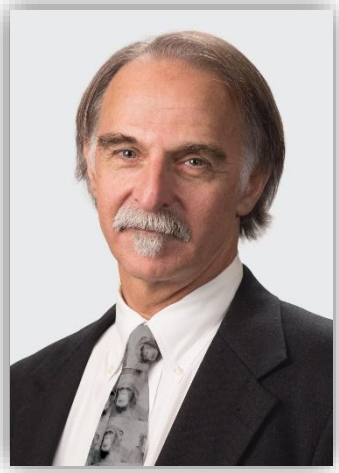
Bruce Wagman

Of Counsel

Direct: 415.275.8540 **Email:** bwagman@rshc-law.com



Since 1992, Bruce Wagman has been using his legal degree to protect and save animals and assist those who care for them — forging a path for improved animal welfare and treatment that considers everyone who is potentially impacted by his work. His experience in the area of animal law is unparalleled.

Bruce's clients include numerous animal protection organizations as well as private individuals. He has worked on behalf of many species, including alpacas, bears, birds, burros, cats, chickens, chimpanzees, chinchillas, cows, deer, dogs, dolphins, ducks, elephants, elk, ferrets, geese, goats, gorillas, horses (domestic and wild), lions, mice, monkeys, pigs, rabbits, sharks, turkeys, whales, and wolves.

Bruce's forte is the kind of creative lawyering it takes to fit animal interests into the legal world, and his clients regularly applaud his ability to model creative solutions and take on the toughest problems. His practice covers a broad range of animal-related legal issues, including cases involving animal cruelty, animal rescue, wildlife, and the use of animals in entertainment, biomedical research, and animal agriculture/food production. He has a long history of success in a wide range of cases constituting "impact litigation," but he also loves to work with individuals on cases involving dog bites, animal custody disputes, and injuries to, and caused by, animals. Bruce brings an undeniable passion for each of his cases, a dedication to both his human clients and the animals involved, and he has a proven ability to turn that passion into winning arguments both in and out of the courtroom. He takes an "eyes on the prize" approach to all of his matters.

Bruce is the only lawyer running an exclusive animal law practice in a major United States firm, and he focuses on matters that benefit both society and the animals themselves. He litigates, drafts animal-friendly legislation, oversees rescue operations, and consults clients who care for and protect animals. He has published two major works, the leading casebook for law schools nationwide — "Animal Law: Cases and Materials" — and a global survey of animal laws, "A Worldview of Animal Law." Bruce also founded Project Chimps, a chimpanzee sanctuary that is home to over 100 chimpanzees retired from a research laboratory.

EXPERIENCE

Clerkships

Hon. William H. Orrick, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California (1991-1992)
Judicial Extern – Hon. James Browning, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

Representative Engagements

- Lead counsel in the U.S. Supreme Court and multiple cases in the Ninth Circuit successfully defending California laws providing for more humane treatment of animals.

- *Humane Society of the US v. Fish and Wildlife Service* — obtained precedential ruling from D.C. Circuit, ensuring Endangered Species Act protection for gray wolves in the Western Great Lakes states, vacating wolves' delisting by federal agency.
- *Anti-cruelty statutes* — Helped develop new body of federal jurisprudence regarding the rights of cities and states to prohibit products that arise from animal cruelty — protecting wildlife, animals raised for food and fur, sharks, and dogs and cats.
- *Shelter Policy and Legal Services* – Cofounder and outside counsel for "Shelter PALS," the only program in the nation providing free legal aid for animal shelters in California, and working on policy and legislative assistance to companion animals in the state, in conjunction with the San Francisco SPCA.
- *Front Range Equine Rescue v. Vilsack* — Obtained temporary restraining order preventing the initiation of commercial horse slaughter for human consumption; part of a multifaceted administrative/legislative program to end horse slaughter in the United States.
- *Project Chimps and Chimpanzee Sanctuary Northwest* — Negotiated release of chimpanzees from biomedical research laboratories and founding member of board of directors providing the chimpanzees permanent sanctuary in Georgia and Washington State.
- *Animal Legal Defense Fund v. Woodley* — Using unique North Carolina law, successfully sued animal abusers, resulting in rescue of approximately 350 dogs and 21 birds from an animal hoarder who kept the dogs warehoused in squalid conditions.
- *Animal custody* — Represented clients in roughly two dozen cases involving disputes over pets, which range from mediation and negotiation to extended civil litigation.
- *Dog bites/vicious and dangerous dogs* — Provided often life-saving protection in over 100 cases defending the owners of dogs threatened with designation as "vicious" and/or "dangerous," in order to prevent the imposition of restrictions or euthanasia after bite incidents.

CREDENTIALS

Education

University of California - UC Law San Francisco, J.D., 1991, *magna cum laude, Order of the Coif*,
Thurston Society
Article Editor, *UC Law Journal*
Columbia University School of Nursing, B.S.N., 1981
Cornell University, B.S., 1979

Bar Admissions

California
U.S. Supreme Court
U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit
U.S. District Court for the Central District of California
U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California
U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California
U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan

Professional Memberships

American Bar Association
Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section, Animal Law Committee
Bar Association of San Francisco
Appellate Practice Section

Teaching Appointments

Adjunct Professor of Law, University of California, San Francisco - UC Law San Francisco, Animal Law (1996 – Present)
Adjunct Professor of Law, University of California, Berkeley - Berkeley Law, Animal Law (2004 – Present)
Lecturer, Stanford Law School, Animal Law (2006 – Present)

Honors & Awards

Humane Hero of the Year Award
San Francisco SPCA Heart of Gold Society (2026)

Lifetime Achievement Award
Animal Legal Defense Fund (2026)

Outstanding Contribution Certificate
American Bar Association Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section, Animal Law Committee (2025)

Shining World Compassion Award
Supreme Master Ching Hai (2022)

Northern California Super Lawyers
Thomson Reuters (2006-2024)

RSHC Pro Bono Award (2020)

SEEDS Award
International Society for Animal Rights (2019)

Humanitarian of the Year
The Marin Humane Society (2016)

Friend of Farm Animals Award
Farm Sanctuary (2013)

Peer Reviewed AV® Preeminent™
Martindale-Hubbell (Since 2006)

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

Bruce is a frequent speaker at animal welfare legal conferences and provides online continuing education on animal law topics. He also teaches animal law classes at three Bay Area law schools and is a guest lecturer at law schools across the country.

"From the Legislature to the Courtroom: Updates in Animal Law," (speaker) Pennsylvania Bar Institute (August 26, 2026)
"Following Sharks, and Their Fins, to the Future of American Law," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2026)
"How Many Roads Must a Dog Walk Down Before You Call Her a Sentient Being?" (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Winter/Spring 2026)
"Animal Law in America – Decades of Change, Millions of Lives Impacted," (author) *Juriste International* (April 2025)
"Animal Law," (speaker) UC Davis School of Law, (February 10, 2026)
"Expanding Your Veterinary Practice's Horizons," (panelist) SF SPCA webinar (October 22, 2025)
"Chimpanzees – Ten Years of Endangered Status" (speaker) American Bar Association (September 25, 2025)
"Building Your Own Successful Animal Law Practice," (panelist) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee (September 17, 2025)
"Buried Audit Found Major Problems at San Diego County Animal Shelters. Issues Still Persist," (mention) KPBS Morning Edition (August 26, 2025)
"Chimpanzees—Ten Years of Endangered Status," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2025)
"Understanding your Ordinances to Expand Lifesaving," (speaker) Best Friends Animal Society Virtual Summit Educational Webinar (July 22, 2025)
"Community Cat Programs: Legally Upheld, Vet-Approved, and the Most Humane Option for Free-Roaming Cats," (co-speaker) SF SPCA Webinar (July 10, 2025)
"Navigating Shelter Medicine and Legal Complexities: Live Questions and Answers," (panelist) Pacific Veterinary Conference (June 28, 2025)
"Shelter Operations and Medicine Legal Round-Up, Including Updates for 2024/2025," (co-speaker) Pacific Veterinary Conference (June 28, 2025)
"The Legal Building Blocks of California's RVT Profession," (co-speaker) SF SPCA/CVMA Webinar (June 24, 2025)
"Penal Code Section 597.1 Pre & Post Seizure PLUS Sweeps, Deportations, and More," (co-speaker) California Animal Welfare Association Webinar (June 9, 2025)
"Intertwined: Animal Law and All Its Relatives," American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Winter/Spring 2025)
"Pet Law 101: A Brief Summary," (speaker) LawPracticeCLE Webinar (March 28, 2025)
"Pet Law 101: Custody and Housing Disputes, Neglect, Bites, Veterinary Malpractice, and More (2025 Edition)," (speaker) myLawCLE Webinar (March 20, 2025)
"Stay Ahead of 2025 Veterinary Legislative Changes," (co-speaker) SF SPCA/CVMA Webinar (March 12, 2025)
"Animal Law is Wild," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Fall 2024)
"Wild Horses' Fate is Poised for US Appeals Court Showdown," (quote) Reuters Online (September 16, 2024)
"Understanding your Ordinances to Expand Lifesaving," (speaker) Los Angeles Network Partner Summit, Culver City, CA (August 10, 2024)

"Veterinarians and Animal Lawyers - The Perfect Paring," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2024)

"Community Cats 2024: Saving Free-Roaming Cats' Lives in the Most Humane Way Possible," (speaker) San Francisco SPCA Webinar (May 21, 2024)

"Civil Procedure Guru Prof. Richard Marcus Prepares Generations of Lawyers for Practice," (quote) UC Law San Francisco Online (March 27, 2024)

"Animal Law – Social Justice in Action," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Winter 2024)

"Representing 'Rocky Raccoon' Animal Law by the Beatles," (author) *ABA Litigation Journal* (Winter 2024)

"Animal Law Section Annual CLE," (speaker) Louisiana State Bar Association, New Orleans, LA (December 8, 2023)

"Animal Protection Organizations and Ways to Represent Them," (co-author) *Chapter 1*, *Guide to Representing Animal Protection Organizations*, American Bar Association, Business Law Section (November 2023)

"From Birds, Rats and Mice, Big Things Come," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Fall 2023)

"The Evolution of Animal Law," (speaker) Marin Humane, Mill Valley, CA (November 1, 2023)

"Controlled Drugs and Premises Permits – What Shelters Need to Know," (co-speaker) SF SPCA/California Animal Welfare Association Webinar (October 11, 2023)

"And Pigs Fly: How Animal Lawyers are Changing the World for All Species," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2023)

"Accommodating Your Best Friend," (author) *Los Angeles Lawyer* (June 2023)

"Addressing the Limited Access to Veterinary Care for Shelters and Their Communities," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Winter/Spring 2023)

"Animal Law 2023: Out of Their Cages and Into the Courtrooms," (speaker) The Rutter Group MCLE Webinar (February 15, 2023)

"Animal Hoarding: Taking the Hoarders to Court, Saving the Animals (Part 2)," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Fall 2022)

"Representing the Fuzzy, Feathered, and Finned: Incorporating Animal Law Into Your Practice," (speaker) DC Bar Remote Program (October 26, 2022)

"Shelter PALS CA Shelter Laws: Community Cats," (speaker) California Animal Welfare Association Webinar (October 18, 2022)

"Intake and Holding Periods: Everything you ever wanted to know!" (co-speaker) California Animal Welfare Association Webinar (September 15, 2022)

"Herding Cats: Legal issues Involving Cats in Your Communities," (speaker) IMLA Animal Law Webinar (August 30, 2022)

"Reasonable Accommodations for Companion Animals in Housing," (speaker) California Continuing Education of the Bar, Oakland, CA (July 27, 2022)

"Project Chimps: Bruce Wagman's Decision to Found a Chimpanzee Sanctuary," (interviewee) 2022 Northern California Super Lawyers Magazine (June 30, 2022)

"Animal Hoarding (Part 1) – Multiple Animals, and Multidisciplinary and Multifaceted Problems and Solutions," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2022)

"Penal Code Section 597.1 Pre and Post Seizure," (co-speaker) California Welfare Association Webinar (June 23, 2022)

"Finder to Foster to Adoption: Keeping Found Animals in the Community," (speaker) California Animal Welfare Association Webinar (June 16, 2022)

"Practicing Animal Law – Applying Professional Ethics While Dealing with Immoral and Unethical Conduct", (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Winter/Spring 2022)

"From Cruelty to Compassion: Animal Rescue and Animal Law," (panelist) Tennessee Bar Association (April 27, 2021)

"Understanding the Wild & Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act," (speaker) Return to Freedom (March 25, 2021)

"Exotic Animals: Understanding the Issues and Using Litigation and Legislation to Combat Abuse," (co-speaker) Golden Gate Law Animal Law Symposium (March 19, 2021)

"The Confinement Wars: Legislation and Litigation Over More Space for Farmed Animals," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Winter/Spring 2021)

"Community Cats Programs in California," (co-speaker) SF SPCA/California Animal Welfare Association webinar (February 25, 2021)

"Animal Law, Shelters, and Veterinary Care in the Time of the Virus," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2020)

"Animal Law Podcast #61: The Case of the Forgotten Birds," (interviewee) Our Hen House (June 24, 2020)

"Birds are finally about to get the protection they deserve," (author) *Marin Independent Journal* (June 15, 2020)

"Animal Law: Livestock," (speaker) The National Judicial College (May 20, 2020)

"The Role Judges Play in Ensuring that Animal-Related Essential Services Remain in Effect During 'Stay at Home' Orders," (speaker) The National Judicial College (April 8, 2020)

"Animal sheltering in the time of the pandemic," (co-author) *Daily Journal* (April 6, 2020)

"PACT Act provides additional enforcement tools against animal cruelty," (co-author) *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (November 12, 2019)

"More Chimpanzees," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Fall 2019)

"Now That We Have Arrived, It's Time to Keep Going Forward," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2019)

"Project Chimps From the Beginning," (blog author) Project Chimps (June 3, 2019)

"The Times They Are A-Changin': Chimpanzees, From Africa to America," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Winter/Spring 2019)

Animal Law: Cases and Materials, *Sixth Edition,* (co-author) Carolina Academic Press (April 2019) — the first casebook for animal law courses in law schools, originally published in 2000

"And Now We Must Provide … Creating Sanctuary" and "Practice Tips: Chicago's Dangerous Dog Proceedings and Using Experts in Animal-Related Litigation," (speaker) Illinois State Bar Association CLE 10th Annual Animal Law Conference, Chicago, IL (March 1, 2019)

"Egg Wars," (speaker) Florida State University School of Law (October 18, 2018)

"Dangerous Dog Cases: From Both Sides of the Aisle," ABA presentation for National Animal Control Association, Denver, CO (October 10, 2018)

"Shelter Law – An Expanding Area of Practice," ABA presentation for National Animal Control Association, Denver, CO (October 10, 2018)

"Changing the World for Animals – 2018 Animal Law Review," (speaker) The Bar Association of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA (April 12, 2018)

"Penal Code Section 597.1 – From Every Angle," State Humane Association of California (November 4, 2017) (December 2, 2017)

"Win Continues String of Legal Victories Nationwide Over Challenges to Local Restrictions on the Sale of Certain Animals," (co-author) Illinois State Bar Association, Animal Law Newsletter (November 2017)

"From Wolves to Horses to Dogs This Big Law Partner Has Built a Practice Exclusively Defending Animals," *American Lawyer Litigation Daily* (August 3, 2017)

"Delta pigs multiply, but where are they now?" *The Sacramento Bee* (June 29, 2017)

"Taking Stock of Animal Law: Part One," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2017)

"Companion Animal Custody and the Law," Clear Law Institute (May 22, 2017)

"Wildlife Law and Ethics: A U.S. Perspective," (co-editor) American Bar Association (April 21, 2017)

"Fighting For Life In The Wild," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Spring 2017)

"A Big-Firm Lawyer's Fight for Animal Rights," (interviewee) *The Recorder* (November 22, 2016)

"In Egg Ruling, Ninth Circuit Sends Message to Businesses," *The Recorder* (November 17, 2016)

"Litigation Involving Shelters," Symposium: Animal Shelter Law, Seattle, WA (November 17, 2016)

"Litigation Involving Shelters," Symposium: Animal Shelter Law (October 5, 2016)

"The Essentials – Sentience In Animal Law," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Fall 2016)

"Sharks Need Friends, Too," *The American Lawyer* (June 27, 2016)

"Companion Animal Controversy – Custody Disputes and Dangerous Dog Litigation," The Bar Association of San Francisco's Arbitration Section, San Francisco, CA (June 14, 2016)

"Spreading the Word," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2016)

"Shelter Law," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Winter/Spring 2016)

"Growing Up with Animal Law: From Courtrooms to Casebooks," in Turning Points In Compassion: Personal Journeys of Animals Advocates (2015)

"Animal Law For All Practitioners," Thomson Reuters Live CLE, Los Angeles, CA (October 12, 2015)

"Who Gets the Animals?" Companion Animal Custody and the Law, California Continuing Education of the Bar, Oakland, CA (October 6, 2015)

"Constitutional Animal Law," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Fall 2015)

"From Legislation to Litigation: Progress and Hurdles in the Puppy Mill Battle," Animal Law Guild, Los Angeles, CA (September 26, 2015)

"Litigation as a Means of Changing and Interpreting Law," State Bar of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM (September 18, 2015)

"'Master Breed' of Mustang Under Development: Wild-Horse Advocates," *Washington Times, CBS News Denver, Seattle Post Intelligencer, Union-Bulletin, Herald News, SF Gate, SF Chronicle, Daily Reporter, and more than thirty other publications* (July 7, 2015)

"Veterinarians – The Animal Lawyers' Friends," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2015)

"Bringing Pigs to Court," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Winter/Spring 2015)

Animal Law: Cases and Materials, *Fifth Edition,* (co-author), Carolina Academic Press (June 2014)

"Orca Welfare Law Is a Strong Step Forward," *Daily Journal* (March 19, 2014)

"Best Bets for 'No Pets'," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2013)

"A Laundry List of Lies - Common 'Defenses' to Animal Cruelty," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Winter/Spring 2013)

"Experts – Explaining the Science of Animal Law," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Fall 2012)

"Animal Biology, Animal Law," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2012)

"Don't Just Complain – Educate and Explain: Drafting the Complaint; Telling Their Story," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Winter/Spring 2012)

"Running the Gauntlet of Dangerous Dog Litigation – A Guide to Getting Good Dogs Off of Death Row: Part II," (co-author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Winter 2011)

"Creative Discovery in Animal Cases – Use of the Inspection Tool to Expose Abuse," (author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Fall 2011)

"Give Me Back My Dog! – A Practical Guide to Helping Clients Obtain or Keep Custody of Their Pets," (co-author) American Bar Association, Animal Law Committee Newsletter (Summer 2011)

A Worldview of Animal Law, (co-author) Carolina Academic Press (June 1, 2011)

"A National Injustice: The Federal Government's Systematic Removal and Eradication of an American Icon," (co-author) *Ecology Law Currents* (February 2011)

"Their Day in Court," *ABA Journal* (September 1, 2010)

"The Wag-Man," *California Lawyer* (December 1, 2008)

"Actions Involving Injuries to Animals," *90 American Jurisprudence Proof of Facts 3d 1-94* (2006)

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Pro Bono Activities

Bruce engages in significant pro bono work, both in his litigation and consultation practice. He is a board member and adviser to several organizations, including Marin Humane Society, Project Chimps, and the United States Equine Rescue League.

Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance, Advisory Board Member
Marin Humane, Board Member
Project Chimps, President and Chairman of the Board of Directors
Front Range Equine Rescue, Board Member