

The Link Between Animal Cruelty and Violence Towards People

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I. Introduction.....	1
II. Animal Abuse as a Predictor of Future Behavior	2
A. Serial Killers	6
B. School Shooters	7
III. Animal Abuse as an Indicator of Domestic Violence or Neglect.....	8
IV. Conclusion	12

I. Introduction

Cruelty to animals and violence towards people share common characteristics.² For example, both types of victims are living creatures, feel pain and experience distress, and may die from their injuries.³ Until recently, however, violence towards children and the elderly, and other domestic violence had been considered to be unrelated to violence towards animals.⁴ A correlation has now been established between animal abuse, family violence, and other forms of community violence.⁵ A growing body of research indicates that people who commit acts of cruelty towards animals rarely stop there.⁶ Murderers and people who abuse their spouse or children frequently harmed animals in the past.⁷ People who abuse animals are not only dangerous to their animal victims but may also be dangerous to people.⁸

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² *Animal Abuse and Violent Offending*, Juvenile Justice Bulletin (September 2001), at http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_2/page4.html (last visited June 27, 2007).

³ *Id.*

⁴ *The Animal Abuse-Human Violence Link*, Progressive Animal Welfare Society, at <http://www.paws.org/help/report/connection.php> (last visited June 27, 2007).

⁵ *Understanding the Link® between violence to people and animals*, American Humane Association, at http://www.americanhumane.org/site/PageServer?pagename=nr_fact_sheets_link (last visited June 27, 2007).

⁶ *The Animal Abuse-Human Violence Link*, at <http://www.paws.org/help/report/connection.php>.

⁷ *Animal Alternatives in Education: The Link Between Human Violence and Animal Cruelty*, The National Anti-Vivisection Society, at http://www.navs.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ain_edu_link_violence_cruelty (last visited July 3, 2007).

⁸ *Animal Abuse and Violent Offending*, at http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_2/page5.html.

Child and animal protection professionals are aware of this connection, and recognize that both child and animal abuse are linked in a self-perpetuating cycle of violence.⁹ One reason for this is that individuals who witness abuse or other violence become desensitized to it. Research shows that the more often someone is exposed to a certain situation, the more comfortable that person becomes with it.¹⁰ Criminal psychologists acknowledge that participating in or viewing acts of repeated cruelty towards animals desensitizes both the perpetrator and the spectator.¹¹ John Locke once wrote of children that "...tormenting and killing...beasts, will, by degrees, harden their minds even towards men; and they who delight in the suffering and destruction of inferior creatures, will not be apt to be very compassionate or benign to those of their own kind."¹² Animal cruelty destroys respect for life,¹³ and children who witness animal abuse are at a greater risk of becoming abusers themselves.¹⁴

II. Animal Abuse as a Predictor of Future Behavior

Cruelty to animals can be a warning sign of future violent behavior.¹⁵ A child's aggressive, abusive behavior towards animals may predict later violence towards people.¹⁶ Child protection and social service agencies, mental health professionals, and educators regard animal abuse as a significant form of aggressive and antisocial behavior, and consider it to be an important red flag in identifying other violent behavior.¹⁷

⁹ *Understanding the Link® between violence to people and animals*, at http://www.americanhumane.org/site/PageServer?pagename=nr_fact_sheets_link.

¹⁰ *Animal Alternatives in Education: The Link Between Human Violence and Animal Cruelty*, at http://www.navs.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ain_edu_link_violence_cruelty.

¹¹ Phyllis M. Daugherty, *Animal abusers may be warming up for more* (February 24, 2005), at <http://www.lacp.org/2005-Articles-Main/LAPDsDedicatedAnimalCrueltyUnit.html> (last visited June 27, 2007).

¹² *Modern History Sourcebook: John Locke (1632-1704), Some Thoughts Concerning Education, 1692*, at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1692locke-education.html> (last visited June 27, 2007).

¹³ Irwin Feldman, *Where Violence Begins: Animal Industries and the Cult of Aggression*, at http://www.animalsvoice.com/PAGES/writes/editorial/essays/hunting/feldman_violence.html (last visited June 27, 2007).

¹⁴ *Understanding the Link® between violence to people and animals*, at http://www.americanhumane.org/site/PageServer?pagename=nr_fact_sheets_link.

¹⁵ *The Animal Abuse-Human Violence Link*, at <http://www.paws.org/help/report/connection.php>.

¹⁶ *If Your Kid is Torturing Animals, We've All Got a Problem*, *The Desert Sun* (April 2005), at http://www.animalsvoice.com/PAGES/writes/editorial/news/comment/kid_torturing.html (last visited June 29, 2007).

¹⁷ *The Animal Abuse-Human Violence Link*, at <http://www.paws.org/help/report/connection.php>.

Children and adolescents may abuse animals out of curiosity or exploration, peer pressure, mood enhancement (i.e., to relieve boredom or depression), as a way to emotionally abuse others, or as practice for future interpersonal violence.¹⁸ In addition, adults may commit acts of cruelty to animals in order to express aggression through an animal (i.e., train an animal to attack by using pain to create a “mean” dog), enhance one’s own aggressiveness (e.g., use an animal victim for target practice), or to satisfy sadistic urges (i.e., to enjoy the suffering experienced by the animal victim).¹⁹

There is a significant correlation between acts of cruelty to animals as a child and serious, recurrent aggression towards people as an adult.²⁰ In fact, one of the most reliable predictors of future violence as an adult is having committed animal abuse as a child.²¹ Research in psychology and criminology indicates that people who commit acts of cruelty to animals often do not stop there — many of them later turn on humans.²² Psychology, sociology, and criminology studies have shown that many violent offenders had committed repeated acts of serious animal cruelty during childhood and adolescence.²³ People who abused pets as children are more likely to commit murder or other violent crimes as adults.²⁴ In fact, violent criminals are five times more likely to commit violent crimes against people if they did so against animals

¹⁸ *Animal Abuse and Violent Offending*, at http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_2/page6.html.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ Mary Lou Randour, *What We Know About the Link Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*, at http://www.animalsvoice.com/PAGES/writes/editorial/features/link/randour_link.html (last visited June 29, 2007).

²¹ Holly Nash, DVM, MS, *Animal Cruelty/Human Violence: The Link*, at <http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?cls=0&cat=1495&articleid=3120> (last visited June 27, 2007).

²² *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/Factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=18> (last visited June 27, 2007)..

²³ Susan I. Finkelstein, *Canary in a Coal Mine: The Connection Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*, Penn Veterinary Medicine, at <http://www.vet.upenn.edu/schoolresources/communications/publications/bellwether/58/connection.html> (last visited June 27, 2007).

²⁴ *Animal Cruelty/Human Violence: The Link*, at <http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?cls=0&cat=1495&articleid=3120>.

as youths.²⁵ There is a further correlation: the most aggressive criminals had committed the most severe acts of animal cruelty in childhood.²⁶

Acts of animal cruelty are not merely signs of a minor personality flaw, but are rather symptomatic of a deep mental disturbance.²⁷ Cruelty to animals has been recognized as an indicator of a dangerous psychopathy that claims animal victims,²⁸ as well as human victims.²⁹ A survey of psychiatric patients who had repeatedly tortured animals found that all of them were also highly aggressive towards people.³⁰

Acts of violence beget acts of increased violence.³¹ It is a matter of escalation: people who want to victimize start with something they can easily control, then they work their way up.³² A person who only feels powerful and in control while inflicting pain or death must continually sustain that “high” by committing acts that are more heinous or morbid.³³ The violent act itself must be viewed as dangerous, without regard as to whether the victim is a person or an animal.³⁴ An example of this escalation is the “Vampire cult leader,” Rod Ferrell, who is serving a life sentence for bludgeoning a Florida couple to death.³⁵ Ferrell first drew the attention of law

²⁵ Robert Price, *Cruelty to animals may lead to child abuse*, KHAS-TV, at <http://khastv.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=9304> (last visited June 27, 2007).

²⁶ Randour, *What We Know About the Link, Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*, at http://www.animalsvoice.com/PAGES/writes/editorial/features/link/randour_link.html

²⁷ *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/Factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=18>.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ Daugherty, *Animal abusers may be warming up for more*, at <http://www.lacp.org/2005-Articles-Main/LAPDsDedicatedAnimalCrueltyUnit.html>.

³² *Criminologists find link between animal cruelty, later violence*, Associated Press (March 2, 2004), at http://www.animalsvoice.com/PAGES/writes/editorial/news/invest/AP_link.html (last viewed June 29, 2007).

³³ Daugherty, *Animal abusers may be warming up for more*, at <http://www.lacp.org/2005-Articles-Main/LAPDsDedicatedAnimalCrueltyUnit.html>.

³⁴ Richard Weizel, *Animal abuse predictor of domestic violence*, Connecticut Post Online, at <http://www.chronicleforums.com/Forum/showthread.php?p=2448275#post2448275> (originally at http://www.connpost.com/localnews/ci_5942231) (last visited June 27, 2007).

³⁵ *Id.*

enforcement in Kentucky, where he was charged with breaking into an animal shelter where two puppies were tortured, killed and mutilated.³⁶

The link between animal abuse and violence towards people is supported by studies, which have shown that:

- 100% of sexual homicide offenders examined had a history of cruelty towards animals.³⁷
- 70% of all animal abusers have committed at least one other criminal offense and almost 40% have committed violent crimes against people.³⁸
- 63.3% of men who had committed crimes of aggression admitted to cruelty to animals.³⁹
- 48% of rapists and 30% of child molesters reported committing animal abuse during childhood or adolescence.⁴⁰
- 36% of assaultive women reported cruelty to animals while 0% of non-assaultive women did.⁴¹
- 25% of violent, incarcerated men reported higher rates of “substantial cruelty to animals” in childhood than a comparison group of non-incarcerated men (0%).⁴²
- Men who abused animals were five times more likely to have been arrested for violence towards humans, four times more likely to have committed property crimes, and three times more likely to have records for drug and disorderly conduct offenses.⁴³

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/Factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=18>.

³⁸ *The Animal Abuse-Human Violence Link*, at <http://www.paws.org/help/report/connection.php>.

³⁹ *Animal Abuse and Violent Offending*, at http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_2/page4.html.

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ Randour, *What We Know About the Link, Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*, at http://www.animalsvoice.com/PAGES/writes/editorial/features/link/randour_link.html

A. Serial Killers

Researchers consider a fascination with cruelty to animals as a red flag that may indicate that a person is a serial killer or rapist.⁴⁴ According to the deputy manager of animal cruelty issues for the Humane Society of the United States, Dale Bartlett, "...the research shows that most mass murderers and serial killers are likely to have animal cruelty in their background."⁴⁵

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) considers past animal abuse when profiling serial killers.⁴⁶ According to Robert K. Ressler, who developed profiles of serial killers for the FBI, "Murderers...very often start out by killing and torturing animals as kids."⁴⁷ FBI criminal profiler, John Douglas, writes in *The Mind Hunter* that serial offenders' earliest acts of violence are often the torture and/or killing of pets or wildlife, then brutalizing younger siblings, and then finally engaging in domestic violence or street crime.⁴⁸

History is replete with serial killers whose violent tendencies were first directed towards animals.⁴⁹ Mass murderers Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer, Albert DeSalvo, and others committed heinous acts of animal cruelty before brutally killing their human victims.⁵⁰ Jeffrey Dahmer's first victims were animals: he decapitated dogs and staked cats to trees in his youth.⁵¹ He also impaled frogs, cats, and dogs' heads on sticks.⁵² Albert DeSalvo, the "Boston Strangler," who was convicted of killing 13 women, trapped dogs and cats and shot arrows at them through boxes

⁴⁴ *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/Factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=18>.

⁴⁵ Weizel, *Animal abuse predictor of domestic violence*, at <http://www.chronicleforums.com/Forum/showthread.php?p=2448275#post2448275>.

⁴⁶ *The Animal Abuse-Human Violence Link*, at <http://www.paws.org/help/report/connection.php>.

⁴⁷ *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/Factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=18>.

⁴⁸ Daugherty, *Animal abusers may be warming up for more*, at <http://www.lacp.org/2005-Articles-Main/LAPDsDedicatedAnimalCrueltyUnit.html>.

⁴⁹ *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/Factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=18>.

⁵⁰ *Animal abuse predictor of domestic violence*, at <http://www.chronicleforums.com/Forum/showthread.php?p=2448275#post2448275>.

⁵¹ *Why You Should Join The War On Animal Cruelty*, Coalition for Animal Justice, at <http://www.animal-justice.org/involved.html> (last viewed at June 29, 2007).

⁵² *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/Factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=18>.

as a youth.⁵³ Dennis Rader, the “BTK” killer, wrote in a chronological account of his childhood about hanging a dog and a cat.⁵⁴ Convicted sniper, Lee Boyd Malvo, who killed 10 people, had “pelted—and probably killed—numerous cats with marbles from a slingshot when he was about 14.”⁵⁵ Ted Bundy also tortured his pets as a child.⁵⁶

B. School Shooters

The deadly violence that has occurred in schools in recent years has, in most cases, begun with cruelty to animals.⁵⁷ Many of the school shooters committed acts of animal cruelty before turning their aggression on classmates, teachers, and parents.⁵⁸

Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, who shot and killed 12 students at Columbine High School, spoke of mutilating animals to their classmates.⁵⁹ Luke Woodham, who murdered his mother and two schoolmates, tortured and killed his own pet dog beforehand.⁶⁰ He wrote in his journal about setting Sparkle on fire,⁶¹ describing her dying howls as a “thing of beauty.”⁶² High-school killer, Kip Kinkel, tortured animals before going on his shooting spree.⁶³ He was reported to have blown up cows and decapitated cats.⁶⁴ Andrew Golden is said to have shot dogs, even his own pet dog, with a .22 caliber rifle before attacking his classmates.⁶⁵

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ *Id.*

⁵⁶ *Why You Should Join The War On Animal Cruelty*, at <http://www.animal-justice.org/involved.html>.

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ Randour, *What We Know About the Link Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*, at http://www.animalsvoice.com/PAGES/writes/editorial/features/link/randour_link.html.

⁵⁹ *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/Factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=18>.

⁶⁰ *Animal Abuse and Violent Offending*, at http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_2/intro.html.

⁶¹ *Criminologists Find Link Between Animal Cruelty, Later Violence*, at http://www.animalsvoice.com/PAGES/writes/intros/link_between.html

⁶² Randour, *What We Know About the Link Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*, at http://www.animalsvoice.com/PAGES/writes/editorial/features/link/randour_link.html.

⁶³ *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/Factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=18>.

⁶⁴ Randour, *What We Know About the Link Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*, at http://www.animalsvoice.com/PAGES/writes/editorial/features/link/randour_link.html.

⁶⁵ *Id.*

III. Animal Abuse as an Indicator of Domestic Violence or Neglect

In recent years, a strong connection has been made between animal abuse and domestic violence.⁶⁶ In fact, cruelty to animals is considered to be a significant predictor of future domestic violence.⁶⁷ According to Phil Arkow, humane educator and chair of the Latham Foundation's Child and Family Violence Prevention Project, "[f]amily violence often begins with pet abuse."⁶⁸ When animals in a home are abused or neglected, it is a warning sign that others in the household may not be safe.⁶⁹ Because abusers target the powerless, crimes against animals, spouses, children, and the elderly often go hand in hand.⁷⁰ Researchers have found that a batterer's first target is often an animal living in the home, while the second is a spouse or a child.⁷¹

Parents who neglect or abuse animals may also abuse or neglect their own children.⁷² For example, Indiana residents Jade M. Jonas and Michael R. Smith faced felony charges when authorities discovered their two children and three dogs languishing in their filthy house.⁷³ According to news sources, officials first found a tethered dog deprived of food and water outside the home.⁷⁴ Upon entering the couple's residence, investigators found a 3-month-old boy lying near piles of feces, trash, and rotten food.⁷⁵ There was also a half-clothed toddler and two other dogs.⁷⁶ In another case, Illinois authorities found 40 parasite-ridden dogs amid 6 inches of feces on property occupied by John Morris.⁷⁷ Officials responding to neighbors' concerns found

⁶⁶ *Animal Cruelty/Human Violence: The Link*, at <http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?cls=0&cat=1495&articleid=3120>.

⁶⁷ *Animal abuse predictor of domestic violence*, at <http://www.chronicleforums.com/Forum/showthread.php?p=2448275#post2448275>.

⁶⁸ *Canary in a Coal Mine: The Connection Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*, at <http://www.vet.upenn.edu/schoolresources/communications/publications/bellwether/58/connection.html>.

⁶⁹ *Understanding the Link® between violence to people and animals*, at http://www.americanhumane.org/site/PageServer?pagename=nr_fact_sheets_link.

⁷⁰ *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/Factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=18>.

⁷¹ *Animal Cruelty and Family Violence*, at http://www.helpinganimals.com/ga_abuseFamily.asp.

⁷² *Id.*

⁷³ *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/Factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=18>.

⁷⁴ *Id.*

⁷⁵ *Id.*

⁷⁶ *Id.*

⁷⁷ *Id.*

the sick and emaciated dogs confined to filthy animal carriers before discovering three children living in similar conditions.⁷⁸

Abusive family members may threaten, injure, or kill pets as a way of controlling others in the family.⁷⁹ According to Susan Urban, a certified social worker with the ASPCA's Counseling Services, the message the perpetrator is sending is, "Look what I can do to your animal, and imagine what I can do to you."⁸⁰ She further states that "[i]n domestic violence, ... the perpetrator often uses the animal to hurt a particular person - usually the person who loves and cares for the pet. The animal is abused in order to intimidate, harass or silence the vulnerable person."⁸¹ In addition, the perpetrator may retaliate against a person by hurting his or her pets or by otherwise abusing animals in that person's presence.⁸² Studies have found that from 54 to 71 percent of women seeking shelter report that their partners had threatened, injured or killed one or more family pets.⁸³

When a family member abuses an elderly relative's pet, the motivations may be complex.⁸⁴ Many older adults are particularly attached to their pets, which makes their pets vulnerable to abuse by those who want to exert power and control over the elderly person.⁸⁵ The perpetrator may neglect or abuse an elderly person's pet as a form of control or retaliation, out of frustration over their caretaking responsibilities, or as a way to extract financial assets.⁸⁶

In cases of child abuse, perpetrators often abuse animals to exert their power and control over children and other vulnerable family members.⁸⁷ In some cases, abusers will force children

⁷⁸ *Id.*

⁷⁹ *Canary in a Coal Mine: The Connection Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*, at <http://www.vet.upenn.edu/schoolresources/communications/publications/bellwether/58/connection.html>

⁸⁰ Robyn Watts, Esq., *Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse*, ASPCA, at http://www.aspc.org/site/PageServer?pagename=edu_resources_domestic (last visited June 27, 2007).

⁸¹ *Id.*

⁸² *Animal Abuse and Violent Offending*, at http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_2/page6.html.

⁸³ *The Animal Abuse-Human Violence Link*, at <http://www.paws.org/help/report/connection.php>.

⁸⁴ *Animal Cruelty and Family Violence: Making the Connection*, at http://www.hsus.org/hsus_field/first_strike_the_connection_between_animal_cruelty_and_human_violence/elder_abuse_and_animal_cruelty/.

⁸⁵ *Id.*

⁸⁶ *Id.*

⁸⁷ *Animal Cruelty, Human Violence Linked in Humane Society Study*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, at

to sexually abuse, hurt, or kill a pet.⁸⁸ Threats of animal abuse may also be used to intimidate children to keep silent about being victims of abuse.⁸⁹

To summarize, batterers may threaten, abuse, or kill animals to

- Demonstrate and confirm power and control over the family;⁹⁰
- Isolate the victim and children;⁹¹
- Eliminate competition for attention;⁹²
- Force the family to keep violence a secret;⁹³
- Teach submission;⁹⁴
- Retaliate for acts of independence and self-determination;⁹⁵
- Perpetuate terror;⁹⁶
- Prevent the victim from leaving or coerce him or her to return;⁹⁷
- Punish the victim for leaving;⁹⁸ or to
- Degrade the victim through involvement in the abuse.⁹⁹

Witnessing abuse towards parents or pets may compromise a child's psychological adjustment, increase his propensity for interpersonal violence, and make children's cruelty to

http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/articles.cfm?article_id=316&issue_id=2001-07 (last viewed June 27, 2007).

⁸⁸ *Id.*

⁸⁹ *Id.*

⁹⁰ *Animal Cruelty and Family Violence: Making the Connection*, at http://www.hsus.org/hsus_field/first_strike_the_connection_between_animal_cruelty_and_human_violence/elder_abuse_and_animal_cruelty/.

⁹¹ *Animal Cruelty/Domestic Violence Fact Sheet*, The Humane Society of the United States, at http://www.hsus.org/hsus_field/first_strike_the_connection_between_animal_cruelty_and_human_violence/animal_cruelty_and_family_violence_making_the_connection/animal_crueltydomestic_violence_fact_sheet.html (last viewed June 27, 2007).

⁹² *Id.*

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ *Id.*

⁹⁵ *Id.*

⁹⁶ *Id.*

⁹⁷ *Id.*

⁹⁸ *Id.*

⁹⁹ *Id.*

animals more likely to emerge as a symptom of distress.¹⁰⁰ Children who have witnessed domestic violence or who have been the victims of physical or sexual abuse may also become animal abusers themselves, imitating the violence they have seen or experienced.¹⁰¹

Children who abuse animals may be repeating a lesson learned at home,¹⁰² engaging in post-traumatic reenactment of a violent episode,¹⁰³ or may be reacting to anger or frustration with violence.¹⁰⁴ Researchers say that a child's violence towards animals often represents displaced hostility and aggression stemming from neglect or abuse of the child or of another family member.¹⁰⁵ Some children may express the pain of victimization by abusing vulnerable family pets.¹⁰⁶ A victimized child may try to regain a sense of power by victimizing a more vulnerable animal.¹⁰⁷ Children in violent homes frequently participate in this pecking-order battery, in which they may injure or kill an animal.¹⁰⁸

The correlation between domestic violence and animal abuse is supported by studies, which have shown that:

- 88% of 57 New Jersey families in which child abuse occurred also had incidents of animal abuse;¹⁰⁹
- 85% of women and 63% of children entering shelters discussed incidents of pet abuse in the family;¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁰ Frank R. Ascione, Ph.D, et al, *The Abuse of Animals and Domestic Violence: A National Survey of Shelters for Women Who Are Battered*, Utah State University, at http://www.vachss.com/guest_dispatches/ascione_1.html (last visited June 27, 2007).

¹⁰¹ *Animal Cruelty and Family Violence: Making the Connection*, The Humane Society of the United States, at http://www.hsus.org/hsus_field/first_strike_the_connection_between_animal_cruelty_and_human_violence/animal_cruelty_and_family_violence_making_the_connection/ (last viewed on June 27, 2007).

¹⁰² *Animal Cruelty and Family Violence*, at http://www.helpinganimals.com/ga_abuseFamily.asp.

¹⁰³ *Animal Abuse and Violent Offending*, at http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_2/page6.html.

¹⁰⁴ *Animal Cruelty and Family Violence*, at http://www.helpinganimals.com/ga_abuseFamily.asp.

¹⁰⁵ *Children and Animal Cruelty: What Parents Should Know*, at http://www.hsus.org/hsus_field/first_strike_the_connection_between_animal_cruelty_and_human_violence/children_and_animal_cruelty_what_parents_should_know.html.

¹⁰⁶ *Animal Abuse and Violent Offending*, at http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_2/page7.html.

¹⁰⁷ *Id.* at http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_2/page6.html.

¹⁰⁸ *Animal Cruelty and Family Violence*, at http://www.helpinganimals.com/ga_abuseFamily.asp.

¹⁰⁹ *Id.*

- More than 80% of families being treated for child abuse were also involved in animal abuse;¹¹¹
- 70.3% of women in domestic abuse shelters reported either threats or actual harm to pets, with 54% reporting actual harm;¹¹²
- 60% of families with child abuse and neglect also had pets that were abused or neglected;¹¹³
- 32% of pet-owning victims of domestic abuse reported that one or more of their children had hurt or killed a pet;¹¹⁴
- Approximately 25% of the battered women reported that concern for their pets' welfare had prevented them from seeking shelter sooner;¹¹⁵ and
- 12% of the reported intentional animal cruelty cases also involved some form of family violence, including domestic violence, child abuse, spouse/child witnessing animal cruelty, or elder abuse.¹¹⁶

IV. Conclusion

Courts should aggressively penalize animal abusers, examine families for other signs of violence, and order perpetrators to undergo psychological evaluations and counseling.¹¹⁷ The deputy manager of animal cruelty issues for the Humane Society of the United States, Dale Bartlett, says that they “are trying to impress upon the courts and prosecutors, who handle cases

¹¹⁰ *Animal Cruelty and Family Violence: Making the Connection*, at http://www.hsus.org/hsus_field/first_strike_the_connection_between_animal_cruelty_and_human_violence/animal_cruelty_and_family_violence_making_the_connection/.

¹¹¹ *The Animal Abuse-Human Violence Link*, at <http://www.paws.org/help/report/connection.php>.

¹¹² *Animal Cruelty/Human Violence: The Link*, at <http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?cls=0&cat=1495&articleid=3120>.

¹¹³ *Animal Abuse and Violent Offending*, at http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_2/page7.html.

¹¹⁴ *Animal Cruelty and Family Violence: Making the Connection*, The Humane Society of the United States, at http://www.hsus.org/hsus_field/first_strike_the_connection_between_animal_cruelty_and_human_violence/animal_cruelty_and_family_violence_making_the_connection/.

¹¹⁵ *Animal Abuse and Violent Offending*, at http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_2/page7.html.

¹¹⁶ *Canary in a Coal Mine: The Connection Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*, at <http://www.vet.upenn.edu/schoolresources/communications/publications/bellwether/58/connection.html>.

¹¹⁷ *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=132> (last viewed June 27, 2007).

of murder and rape, and often do not take animal abuse seriously that they must begin to realize the connection between how abusers treat people and animals.”¹¹⁸ Schools, parents, communities, and courts that dismiss cruelty to animals as a “minor” crime are ignoring a time bomb.¹¹⁹

According to Phil Arkow, humane educator and chair of the Latham Foundation’s Child and Family Violence Prevention Project, “Animal abuse must be redefined as a crime of violence...” and “[i]t must be perceived and documented as a human welfare issue.”¹²⁰ Judy Priess of the SASA Crisis Center says a connection needs to be established “that hurting an animal is just as bad as hurting a person.”¹²¹ She believes that if one can prevent a person from abusing animals as an adolescent, one can stop him from abusing people as an adult.¹²²

Communities must acknowledge that the abuse of any living being is unacceptable and endangers everyone.¹²³ Recognizing that cruelty to animals is a significant form of aggressive and antisocial behavior may help further the understanding and prevention of violence.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Weizel, *Animal abuse predictor of domestic violence*, at <http://www.chronicleforums.com/Forum/showthread.php?p=2448275#post2448275>.

¹¹⁹ *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=132>.

¹²⁰ *Canary in a Coal Mine: The Connection Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*, at <http://www.vet.upenn.edu/schoolresources/communications/publications/bellwether/58/connection.html>.

¹²¹ *Cruelty to animals may lead to child abuse*, at <http://khastv.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=9304>.

¹²² *Id.*

¹²³ *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime*, at <http://www.helpinganimals.com/factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=132>.

¹²⁴ *Animal Abuse and Violent Offending*, at http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2001_9_2/page9.html.