

# The Connection Between Cruelty to Animals and Human Violence

Nearly all violent individuals were abused, neglected, or abandoned as children. The majority of violent individuals started abusing animals as children or adolescents, and later added violence against humans.

*According to the FBI, the triad of: 1) being abused as a child, 2) reacting by torturing animals, and 3) becoming violent to humans -- is so well established that animal cruelty is used as a means of identifying possible suspects in violent crimes and as an indicator of possible future offenders.*

## Juvenile Violence

Every year, 4000 kids under 18 murder others and 5000 more commit suicide. Virtually all of them were abused and began abusing animals by their teenage years.

*Luke Woodham, 16, killed his mother and 3 classmates in Pearl, Mississippi.*

*Kip Kinkle, 15, killed his parents and 2 classmates, wounding 22 more, in Springfield, Oregon.*

*Jose Hernandez, 17, killed his father, mother, 6-year old brother, and 8-month old brother.*

*Jim Hardy and 2 friends, 17, beat a boy to death to see what it was like.*

*Dylan Kiebold and Eric Harris, 16, killed 13 and wounded 20 more in Littleton, Colorado.*

All of them were known to be torturing animals. No one did anything about it. There are hundreds of more examples of violent kids who were abused and who tortured animals. *"One of the most dangerous things that can happen to a child is to kill or torture an animal and get away with it."* - Margaret Mead.

## Serial Killers

The FBI estimates there are 500 serial killers operating in the U. S. at any one time. Most of them rape, torture, and savagely kill their victims. The number of serial killers has increased in recent years. All known serial killers were abused as children. All known serial killers tortured animals.

*Edmund Kemper killed his mother, grandparents, and 7 college girls; began torturing cats at age 13.*

*Jeffrey Dahmer killed 17 young men and boys, beginning at age 18. Started abusing animals at age 10.*

*David Berkowitz killed 6 young people, set 1400 fires. Began torturing animals before age 10.*

*Albert DeSalvo murdered 13 and raped 300. Trapped animals in boxes for archery target practice.*

*Charles Manson, responsible for 35 ritual murders, tortured animals as satanic sacrifices.*

*Albert Hamilton Fish, guilty of 15 murders and 100 rapes, set animals on fire.*

*Henry Lee Lucas, believed responsible for 100 to 200 murders, tortured animals severely as a child.*

## Other Violent Crimes

Studies of violent criminals in prisons, patients in psychiatric hospitals, women in battered women's shelters, domestic violence cases including child abuse and elder abuse, and national crime statistics indicate that:

46% of sexual homicide perpetrators abused animals;

48% of convicted rapists abused animals;

88% of child abuse situations also included cruelty to animals if animals were present;

70% - 80% of spouse abuse situations also included animal cruelty if animals were present;

30% of child molesters abused animals;

60% of aggravated assaulters abused animals;

100% of serial killers abused animals.

Many elder abuse situations also involve animal abuse if animals are present.

Animal cruelty is a valuable predictor of present and future violent individuals. Many human lives could be saved, much human tragedy and suffering could be prevented, and a great deal of money would be saved, if police forces, prosecutors, judges, social workers, and the public were to recognize the strong connection between animal cruelty and human violence and take animal cruelty seriously.

H. Hovel, NYS Humane Association

**What is animal cruelty?** Animal cruelty encompasses a range of behaviors harmful to animals, from neglect to malicious killing. Most cruelty investigated by humane officers is unintentional neglect that can be resolved through education. *Intentional* cruelty, or abuse, is knowingly depriving an animal of food, water, shelter, socialization, or veterinary care or maliciously torturing, maiming, mutilating, or killing an animal.

**Why is it a concern?** Animal cruelty can be one of the earliest and most dramatic indicators that an individual is developing a pattern of seeking power and control by inflicting suffering on others.



**Is there any evidence of a connection between animal cruelty and human violence?** Absolutely. Many studies in psychology, sociology, and criminology during the last twenty-five years have demonstrated that violent offenders frequently have childhood and adolescent histories of serious and repeated animal cruelty. The FBI has recognized the connection since the 1970s, when bureau analysis of the life histories of imprisoned serial killers suggested that most, as children, had killed or tortured animals. Other research has shown consistent patterns of animal cruelty among perpetrators of more common forms of violence, including child abuse, spouse abuse, and elder abuse.



**How do law enforcement agencies use this evidence?** The FBI identifies animal cruelty as one of a cluster of juvenile behaviors associated with increasingly violent behavior and uses animal cruelty in analyzing the threat potential of suspected and known criminals.

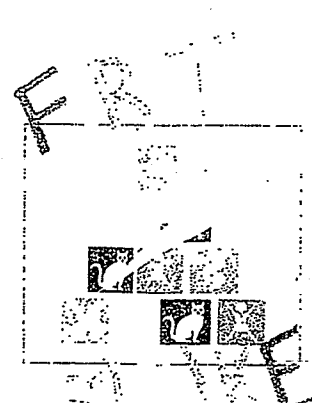


**Who abuses animals?** Most animal abusers are adolescent or young-adult males, although children as young as four have been known to harm animals. Many animal abusers have a history of other antisocial or criminal activities, including vandalism,

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**MAKING THE  
CONNECTION: WHAT  
LAW ENFORCERS  
AND PROSECUTORS  
NEED TO KNOW**  
■

The First Strike™  
Campaign was developed by The Humane Society of the United States to increase public awareness of the connection between animal cruelty and human violence.



ANIMAL CRUELTY/HUMAN VIOLENCE

assault, and arson, and many are the victims of physical or sexual abuse.

Animal cruelty is often associated with children who do poorly in school and have low self-esteem and few friends.

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**Why would anyone abuse animals?** There can be many reasons. Animal cruelty, like any other

form of violence, is often committed by a person who feels powerless, unnoticed, and under the control of others. The motive may be to shock, threaten, intimidate, or offend others or to demonstrate rejection of society's rules. Some who are cruel to animals copy things they have seen or that have been done to them. Others see harming an animal as a safe way to get revenge on someone who cares about that animal. In some extremely serious cases, animal abuse

is associated with deviant arousal.

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**Are other violent behaviors associated with animal cruelty?**

Recent studies have identified connections between animal cruelty and many different forms of family and societal violence. A 1983 survey of fifty-seven pet-owning families

under treatment by New Jersey's Division of Youth and Family Services for child abuse revealed that in 88 percent of the families at least one person had abused animals. In two-thirds of those cases, the abusive parent had injured or killed a pet; in the remaining cases, children were the animal abusers. Several surveys of women seeking protection from domestic violence report that up to 70 percent of the women with pets indicated that their pets had been

threatened, hurt, or killed by their abusive partners.

Patrol officers should be aware that pets are often the first victims of family or neighborhood disputes that escalate into violent and even fatal encounters between people. Intervention at an early stage might prevent these conflicts from becoming more serious.

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**Is animal cruelty recognized as a sign of mental disorder?** Yes. In *The Di-*

*agnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, the American Psychiatric Association lists animal cruelty as one of the behaviors signaling

conduct disorder. Clinical evidence indicates that animal cruelty is one of the symptoms usually seen at the earliest stages of conduct disorder,

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FBI experts advise all appropriate agencies to share case information with one another. A comprehensive approach, with family cooperation, school support, and psychological counseling, is essential.

often by the age of eight. This information has only recently been included in the *DSM*, so some psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers are just now becoming aware of it.

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**Why is it important to stop animal abusers when they are young?** A 1994 report released by the National Research Council states that early intervention is more likely to reduce adult crime than criminal sanctions applied later in life. The report further states that childhood behavior is more important than teenage behavior in predicting future violence.

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**What can be done to prevent young animal abusers from developing into violent adults?** Crimes against animals are not isolated events. FBI experts advise all appropriate agencies to share case information with one another. A comprehensive approach—with

cooperation from the family, support from the school, and counseling by a psychologist or social worker—is essential.

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**How can law enforcement officers and humane investigators work together?**

Upholding anticruelty laws is usually the responsibility of local police, although in some communities, humane investigators have law enforcement powers. Law enforcement officers should be thoroughly familiar with anticruelty laws. They should get to know local humane investiga-

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tors, who may be aware of potentially violent situations that have not come to the attention of the police. Humane investigators may also be able to provide helpful information relevant to ongoing investigations. Other important contacts for law enforcement

officers include school teachers, child-welfare professionals, crisis-intervention teams, family-shelter personnel, social workers, and veterinarians.

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**Is animal cruelty a crime?**

Yes. Anticruelty laws exist in all states. In many states animal cruelty is a felony offense under certain circumstances.

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**What is the key to prosecuting an animal-cruelty case successfully?**

Preparing an animal-cruelty case is similar to preparing any case of criminal violence. The testimony of an iden-

tifiable witness and expert testimony addressing the nature of the injury and the physical condition of the animal are vital. Contact The Humane Society of the United States for information on professionals who can provide expert testimony.



## When to Seize an Animal for Its Protection

What if the animal needs to be seized for its own protection? Can an officer go onto the property, remove and transport the animal to a veterinarian? No, not without proper authority. Very seldom is the animal in such immediate danger that the officer does not have time to obtain a search and seizure warrant. Fig. 2-2 presents several situations and the action taken to achieve the desired results.

Remember unless the animal is in immediate danger of dying or suffering permanent physical or mental damage, you must have a search and seizure warrant. Unless you obtain written permission from the occupant or have the warrant, you are committing an illegal act,

and instead of solving the problem, you have added to it. You and your agency can be held liable for your illegal actions.

In summary, the most effective approach to search and seizure is to meet with the prosecutor, explain your problem, concerns, and needs. Ascertain the prosecutor's and the court's needs and requirements and follow their guidelines. As a team you will be much more effective in solving the community animal problems, while guarding their constitutional rights. Every case is different. Do not assume the ruling on one case is the final word on another similar case.

Figure 2-2

### Situational Analysis

**Problem:** Animal very ill and the keeper refuses to provide medical attention.

**Action:** Obtain a search and seizure warrant and charge keeper with cruelty.

**Result:** Animal receives needed medical treatment and keeper is prosecuted.

**Problem:** Officer responds to complaint of man beating a dog. Upon arrival, observed the man beating the dog and fears for the dog's well-being.

**Action:** Officer enters the property because he observed a crime being committed, charges the man with cruelty, and removes animal for treatment.

**Result:** Animal receives needed medical treatment, and beater is prosecuted.

**Problem:** Same as above, but officer does not see the dog or the reported beater.

**Action:** Officer obtains statements from eyewitnesses, talks to suspect and views dog, if allowed to. If evidence supports complaint and eyewitness signs a complaint, the officer obtains a search and seizure warrant and charges the beater with cruelty.

**Result:** Animal receives needed medical treatment, and beater is prosecuted.

**Problem:** Officer observes a dog tied up in a yard and the nearby residence appears unoccupied. Dog appears hungry and thirsty.

**Action:** Officer checks with the neighbors and learns that the owners moved away two days ago. Officer provides dog with food and water, posts the property. After 24 hours have passed and there is no response, officer obtains and exercises a search and seizure warrant and charges the former occupants with cruelty or abandonment.

**Result:** Animal is removed from area of jeopardy and owners, if located, may be prosecuted. Officer and agency cannot be charged with theft or conversion.

**Problem:** Officer observes a cat locked in vehicle parked in the hot sun. In the officer's judgement, the cat will die if not removed immediately.

**Action:** If time allows, have a police officer witness your observations. If no police officer is available, try to have any competent adult be your witness. Call in by radio and explain what you are about to do. Then break window and remove the cat. Have the vehicle towed to wherever your jurisdiction keeps them and notify the police of your actions.

**Result:** Cat's life is saved and subsequent investigation may warrant that a charge of cruelty be filed against the driver of the vehicle.

