

Connecting the Dots:

The LINK between Pet Abuse, Elder Abuse, Child Abuse, and Domestic Violence



"Healing Together: Building Safe Communities for Survivors and Their Pets"
Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
February 3, 2021



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Key Take-Aways for Building Safer Communities and Healing Together

1. Animal abuse often means increased violence against people.
2. Human-animal bonds can intensify through shared experiences of violence.
3. Victims and survivors are often unwilling to leave without their pets.
4. Supporting companion animals can assist human victims; ignoring animals in social work practice can hinder your ability to help clients.
5. There are enhanced benefits of human and animal victims and survivors recovering together.

— Taylor, Fraser & Riggs (2020): Companion-animal-inclusive domestic violence practice: implications for service delivery and social work.



How I Got Here

"This is my cat. My dad treats my cat unfairly like he treats my mom."
—Jennifer, age 8



The fateful after-dinner speech...



"This is a snake. Snakes make me angry. They will bite my dad and kill him. My dad's in jail because he sucked my mom."
—Brendy, age 4



The provocative research study....

The curious teacher training....



"My dog used to be abused by my Mom's old boyfriend. It has a family that takes care of it now. My dog used to look shabby but now her fur looks soft. My dog has a good home now."
—Chris, grade 4

What is the National Link Coalition?

- National Resource Center.
- Organized 2008, Portland, Maine.
- 4,500+ members, 50 states, 55 countries.
- Informal collaboration addressing linkages, prevention and response to animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment and elder abuse.
- Policy, programs, awareness, & research (1,500+ citations).
- LINK-Letter, local coalitions, trainings.
- "When animals are abused, people are at risk; when people are abused, animals are at risk."



Several of our key members are on today's program –
Allie Phillips, Katie Campbell
Thank you for inviting us!

NationalLinkCoalition.org

Summary

1. Decades of research link cruelty to animals and IPV.
2. Animals are convenient soft targets of threats and violence to intimidate and retaliate against women & kids.
3. Animal abuse an early warning sign of families in trouble.
4. Animal investigators first point of social services interventions.
5. Approaching family violence via The Link:
 - protects all victims
 - offers early interventions
 - improves community systems through coordinated, integrated MDTs & CCRTs

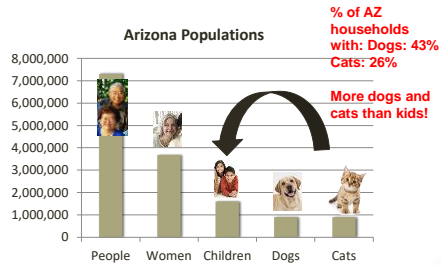
What Do We Know About Pets in Families?

- More homes have pets than children.
- More money on pet food than baby food.
- More dogs in US than people in most countries in Europe... and more cats than dogs.
- Children's literature, media, vocabulary saturated with animals.
- Fairy tales: more animals than fairies.
- Pets may be child's only source of 24/7 affection.
- *Child more likely to grow up with pets than a father.*



(Melson, 2001)

And There Are a Lot Of Them!



What Do We Know About Pets in Families?

Who Cares for All These Pets?

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

67.7% of households with children under 6 have pets

74.6% of households with children over 6 have pets

Female is the primary caregiver in 80.7% of pet-owning households

AVMA: U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook, 2007

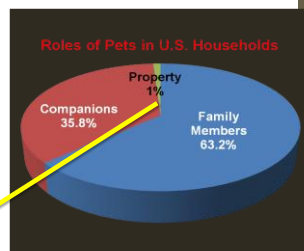


What Do We Know About Pets in Families?

How we view pets has changed dramatically...



... but a disconnect between law and perception!



AVMA: U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook, 2007

Pets in Families

Our View of Pets Has Changed...

Hurricane Katrina



Fukushima



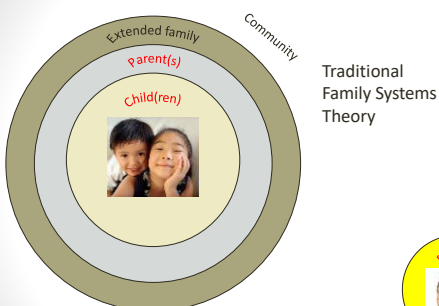
Super Storm Sandy



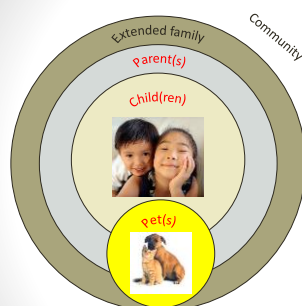
Hurricane Harvey



So Why Aren't We Paying Attention?

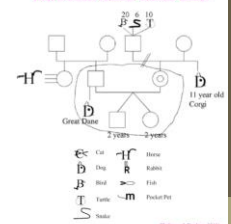


A Much More Appropriate Solution!



... and include them in the genogram!

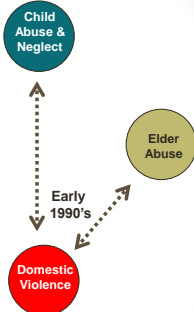
Example of a Family Genogram That Includes Human-Animal Bonds



Example of a genogram for a married couple with two young children (a boy and a girl). The husband has a cat named Steve. The wife has a pet dog named Bob. The husband has an 11-year-old son named John. The wife has a 10-year-old daughter named Sarah. The husband's name is John and the wife's name is Sarah. The husband's name is John and the wife's name is Sarah.

Connecting the Dots: The Link between Animal Abuse and Other Forms of Family Violence

Animal
Cruelty

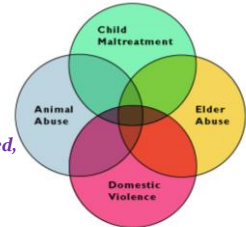


Connecting the Dots: The Link between Animal Abuse and Other Forms of Family Violence

A Species-Spanning Approach:

*"When animals are abused,
people are at risk;*

*When people are abused,
animals are at risk."*



Animal Abuse: It's the tip of the Iceberg...



What we're NOT talking about...



Definitions: What is "Cruelty"?



Three challenges:

1. Public, professional, and statutory standards differ widely.
2. Haphazard, inconsistent enforcement and prosecution.
<http://NationalLinkCoalition.org/how-do-i-report-suspected-abuse>
3. 95% of reports are neglect.

cruelty the infliction of pain or distress unnecessarily, **c.** to animals an offence under the Protection of Animals Act or similar legislation. The definition of a **unnecessary** varies between countries and from time to time in the one country. Under the impact of a great body of community compassion the threshold has been greatly lowered in recent times. Determination of the prevailing standard of cruelty can only be decided by the courts. It is now taken to include, besides physical assault and surgery without anesthesia, denial of food, water and shelter. The worst kinds of cruelty are punishable to the heaviest penalty, under the classification of aggravated cruelty.



"Cruelty: Hard to Define It But You Know It When You See It"

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

- Owner or child physically abuses animal
- Extremely thin animal
- Open wounds, multiple healed wounds
- Animal limping or cannot stand
- Collar embedded in animal's neck
- Severely matted fur, overgrown nails
- Heavy discharge from eyes or nose
- Infested with fleas, ticks
- Untreated bruises, broken bones, cuts, sores
- Recreational drugs given to animal
- Sexual abuse of animal
- Feces, urine, excess numbers, dead animals
- Dangerous animals threatening child welfare
- Animal fighting paraphernalia

Cross-Reporting Template for CPS Agencies:
<http://nationallinkcoalition.org/resources/articles-research#CHILD%20ABUSE>

How Did We Get Here? Evolution of The Link

1964: Margaret Mead

"One of the most dangerous things that can happen to a child is to kill or torture an animal and get away with it."



1970s: The Macdonald "Triad"



1980s: The "Tangled Web" of Serial Killers



"Son of Sam," "Boston Strangler," Ted Bundy...

1990s: School Shooters: 43%



Kip Kinkle, Eric Harris & Dylan Klebold...

2000s: Social capital, The National Link Coalition



2010s: Links with bullying, corporal punishment, sex abuse, terrorism; Added to FBI NIBRS system

2020 and beyond....

All in the Family and Caught in the Crossfire: Types of Links



- 1. Domestic Violence:** Power & control. "You're next!" No escape (18% - 48%). Coercive control. Emotional extortion.
- 2. Child Sexual Abuse:** Emotional extortion. Child chooses between victimization or pet's death.
- 3. Adverse Childhood Experience:** Perpetrating or witnessing. Conduct disorder: Manifests at age 6-1/2.
- 4. Bullying:** By bullies and by the bullied.
- 5. Animal Hoarding:** Often Linked with elder abuse, seniors' issues.
- 6. Animal Fighting:** Linked with other crimes (homicide, trafficking, narcotics, weapons, racketeering, etc.)
- 7. Animal Sexual Abuse:** Often Linked with child pornography and other sex crimes.



Why Are People Cruel to Animals?

There are as many reasons as there are for interpersonal violence, including:

Ignorance

- Poor animal husbandry skills

Socialized to abuse

- Entitlement; believe abuse justified and beneficial (violence = power and control)
- Lack of empathy
- Religious /regional subcultures

Lack of adequate coping skills

- Pet's behavior released frustration and anger
- Personality dysfunction, poor impulse control....

Why Are People Cruel to Animals?

Threaten, intimidate or control a person

- Domestic violence/child sexual abuse
- Neighborhood retaliations
- Shock people for amusement

To control the animal

- Retaliation
- Behavior problems

Psychopathology

- Sadism
- Enhance their own sense of aggression
- Sexual gratification

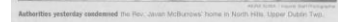
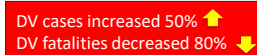
Why Are Children Cruel to Animals?

All of the above, plus:

- Curiosity or exploration
- Peer pressure
- Relieve boredom or depression
- Fear of the animal
- To protect the animal from worse abuse
- Re-enacting their own experience of being abused
- Regaining a sense of power after abuse
- Imitating adult actions
- Rehearsal for interpersonal violence

Why Should Animal Abuse Be Taken Seriously?

- Identifies other criminal activities.
(Chicago: 35% of search warrants for animal abuse or dog fighting resulted in seizures of narcotics or guns. 82% of offenders had priors for battery. 31% of teens attended dogfights.)
- Exposes family violence.
- First access to a troubled family.
- Perpetrators pose risk to selves and others.
- Witnesses/victims comfortable talking about it.
- Begins early in childhood.
- Inflicts pain and suffering on victims.**

[illegible]

The LINK and Domestic Violence

Animal Abuse and the Duluth Model

Isolation: Refusing to allow you to take your pet to your vet. Prohibiting you from socializing your dog with other dogs.

Coercion and Threats: Threatening to harm or kill your pet if you leave or assert any independence. Pet "disappears" to send a message.

Legal Abuse: Trying to take possession of a pet for which you have been the primary caretaker. Filing charges of theft if you leave with the pet. Custody battles.

Minimizing, Denying & Blaming: Blaming you or your pet for the cruelty.

Emotional abuse: Calling pet names. Giving away or killing pet to take away your source of comfort and unconditional love. Forced participation in animal sexual abuse.

Economic Abuse: Refusing to allow you to spend money on pet food and/or vet care (then blaming you).

Intimidation: "Next time it'll be you..."

Using Children: Harming or killing the children's pet to intimidate them. Blaming the "disappearance" of the family pet on you to create a wedge between you and the children.



The LINK and Domestic Violence

It's a "Wake-Up Call"

- Many victims blame themselves for the abuse.

Animal cruelty is a wake-up call that the fault lies not within themselves, but in the personality of the abuser.



The LINK and Domestic Violence

Research Highlights

"He says he'll kill the dog if I leave..."

18% - 48% of battered women - and their children - stay, fearing for their animals' welfare

41% of arrested IPV offenders had abused animals.

(Febres et al., 2014)



The LINK and Domestic Violence

Research Highlights

Pet abuse is one of the four greatest risk factors for becoming a batterer.

(Walton-Moss, Manganello, Frye & Campbell, 2005)

Batterers who also abuse pets are more dangerous and use more controlling behaviors, and more forms of violence.

(Simmons & Lehmann, 2007)

Lethality risk to first responders doubles.

(Campbell et al., 2019)

The LINK and Domestic Violence

Research Highlights

71% of survivors reported death, harm or threat...

32% reported their children had hurt or killed animals

(Ascione, 1998)

Animal abuse occurred:

In presence of women - 87%

In presence of children - 75%

(Quinlisk, 1994)

The LINK and Domestic Violence

Why Do Abusers Target Animals?

- Because they can...
- Because they're convenient...
- BECAUSE IT WORKS!!**
 - Normalize culture of violence
 - Hold family hostage
 - Get revenge
 - Jealousy: more attention to pet
 - Believe police won't care
 - Target pets of family/friends who helped her escape

(Raguski, 2012)

The LINK and Child Abuse



Henry Bergh, Founder
American SPCA (1866)



The "Little Mary Ellen" Case
(1874)

The LINK and Child Abuse

The Battered-Child Syndrome

C. Henry Kempe, M.D., Deane, Frederic N. Silverman, M.D., Candeloni, Brenda F. Steele, M.D.,
William Orvaschel, M.D., and Henry E. Silver, M.D., Denver

Reprinted from The Journal of the American Medical Association
Vol. 216, No. 12, pp. 1041-1045, 1971
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The battered-child syndrome, a clinical condition in young children who have received serious physical abuse, is a frequent cause of permanent injury or death. The syndrome should be considered in any child exhibiting evidence of fracture of any bone, subdural hematoma, failure to thrive, soft tissue swellings or skin bruising, in any child who dies suddenly, or where the degree and type of injury is at variance with the history given regarding the occurrence of the trauma. Psychiatric factors are probably of prime importance in the pathogenesis of the disorder, but knowledge of these factors is limited. Physicians have a duty and responsibility to the child to require a full evaluation of the problem and to guarantee that no expected repetition of trauma will be permitted to occur.



The LINK and Child Abuse

- 60% of New Jersey pet-owning families investigated for child abuse or neglect also had abused or neglected pets
- Animal abuse in 88% of families with physical child abuse
- 2/3 of incidents perpetrated by man; 1/3 by children
- Bite rate was 11x greater
- Use of veterinary services similar to general population



(DeVinney, Dickert & Lockwood,)

The LINK and Child Abuse

Psychological Impact on Children

"It is now understood that childhood cruelty to animals is an important predictor of later antisocial and aggressive acts and that children showing these behaviors, without intervention, are at risk for enduring disorders in conduct and mental health."



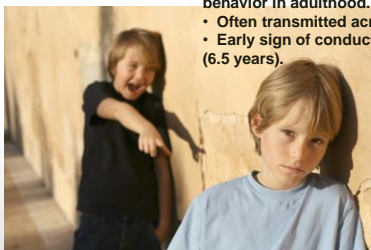
(Becker & French, 2004;
American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

"Does Childhood Animal Abuse Always Lead to Human Violence?"

WHAT WE DO KNOW:

Child aggressive behavior:

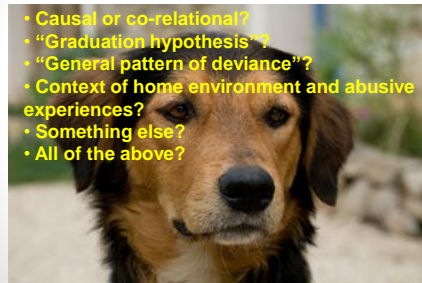
- Stable and predictable by age 8.
- Often predictive of serious anti-social behavior in adulthood.
- Often transmitted across generations.
- Early sign of conduct disorder (6.5 years).



"Does Childhood Animal Abuse Always Lead to Human Violence?"

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW:

- Causal or co-relational?
- "Graduation hypothesis"?
- "General pattern of deviance"?
- Context of home environment and abusive experiences?
- Something else?
- All of the above?



The LINK and Elder Abuse

Issues for Agencies Working with Elders



- Memory loss
- Fixed/low income
- Physical frailness
- Social isolation



The LINK and Elder Abuse

Issues for Adult Protective Services

1. Neglect of pet (food, vet care).
2. Self-Neglect to care for pet (starve, eat pet food, avoid hospital/nursing home).
3. Attachment and pet loss.
4. Safety of caseworker, home health aide or homemaker services (waste, bites).
5. Animal abuse as revenge or control.
6. Jealousy over service animal.
7. Animal hoarding. (Recidivism rate: 100%)



The LINK and Elder Abuse

Animals provide reward, acceptance, conflict-free relationships, sense of self-worth

Types of Animal Hoarders

1. **Mental illness:**
Attachment disorders? OCD? Depression?
Agoraphobia? Anxiety? Schizophrenia? Alzheimer's?
2. **Overwhelmed:** good intentions gone bad; the go-to lady.
3. **Rescuers:** only ones who can care for them, state of denial, identity tied to possession, mistrust of others.
4. **Exploiters:** greed or criminal intent.

Summary – Key Concepts for Victim Advocates

1. **Animal abuse also harms people.**
2. **Animal abuse is a form of family violence.**
3. **Animal abuse should be considered an Adverse Childhood Experience impacting the health and well-being of children and domestic violence survivors.**
4. **Recognizing and responding to suspected animal maltreatment is an early and effective way to better help families.**
5. **Interventions when animals are involved require creative solutions by advocates who are sensitive to animals and clients' attachments to them.**

What Victim Advocates Can Do to Connect the Dots

- Animal issues are a window into your clients' lives, a big piece of the puzzle, a mirror of interpersonal relationships – *and an opportunity to build rapport*

1. "Are there animals at home?"
2. "How are they cared for?"
3. "Are you worried about their welfare?"



Responses Based on The LINK

1. Social Services Agencies' Responses

Check the physical condition of pets.

- Ask about any recent health problems or injuries.
- Look for malnutrition, inadequate food/water/shelter.
- Look for lots of pet food but no human food.
- Look for excessive numbers of animals.

Look for dangerous animals threatening child's welfare.

Treat pet loss as potential developmental issue.

Responses Based on The LINK

2. Get More Information

Assessments, crisis lines, intakes:

Ask about presence & relationships with animals; histories; fears; pet loss or disappearance.

Observe interactions:

"If you don't look and don't ask, you won't know."

Assess needs for help with pet/livestock care.

Know who to call for referrals:

- Animal organizations (surrender, adoption, low-cost spay/neuter, foster care while in hospital/shelter, pet food banks)
- Veterinarians/vet associations
- National Link Coalition Directory of Abuse Investigation Agencies (NationalLinkCoalition.org)

Responses Based on The LINK

3. Pets in Protection Orders



Pet protection orders
2006-2020 (35 states)

Pet And Women Safety
(PAWS) Act (2018)

- PPOs across state lines

- \$2,500,000 for pet-friendly shelters

Other Public Policy:

- Animal cruelty in definition of DV (10, incl Arizona)
- Animal cruelty in definition of elder abuse (2)
- Courts can award pet custody in animals' best interests (4)

Responses Based on The LINK

4. Cross-Training



Step 4 Set up lines of communication

Step 3 Reciprocate with training for your staff

Step 2 Conduct an in-service training to introduce them to your organization and how it functions

Step 1 Make contact with other agencies: Humane Society, SPCA, Animal Control/Animal Services

Responses Based on The LINK

5. Increased community awareness



Baltimore, MD

Responses Based on The LINK

6. Pets in Safety Planning

PALS Safety Planning (URI PALS, NYC)

Pet-care plan: identify in advance family & friends who can care for pets. Know where your pet likes to hide.

Animal ownership documents: License, vaccinations, vet bills, pet food receipts, photos to prove ownership.

Legal protection: Include pets in protection orders.

Safety supplies: Keep emergency bag of toys, food, records, meds and supplies hidden and ready to go

- Get all documentation in HER name.
- Include pets in safety planning brochures. (Samples at NationalLinkCoalition.org/Resources)
- Identify pet foster care resources. (SafePlaceForPets.org; DomesticShelters.org; AWlonline.org)
- Identify pet-friendly housing – ApartmentGuide.com

Responses Based on The LINK

7. "DV and the DVM"



2015: NZVA: A "three-dimensional profession" – unique voice that transcends animal life, human life and the environment. Joins national domestic violence prevention initiative.

NZ Code of Professional Conduct: Veterinarians, when confronted with situations of animal abuse, should consider whether people within that home might be at risk.



U.K.'s Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons:
"Given the links between animal, child and domestic abuse, a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse reporting suspected or actual animal abuse should consider whether a child or adult within that home might also be at risk"

Responses Based on The LINK

7. "DV and the DVM"



DeLand, Fla. June 2018



A GUIDE FOR VETERINARIANS AND OTHER PRACTICE STAFF MEMBERS ASKING QUESTIONS RELATED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

When to ask questions:

- Intake of new clients.
- Routine history or health assessment.
- When abuse is suspected.

What to ask:

- What are family members' attitudes toward the pet?
- Is there an order of protection?
- Are there any safety concerns you have?
- Are there any obstacles in providing care for the pet?
- Questions about signs of abuse and interpersonal violence, using the Power and Control Wheel.

How to ask:

- Face-to-face in a confidential space.
- Directly and nonjudgmentally.
- With resources or referrals.
- With appropriate responses:
 - "I believe you."
 - "No one deserves to be hurt."
 - "There are resources available."

Source: Michelle Lockman, PhD

Allison, M., et al. (2017). Strategies veterinary practices can use to address the problem of intimate partner violence. -- JAVMA, 250(1), 42-45.

Given that victims of domestic violence often seek veterinary aid for their pets, veterinarians may act as frontline professionals in the recognition of the Link between pet abuse and domestic violence.

-- Newland, Boller & Boller, NZ Vet. Journal, 2020

3 articles in 2020
West Coast Veterinarian magazine (Canada)
-- Louise Lathey & Emilia Gordon

Responses Based on The LINK

7. "DV and the DVM"

Veterinary Reporting of Suspected Child, Elder and Animal Abuse



AVMA (2012): "responsibility to report, whether or not mandated"

(2019): "encourages laws granting immunity"

AAHA (2015): "supports reporting of suspicions"



Hit Free Zone

This facility is a Hit Free Zone.

Hitting hurts people and animals.

This is a safe place where...

- Growups don't hit growups
- Growups don't hit kids
- Kids don't hit growups
- Kids don't hit kids
- No one hits animals

(DVM members are happy to speak with you about these questions or provide other resources.)

Customizable
Hit-Free Zone
Posters and
guidelines



Infographic:
Martha Smith-Blackmore

Responses Based on The LINK

8. Pet-friendly co-sheltering



SAFT

250+ shelters in U.S., int'l
(46 states; 9 in Arizona)

www.SAFTprogram.org



"Doggie
Witness
Protection"



- \$20,000 grants for capital construction
- \$500 emergency grants for individuals
- Emergency boarding grants during COVID-19

Any Questions?



Phil Arkow, Coordinator
The National LINK Coalition
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LOTS of FREE resources!
Sign up for our LINK-LETTER!
-- PLEASE include your affiliation

