



AMERICAN HUMANE

Protecting Children & Animals Since 1877

FACTS ABOUT ANIMAL ABUSE & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

in association with the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

WHY IT MATTERS

- 71% of pet-owning women entering women's shelters reported that their batterer had injured, maimed, killed or threatened family pets for revenge or to psychologically control victims; 32% reported their children had hurt or killed animals.¹
- 68% of battered women reported violence towards their animals. 87% of these incidents occurred in the presence of the women, and 75% in the presence of the children, to psychologically control and coerce them.²
- 13% of intentional animal abuse cases involve domestic violence.³
- Between 25% and 40% of battered women are unable to escape abusive situations because they worry about what will happen to their pets or livestock should they leave.^{4,5,6}
- Pets may suffer unexplained injuries, health problems, permanent disabilities at the hands of abusers, or disappear from home.⁷
- Abusers kill, harm, or threaten children's pets to coerce them into sexual abuse or to force them to remain silent about abuse. Disturbed children kill or harm animals to emulate their parents' conduct, to prevent the abuser from killing the pet, or to take out their aggressions on another victim.^{8,9}
- In one study, 70% of animal abusers also had records for other crimes. Domestic violence victims whose animals were abused saw the animal cruelty as one more violent episode in a long history of indiscriminate violence aimed at them and their vulnerability.¹⁰
- Investigation of animal abuse is often the first point of social services intervention for a family in trouble.⁴
- For many battered women, pets are sources of comfort providing strong emotional support: 98% of Americans consider pets to be companions or members of the family.¹¹
- Animal cruelty problems are people problems. When animals are abused, people are at risk.¹²

DID YOU KNOW?

- More American households have pets than have children. We spend more money on pet food than on baby food. There are more dogs in the U.S. than people in most countries in Europe – and more cats than dogs.¹³
- A child growing up in the U.S. is more likely to have a pet than a live-at-home father.¹⁴
- Pets live most frequently in homes with children: 64.1% of homes with children under age 6, and 74.8% of homes with children over age 6, have pets. The woman is the primary caregiver in 72.8% of pet-owning households.¹¹
- Battered women have been known to live in their cars with their pets for as long as four months until an opening was available at a pet-friendly safe house.¹⁵

STATE ANIMAL CRUELTY LAWS

Anti-cruelty laws exist in all U.S. states and territories to prohibit unnecessary killing, mutilating, torturing, beating, neglecting and abandoning animals, or depriving them of proper food, water or shelter. Animal cruelty cases may be investigated by a local humane society, SPCA or animal control agency or, in areas where these organizations are not present, by police or sheriff's departments. When an investigation uncovers enough evidence to warrant prosecution, charges may be filed by the local district or state's attorney. Often, only the most serious cases generate sufficient sympathy and evidence to warrant prosecution, and gaining convictions may be very difficult.^{16,17}

IF YOU NEED HELP

- Contact your local humane society, SPCA, animal control agency, or veterinarian to see if they have temporary foster care facilities for pets belonging to battered women.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Have your pets vaccinated against rabies, and license your pets with your town or county: make sure these registrations are in your name to help prove your ownership.
- Consider and plan for the safety and welfare of your animals. Do not leave pets with your abuser. Be prepared to take your pets with you: many women's shelters have established "safe haven" foster care programs for the animal victims of domestic violence.
- Alternatively, arrange temporary shelter for your pets with a veterinarian, family member, trusted friend, or local animal shelter.

WHAT ADVOCATES CAN DO FOR BATTERED WOMEN WITH PETS

- Add questions about the presence of pets and their welfare to shelter intake questionnaires and risk assessments.
- Work with animal shelters, veterinarians, and rescue groups to establish "safe haven" foster care programs for the animal victims of domestic violence; some women's shelters are building kennels at their facilities.
- Include provisions for pets in safety planning strategies.
- Help your clients to prove ownership of their animals.
- Help victims to retrieve animals left behind.
- Include animals in abuse prevention orders.
- Help victims find pet-friendly transitional and permanent housing.
- When victims can no longer care for their pets, make referrals to animal adoption agencies.
- Establish community coalitions against family violence that include humane societies, SPCAs, animal control agencies, and veterinarians. Invite representatives from these agencies to train your staff on how animal abuse cases are investigated and prosecuted: offer to train their staffs and volunteers about domestic violence issues.

RESOURCES

Arkow, P. (2003). *Breaking the Cycles of Violence: A Guide to Multi-disciplinary Interventions. A Handbook for Child Protection, Domestic Violence and Animal Protection Agencies*. Alameda, CA: Latham Foundation.

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Maxwell, M. S. & O'Rourke, K. (2000). *Domestic Violence: A Competency-Based Training Manual for Florida's Animal Abuse Investigators*. Tallahassee: Florida State University Institute for Family Violence Studies.

National Crime Prevention Council (2003). *50 Strategies to Prevent Violent Domestic Crimes: Screening Animal Cruelty Cases for Domestic Violence*. Washington, DC.

For a bibliography of "Link" materials: please see www.animaltherapy.net/Bibliography-Link.html

SOURCES (as of 7-19-06)

¹ Ascione, F.R., Weber, C. V. & Wood, D. S. (1997). The abuse of animals and domestic violence: A national survey of shelters for women who are battered. *Society & Animals* 5(3), 205-218.

² Quinlisk, J.A. (1999). Animal Abuse and Family Violence. In, Ascione, F.R. & Arkow, P., eds.: *Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Animal Abuse: Linking the Circles of Compassion for Prevention and Intervention*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, pp. 168-175.

³ Humane Society of the U.S. (2001). 2000 Report of Animal Cruelty Cases. Washington, DC.

⁴ Arkow, P. (2003). *Breaking the cycles of violence: A guide to multi-disciplinary interventions. A handbook for child protection, domestic violence and animal protection agencies*. Alameda, CA: Latham Foundation.

⁵ McIntosh, S. (2001). Calgary research results: Exploring the links between animal abuse and domestic violence. *The Latham Letter* 22(4), 14-16.

⁶ Arkow, P. (1994). Animal abuse and domestic violence: Intake statistics tell a sad story. *Latham Letter* 15(2), 17.

⁷ Jorgensen, S. & Maloney, L. (1999). Animal abuse and the victims of domestic violence. In, F.R. Ascione & P. Arkow, eds.: *Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Animal Abuse: Linking the Circles of Compassion for Prevention and Intervention*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, pp. 143-158.

⁸ Loar, L. (1999). "I'll only help you if you have two legs," or, Why human services professionals should pay attention to cases involving cruelty to animals. In, Ascione, F.R. & Arkow, P., eds.: *Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Animal Abuse: Linking the Circles of Compassion for Prevention and Intervention*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1999, pp. 120-136.

⁹ Ascione, F.R. (2005). *Children and Animals: Exploring the Roots of Kindness and Cruelty*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005.

¹⁰ Luke, C., Arluke, A., & Levin, J. (1998). *Cruelty to Animals and Other Crimes: A Study by the MSPCA and Northeastern University*. Boston: MSPCA.

¹¹ American Veterinary Medical Association (2003): *U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook*. Schaumburg, IL: AVMA.

¹² Arkow, P. (1996). The relationships between animal abuse and other forms of family violence. *Family Violence & Sexual Assault Bulletin* 12(1-2), 29-34.

¹³ American Pet Products Manufacturers Association: Industry Statistics & Trends (www.appma.org); Baby Food & Drink – US (www.marketresearch.com); Annie E. Casey Foundation/Kids Count Census Data Online (www.aecf.org)

¹⁴ Melson, G.F. (2001). *Why the Wild Things Are: Animals in the Lives of Children*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

¹⁵ Kogan, L.R., McConnell, S., Schoenfeld-Tacher, R., & Jansen-Lock, P. (2004). Crosstrails: A unique foster program to provide safety for pets of women in safehouses. *Violence Against Women* 10, 418-434.

¹⁶ Lacroix, C. A. (1999). Another weapon for combating family violence: Prevention of animal abuse. In, F.R. Ascione & P. Arkow, eds.: *Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Animal Abuse: Linking the Circles of Compassion for Prevention and Intervention*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, pp. 62-80.

¹⁷ Frasch, P. D., Otto, S. K., Olsen, K. M., & Ernest, P. A. (1999). State animal anti-cruelty statutes: An overview. *Animal Law* 5, 69-80.