



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

*Working together to stop violence
against people and animals*

**The National Resource Center on The Link Between
Animal Abuse and Human Violence**

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THE “LINK” AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

What do state and local law enforcement, court personnel and victim advocates need to know about animal cruelty? What information would be useful to them to inform their understanding about how animal cruelty affects the populations they serve?

1. THE PREMISE

Animal cruelty is a crime.

Animal-related criminal activities often involve multiple forms of criminal behaviors including violence, illegal possession of weapons, gambling, and illegal drugs.

Animal abuse rarely occurs in isolation. It is often a sentinel “red flag” predictor and indicator of other crimes and of human victimization. Early intervention can keep crimes from escalating in range and severity against human victims.

Compelling research confirms that committing or witnessing animal cruelty, abuse and neglect are predictor and indicator crimes frequently linked with other crimes of violence including dog- and cock-fighting, domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, bullying, juvenile delinquency, bestiality, drugs, and a wide range of antisocial behaviors.

Recognizing animal abuse as an indicator that something is wrong in a household may be the first step in stopping the cycle of violence. As with the “broken window” theory of crime prevention, early response to animal cruelty reduces violence against animals, people and communities.

Animal abuse is a particularly common and insidious form of domestic violence, a form of “domestic terrorism” that occur daily on the family level across the U.S. to threaten abused women and children and keep them trapped in violent households.

Animal abuse is one of the top three indicators that a woman will be killed by her batterer, and one of the top four risk factors that someone will become a batterer.

Childhood cruelty to animals is an important predictor of later antisocial and aggressive acts. Children showing these behaviors, without intervention, are at risk for enduring disorders in conduct and mental health.

Animal cruelty is more than just a legal issue. It's a community issue. If you improve animal welfare in a community, you improve public safety for everyone.

Would you want anyone harming YOUR animals?

2. WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY ABOUT THIS

“One of the most dangerous things that can happen to a child is to kill or torture an animal and get away with it.” – Margaret Mead (1964)

The FBI has noted that animal cruelty should play a role in threat assessment. The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior, and animal abuse is prominently displayed in the histories of people who are habitually violent. – Alan Brantley, FBI Special Agent, Behavioral Science Unit (1996)

“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. [Preventing animal cruelty] cannot undo generations of abuse, but can be an effective means of breaking the cycle of family violence from one generation to the next.” – International Association of Chiefs of Police (2000)

“The topic of animal cruelty may seem unimportant in the face of events like the Boston bombing, school shootings, and other recent tragedies, but we know there's a history of animal cruelty in the backgrounds of many perpetrators of violent acts. Understanding this link between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence is critical to the Department.” -- U.S. Department of Justice Acting Assistant Attorney General Mary Leary (2013)

“Animal cruelty crimes uncover other crimes – family violence, juvenile delinquency, drugs and human trafficking, and more.” – John Thompson, Deputy Executive Director, National Sheriffs Association (2014)

3. ANIMAL CRUELTY “BY THE NUMBERS”

6¹/₂ Age at which childhood acts of animal cruelty begin to emerge. Animal cruelty is one of the earliest signs of conduct disorder.

7 Number of states in which acts of animal cruelty intended to intimidate or terrorize other family members are defined as domestic violence and elder abuse.

8 Number of states that define animal fighting as racketeering or are considering similar legislation.

21 Percentage of fatal dog bite attacks in which a history of animal abuse or neglect occurred.

26 Number of states allowing courts to include animals in domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders.

30 Percentage of child molesters admitting to childhood or adolescent histories of animal abuse.

31 Percentage of youths in some Chicago neighborhoods who have attended a dog fight.

35 Percentage of search warrants executed for animal abuse or dog fighting investigations that resulted in seizure of narcotics or guns.

43 Percentage of school shooters with prior or concurrent histories of animal cruelty.

48 Percentage of battered women who delay escaping their abuser out of fear for what will happen to their pets or livestock in her absence.

48 Percentage of rapists admitting to childhood or adolescent histories of animal abuse.

50 Number of states with felony-level penalties for animal cruelty crimes. (In 1990, only 5 states had felony charges.)

71 Percentage of battered women in shelters who report their abuser killed, harmed or threatened their animals.

88 Percentage of families investigated for physical child abuse in which animal abuse also occurred.

90 Number of domestic violence shelters that allow families to bring their pets with them in order to keep the entire family together and safe.

92 Percentage of Adult Protective Services caseworkers who report animal neglect co-occurring with self-neglect of elders.

99 Percentage of animal cruelty offenders found to have committed other crimes (an average of 4 crimes, primarily sexual assault, firearms offenses and domestic violence). A history of animal cruelty was a better predictor of sexual assault than were previous convictions for homicide, arson or firearms offenses.

99 Percentage of Americans who consider pets as close companions or members of their family.

145 Number of law schools teaching Animal Law curricula.

1641 Date of the earliest anti-cruelty laws in America. These are the world's oldest such laws.