



NATIONAL LINK COALITION
*Working together to stop violence
against people and animals*

37 Hillside Road, Stratford, NJ 08084
arkowpets@snip.net
www.NationalLinkCoalition.org

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

LESSON PLAN

The Cruelty Connection: Animal Abuse and Its Links to Human Violence

A customizable PowerPoint presentation for school audiences

Preface: Rationale for this Presentation

Humane education typically focuses on such important animal welfare issues as our responsibilities toward companion animals, the ethical and moral issues surrounding human-animal interactions, safety around dogs, animal behavior, and so forth. A new emphasis in animal care and control is focusing on how animal abuse is important because it not only affects animals but also adversely impacts children, families, and society. We call these areas where animal, child, domestic and elder abuse intersect The Link.

The topic is highly relevant to today's schools and the Link with human violence may make it easier to get your humane education program accepted into existing school curricula. Extensive research is finding that:

- Youths who commit or witness animal cruelty are at increased risk of perpetrating violence on other people in their lives.
- These youths have often been exposed to family violence, including animal cruelty perpetrated on their beloved pets by violent adults.
- Histories of animal cruelty have been found in the backgrounds of 43% of school shooters.
- Three federal agencies have declared that acts of animal cruelty may be a warning sign of potential terrorism.
- Animal abuse is Linked with bullying behaviors – not only by youths who bully others, but also by children who have been bullied.
- A history of animal abuse is one of the earliest signs of conduct disorder, and starts showing up as young as 6-¹/₂ years of age.

Although youths who are cruel to animals are already troubled, there are opportunities for early intervention. Teachers and fellow students may be able to identify these vulnerable youths and refer them to needed services before violence is visited on other humans.

This emphasis – called The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence – not only helps build respect, compassion and empathy for animals but also may be more readily welcomed into schools’ existing core standards and curricula, making it easier for humane educators to gain access to young audiences.

This presentation is aimed primarily at high school audiences but you may find it applicable to younger students as well. We encourage humane educators to modify it as necessary to make it more relevant given your community’s geographical, cultural, age-related and demographic conditions. Feel free to customize it with your own state and local statutes, organizational information, logos and current issues. The background has been deliberately kept simple to make it easier for you to customize it with your own graphics and standard slide templates if you like. We just ask that you acknowledge the National Link Coalition when you use it.

Caution: Prepare for Responses

The subjects introduced in this presentation may be emotionally difficult (for you, for teachers, for students); some students may have witnessed acts of animal abuse, child abuse or domestic violence, or know someone who has, or may have committed acts of animal cruelty themselves. Be prepared to deal with students’ feelings; you might need to talk with a student one-on-one if the topic hits too close to home. Because the topics are potentially sensitive you may want to prep teachers in advance about what to expect; there may be possible follow-ups with school counselors. You may have to determine what the school’s policy is if a student discloses abuse.

The nature of abuse lends itself to the temptation to include graphic photos that demonstrate the severity of what animals feel and what animal shelters contend with every day. Such photos, however, have a negative impact on non-professional audiences. We encourage you to add your own images to this presentation but discourage you from including any that may be too unpalatable for younger audiences.

Some students will ask about apparent moral contradictions: if it’s illegal to hurt animals, how come we hunt them and eat them? This can lead into energized discussions about which behaviors are culturally acceptable and how individuals can create and respond to their own value systems.

Some students may wonder “why can’t something be done about this” when it comes to a cruelty case; they need to understand how the criminal justice system works and that it’s not like they see on TV where everything is wrapped up in 30 minutes. This can lead to a lively discussion about the laws of search and seizure, evidence, the rights of defendants vs. the needs of society, court procedures, etc.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Title: The Cruelty Connection: Animal Abuse and Its Link to Human Violence

Purpose: The purpose of this lesson is to teach children about the various kinds of animal cruelty that exist and how this abuse harms people as well as animals, particularly domestic violence, child maltreatment and elder abuse. It considers how to recognize the signs of such abuse, what laws protect animals from human violence, and how to appropriately report and stop animal cruelty.

Grade: 9-12

Lesson length: 45-60 minutes

- 1. Introduction:** Introduce yourself to the class. Describe the purpose of today's discussion as being about not only how to identify and prevent animal cruelty to protect animals, but also why preventing animal cruelty is important because of how animal abuse hurts people and society. Properly frame the discussion as one that seeks to help students understand the different kinds of animal cruelty, their motivations, what laws protect animals from abuse, and how they can help keep animals and people in our community safe.
- 2. "About Our Organization":** Briefly describe your organization, its programs and services, why you came to the school today, what the program will cover, and that you'll be encouraging the students to think about the implications of this and what they can do as young adults to make a difference. Thank the National Link Coalition for providing much of the material for this program and encourage the students to learn more about The Link at www.NationalLinkCoalition.org
- 3. "A Note of Caution":** The topics of animal cruelty, domestic violence, child abuse and elder abuse may be emotionally challenging for some students, especially if they have experienced any of these in their own lives. Let the students know that it's OK if they don't wish to participate or share their feelings but that it's important that they understand why this is so important. Assure them that there won't be any graphic or disturbing images in the program.
- 4. "Why Are Companion Animals Important to You?":** Start the discussion on a positive note by soliciting responses about why their pets are important to them. Keep the discussion moving along. You might want to make a list as you get responses. Keep it

brief – pick only a few students, allow maybe 30 seconds each, and focus on why their animals are important to them.

5. **“Our Animal Friends are All in the Family”:** Discuss the sheer number of companion animals in America: you can use the statistics to frame a math or geography exercise. If you want to make this more interactive, ask each bullet point as a True or False question. (The answer is True for all of them.)
 - i. **Discussion points:** The current estimated pet populations in the U.S. is 70 million dogs and 74 million cats (American Veterinary Medical Association estimate). By comparison, the human populations of the largest countries in Europe are: Germany (82 million); U.K. (66 million); France (65 million); Italy (59 million); Spain (46 million).
 - ii. Why do they think there are so many companion animals in America?
 - iii. These numbers are only estimates because pets are not included in the census: why do they think this is the case?

6. **“Why Do So Many People Share Their Homes with Pets?”:** Build on the list and add other reasons that they can think of. Student responses will probably include such things as: companionship, comfort, protection, we think of them as members of our family, therapy animals, service animals for the disabled, etc.

7. **“The Bright Side of the Human-Animal Bond”:** This continues the initial theme of keeping things positive and discusses all the wonderful things about human-animal interactions as a way to promote empathy, respect and compassion for our animal friends who do so much for us.
 - i. **Discussion point:** Walking a dog gives us more opportunities to meet our neighbors and get to know them and their dogs. What does this say about the nature of American society today? How many students know their neighbors not by the person’s name but by the animal’s name?

 - ii. **Discussion point:** How does interacting with a companion animal “bring us closer to the natural world”? (This can lead into a discussion of how dogs evolved from wolves, animal behavior issues, forcing us to get off our devices and get outdoors to exercise with them, etc.

 - iii. **Discussion point:** How can animals help disabled persons? What are the differences between guide dogs, hearing dogs, and assistance dogs? How are these amazing animals different from regular pets? (They’re not just animal companions – they are working animals with special privileges under the law.)

8. **“The Dark Side of the Human-Animal Bond”:** Unfortunately, many animals are mistreated and not everyone is as respectful of animals as the students are.

- i. **Discussion point:** Put this into a local context: how many abused animals come into your shelter (or other local shelters) over the course of a year?
- ii. **Discussion point:** Although there are many different kinds of animal abuse, there are 4 main categories. Solicit student responses and make another list of the ways people can hurt animals. You may want to add some examples of cases you have seen but don't be too graphic. Ask the students how these issues make them feel. You may find it convenient to group the responses in several main categories:
 - a. **Physical abuse** (beating, kicking, hitting, stabbing, burning, etc.)
 - b. **Neglect** (the most common form. Includes lack of veterinary care, inadequate food/water/shelter, poor grooming, no control of fleas and ticks, inadequate housing, starvation or improper food)
 - c. **Animal hoarding** (extreme animal neglect from having too many animals). Does your community have a limit as to how many animals a person is allowed to keep?
 - d. **Animal fighting** (dog- and cock-fighting). You may want to go into more detail about why this is especially harmful to animals and people: it is often linked with organized crime, racketeering, drugs, human trafficking, gambling, homicides, and, of course, the harm to the animals.
 - e. **Abandonment** (people leaving animals behind when they move or face financial difficulties). What should people do if they find they can't keep their animals any longer?
 - f. **Animal sexual abuse** (This is a growing concern and is now illegal in 45 states, but given its sensitive nature you may or may not want to introduce this)
 - g. **Emotional abuse.** Explain that although it's wrong to not provide animals with emotional support, it is not illegal. For example, it may not be right to leave a dog alone all day but as long as it has food, water and shelter it's not against the law. This can lead into a lively discussion about why emotional abuse is illegal in child abuse but not for animal abuse.

9. **“Why do Some People Hurt Animals?”:** The motivations for animal cruelty are as complex as they are for interpersonal violence. Emphasize that any person can commit abuse, but most active animal cruelty is committed by men, and many are predisposed to violence having observed it or been a victim of it. Most animal hoarders are women. Encourage student interaction to create a list of reasons.

- i. **Discussion point:** Some of the most common reasons are the following: What do the students think these terms mean and how do they feel about these issues?
 - a. **Ignorance** (people just don't know what animals need to be healthy and happy)
 - b. **Lack of empathy** (people don't realize that animals have feelings, too)
 - c. **Animal behavior issues** (people don't understand why animals do what they do and respond inappropriately to animal "accidents"). This can generate a discussion about how we can better understand canine and feline behavior, and why positive reinforcement works better – for animals and humans – than negative reinforcement.
 - d. **Power and control** (people believe that force is the only way to solve problems). Why do some people feel like they must be in control of everyone around them, including helpless animals?
 - e. **Convenience** (animals are vulnerable and easy targets)
 - f. **Poor coping skills** (people who are under a lot of pressure may take their anger and frustrations out on their pets) What can people like this do instead so they don't harm animals when they're angry?
 - g. **Mental illness**
 - h. **They have been bullied or abused themselves.** Why would someone who has been abused or bullied retaliate against a helpless animal? (Hint: It helps them regain a sense of power after they have been abused.)

10. "How Does This Make You Feel?": As a way to build empathy and help students understand that animals have feelings too, have the students share how they have felt when someone has abused, belittled or bullied them and how they think an animal might similarly feel. You can use this as a springboard into discussing why positive reinforcement works better than negative reinforcement.

11. "Why Do You Think It's Wrong to Hurt Them?": Solicit responses.

- i. **Discussion point:** Each of the reasons below – and others – can generate considerable discussion:
 - a. **Animals have feelings.** (It's not nice to hurt other people's feelings, so why would we want to hurt their feelings of our best friends?) Do animals have all the same feelings that we do? How do they express their feelings?)
 - b. **Animals have "rights"** (Whether animals have legal rights, or whether we have a moral obligation to care for them). This is a fundamental

distinction between animal rights and animal welfare. The former believes that animals have legal rights (when, in fact, they do not); the latter believes that humans have a moral responsibility to care for animals. Why don't animals have legal rights? What would be the implications if they did?

- c. **Animal abuse is bad for society** (You may want to insert the Gandhi quote about how we can judge the character of a society by the way people treat their animals)
- d. **Animal abuse is a crime** (emphasize this and say we'll go into more detail on this shortly)

12. “Here’s How Our State Deals with This”: Every state has an anti-cruelty law. The terms and details vary, but all states generally include these, as well as other, provisions to protect animals from harm. Add your most significant state statutes in here. If you have local ordinances that also pertain, you can add them and describe when some crimes are investigated on the municipal level and others on the statewide level. It is important to note that there are exceptions in these laws for animal-related practices that are considered socially acceptable.

- i. **Discussion point:** Most state laws define illegal acts of animal abuse with such modifiers as “unnecessary” or “cruelly.” Why are these words included in the statutes? For example, the distinction between accidental and deliberate acts that hurt animals, and actions that some people object to but that are socially acceptable. Better laws would protect more animals but powerful financial interests (agribusiness, pharmaceuticals, etc.) make this challenging.
- ii. **Discussion point:** Who in your community enforces these laws? How much of a priority is it for them?
- iii. **Discussion point:** How does an idea become a bill and then a law? What is the difference between a misdemeanor and a felony? Why do some crimes carry more severe penalties than others?

13. “There’s One More Reason: Animal Abuse Hurts People”: Now that we’ve established why animal abuse is wrong for the animals’ welfare and the moral issues involved, we transition into discussing The Link – that people and society are harmed by these acts as well. Extensive research shows that animal abuse often precedes other violence or indicates other violence occurring at the same time. We’ll focus on some of the highlighted research shortly.

14. “What Does The Link Means”: This is called a Venn diagram. Each circle represents a field that can exist independently or overlap into one or more other areas. What this

means is that an investigator working in one of these fields, such as animal protection, might only see abused animals but might also encounter abused children, battered women, and/or abused elders. Similarly, an investigator in one of the other areas might encounter one or more forms of family violence as well. We call it the LINK because each circle “links” to those that touch it --- and they all touch each other --- so everyone in the family might be affected, and investigators from any agency need to be on the lookout for other forms of family violence as well.

- i. **Discussion point:** What should an investigator in one of these areas do if he or she encounters another form of abuse? In every state, either everyone or a defined list of specific medical, educational and other professionals who work with children are required by law to report suspected child abuse. In only a few states are these human services investigators required to report suspected animal abuse, or animal welfare investigators are required to report suspected child or elder abuse. Why do you think animal abuse is not reported as widely as child abuse?
- ii. **Discussion point:** Doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals are required to report child abuse. Do veterinarians have to report animal abuse? In many states, they do! See the National Link Coalition’s resources about Cross-Reporting at <http://nationallinkcoalition.org/resources/articles-research> to determine who has to report child, animal, and elder abuse in your state.
- iii. **Discussion point:** People are taught these days, “If you see something, say something.” But if you see abuse, who should you call? See the National Link Coalitions Directory of Abuse Investigation Agencies to find out who is required to report which kinds of family violence in your state and the specific phone numbers to call to report child, animal, domestic and elder abuse in your state/county/city. You’ll find this list at <http://nationallinkcoalition.org/how-do-i-report-suspected-abuse>

15. “Animal Abuse: A Red Flag and the Tip of the Iceberg”: The way animals are regarded in a family is a window into interpersonal relationships and family dynamics. Investigators who find animal cruelty, abuse or neglect are rarely surprised to see other issues lurking beneath the surface.

- i. **Discussion point:** What do these terms mean and why do you think we refer to animal abuse this way? (A red flag is a warning sign of a problem needing attention, or of danger lying ahead. Because 90% of an iceberg is under the water, this phrase means that when you see something you may not be aware of the full scope of what lies beneath the surface. You may think you’re seeing only animal abuse, but there could be other issues as well. Animal abuse is often a symptom of deeper underlying issues.)
- ii. **Discussion point:** Is it just dogs and cats that are affected by The Link, or could other animals be affected as well? (While dogs and, to a lesser degree, cats, are

the most common targets, the abuse of other companion animals, wildlife and farm animals is a serious issue and may also indicate interpersonal violence.)

16. “What Have Famous People Said About The Link?”: The idea that animal abuse may predict interpersonal violence is an old one and is deeply rooted in philosophy. You may want to find other examples, either quotes from famous people or situations in movies or books.

- i. **Discussion points:** Who were Margaret Mead and Albert Schweitzer? Why are their words so important? What is an anthropologist? What is a humanitarian?

17. “Do All People Who Hurt Animals Also Hurt People?”: It is a common misconception that all serial killers and mass murderers started out torturing animals. This is misleading: many of them did, but not all of them. And more importantly, not every child who hurts animals will grow up to become a serial killer or mass murderer. With early intervention, future tragedies can be prevented.

- i. **Discussion point:** Identify mass murderers and serial killers who started out torturing animals. Why do you think these acts went unnoticed and unpunished? What might have happened had they been stopped?

18. “The Link Between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse”: Many abusers threaten to hurt the family’s companion animals or livestock as a way to keep them from escaping. The rest of the family remains trapped in an abusive relationship in fear for their animals’ lives. The drawing on this slide was made by an 8-year-old girl staying in a domestic violence shelter with her family. Today, over 100 domestic violence shelters also accept the family’s pets, thereby making it easier for everyone to escape the violence.

- i. **Discussion point:** How does this situation make you feel? How do you think the adults, children, and animals in such a violent home feel?
- ii. **Discussion point:** Domestic violence shelters that also accept pets are called SAF-T (Sheltering Animals and Families Together). See if there are any SAF-T shelters near you at <http://alliephillips.com/saf-tprogram/saf-t-shelters/>

19. “The Link Between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse”: These are just a few of the many research findings Linking a history of animal abuse with domestic violence. The sources are:

- a. Risk factor statistics: The other three most significant risk factors were: a history of substance abuse; low education levels; and mental health issues. Source: Walton-Moss, B.J., Manganello, J., Frye, U. & Campbell, J.C. (2005). Risk factors for interpersonal violence and associated injury among urban women. *Journal of Community Health, 30*(5), 377-389.
- b and c. The 71% and 32% statistics were reported by researcher Frank Ascione. Sources: Ascione, F.R. (2007). Emerging research on animal abuse as a risk factor for intimate partner violence. In K. Kendall-Tackett & S. Giacomoni (Eds.). *Intimate Partner Violence*. Kingston, NJ: Civic Research Institute, pp. 3-1 — 3-

17; and Ascione, F.R. (1998). Battered women's reports of their partners' and their children's cruelty to animals. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 1, 119-133.

- d. The likelihood of children exposed to domestic violence to be cruel was reported in a study in Alberta, Canada. Source: Currie, C.L. (2006). Animal cruelty by children exposed to domestic violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 30(4), 425-435.

- i. **Discussion point:** For a more detailed look at the research, visit <http://nationallinkcoalition.org/what-is-the-link/domestic-violence-and-the-link>

20. “The Link Between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse”: Children often imitate what they see grown-ups do, and raise their own children the way they themselves were raised. If they grew up in a violent environment, they may carry this violence over into the way they raise their own children. Social scientists call this the Intergenerational Cycle of Violence, and we see it very dramatically in the areas where animal abuse and domestic violence are Linked. Walk the class through each of these stages and ask them how they think this makes the adults, children and animals in the home feel?

21. “The Link between Child Abuse and Animal Abuse”: This concept dates back centuries that children who are kind to animals grow up to be more humane citizens – and that animal cruelty is a surefire way to lead a child down a path of antisocial behavior and crime. Many people are amazed to learn that the child protection movement began with animal protection! The first child abuse case was prosecuted when the ASPCA intervened in the historic “Little Mary Ellen” case in New York City in 1874. For many decades, humane societies protected both animals and children.

- i. **Discussion point:** Invite a representative from a child welfare agency to speak to the class about child abuse and how to prevent it.

22. “The Link Between Child Abuse and Animal Abuse”: These were the findings from one of the earliest studies Linking child abuse and animal abuse. They show not only a huge correlation between these two types of family violence, but that the animals retaliated the only way they could – with their teeth – causing a huge health risk of dog bites. Violence begets violence. Source: DeViney, E. Dickert, J., & Lockwood, R. (1983). The care of pets within child abusing families. *International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems*, 4, 321-329.

- i. **Discussion point:** What happens when a dog bites someone? What is trauma? What is rabies? How do we prevent animals and people from getting rabies?

- ii. **Discussion point:** For a more detailed look at the research on children and The Link, visit <http://nationallinkcoalition.org/what-is-the-link/child-protection-and-the-link>

23. “The Link Between Elder Abuse and Animal Abuse”: Elder abuse is the newest area of family violence prevention. It refers to situations where senior citizens or disabled persons are taken advantage of, physically or emotionally abused, neglected, or

abandoned by their caregivers. Elder abuse is usually investigated by a state agency called Adult Protective Services. The Link takes several forms when abused elders are involved:

- **Animal neglect:** Seniors may love their animals deeply, but because of memory loss, physical disabilities, lack of transportation and limited finances they may not be able to provide their pets with the care and veterinary attention they need. How do you think these animals feel?
- **Self-neglect:** They may spend what little money they have on their pets instead of their own needs. When a person neglects himself or herself, what might that look like to friends or neighbors?
- **Lack of support from caregivers:** Home health aides and social workers may be reluctant to visit them because the home is overrun with rats, mice and insects if the litter boxes haven't been cleaned in a long time or if the pet food cans and bags are left lying around. How might this affect the people involved?
- **Animal hoarding:** Older people are more likely to be animal hoarders and accumulate too many animals who they cannot care for properly. How might these animals suffer?
 - i. **Discussion point:** For a more detailed look at these issues, visit <http://nationallinkcoalition.org/what-is-the-link/adult-protection-and-the-link>

24. “How Else Does Animal Abuse Hurt People?” Sources:

- The dog bite fatalities were reported in Patronek, G.J., Sacks, J.J., Delise, K.M., Cleary, D.V., & Marder, A.R. (2013). Co-occurrence of potentially preventable factors in 256 dog bite-related fatalities in the United States (2000-2009). *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 243(12), 1726-1736.
- School shooting statistics: Arluke, A., & Madfis, E. (2013). Animal abuse as a warning sign of school massacres: A critique and refinement. *Homicide Studies*, 20(10), 1-16.
- The FBI warning is from a report co-signed by the Department of Homeland Security and the National Counterterrorism Center in July 2018. Source: Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team (2018, July 18). *Animal Cruelty: A Possible Warning Behavior for Terrorism and Other Premeditated Violence Against Humans Which Needs Reporting and Further Vetting*. Washington, DC: JCAT.
 - i. **Discussion point:** What are the implications of findings like these?

25. “What Can We Do About All This?” Okay, now it’s time to brainstorm some action ideas. What can people who care about these issues do? See what they come up with. You can do this with the class as a whole, or have them break out into small groups and have each group come up with a list.

- i. **Discussion point:** How can someone report cruelty? In addition to knowing who to call, you’ll probably have to explain what specific information is needed (detailed dates and times, photographic and other evidence, eyewitnesses who are willing to testify, etc.), and how cruelty reports are handled. Like any other crime, officers and prosecutors need very specific details.

- ii. **Discussion point:** How does the court system work? Explain how a case goes from suspicion to investigation to charges to trial to verdict, and that the defendant is always innocent until proven guilty.
- iii. **What laws need to be changed?** Here are some ideas that are working nationally: you'll find up-to-date details about these in the Resources section of the National Link Coalition website.
 - a. **Cross-reporting:** Many states now require or allow veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse (just as physicians have to report child abuse). Many states require or permit animal protection, child protection and adult protection officials to report the other forms of family violence that they see.
 - b. **Sheltering pets of domestic violence:** Over 100 domestic violence shelters have built facilities to care for the companion animals of abused women and their children.
 - c. **Pet Protection Orders:** When someone is being abused by their spouse or living partner, they can get a judge to issue an order protecting them from this person. 32 states now allow judges to include companion and farm animals in these court orders.
 - d. **Felony laws:** The most serious crimes are called felonies (as opposed to misdemeanors or petty offenses) and they carry more severe penalties. All 50 states now have some type of animal cruelty law considered a felony, but many crimes are still only misdemeanors.

26. “What You Can Do”: Have the students share what else they can do, individually, to model humane behavior, to break the cycles of violence, and to make a difference for animals.

27. “What You Can Do”: This is an extremely short list to summarize the actions they can take individually. Add your own suggestions here.

28. “Conclusion”: Thank them for their interest and participation, remind them about your organization’s resources, and leave lots of time for Q&A.

GLOSSARY

Adult protective services -- an agency of the state government that protects older adults and disabled persons who have been abused or mistreated. The agency may go by different names depending on which state it is in (e.g., Department of Family and Protective Services).

Animal cruelty or animal abuse – the crime of inflicting physical pain, suffering, distress or death upon a non-human animal beyond what is considered socially necessary or acceptable, the standards for which vary from time to time and place to place.

Animal neglect – the crime of omission of failing to provide a non-human animal with the necessities of adequate food, water, shelter, and space consistent with the animal’s normal husbandry.

Child abuse and neglect – an act or failure to act by a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation of a young person (generally under age 18). The term is also referred to as child maltreatment. Each state has its own specific definitions. Many states recognize 4 major types: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse or neglect.

Child protective services – an agency of the state government that protects children who have been abused or mistreated. The agency may go by different names depending on which state it is in (e.g., Department of Family and Protective Services).

Domestic violence -- physical, emotional, sexual, and financial tactics used by one partner in a relationship to gain power and control over the victim. It may also be called dating violence, intimate partner violence, wife battering, and domestic abuse. While most domestic violence involves a man abusing a woman, men may also be abused by women. Domestic violence also occurs in same-sex relationships.

Elder abuse -- situations where senior citizens or disabled persons are taken advantage of, physically or emotionally abused, neglected, or abandoned by their caregivers.

Felony – A more serious crime that carries stronger penalties, such as a greater fine and incarceration in a state penitentiary for one year or longer. In addition, felonies can be investigated by state agencies and prosecuted in a higher court.

Humane society – a nonprofit organization formed for the prevention of cruelty to animals. Each local humane society is independent, with its own board of directors and policies, and is not a branch of a national organization.

Jurisdiction – the area where a crime took place determines who investigates it. If it occurred in an incorporated city or town, the local police usually investigate; in unincorporated areas of the county, the county sheriff is the typical investigator. Some humane agencies, SPCAs and animal control agencies have their own investigators and the scope of their jurisdiction varies.

Link – something that connects two or more things. In this context, the Link means that acts of animal abuse often occur at the same time as, or predict, other crimes against people.

Misdemeanor – a crime that is generally considered not as serious as others. If convicted, the offender may face a minimal fine and incarceration in the city or county jail up to perhaps 6 months to a year. Misdemeanors are usually investigated only by local police or sheriffs and prosecuted in lower courts.

SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) – a nonprofit organization formed for the prevention of cruelty to animals. Each local SPCA is independent, with its own board of directors and policies, and is not a branch of a national organization.

Venn diagram – a graphic of two or more overlapping circles representing fields which can exist independently or interact with one or more of the other fields.