



**Pachyderm Productions Proudly Presents:**

# The Link: Pet Abuse and Family Violence



**By Michelle Welch**

Change is  
in the air.

785 matters  
2015

58 special  
prosecution  
Up from 14  
20 special  
prosecution  
Total special  
prosecution



18 years-Animal Crime  
prosecutions

Animal Law Unit

First of its kind in the U.S.

785 matters in 3 ½ years

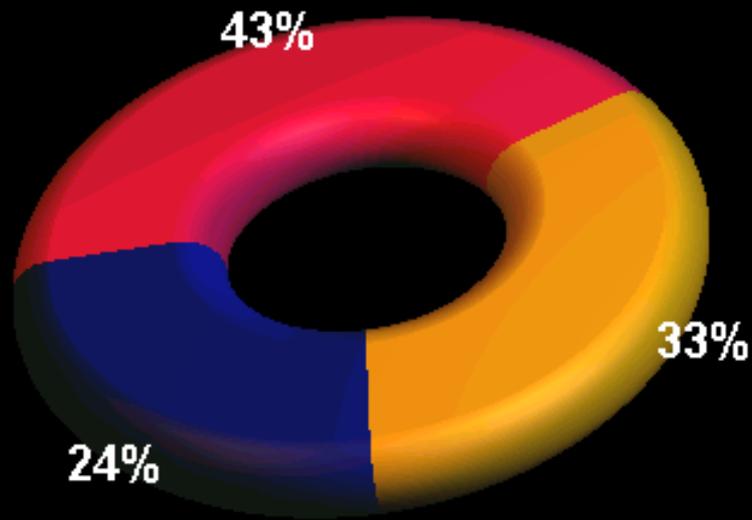
Our Animal Law Unit is designed to help assist with the prosecution of violations of the Commonwealth's animal fighting, abuse, neglect and other animal-related criminal laws and advise on legal matters relating to animals.



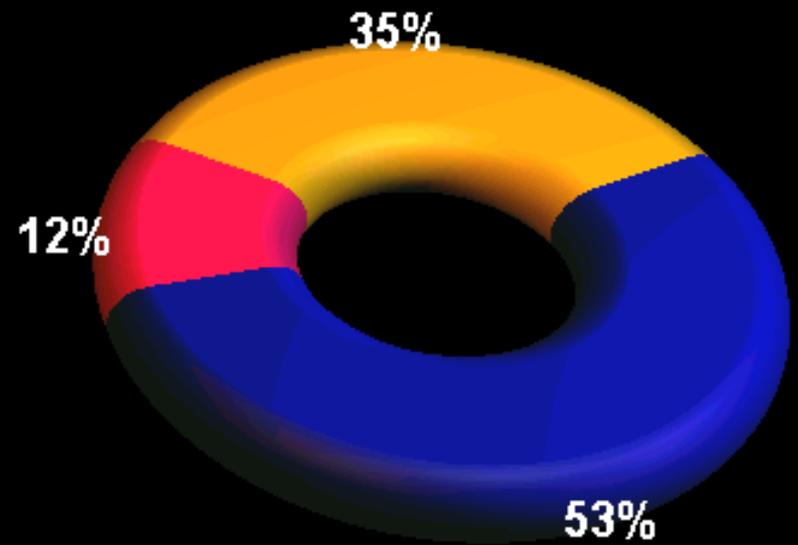
# The Link: Domestic Violence

*“Aubrey got angry with the family dog for straying outside their yard. He loaded one of his nine guns, then shot and killed it. The kids began to sob, devastated. He grabbed (one child's) hair . . . slapped another of the kids, then began crying himself. Joyce tried to comfort them all. But her feelings of anger were mixed with genuine terror: in a moment of rage, she knew, Aubrey could kill any one of them and cry about it afterward.”*

# Family Violence\Animal Cruelty



Male

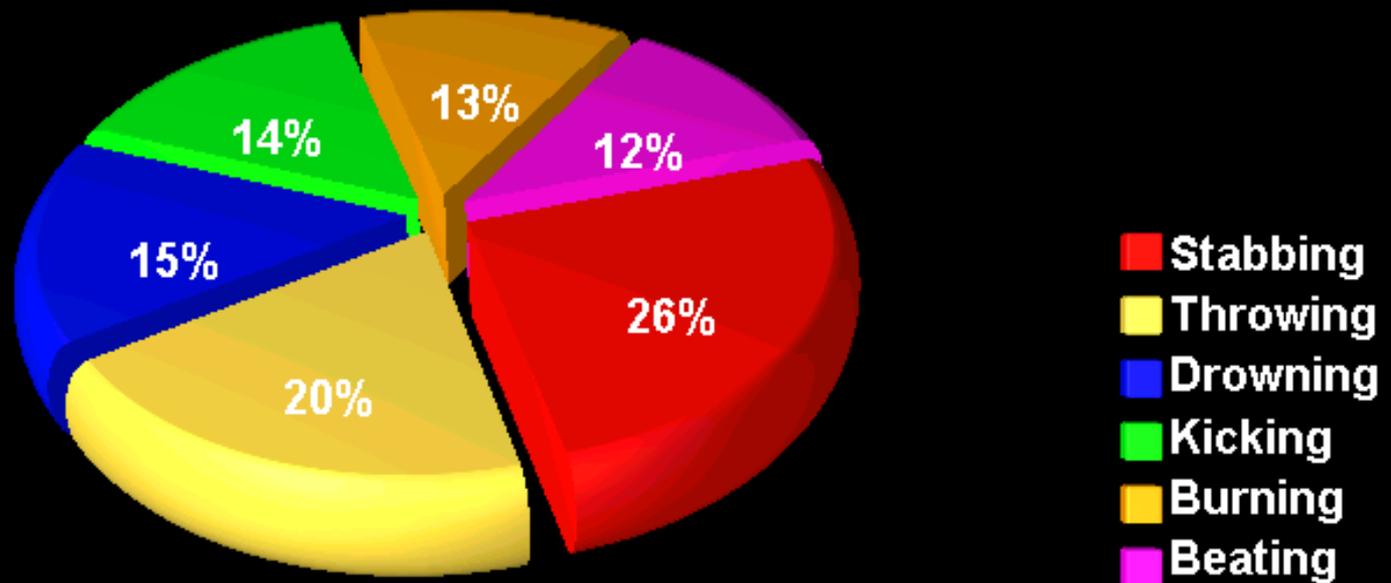


Female

■ Domestic Violence ■ Child Abuse

■ Elder Abuse

## % Of Co-Occurance with Domestic Violence, Child Abuse or Spouse/Child Witness





# What is “The Link”?

- **Correlation between related abuses and violence:**
  - **Animal abuse**
  - **Child abuse**
  - **Domestic violence**
  - **Elder abuse**
  - **Other personal violence**

# **Emergence of Child Protection and Animal Protection in the U.S.**

- **“Little Mary Ellen” Henry Bergh, ASPCA. Same individuals responsible for animal protection were involved in the subsequent creation of child welfare legislation;**
- **Framework for the creation and enforcement of child protective laws was modeled almost entirely after animal protection;**
- **Although the two movements share roots, with time animal and child protection have diverged.**

# **Animal Abuse Defined**

- **FBI's National Incident Based Reporting System definition of animal cruelty has four types:**
  - **Simple/Gross Neglect**
  - **Intentional Abuse and Torture**
  - **Organized Abuse (Dog Fighting and Cock Fighting)**
  - **Animal Sexual Abuse**

# **Poly-Victimization**

- **Poly-victimization: exposure to violence in a variety of contexts – is significantly associated with poor outcomes with prolonged exposure leaving a genetic imprint that threatens long-term well-being.**
- **Animal abuse – within the family and being exposed to it in the community – is often a form of unrecognized victimization (McDonald, et al, 2015)**

# The Link: Domestic Violence

- 41% of intentional animal abuse cases involve domestic violence

2014 (Febres, et al)

- 25%-40% of battered women do not escape abusive situations because they worry about what will happen to their pets or livestock if they leave



# The Link: Domestic Violence

- **62%-76%** of animal cruelty occurs in front of children
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that some children may put themselves in harm's way to save their pets from being injured or killed



# The Link: Domestic Violence

- Interviewer questioned 53 families being investigated for child abuse
- Animal abuse was reported by **60%** of the families



- Animal abuse was reported by **88%** of the families being investigated for physical child abuse

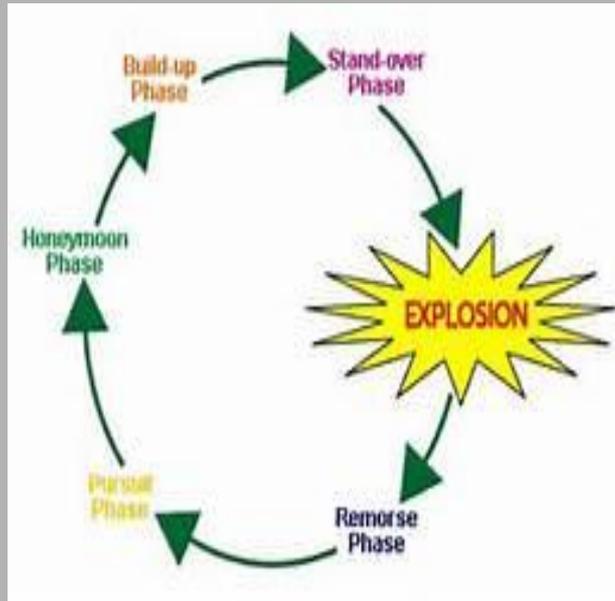
# The Link: Domestic Violence

- In a survey of battered women in northern Utah, **71%** of the women reported that their male partners had threatened to or had, in fact, harmed or killed their pets
- A national study found that **85.4%** of women and **63%** of children in domestic violence shelters reported incidents of pet abuse

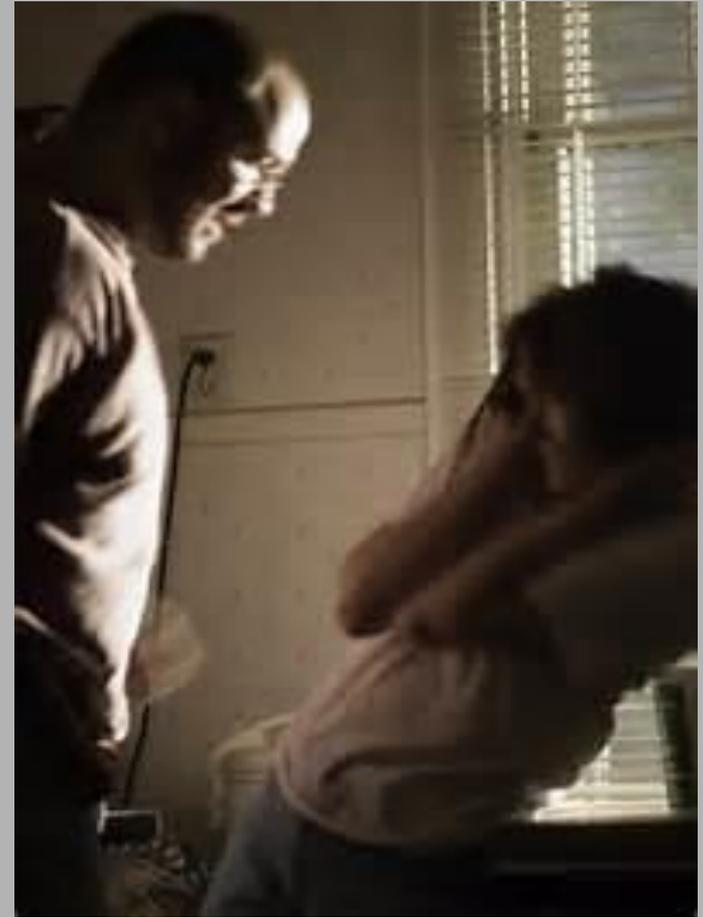
# The Link

*“Something we believe is prominently displayed in the histories of people who are habitually violent is animal abuse... You can look at cruelty to animals and cruelty to humans as a continuum.”*

# Cycle of Violence



# Stand Over during the escalation phase



Turning her body to protect the dog but she can't completely turn her back on him. The explosion is coming.

She says "he was standing over me" have her demonstrate

# CASE STUDY - Jessica

- Jessica biological parents are divorced and remarried
- Lives with bio mom and stepdad
- Begins sexualized play with dolls at 3 yoa
- Child Protective Services unfounds the case (nothing there)
- at age 13 she discloses that stepdad has been abusing her sexually for 10 years

# Demonstration of Power



Child was playing with dolls in sexualized way at 3 years old. CPS unfounded the case. Bio mom kept custody with evil step dad. When the kid was 13 she told again. The evil step dad killed the dog with a cross bow in the back yard. Whole neighborhood heard it. Prosecutor and

In the United States, we have Child Advocacy Centers- the Accredited Centers help investigate the case but they also help heal the child (15 total)



## **Southern VA Child Advocacy Center- Rocky Mount , Virginia – Recent case/2016-2017**

The child had come home from school. Her kitten would not stop meowing....

The father strangled the kitten in front of the child.

She mentioned how this was used as a way

# The Link: Child Abuse

- Interviewer questioned 53 families being investigated for child abuse

Animal abuse was reported by 60% of the families



- Animal abuse was reported by 88% of the families being investigated for physical child abuse

# Example

Dog as protector....

Tries to protect and gets  
stabbed instead of victim

Child has to kill the dog b/c  
parent makes him/ in sex  
offenders background

# Connections Between Child Abuse and Animal Abuse

- **Co-occurring child abuse or harsh parenting with domestic violence and animal abuse (Deviney, 1983, et al, Barnes, et al, 2006; Brennan, et al, 2010; Fielding, et al, 2011; Duncan, et al, 2005; Girardi & Pozzulo, 2012; McEwen, et al, 2014)**
- **Retrospective; those who reported harsh parenting or child maltreatment more likely to acknowledge animal abuse behavior (DeGue & DeLillo, 2009; Flynn, 1999)**
- **Prospective; marital violence and harsh parenting associated with animal cruelty (Becker, 2004; Knight, 2014)**

# Domestic Violence/Family Violence

- A national study found that **85.4%** of women and **63%** of children in domestic violence shelters reported incidents of pet abuse
- **41%** of intentional animal abuse cases involve domestic violence

# The Link: Example

- Cat at SPCA
- Brought in for vet care by victim or other family member
- Had been thrown against the wall
- Abusive boyfriend
- Convicted of animal cruelty



# The Link: Example

- Woman tells partner to leave
- Comes back when she and her child are at work and school
- Beats beagle to within an inch of its life
- Dog has to be euthanized



# The Link: Example

- Snake-exposure to elements
- Woman-girlfriend had bludgeoned it to death
- Necropsy-autopsy on animal
- Boyfriend was spending too much money with the snake



# The Link: Examples

- Wife leaves husband
- Animal Control is called
- Dog is starved and left in basement
- He locks little terrier mix in basement and lets it die of starvation
- At first look, neglect to the point of cruelty
- But should be charged at Felony level cruelty
- Dangerous to leave but often victim won't leave because of fear of harm to pet.



# FAMILY VIOLENCE = CHILD ABUSE

- CONTINUUM OF VIOLENCE AFFECTS KIDS
- Dog jumps in front of the kid to protect the kid from harm and gets stabbed.

# Pet abuse - part of Child abuse

- The child woke up from a nightmare and the father comforted her and may have believed that the family dog was responsible for the child's nightmare.
- The father reportedly carried the dog downstairs telling the child that its leg was hurt and to get dressed. The father reportedly hit the dog in the head with a shovel once in the backyard and then covered him with an accelerant.
- He then lit the animal on fire and told the child that it was ok because he was now in heaven. The alleged offender was charged with Animal Cruelty and was admitted to a psychiatric facility. (Watching animal abuse is psychologically abusive to the child)

# Threats against the beloved pet Warning “you will be next.”

- Often, children would disclose being afraid to talk about violence or abuse in the home because their beloved family pet was being threatened. One child in particular told me about witnessing his father crushing his cat’s head with a concrete block. The child’s father told him if he disclosed, his head would be next

# **Sexual Abuse and Animal Abuse**

**Children who committed acts of cruelty to animals significantly more likely to have been sexually abused (Ascione, 2001; Ascione, et al, 2003; Boat, et al, 2011; Duncan, et al, 2005; Fleming, et al, 2002)**

# The Link: Example

- Bestiality and sexual abuse of children and elders
- Abnormal sexual partners-to include animals, children and elderly
- Sexual deviance

# The Link: Sexual Abuse

- 36.8% of boys and 29.4% of girls who were victims of physical and sexual abuse and domestic violence have been reported to abuse their family pet



# The Link: Sexual Abuse

- Abusers kill, harm, or threaten children's pets to coerce them into sexual abuse or to force them to remain silent about abuse
  - *State v. Twist* (Me. 1987)
  - *State v. Swanson* (Nb. 1993)
  - *State v. Pugsley* (Id. 1995)
  - *State v. Foster* (Wa. 1996)
  - *Gordon v. Virginia* (1997)
  - *Campos v. State* (Tx. 1998)

# The Link: Other Acts of Violence



- Acts of animal cruelty are linked to a variety of other crimes:
  - crimes of violence against humans
  - property crimes
  - drug offenses
  - disorderly conduct offenses

# The Link: At-Risk Youth

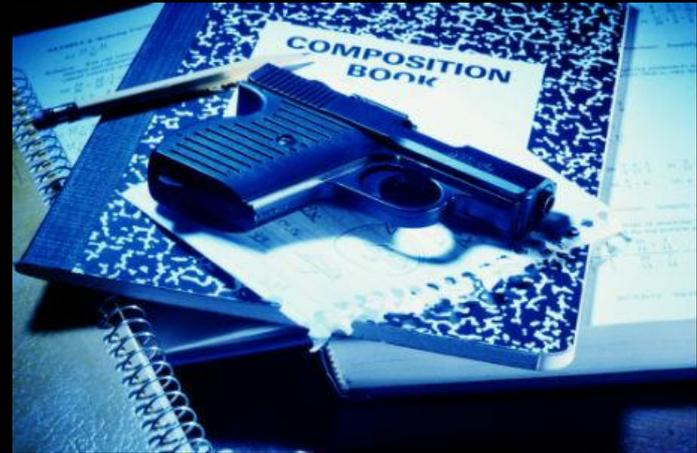
- Animal cruelty is a warning sign for at-risk youth\*
- Chronic physical aggression during elementary school increases boys' risk for continued physical violence and delinquency during adolescence



\*according to the National School Safety Council, the U.S.D.E., the APA, and NCPC; Broidy et. al., 2003

# The Link: At-Risk Youth

- Between 1997 and 2001, school shootings occurred in MS, KY, AK, OR, CO, GA and CA



- All of the boys involved in these school shootings had performed acts of animal cruelty such as: shooting dogs, setting cats on fire, blowing up cows and killing other small animals

# The Link: Interpersonal Violence

- A survey of college sophomores found that the students who admitted to engaging in animal cruelty as young people were more likely than non-abusers to respond “Yes” to a question about whether it was permissible to slap their wives

# The Link: Adult Violence

- A survey of 50 violent and 50 non-violent prison inmates found that a statistically significant greater proportion of the violent offenders had committed past acts of cruelty to animals



# The Link: Adult Violence

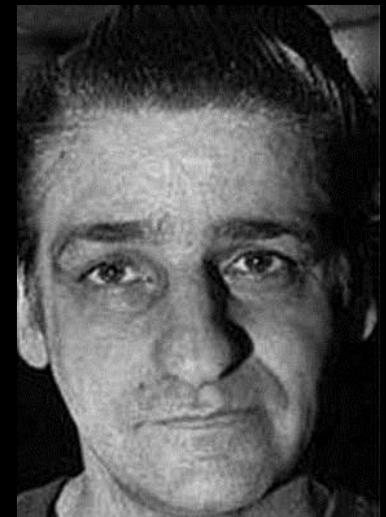
- Almost all serial killers and school shooters have histories of abusing animals (DDAF)
- In a survey of 36 convicted multiple murderers, **46%** admitted committing acts of animal torture as adolescents (Congressional Register, 1996)



Jeffrey Dahmer



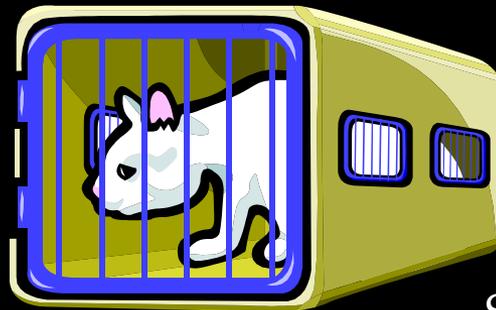
Ted Bundy



Albert DeSalvo

# Specific Recommendations for Family Violence Programs

- Address pets in intake questionnaires
- Include pets in safety planning procedures
- Partner with animal care and control agencies and veterinarians
- Establish lists of pet-friendly transitional housing
- Support legislation that includes pets in protection orders



# Specific Recommendations for Child Protective Services

- Ask about pets and include pets in assessments
- Engage and include families in the process
- Report animal abuse and neglect
- Partner with animal care and control agencies
- Make efforts to keep kids and pets together
- Consider animal-assisted interventions and treatment options for children



## 2006 Canadian Study

(Currie, Animal Cruelty by Children Exposed to Domestic Violence, in *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Vol. 30, p. 425-35)

Mothers with 2 children (ages 5-17) from two groups

Comparing children's cruelty to animals according to domestic violence exposure

Children exposed to DV were 2.95 times more likely to engage in animal cruelty

Average age of children being cruel to animals was older (9.6 yrs) than the non-violent group

Gender was equal

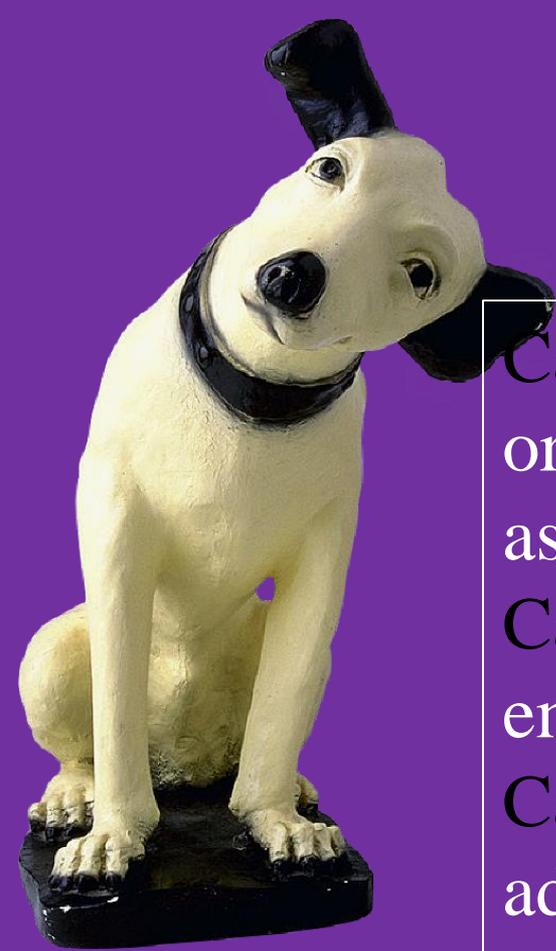


## Exposure to Animal Abuse and Neglect

Can predict other harmful behaviors or violent crimes, such as sexual assault

Can indicate mental, behavioral and emotional health issues

Can lead to subsequent perpetration of adult violence, including family violence

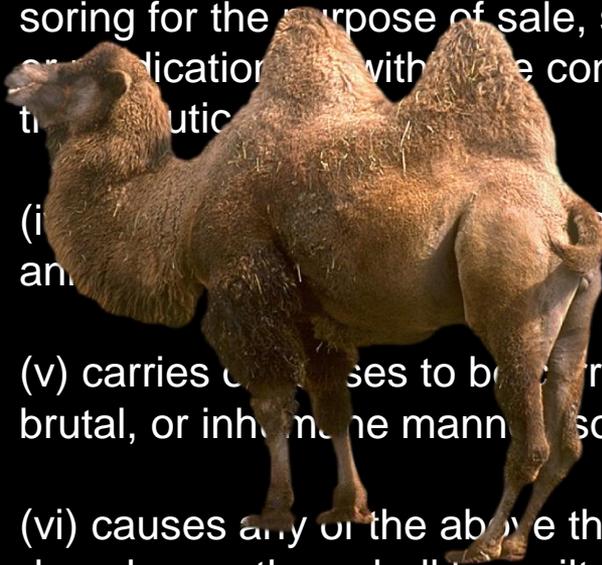


# Cruelty to animals penalty

## § 3.2-6570

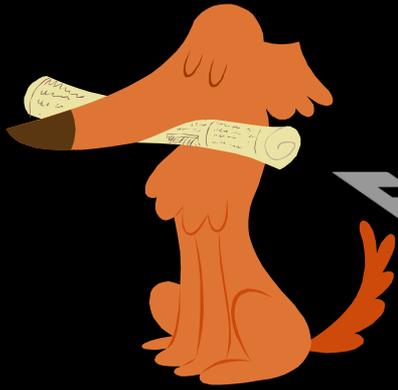
### A. Any Person Who:

- (i) overrides, overdrives, overloads, tortures, ill-treats, abandons, willfully inflicts inhumane injury or pain not connected with bona fide scientific or medical experimentation, or cruelly or unnecessarily beats, maims, mutilates, or kills any animal, whether belonging to himself or another;
- (ii) deprives any animal of necessary food, drink, shelter or emergency veterinary treatment;
- (iii) sores any equine for any purpose or administers drugs or medications to any equine for the purpose of sale, show, or exhibition of any kind, unless such application is with the context of a veterinary client-patient relationship;
- (iv) transports, engages in, or in any way furthers any act of cruelty to any animal;
- (v) carries or causes to be carried in or upon any vehicle, vessel or otherwise any animal in a cruel, brutal, or inhumane manner so as to produce torture or unnecessary suffering; or
- (vi) causes any or the above things, or being the owner of such animal permits such acts to be done by another, shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.





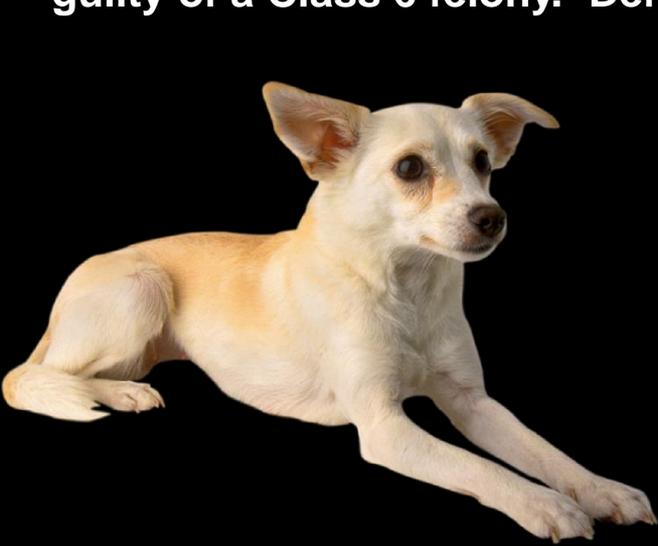
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# FELONY CRUELTY



**Section 3.2- 6570 (F) (i) tortures, willfully inflicts inhumane injury or pain not connected with bona fide scientific or medical experimentation or cruelly and unnecessarily beats, maims or mutilates any dog or cat that is a companion animal whether belonging to him or another; and (ii) as a direct result causes the death of such dog or cat that is a companion animal, or the euthanasia of such animal on the recommendation of a licensed veterinarian upon determination that such euthanasia was necessary due to the condition of the animal, is guilty of a Class 6 felony. Defense of your animal on your property is a bar to prosecution.**



Neglect



# Neglect

## § 3.2 - 6503. Care of animals by owner; penalty

### A. Each owner shall provide for each of his companion animals:



1. Adequate feed;

2. Adequate water;

3. Adequate shelter that is properly cleaned;

4. Adequate space in the primary enclosure for the particular type of animal depending upon its age, size, species, and weight;



5. Adequate exercise;

6. Adequate care, treatment, and transportation; and



. Veterinary care when needed or to prevent suffering or disease transmission.

**MORE...**

# Neglect

Pictures



Example: throwing a dog in the basement and starving it to death.

Not feeding the victim's horses and starving them to death..

- Filthy conditions for animal
  - May mean Child Neglect
  - Example Hoarders
  - Often have family member in  
the home as well.
- Lack of care of animal  
Lack of care for child



# Examples ...

- **2005: Two parents in Indiana were charged with felony child abuse and animal cruelty, stemming from an investigation into the plight of a dog tied up outside without food and water. Upon entering the home, police found a 3-month-old child lying near piles of feces, trash and rotten food.**

**Dogfighting is a highly organized crime:**

**High levels of coordination**

**Planning**

**Covert activity designed to evade law enforcement.**

**The Industry is built on large sums of money from:**

**Illegal Gambling**

**Breeding to fill the void from animal that are killed or executed following fights.**

**Level of organization is on par with major drug trafficking or other organized crime which is viewed more seriously in the U.S.**

**CHILDREN ARE EXPOSED-WE KEEP FINDING CHILD MOLESTATION/PORNOGRAPHERS**

**WHY YOU SHOULD CARE**

# Dogfighting : Paraphernalia Case/Hobbyist Level –case example

Anthony Terrell Wright- My Taskforce has been working on him for 10 years

**Links:**  
**Larceny**  
**Narcotics (human and animal use)**  
**Alcohol**  
**Gambling**  
**Firearms**  
**Malicious wounding & assaults**  
**Child neglect/endangerment**  
**Homicide/Rape**  
**Vice crimes (humans and animals)**  
**Tax law violations**  
**Veterinary medicine**



Dogs are bred for the pit  
Tortured for Money & Amusement  
Level of brutality makes this a Violent crime  
Dogfighters should be considered violent criminals  
and sentenced to maximum levels of imprisonment

First ever in Virginia  
Victim impact Statement  
We focused on the heavy scarring  
on the dogs....  
The conditions they were kept in.





# Detecting animal abuse

## What to look for LEO

- Fearful/cowering animal (e.g. ears back, tail tucked between legs or low)
- Animal with injuries to include limping, burns, unable to stand up, visible injuries
  - Animal that is afraid of the abuser only
    - Overprotective animal
    - Listless animal
    - Emaciated animal
  - Chained/penned up animal
    - Excessive feces
    - No dog house
  - Unkempt house with feces or urine smell
- Lots of animals in the house or out in the yard (excessively over the legal limit– animal hoarding)
  - No food visible
  - No water visible
  - Tethered animal tangled around object
    - Bugs present in the home
  - Accumulation of trash, debris, or junk





# Who to call



- . IF you are Law Enforcement:
- If you see signs of animal abuse or neglect:
- “ **Call Animal Control**
- “ If probable cause exists, make an arrest for animal cruelty
- “ Write a summons if animal neglect is visible



# What Animal Control should look for in DV situations



- “ Victims are fearful of the abuser
- “ Victims can be both adults and children
- “ Signs of violence or Struggle in the home
- “ Abuser does not allow victims to talk or be near you
- “ Victims check with the abuser prior to answering questions
- “ Abuser answers your questions for victims
- “ Animal is protective of victims
- “ Victims may seem overly anxious
- “ Evidence of physical abuse includes: visible bruising, dressed in clothing designed to hide bruises or scars (e.g. wearing long sleeves in the summer, scarves or sunglasses indoors)
- “ Abuser belittles the victim in front of you
- “ Unkempt house with feces or urine smell
- “ Soiled or dirty clothing being worn by victims
- “ Bugs present in the home
- “ Accumulation of trash/debris, junk



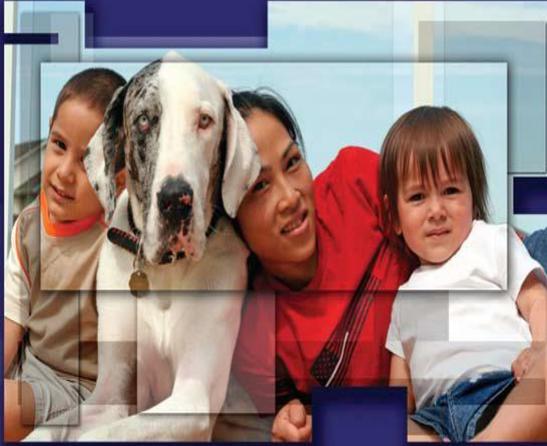
## Who to call



- If you are animal control:
- If you see signs of domestic violence:
  - **Notify the local police or sheriff's office**
  - **Contact CPS or APS if child abuse/neglect or adult abuse/neglect is suspected**
-

# A Common Bond:

Maltreated Children and Animals in the Home  
Guidelines for Practice and Policy



by **Mary Lou Randour**  
The Humane Society of the United States  
with **Howard Davidson**  
American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law

Published by



In Cooperation With



# Child Abuse and Animal Abuse Partnerships

- *A Common Bond, Maltreated Children and Animals in the Home*, Mary Lou Randour
- Encouraging cross reporting
- Questions to ask (Child Advocacy Centers)
- **NCANDS** - The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) is a federally sponsored effort that annually collects and analyzes data on child abuse and neglect known to child protective services (CPS) agencies in the United States

# Animal Welfare Institute web- page

- <https://awionline.org/content/children-and-animals-risk>

Questions to ask-following  
slides

- **Asking Children about their Relationship with Animals:**
- Have you or your family ever had any pets? What happened to them?
- Do you have a pet or pets now?
- Have you ever lost a pet you really cared about? What happened?
- Has your pet ever been hurt?
- Have you ever felt afraid for your pet or worried about bad things happening to your pet?
- Has anybody ever tried to make you do something you didn't want to do by threatening to hurt your pet? What happened?
- Have you ever seen someone hurt an animal or pet? Tell me what happened.
- Have you ever hurt an animal or pet? Tell me what happened.
- Have you ever been frightened or hurt by an animal or pet? Describe what happened.
- What happens when your family pet misbehaves?
- Have you ever been punished for something your pet did, like getting into the trash?
- Or has your pet ever been punished for something you did, like not doing the dishes when you were told to?
- 
- \*Source: "Animal-Related Experiences" Inventory by Barbara Boat, Ph.D. and AniCare Child: An Approach for the Assessment and Treatment of Childhood Animal Abuse, by Mary Lou Randour, Ph.D., Susan Krinsk, LMHC, and Joanne Wolf, M.A.

- **If a Child Witnesses Animal Abuse in the Home:**
- Children who witness abuse are at greater risk for becoming either victims or perpetrators. One form of abuse that children too often witness is toward the pet in family violence situations. When there is knowledge that a child has witnessed animal abuse, the following information should be obtained from the child or his or her caretaker:
  - The relationship of the child to the abuser; if it was a family member, do a thorough assessment of other abuse that may be occurring in the family and take appropriate action
  - The relationship of the child to the animal
  - The type and severity of the abuse and who was involved
  - How many times it occurred
  - The type of victim(s), and the victim(s)' response, as well as the response of the perpetrators and other witnesses
  - The child's role in witnessing animal cruelty—active or passive, encouraging or discouraging, coerced (real or perceived)
  - Ask the child, “What was the hardest thing for you about what happened; or what bothers you the most about what happened?”

- **Assess the child's immediate and long-term emotional response to being a witness.**
  - **Does the child exhibit any of the following?**
    - **Anxiety**
    - **Nightmare or frightening dreams**
    - **Difficulty sleeping or eating**
    - **Withdrawal**
    - **Problems concentrating**
    - **Repetitive play with themes or aspects of the trauma**
    - **Disorganized or agitated behavior**
  - **Does the child feel any of the following?**
    - **Shame**
    - **Guilt**
    - **Remorse**
  - **Does the child experience either of the following?**
    - **Numbing or feelings of detachment**
    - **A restricted range of affect**
- **Is the child fearful of reprisal?**
- **Did the child speak about the abuse to anyone?**
- **What was the response of the person to whom the child spoke about the abuse?**



## Animal Abusers move on to human victims.



“Batterers who also abuse their pets are both more controlling and use more dangerous forms of violence [sexual violence, marital rape, emotional violence and stalking] than batterers who do not.”

-- Simmons & Lehmann (2007)  
*Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 22, No. 9,  
p. 1211-1222 (2007)

# Developing a curriculum for CPS/APS and DV Advocates

TO include what the protections for animals are:

Signs of neglect

Signs of Cruelty

When to act

Who to call

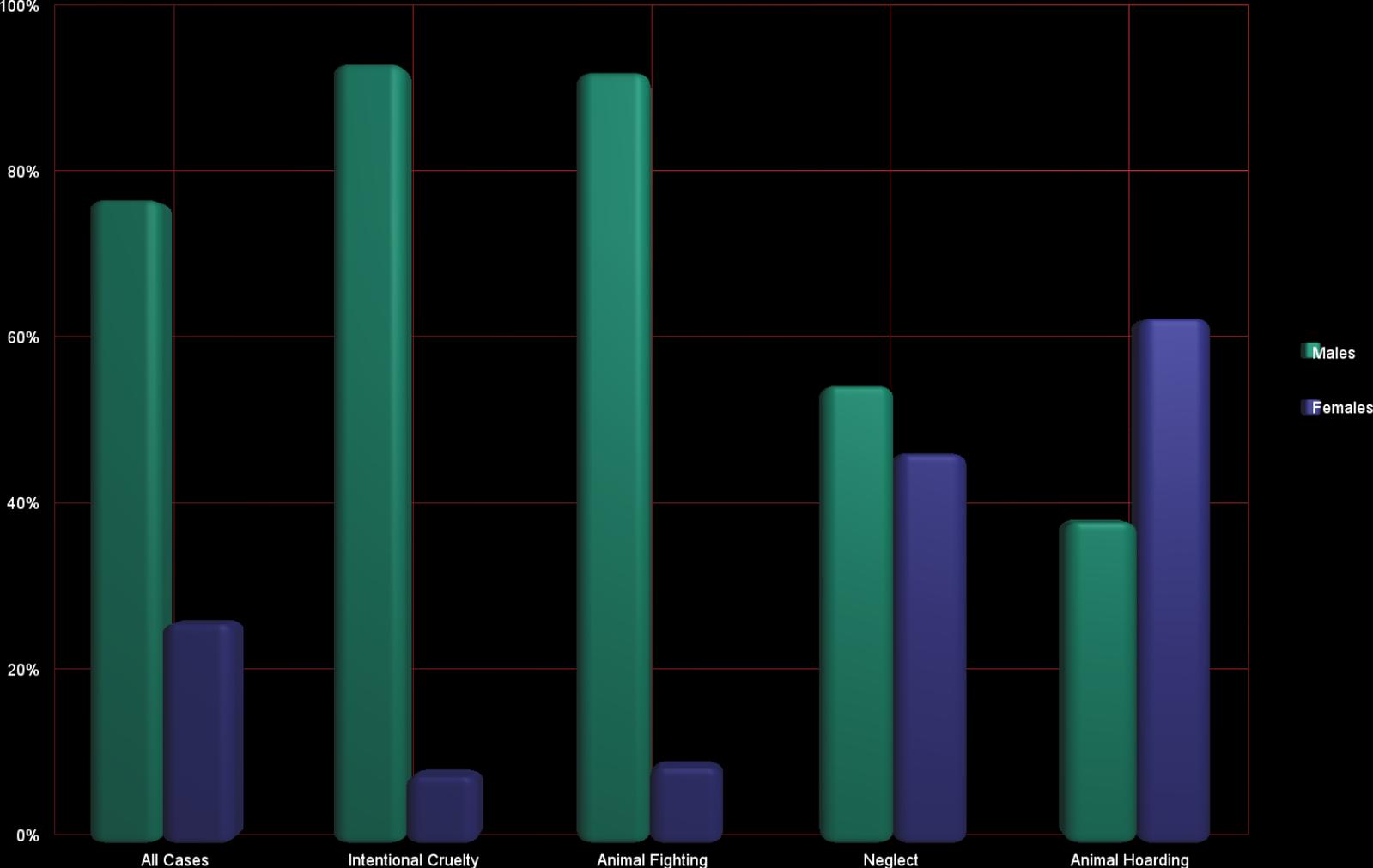
How to intervene

What questions to ask.

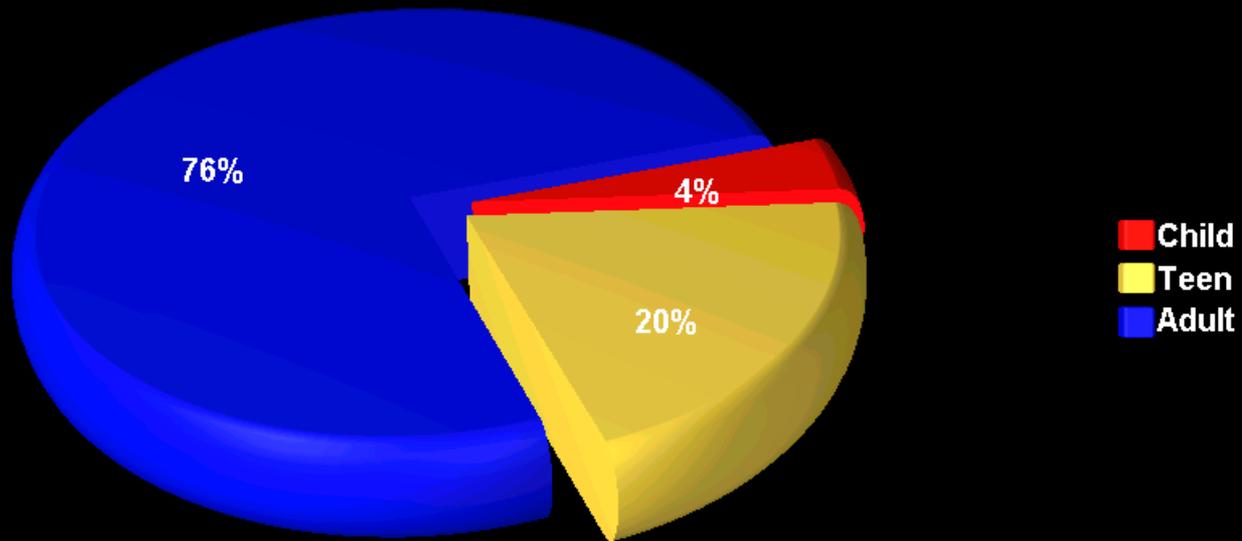
Looking at the whole picture

Investigating and Prosecuting the Animal Abuse

# Percentage of Animal Cruelty Cases By Gender



## Intentional Cruelty By Offender Age



*Cruelty  
to Animals  
and  
Interpersonal  
Violence*

READINGS IN RESEARCH  
AND APPLICATION

EDITED BY  
RANDALL LOCKWOOD AND FRANK R. ASCIONE

*Child Abuse,  
Domestic  
Violence,  
and Animal  
Abuse*

*Linking the Circles of  
Compassion for Prevention  
and Intervention*

*edited by Frank R. Ascione and Phil Arkow*



**ANIMAL CRUELTY**

Pathway  
to Violence  
against People

LINDA MERZ-PEREZ and  
KATHLEEN M. HEIDE



# CONFRONTING ANIMAL ABUSE



LAW, CRIMINOLOGY, AND  
HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIPS

PIERS BEIRNE

# ANIMAL ABUSE

HELPING ANIMALS AND PEOPLE

CATHERINE TIPLADY





Be the  
hero!



**Michelle Welch**

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Director of the  
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T H E

E N D