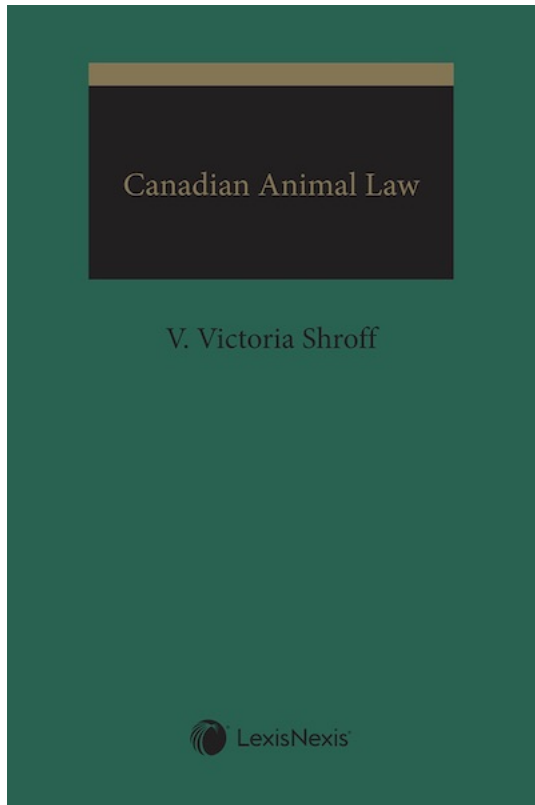


How Animal Law Applies to Many Areas of Mainstream Practice

Canadian Animal Law By Victoria Shroff – Interviewed by [Marc Bekoff, Psychology Today / Animal Emotion](#)

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Available at [LexisNexis](#)

A new book shows how laws protecting animals have broad legal impacts.

I recently learned of a wide-ranging book by award-winning Canadian lawyer and educator [Victoria Shroff](#) titled *Canadian Animal Law* that caught my interest because it clearly shows how laws that apply to nonhuman animals (animals) "intersect with more mainstream practice areas, including family law, criminal law, wills and estates, environmental law and professional liability."^{1,2} Her book made me think about other pieces I've done with lawyers that show just how interconnected animal law is with many different aspects of the ways in which humans live with nonhumans.³ Here's what Shroff had to say about her landmark book.

Why did you write *Canadian Animal Law*?

I wrote *Canadian Animal Law* for animals, to bring their pressing legal issues to light, to examine how their lives as sentient beings can be improved and protected under the law. It was time. In the book, I address concerns of all animals—companion, farmed, wild, and captive animals—and have a short section on aquatic beings.

How does your book relate to your background and general areas of interest?

I've been an animal law lawyer for over 20 years, I teach animal law at two universities, and founded a program called "[Paws of Empathy](#)" for children where I teach (by taking well-socialized dogs into the classroom with me) animal law and empathy to young people so that they can understand the needs of animals. It's a gift for me to be able to help shape the next generation of animal law lawyers and animal guardians through my teaching and writing.

I've had a kinship and been involved with animals my whole life, starting as a child in Africa. I was born not far from the Serengeti with its wondrous animals. From a young age, I knew I would become a lawyer, following in footsteps paved by my great-grandfather who was in the legal profession, and by my barrister father, whom I practiced with for years. Melding two of my greatest interests in life—animals and law—was a natural fit.

Throughout my long career, I've had the opportunity to present in Asia, Europe, and North America, to try to act as a bit of an ambassador to the subject, and to generate interest in animal law as a viable practice interest. I'm flattered to have been referred to as a "pioneer" and "trailblazer" in the area of animal law and have enjoyed working with groups around the world for the betterment of animals.

Who is your intended audience?

I define animal law simply as anytime the law and an animal intersect. The book is for anyone with an interest in animals and how the law impacts them. It's written in plain language to appeal to a wide audience, from law students, lawyers, animal groups—anyone working with or having an interest in animals and the law. The book provides commentary and analysis of the primary issues in animal law, with a view to how it intersects with black-letter laws such as criminal law, family, municipal law, environmental law, and more. (For more, see: [60\(ish\) Seconds: What is Animal Law?](#))

What are some of the topics you weave into your book and what are some of your major messages?

My foundational message is that animals matter. Animals have intrinsic worth, they are individuals. How we treat animals is an important yardstick for how we behave as people. Throughout the book, starting with the history of animal law in the west and the east, I address the germane idea of respecting animals. How do we seek legal solutions to best meet their interests? It's important to consider animals from a wide lens, not just the human lens. How do animals access justice? How are their needs met using the law? This is key for both animals and their humans in the case of companion animals, farmed, captive, and wild animals.

Animal law cases can involve extremely serious issues, including, for example, when a dog owner or guardian's dog ends up on "death row" for biting or harming someone. Because animals are classified as 'property' these scenarios still occur. I was fortunate to be part of a great team of lawyers bringing Canada's apparently first death-row dog case to the Supreme Court of Canada. [The case ignited interest](#) throughout North America and elsewhere. In the end, though we were denied leave, the groundbreaking animal law case helped bring animals and the laws affecting them into the national conversation.

Another not often recognized area in law is [the link](#) between violence toward animals and violence toward humans. The book covers 12 chapters starting from the history of animal law to the future of animal law and all things in between, including wildlife, housing issues affecting animals, pet custody disputes about who gets to keep a pet upon the dissolution of a relationship, issues relating to animals on farms and zoos,

animals in science, and tigers kept in basements. I also discuss legal [personhood](#) standing for animals. We absolutely cannot have rights for animals without human responsibility for them. I am grateful for Indigenous voices in animal law as well.

How does your book differ from others concerned with some of the same general topics?

This book is informed by my experiences and perspective as a long-term practitioner and adjunct professor. It is unique in its plain language style and approach to the subject matter. I have tried above all to make it accessible as part of my [Access to Justice for Animals](#) platform.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell readers?

The animal law of 2021 will bear little resemblance to the animal laws of 2041. We're witnessing a paradigm shift unfolding in this burgeoning area.

To learn more about animal law please listen to a [podcast](#) about Canadian Animal Law: Access to Justice.

References

Notes

In conversation with Victoria Shroff.

1) For more information on Ms. Shroff click [here](#).

2) Professor, Scholar and Animal Law author, Maneesha Deckha at the University of Victoria said this about *Canadian Animal Law*: "This is a capacious and compelling treatise about the state of animals today in Canadian law. Shroff shares her rich practice-based knowledge and experience as a long-standing animal law lawyer to provide informative overviews and illuminating case snapshots of the laws (or lack thereof) pertaining to animals in different industries and settings. Immensely clear, readable and comprehensive, and covering the latest legal developments, the book is an impressive blend of facts, laws, practice and other advocacy stories, and informed opinion. It provides readers with both breadth and depth in understanding how Canadian laws fail animals. Whether one wants to learn efficiently about a specific regulatory area or grasp the wider legal landscape as to how Canadian laws treat animals, this is the go-to book for the legal profession, law students, and the wider public. Readers new to the area as well as seasoned advocates will learn from Shroff's seemingly endless and outstanding expertise in animal law."

3) See, for example" "[Should Wildlife Be Granted the Right to Own Their Homes?](#)", "[Why Are Cages Bad for Nonhumans and OK for Humans?](#)," "[The Nonhuman Rights Project: An Interview with Steven Wise](#)," "[Do Animals Think or Feel?](#)" and "[Canine Science Shows Dogs Aren't Merely Unfeeling Property](#)."