

## The Link Between Violence toward Animals and Violence toward People

### What Are the Implications of The Link?

Social scientists and law enforcement agencies have begun to examine cruelty to animals as a serious human problem closely linked to domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and other violent crimes. [These efforts] cannot undo generations of abuse, but they can be an effective means of breaking the cycle of family violence from one generation to the next.”

— International Association of Chiefs of Police

When animals are abused, people are at risk; when people are abused, animals are at risk. Animal maltreatment must be viewed as a form of family violence. Animal neglect, abuse, cruelty, fighting, and hoarding:

1. Promote desensitization to violence.
2. Damage a child's development of empathy.
3. Foster the idea that victims are expendable.
4. Harm the sense of safety of children, pets, and vulnerable adults.
5. Damage children's sense of safety and confidence in the ability of adults to protect them from harm.
6. Lead to acceptance of physical harm in supposedly loving relationships.
7. Foster a dynamic of inflicting pain, suffering and humiliation to achieve power and control.
8. Lead to imitation of abusive behaviors.
9. Prevent survivors from leaving abusive situations fearing what may happen to their pets.

## Research Summary

### The Link and Violent Crimes...

- Children's acts of animal abuse are some of the strongest and earliest diagnostic indicators of conduct disorder, often beginning as young as 6-1/2 years of age (Ascione, 2001).
- 70% of animal abusers had criminal records including crimes of violence, property, drugs, or disorderly behavior (Arluke & Luke, 1997).
- 50% of schoolyard shooters have histories of animal cruelty (Verlinden, Herson, & Thomas, 2000).
- 35% of search warrants executed for animal abuse or dog fighting investigations resulted in seizures of narcotics or guns. 82% of offenders arrested for animal abuse violations had prior arrests for battery, weapons or drug charges: 23% had subsequent arrests for felony offenses (Chicago Crime Commission, 2004).
- 31% of inner-city teens have attended a dog fight (Cleveland, 2006).
- Adults who keep vicious dogs are more likely to have been arrested for violent crimes and drug- and property-related offenses (Barnes et al., 2006).
- 70% of people charged with cruelty to animals were known by police for other violent behavior – including homicide (Boat & Knight, 2000).
- 61.5% of animal abuse offenders had also committed an assault; 17% had committed sexual abuse; 8% had arson convictions. Animal abuse was a better predictor of sexual assault than were previous convictions for homicide, arson or firearms offenses. Animal cruelty offenders committed an average of four different types of criminal offenses. All sexual homicide offenders reported having been cruel to animals. Sexual assault, domestic violence and firearms offenses featured prominently in cruelty offenders' criminal histories (Clarke, 2002).
- 63% of aggressive criminals had deliberately inflicted harm on animals in childhood (Schiff, Louw, & Ascione, 1999).
- Including a screening question about animal cruelty on a domestic violence crisis line resulted in an 80% decrease in domestic violence homicides (Boat & Knight, 2000).
- 48% of rapists and 30% of child molesters committed animal abuse in childhood or adolescence (Tingle, Barnard et al., 1986).

### The Link and Domestic Violence...

- A history of pet abuse is one of the four most significant indicators of who is at greatest risk of becoming a batterer (Walton-Moss et al., 2005).

## Research Summary (continued)

### The Link and Domestic Violence...

- Twelve studies have reported that 18% to 48% of battered women delay leaving abusive situations out of fear for the safety of their animals (Ascione, 2007).
- 71% of battered women said their partners harmed, killed or threatened pets. 75% of these incidents occurred in the presence of the women to control them. 13% said their children had hurt pets. (Ascione, Weber & Wood, 1997).
- 32% of battered women reported that their children had hurt or killed animals (Ascione, 1998).
- 68% of battered women reported violence to their animals. 87% of these incidents occurred in the presence of women to control them; 75% occurred in presence of children (Quinlisk, 1999).
- Batterers who also abuse pets are more dangerous, more controlling, and use more forms of violence than batterers who do not (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007).
- Children exposed to domestic violence were three times more likely to be cruel to animals (Currie, 2006).
- 48% of battered women reported that animal abuse had occurred “often” during the past year. (Carlisle-Frank & Flanagan, 2006).

### The Link and Elder Abuse...

- 92% of Adult Protective Services caseworkers found animal neglect co-existing with clients who were unable to care for themselves. 75% noted their clients’ concern for their pets’ welfare affected decisions about accepting interventions or other services. (HSUS & National Center on Elder Abuse, 2003).
- The inability of animal hoarders, a significant number of whom are older women, to adequately care for large numbers of animals puts them at risk of self-neglect, eviction, and health issues, and often indicates a need for mental health and social services interventions (Patronek, Loar, & Nathanson, 2006).
- In the absence of children or other loved ones, pets may be particularly significant others for isolated seniors: the loss of these animals when a senior moves to subsidized housing or assisted living facilities can be traumatic. Abusive children may intimidate elders, retaliate against them, or control their assets by threatening or removing their pets (Arkow, 2007).
- 35% of Adult Protective Services caseworkers reported their clients talk about pets being threatened, injured, killed, or denied care (Boat & Knight, 2000).

### The Link and Child Abuse and Neglect...

- Animal abuse was reported in 60% of child-abusing families and in 88% of families investigated for physical child abuse. In one-third of the families, the children had abused animals, using them as scapegoats for their anger. There were 11 times more dog bites and attacks in these homes (DeViney, Dickert & Lockwood, 1983).
- Children who were sexually abused were five times more likely to abuse animals (Ascione, Friedrich, Heath, & Hayashi, 2003).
- 20% of children who sexually abused other children also had histories of sexually abusing animals. In most cases the acts were carefully planned with pets targeted, isolated, groomed and abused -- much like their child victim counter- parts (Duffield, Hassiotis, & Vizard, 1998).
- 91% of abused children institutionalized for delinquency and emotional disturbances said they had had special pets, and 99% showed very positive feelings toward these pets. However, abusive adults had frequently punished or intimidated them by killing, harming, or removing their pets (Robin, ten Bensel, Quigley & Anderson, 1984).
- 82% of families investigated for animal abuse were also known to social services departments, and 61% to probation departments. These families were largely described as having children at risk (Hutton, 1983).
- Children’s witnessing animal cruelty was the largest predictor of future violence, with the witness eight times more likely to become a perpetrator. Animal abuse perpetration was associated with higher rates of child neglect (DeGue & DiLillo, 2009).
- 62% to 76% of animal cruelty in the home occurs in front of children (Faver & Strand, 2003).
- Significant research has documented relationships between childhood histories of animal cruelty and patterns of chronic interpersonal aggression (Kellert & Felthous, 1985; Hensley & Tallichet, 2005; Merz-Perez, Heide & Silverman, 2001; Becker & French, 2004).

*- National Link Coalition - References for these and hundreds of writings on The Link can be found at [www.animaltherapy.net/Bibliography-Link.html](http://www.animaltherapy.net/Bibliography-Link.html)*

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