularly in the United States, which treat animals as property, are inadequate. We propose a justice-oriented framework to operationalize sentience-centered ethics, ensuring animals can flourish within AAS. This entails prioritizing well-being, honoring animal agency, and respecting core entitlements. By centering sentience, AAS professionals can deepen therapeutic outcomes and ethical obligations by advocating for robust legal protections that reflect contemporary understanding of animals as sentient beings.

EXECUTIVE CERTIFICATE **ANIMALS FORWARD: ADVANCING INTERSPECIES JUSTICE**

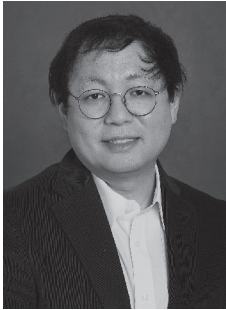
In Summer 2026, the Animal Law Program launched the DU Executive Certificate Animals Forward: Advancing Interspecies Justice. Despite growing awareness, there is no accessible, interdisciplinary training pipeline for animal advocacy professionals, and limited legal literacy among frontline advocates and sanctuary leaders. With no comparable university program in the region, Animals Forward fills this gap by bridging academia and real-world impact together to create a pipeline for systemic change and equip leaders to: 1) challenge outdated legal frameworks for animals; 2) transform animal exploitation industries and institutions; and 3) build more just relationships between humans and animals. Led by Co-Directors Jess Beaulieu and Pablo Perez Castillo, the program provides participants with the theoretical tools and practical skills to transform how society treats animals – across law, policy, advocacy, and public perception.

Applications for the 2026–2027 program opened on June 3, 2026, and we're excited to welcome our first cohort in October 2026! More information about *Animals Forward* can be found at animalsforward.org.



RESEARCH FELLOW UPDATES

Kai Wu



Over the past year, Kai advanced several projects spanning legal knowledge management, empirical scholarship, and academic translation. First, he completed the Animal Law Research Guide (2nd edition), a comprehensive resource for students, researchers and practitioners that notably includes a pioneering section on AI-assisted animal law research which is among the first efforts to systematically integrate emerging AI tools into this area of legal research. Second, his co-authored study “When Responsibility Compensates for Ownership: Agency Theory, State Capitalism, and Chinese OFDI Performance” was published in *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*, a leading business journal, contributing new empirical evidence on how corporate social responsibility moderates the relationship between state ownership and the performance of Chinese outbound foreign direct investment. Finally, Kai completed the translation of *Social Computing and the Law: Uses and Abuses in Exceptional Circumstances* (originally published by Cambridge University Press), released through China Financial Publishing House (Affiliated directly with the central bank of China), helping bring this important work on technology and legal regulation to Asian Pacific readers.

Pablo Perez Castello



Over the past year, Pablo has made significant progress on his book project examining the relationship between visibility, the recognition of violence, and political transformation. His article on the territorial rights of wild animals has been accepted for publication in the *American Journal of Political Science*, one of the discipline’s leading journals worldwide, while his research on the transformative potential of difference will appear in the *Oxford Handbook of Multispecies Justice*. Pablo has also presented his work at conferences in Montreal, Canada; Athens, Greece; and Fort Collins, Colorado. As Co-Director of the new Executive Certificate *Animals Forward: Advancing Interspecies Justice*, Pablo co-developed the curriculum and program. He also successfully co-organized a fundraising event in late February that helped secure the financial support needed to launch the program in the fall of 2026. In recognition of the strength and originality of his research, the European Union awarded Pablo a prestigious three-year Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Postdoctoral Fellowship for his project *Animals and Democracy*, which will examine whether animals’ embodied expression can play a significant role in sustaining the social norms, values, and practices of democratic communities and, if so, how these embodied forms of expression can be taken up by political institutions.

VISITING SCHOLARS

The Animal Law Program was fortunate to welcome two incredible visiting scholars during the 2025–2026 academic year!

Akimune Yoshida, a researcher from Hitotsubashi University (Japan), visited in January 2026. The primary purpose of his visit was to discuss animal law research and legal education. He informed us that he chose to visit the University of Denver because Program Director Marceau’s insights were invaluable to his current project – an English article on Japanese animal law, which he is preparing for a tenure-track position. Akimune’s interest is to analyze the gap between society and legal rules, and the differences and similarities between legal systems. He chose animal law as his research topic because it is an example of the divide between people’s intuition and the law, and each legal system constructs unique rules. During his time here, he attended classes, met with Animal Law Program staff to discuss potential collaborations, and spoke with students about the status of beyond human animals under Japanese law.

In May 2026, Federico Onnis Cugia, an Associate Professor of Agri-Food Law at the University of Cagliari (Italy), visited the Animal Law Program. His current research focuses on animal health, and he is in the process of writing a monograph on liability across supply chains, with particular emphasis on the various stages of veterinary oversight and control. He informed us that he chose to visit the University of Denver because its distinguished position in the global legal landscape – particularly in the field of Animal Law – is widely recognized, and it was an honor for him to undertake a short-term visiting research period at our institution. During his time here, Federico discussed various collaboration opportunities with Animal Law Program staff.

STUDENT UPDATES

DIRECTED RESEARCH

In Fall 2025, two of our students engaged in directed research with the Animal Law Program.

Briana Lombard (then a second-year law student) conducted research on prairie dogs. Her paper surveyed existing legal protections for prairie dogs across federal, state, and local levels before examining avenues for statutory and regulatory reform. Despite dramatic population loss, legal protections for prairie dogs remain minimal under all levels of government. It examined how judicial challenges to the Endangered Species Act and to prairie dog management plans implemented by federal agencies are a strong solution for mitigating the loss of prairie dog populations. In Colorado, prairie dogs are simultaneously designated as “pests” and as a keystone species listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). The paper argued that bolstering prairie dog protections at the state level will require revisions to the Colorado Revised Statutes and Colorado Parks and Wildlife codes to reflect

prairie dogs' true conservation status. And, at the local level, the treatment of prairie dogs varies considerably. Some towns and municipalities affirmatively prohibit lots from becoming "infested" with prairie dogs, while others require permits for takings and encourage "nonlethal control measures." The paper concluded arguing existing local relocation models and partnerships can inform prairie dog protection in Colorado and federal and state reform will most likely preempt local ordinances, creating a floor for prairie dog protection throughout Colorado.

Amy Walsh (then a third-year law student) conducted research on wolfdogs. Her paper discussed how wolfdogs have faced scrutiny since their initial hybridization and emergence in conventional dog ownership. Recent anti-wolf sentiment has only exasperated public concern about safety risks associated with ownership of wolfdogs. As a result, existing resources are unable to ensure that these animals obtain adequate medical care despite legal ownership under federal law and some state law. The paper analyzed the existing legal and policy limitations on wolfdog ownership and care and then proposed legislative avenues to improve the welfare of wolfdogs in captivity.

ANIMAL LAW FELLOW

In Fall 2025, Leki Tshering joined the Animal Law Program as a Research Assistant. Leki is a Bar-Certified Lawyer in Bhutan and a faculty member at JSW School of Law, Bhutan's first and only law school, bringing both academic and practical legal experience. He currently specializes in environmental law and will be teaching related courses in Bhutan, as well as directing the Climate Change and Environmental Law Clinic. He joined as a fellow to introduce and develop Animal Law initiatives in Bhutan while learning from our team.

ANIMAL LAW SUMMER FELLOWSHIP 2026

The Animal Law Program is committed to supporting summer public interest employment opportunities and providing a guaranteed summer funding award to animal law students who choose to work in a public interest law position during the summer. In Summer 2026, we chose to support Evan Oliver, who worked with the Aurora Municipal Public Defender's Office. A primary reason Evan chose to attend the Sturm College of Law was to participate in the Animal Law Program. He recognizes how systemic issues both cause and perpetuate harm to beyond human animals, and working as a public defender over the summer enabled him to further develop his litigation and criminal defense skills so that he can better advocate on behalf of marginalized and vulnerable beings.

STUDENT HIGHLIGHT



Marisa Wesker

Marisa is a prior recipient of an Animal Law Summer Fellowship. As a junior in college, Marisa saw wild wolves for the first time in Yellowstone and cried—unabashedly. Now a third-year student in the environmental and animal law programs at Sturm, she came to law school to work on wildlife issues. With a passion for the Northern Rockies, Marisa spent her first-year summer at an environmental nonprofit law center in Bozeman, MT, where she participated in federal litigation over bison quarantine and transfer periods between the National Park Service and the Wind River Reservation.

As a second-year student, she completed an internship at the Wildlife Law Center at Friends of Animals, conceiving of and drafting an Endangered Species Act petition. She also volunteers with Colorado Bear Coalition (CBC), a community-oriented network of advocates from around the state who work to reduce human-bear conflict and lobby for bear-friendly legislation. As part of her role with CBC, she was invited to present research and findings on human-bear conflict mitigation at the Northern Rockies Conservation Symposium in Jackson, WY. Lawmakers, academics, attorneys, organizers, and advocates collaborated to share innovative solutions for wildlife challenges in wildland-urban interface zones.

COURSES

Beyond the Cage: Championing Animal Rights Through Law and Policy **Community Enrichment Course (Fall 2025)**

In Fall 2025, Program Director Marceau and Program Manager Beaulieu taught a community enrichment course titled *Beyond the Cage: Championing Animal Rights Through Law and Policy*. This course dove into the heart of the animal rights movement, where compassion meets action. It also explored why more people are recognizing animals as sentient beings with their own intrinsic value – and how that’s changing laws, industries and public opinion. From groundbreaking lawsuits to food policy debates and wildlife protections, this class shed light on the legal, ethical, and social sides of animal rights. Students unpacked major milestones in the movement, discovered how activists are making waves, and explored the philosophies and scientific discoveries that show animals feel pain, pleasure, and emotions.

Wildlife Law Course (Spring 2026)

In Spring 2026, Program Manager Beaulieu taught a course on Wildlife Law. The course covered the constitutional underpinnings of wildlife law and its core statutory framework, as well as considered different conservation approaches and animal rights principles.

PLANS FOR FALL 2026



EVENTS

The Animal Law Program has a great line-up of Fall 2026 events, subject to some changes and additions, with many open to the public:

SEPTEMBER

- From Cattle Rancher's Wife to Farmed Animal Advocate with Renee King-Sonnen (September 29)*

OCTOBER

- Lunchtime Advocacy Talk with Animal Outlook (October 6)*
- The Animal of Bad Faith: Speciesism as an Existential Project with John Sanbonmatsu (October 15)*
- Volunteer Day with Luvin Arms (October 17)
- Lunchtime Advocacy Talk with Brave New Life Project (October 26)*

NOVEMBER

- Merchants of Beef with Vasile Stenascu (November 19)*

* Events open to the public

Animals are not property or “things,” but rather living organisms, subjects of a life, who are worthy of our compassion, respect, friendship, and support.

- Marc Bekoff

Gifts from both individual and institutional donors have played a vital role in sustaining—and expanding—the impact of the **Animal Law Program** at the Sturm College of Law. Generous philanthropic support has enabled the program to offer innovative educational experiences, support student academic and public policy research, and advance advocacy efforts that protect the interests and well-being of beyond human animals.

Fittingly, given its unique interdisciplinary focus and its growing influence in legal education and public policy, the Animal Law Program is a top philanthropic priority within **The Denver Difference** campaign.

To learn more about the Animal Law Program and how you can support its mission, please contact **Kelly Hall**, Executive Director of Development at the Sturm College of Law, at **303.406.8966**, via email at Kelly.Hall@du.edu.

Ready to invest in the future of the Animal Law Program?
Go to: <https://tinyurl.com/Give-Animal-Law> to make your gift today!



Until next year!



Animal Law Program
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

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