The Link Between Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence

By

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&

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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
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SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS

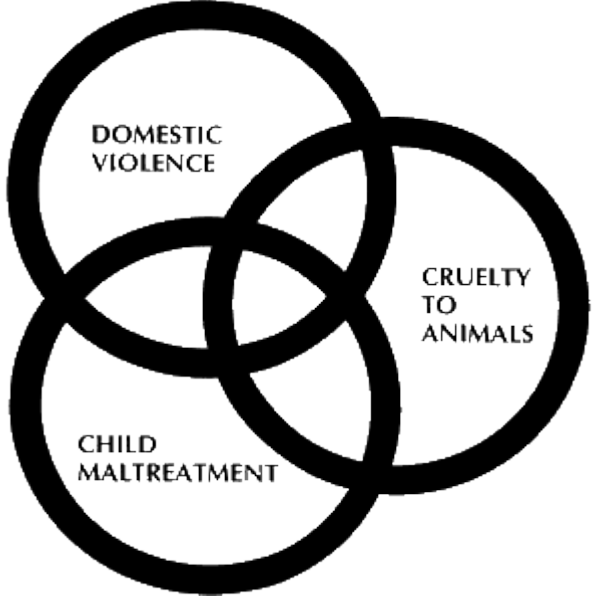
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ATLANTA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
JUSTICE

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

FBI BAU - Violence in Animal Cruelty Offenders

- **Springer Briefs in Psychology**
  - **By Tia Hoffer; Holly Hargreaves-Cormany; Yvonee Muirihead and J. Reid Meloy**
  - **The link between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence has been supported in this research.**
  - **Animal Cruelty is a highly complex form of deviance**
  - **The association between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence is not cause and effect.**
  - **VIOLENCE IS VIOLENCE (HUMAN AND ANIMAL VICTIMS)**



What is "The Link"?

- Animal Abuse is linked to all the below abuses:
  - Child abuse
  - Domestic violence
  - Elder abuse
  - Other personal violence
  - Poly victimization-being exposed to animal abuse a form of unrecognized victimization (McDonald, et al, 2015)

Alexandria Man, Melvin Williams, pled guilty to First Degree Murder, Malicious Wounding, Animal Cruelty, and Impeding Arrest on 4/5/18. Who Killed Girlfriend, Chased Man Out Second-Story Window, Sentenced t
33 Years

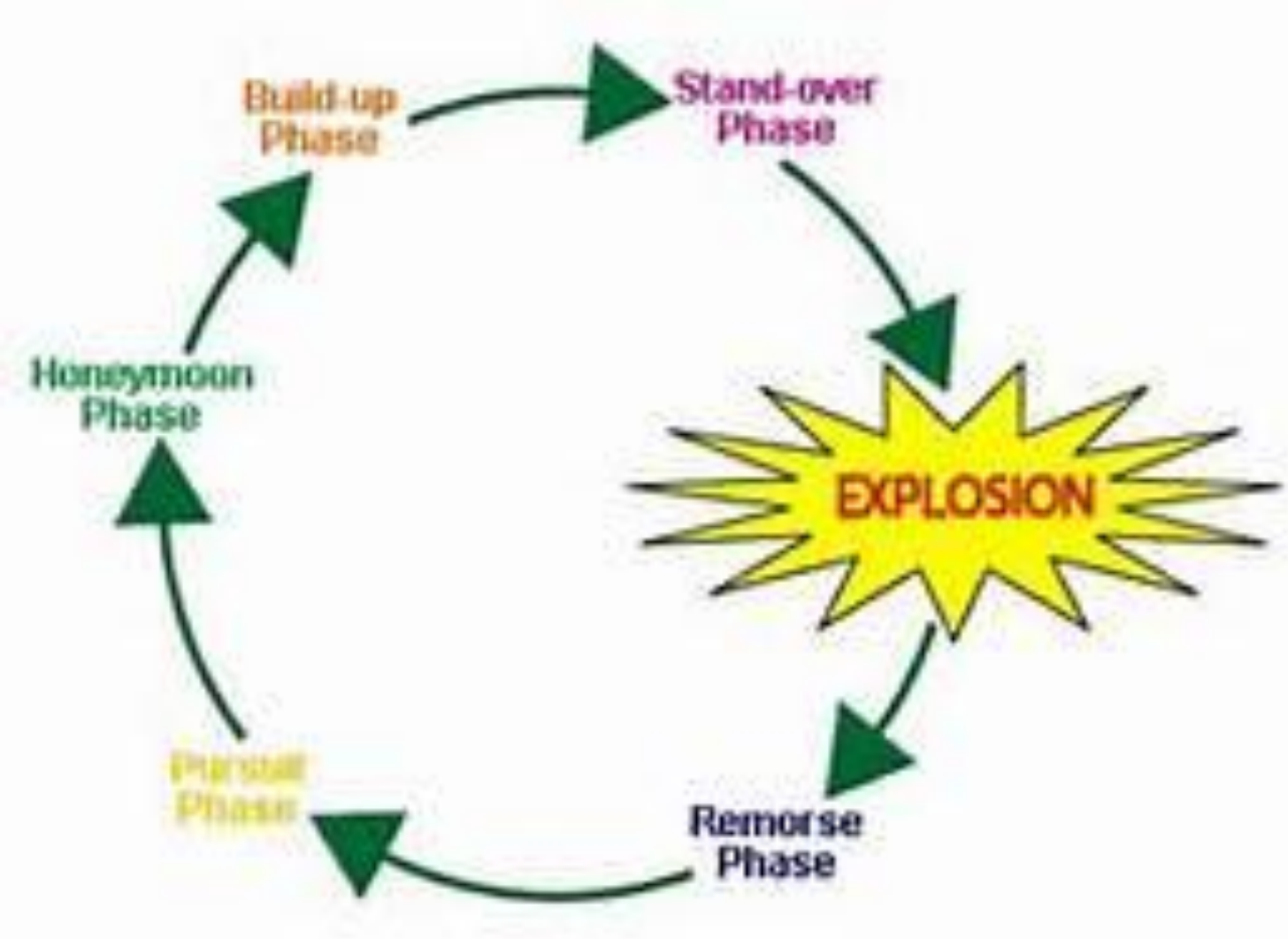
Tammy Doran, ACO Kitten… video strangling and kicking her which broke her leg, and threw 2 ferrets out the window, and fish tank

TREAT ME
LIKE A
PRINCESS

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

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. Colleague felt she was losing an abuse and neglect case and she had one of the children demonstrate the strangling on her (the lawyer) and the judge commented on it in her ruling even though this was the lesser of the injuries between the two children.

Examples

- CAT duck taped.
- He breaks her nose

- Dog is dead at her front door

- Power Control
- Retaliation

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

Examples …

- **2012: A man in Connecticut was sentenced to prison for animal cruelty and assault after killing his girlfriend's cat and leaving it at her front door with a note reading "you're next!".**

In the United States, we have Child Advocacy Centers- they help investigate the case but they also help heal the child

12 Accredited CACs in Virginia (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.
Investigator mentioned how this was used as a way to exert power over the child.

Investigator said that it was devastating to the child.

The CAC helps build the case through an investigator but also helps get the child psychological counseling.

KEY to the PUZZLE: Animal Cruelty-Obviously this is harmful for the child
OFTEN: witnessing animal cruelty is not a crime-the act itself is criminal-Animal Cruelty

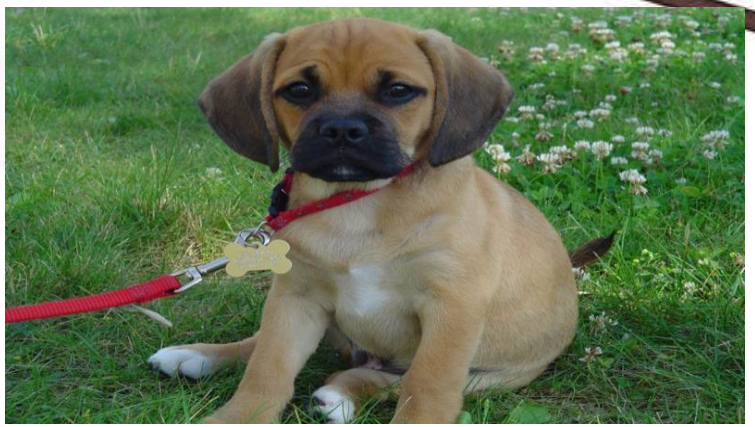
The Link: Child Abuse

- 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

DeViney, Dickert & Lockwood, 1983

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 detective went back and got one of the neighbors to testify. He also kicked a kitten to death because he had not given permission for the little girl to accept the gift of a kitten from another adult. Showing the family his power, his invincibility. If someone had reported the animal abuse and it was investigated MAYBE this would have ended for this child sooner.

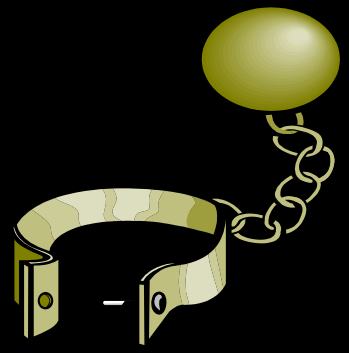
Examples …

- **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.**

Examples …

- **2013: A man in Michigan was charged with animal cruelty for beating his neighbor's dog to death with a golf club. The man reportedly threated the woman and her infant son, saying "I killed your dog, what more do I have to do to you guys? Next will be your son".**

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

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
- 50% of intentional animal abuse cases involve domestic violence
- 48% to 71%, depending on whether they are interviewing women who are in shelters who report abuse of pets or whether they are looking at criminal records of offenders.

• Ascione et al. 1997

•

Domestic Violence/Family Violence

- Always consider a pet in a safety plan
- Fear of harm to an animal may prevent a victim from leaving
- Seek out resources beyond standard shelters in your area

Examples …

- **2012: A man in West Virginia was charged with abduction and animal cruelty with the torture and killing of 29 dogs in a domestic violence intimidation scheme. The man reportedly told his girlfriend that the only way she was leaving the house was "in a body bag" and forced her to watch him torture and kill animals, including forcing her to hold a puppy as he killed the dog with an electric drill.**

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: 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.

The Link: Examples

- Woman tells man to leave
- He accuses her of loving the dog more than him
- Uses dog as a weapon, breaking her nose by striking her with the dog.
- Kills dog after beating, blames her for “making me do it.”

Include Pets in Orders of Protection

Maryland

Approximately ½ of the states and the District of Columbia allow

Examples …

- **2013: Police in Texas responding to a 911 call from a woman who claimed her husband had threatened to kill her led to the husband's arrest for animal cruelty when detectives found 13 dogs beaten and locked in cages, without food or water, covered in feces and with cuts and untreated broken bones consistent with dog fighting injuries.**

Examples …

- **2013: A man in North Carolina was charged with felony assault, child endangerment and animal cruelty after beating the family's kitten to death and beating and choking his fiancée in front of their two-year-old daughter.**

Examples…

- **2016: A man in Atlanta Georgia was charged with aggravated stalking for repeatedly violating a protection order. He would wait for the protected parties to leave, then open the fence allowing the dog to leave the property.**

Suggested Language

“the Defendant shall have no contact, directly, indirectly, or via a third party with any animal under the custody, care, or control of [PERSON] or any immediate family member of [PERSON] or any person residing with [PERSON].”

Suggested Language

- WHY
  - Direct contact is logical
  - Indirect
    - Putting out poison
    - Opening a gate
    - Allowing another animal into a yard
  - Third Party
    - Calling animal control/police with complaints
    - Contacting a landlord or insurance company

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 it's leg was hurt and the child should 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)

Ascione, Shelby, et al. 2018

- **The relations among animal abuse, psychological disorders, and crime: Implications for forensic assessment**
- **Behav Sci Law. 2018;36:717–729.**
- **Our review highlights the need for large-scale longitudinal studies that attend to children's exposure to and perpetration**
- **of AA, and potential sociocontexual factors (e.g., culture, adverse childhood experiences, economic hardship)**
- **and affective processes (e.g., CU traits, CD, anger dysregulation) that may play a role in the onset and**
- **maintenance of AA behavior.**

Development of Anti-Social, Aggressive Behavior

- Criterion for conduct disorder:
  - Cruelty to animals one of earliest reported symptoms (Frick, et al, 1993)
  - Children who are cruel to animals exhibit more severe conduct disorder (Luk, et al, 1999)
- Offenders who committed animal cruelty more likely to engage in other criminal behavior (Arluke, et al, 1999; Levitt, et al, 2016; Vaughn, et al, 2009)

Development of Anti-Social, Aggressive Behavior

- Recurring animal cruelty associated with persistence of anti-social behavior over time (Loeber, 2004)
- Most concerning is the appearance of animal cruelty at an early age and its recurrence (Henderson, et al, 2011; Merz-Perez, et al, 2001)

Sexual Abuse and Animal Abuse

Children who committed acts of cruelty to animals significantly more likely to have been sexually abused (Ascione, 2001; Ascione, e 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
- Sexually Violent Predators-bestiality in background-human victims (child molesters and rapists)
  - Child has to kill the dog b/c parent makes him

The Link: At-Risk Youth

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

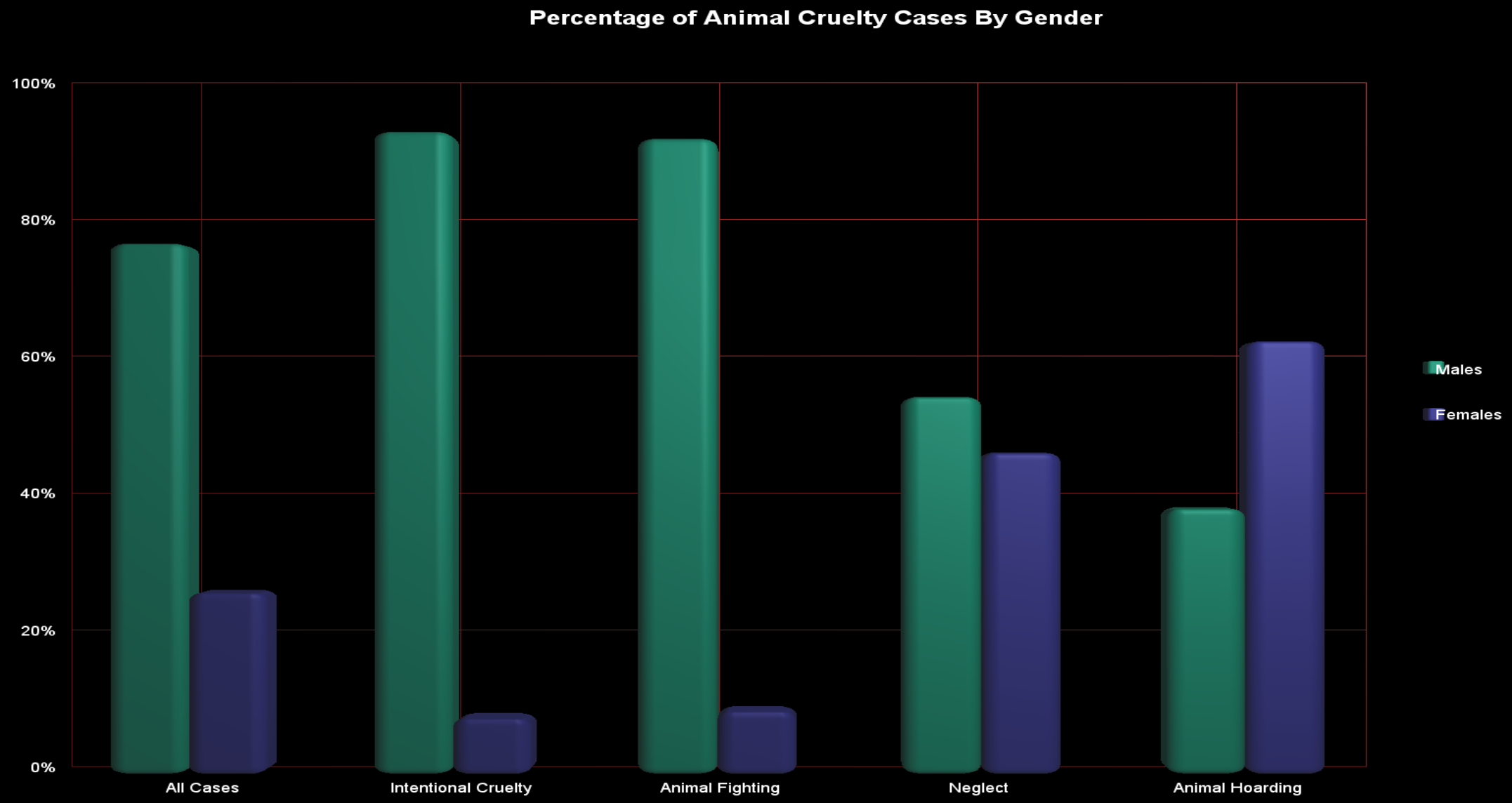
http://www.aldf.org/article

- 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

43 % of school shooters from 1998-2012

The Link: Adult Violence

- Almost all serial killers 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)


Percentage of Animal Cruelty Cases By Gender
100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
All Cases
Intentional Cruelty
Animal Fighting
Neglect
Animal Hoarding
Males
Females

Types of Animal Cruelty

- **Simple/Gross Neglect**
- **Intentional Abuse and Torture**
- **Organized Abuse (Dog Fighting and Cock Fighting)**
- **Animal Sexual Abuse**

06.29.2006 20:26

01.04.2006 17:18

05.18.2006 16:58

Simple neglect- when you don’t provide for the animal’s needs

- **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
- 7. Veterinary care when needed or to prevent suffering or disease transmission.

Examples …

- **2012: A Florida woman was charged with child neglect and animal cruelty when police responded to a report of animal cruelty, finding two children in "deplorable conditions", 22 dogs confined without food or water, one with a broken leg, and a dead bird. The woman had previously been charged with animal cruelty.**

Gross Neglect

- deprives any animal of necessary food, drink, shelter or emergency veterinary treatment to alleviate or disease progression;

Maggot dog/Shepherd mix dog

Dog had been left to suffer for 2-3 weeks

Maggots set in-proved how long they had been on dog

05.18.2006 16:57

Smithfield
KEEP
REFRIGERATED

06/02/2009

- 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

L16-19096
#3

Intentional Abuse or Torture

overrides, overdrives, overloads,
tortures,
ill-treats,
abandons,
willfully inflicts inhumane injury or pain, or
cruelly or unnecessarily beats,
maims, mutilates, or kills any animal,

Chicken Abuse case- 100 hours of video/like a child pornography case- 9 defendants

Torture case- treat it like a crime Scene

Take pictures of how you found the animal

Wallaby… in trash

Puppies… tied out to a pen in yard

Do not leave evidence behind- ex: glue

Links:
ANIMAL FIGHTING
Larceny
Narcotics (human and animal use)
Alcohol
Gambling
Firearms
Malicious wounding & assaults
Child neglect/endangerment
Homicide/Rape
Vice crimes
Tax law violations
Veterinary medicine
01 17 2006 14:54

WHY LAW ENFORCEMENT SHOULD CARE

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. They also sell the puppies fo money to other fighters.

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

Often by investigating the animal fighting operation, we take out the largest drug dealer in that community:
Amelia examples.

Dogfighting : Paraphernalia Case/Hobbyist Level –case example

6 dogfighting cases
3 cockfighting cases

Last Big Animal Fighting case
We proved they ran 3 million dollars through the pit.
We forfeited almost $1 million through the pit
HUGE GAMBLING

The locality got $100,000 back in forfeiture monies
$150,000 for the State agency.

We successfully won seizure hearings on over 800 fighting birds and 108 dogfighting dogs.

Educate your drug and gang units on this: Numerous cases recently b/c of drug/gun connection…. Luckily the officers reached on the dog issue—but if not trained… they could easily just ignore dogfighting.

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 for an Animal. Usually VIS is for humans only.

We focused on the heavy scarring on the dogs….
The conditions they were kept in.
(prior to this-we would highlight condition of the animal)

Crimes against Nature

- Bestiality is very hard to prosecute
- Not because we don't investigate it.
- Because everyone is grossed out by it.

  - Ex: DV –female partners to engage in it as a way for control
    - Could not get law enforcement to act
    - Often cannot get prosecutors to do the cases
      - » However, you must do them because of the sexual deviance involved
      - » Sex offender who had sex with 5 different animals moved onto to molesting children
      - » Sex offender who had sex with a pig then raped a 70 year old woman

Bestiality

- He investigated 20 bestiality cases in Virginia between 2011-2015 which were adjudicated
- From the twenty cases:
  - Five offenders had committed hands on offenses with children
  - Six offenders possessed child pornography
  - Three offenders had solicited sex from a minor
  - Two offenders are believed to have committed infected sexual battery with adults

Study-SVP in Virginia

- 2003-2015
- Over 1200 SVPs
- Engaged in Bestiality – engage child abuse
- Bestality was a form of cruelty
- Published this year.

Some clues to look for:

- Admissions made to probation officers, others.
- Forums on the internet
- Vet exam of an animal (Autistic boy who washed the dog's anus)
- Note: family violence (sexual violence) Male partners making wife perform sex with animals as dominion and control over her.
- Note: Women are becoming more involved in this type of crime of their own volition (multiple male partners and animals)
- Family will often inform law enforcement but b/c of stigma may not want to testify

Sentencing

Jail time

Ban on Animals

Probation:

Sex Offender registration

Include mental health counseling and treatment

Don’t forget the animals

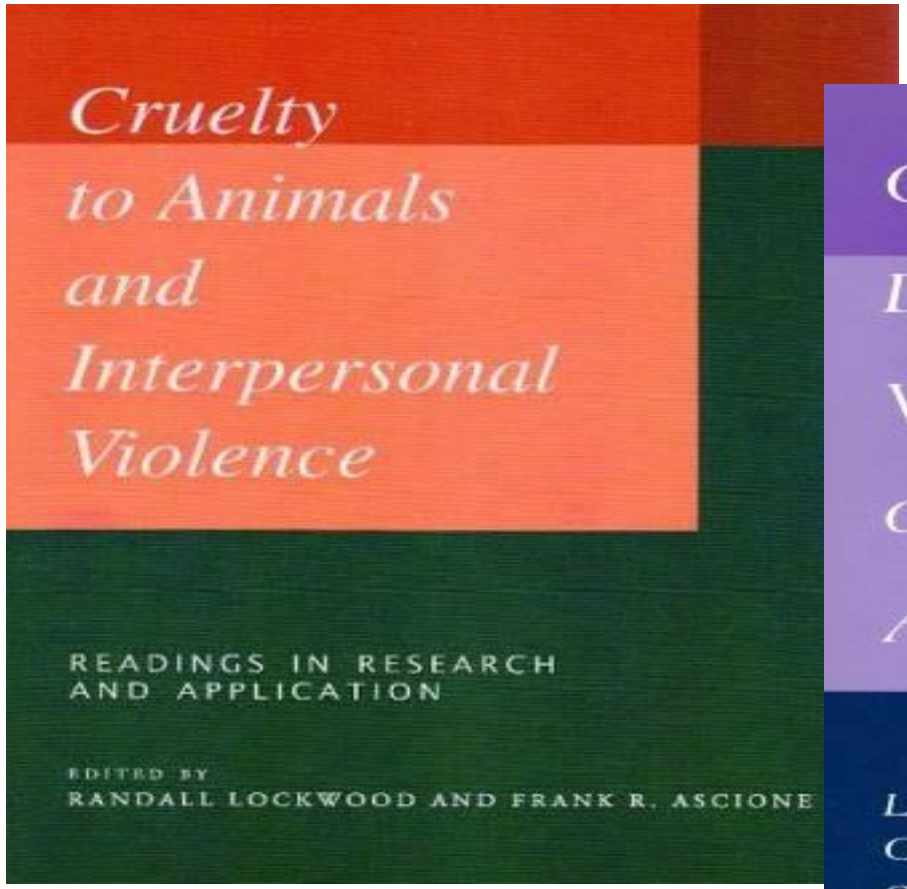
Argue how the animal abuse played into the family violence scenario to show manipulation, torture, state of mind of the offender, etc.

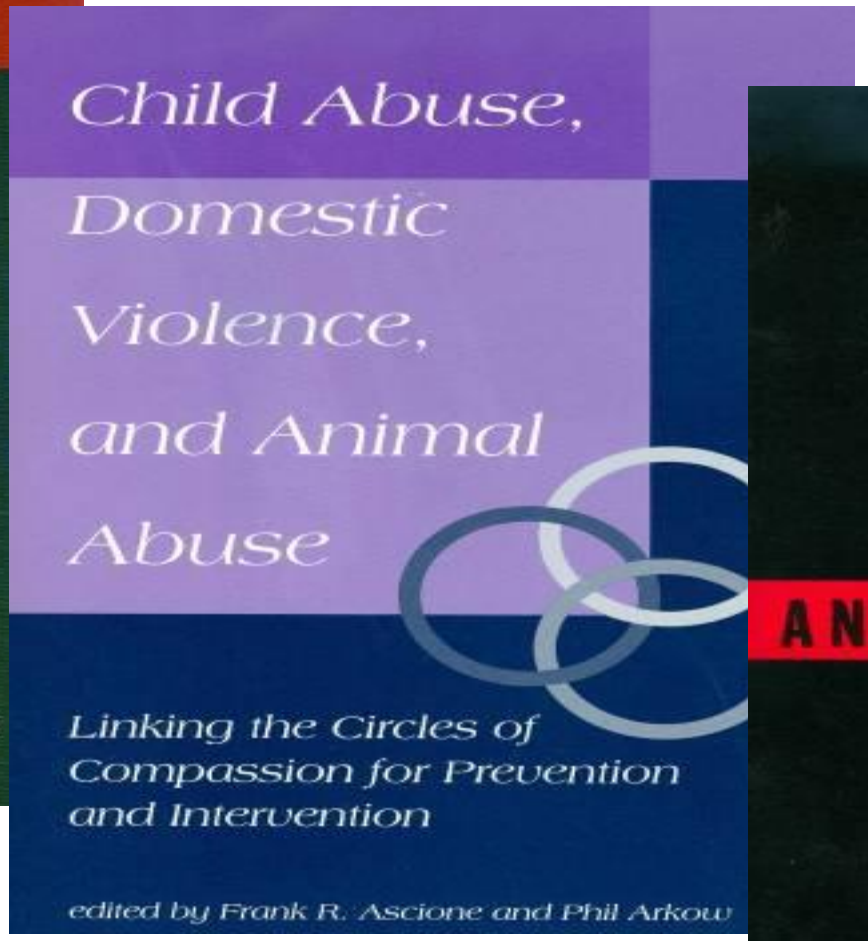
Considerations for the future

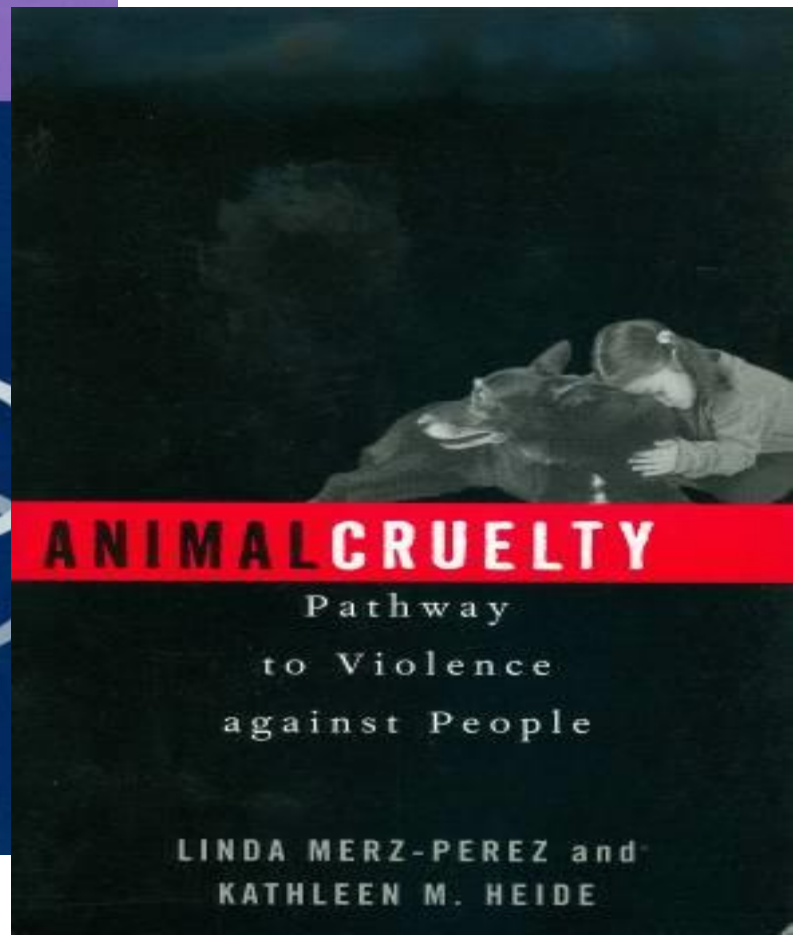
Categories like our FBI's listing: simple/gross neglect; intentional abuse/torture; animal fighting; and sexual abuse

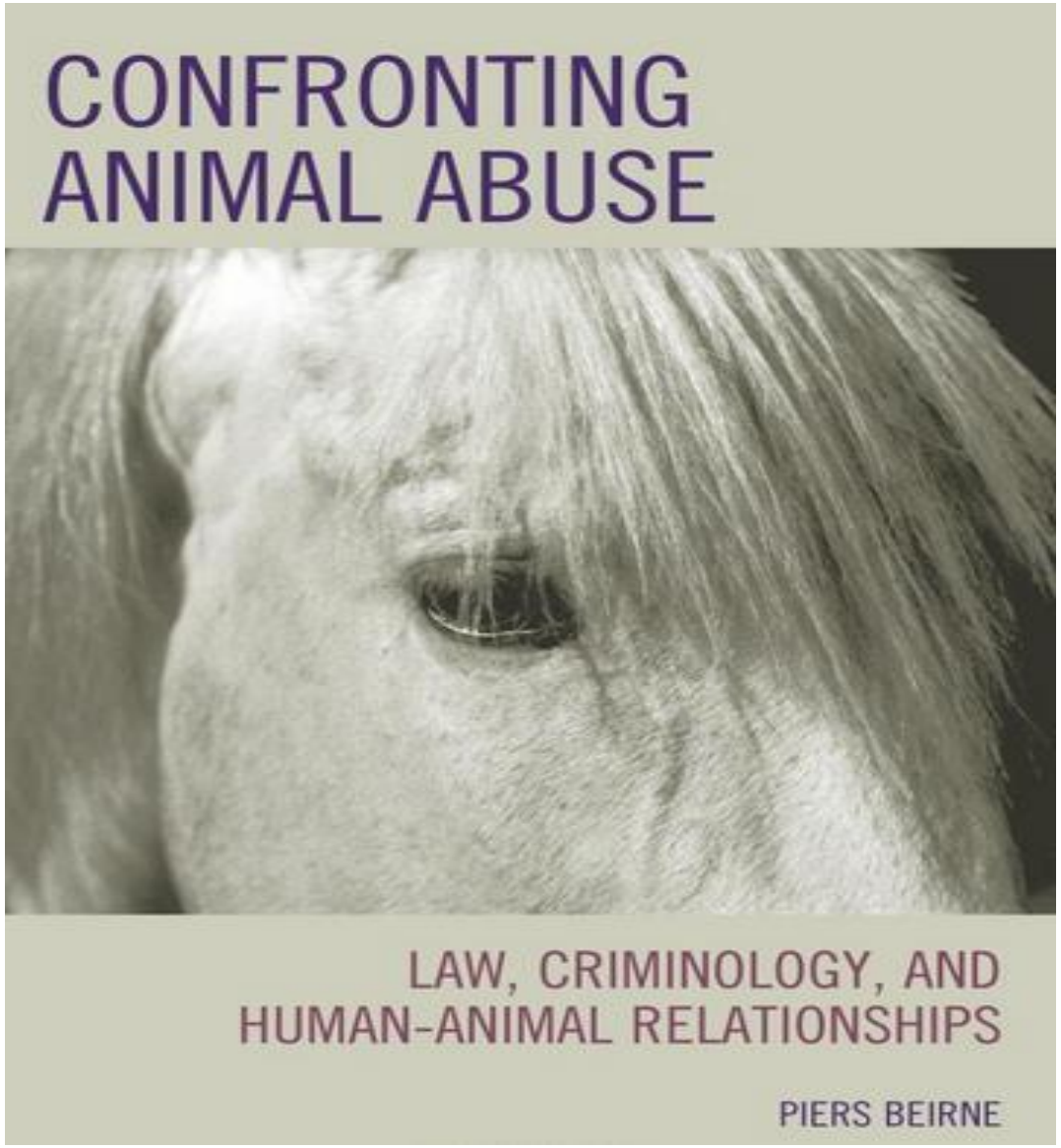
Resources for your officers (veterinarians who can help you; equipment; trainings and cooperation with animal groups who can help

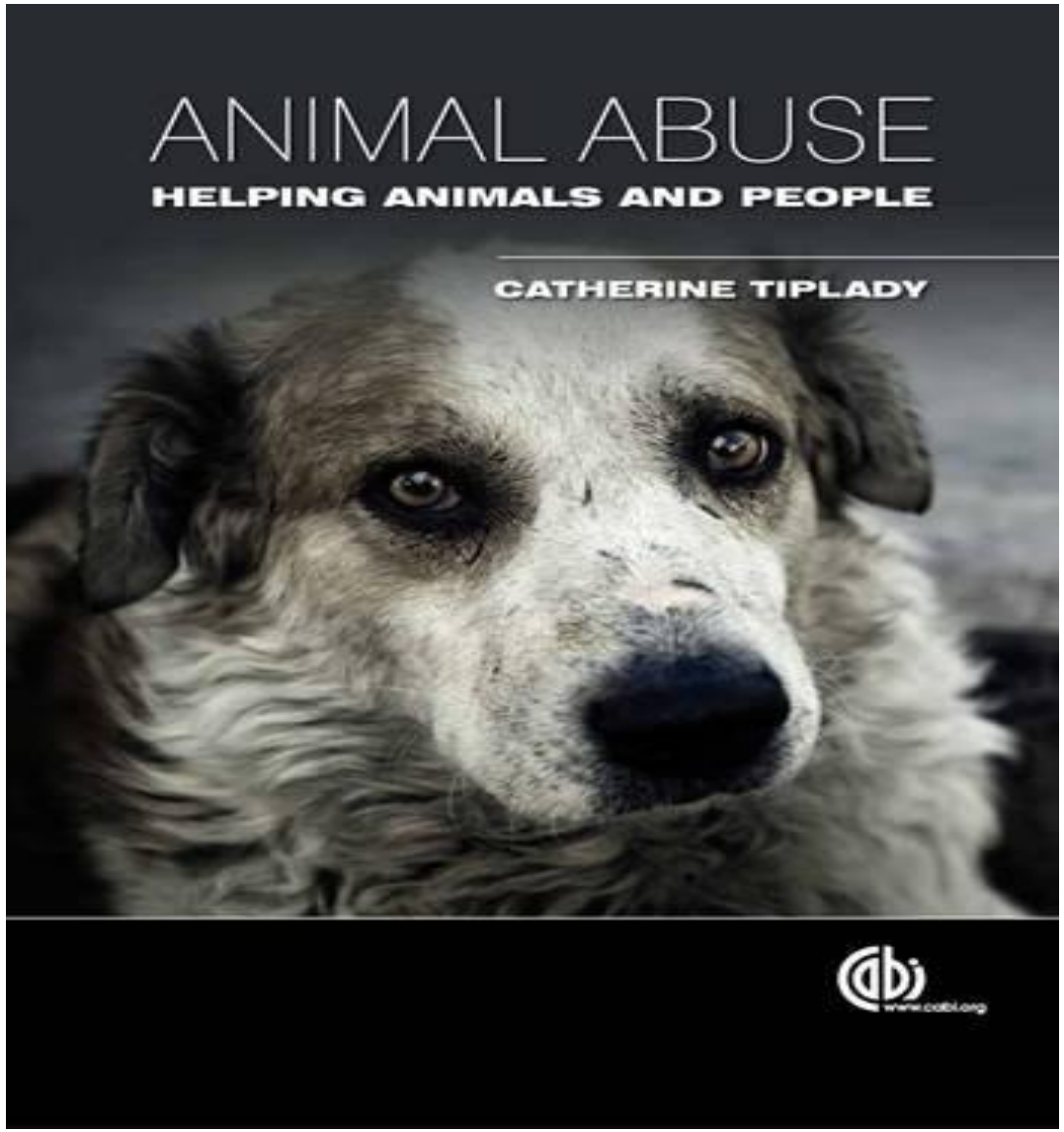
Sentencing: Bans on owning, possessing animals after convictions of animal cruelty; Family counseling for family violence and animal cruelty; Cost of care for the animals being paid by the abuser.
Harsher penalties for intentional abuse (violent cases-stabbing dogs)


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

Detecting animal abuse
What to look for LEO

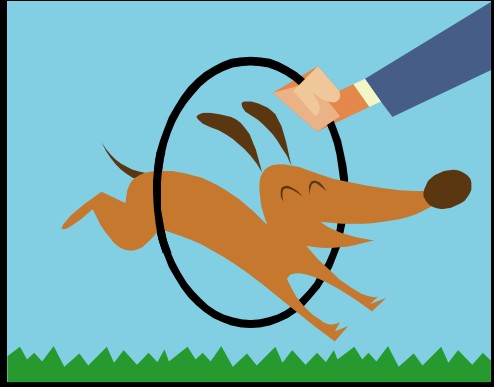
¨ Fearful/cowering animal (e.g. ears back, tail tucked between legs or low)
¨ Animal with injuries to include limping, burns, unable to stand up, visible injuries
¨ Animal that is afraid of the abuser only
¨ Overprotective animal
¨ Listless animal
¨ Emaciated animal
¨ Chained/penned up animal
¨ Excessive 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:

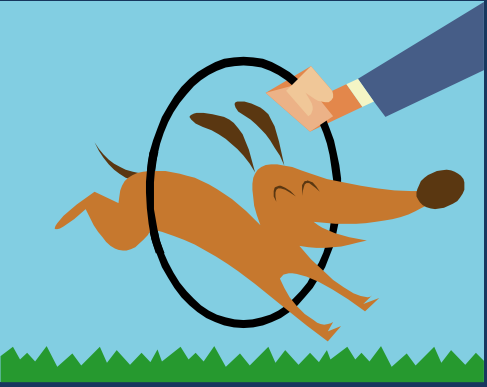
- If you see signs of animal abuse or neglect:
- ¨ **Call Animal Control**
- ¨ If probable cause exists, make an arrest for animal cruelty
- ¨ Write a summons if animal neglect is visible

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
-

Thanks to:

Mary Lou Randour, Ph.D.

Marylou@awionline.org

301-806-1436

“A Common bond”

RESOURCES

ASPCA

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

Animal Welfare Institute

Animal Legal Defense Fund

Be the hero!

Michelle Welch

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