The Cruelty Connection Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence

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Objectives:

- The Human Animal Bond: The Good and the Bad
- What is THE LINK
- Animal Abuse and Interpersonal/Intergenerational Violence: the tip of the iceberg
- Why should animal abuse be taken seriously
- Animal Abuse and Other Crimes
- Why Children are Cruel to Animals
- Risks to Children
- The Laws in California
- Case examples
- Resources
DISCLAIMER:

Some points of discussion and some slides may contain graphic material...
Let’s start with the Human-Animal Bond

The AVMA’s Committee on the Human-Animal Bond defines the human-animal bond as,

“a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and other animals that is influenced by behaviors that are essential to the health and well-being of both. This includes, but is not limited to, emotional, psychological, and physical interactions of people, other animals, and the environment.” (JAVMA, 1998)
Pets are Part of the Family.... Right?

- A child is more likely to grow up with a pet than with a father (Melson 2001)

- Pets help children with Learning...
- Self-esteem...
- Social support...
- Help child cope: loss, grief...
- Promote compassion, kindness
  Nurturance...
- Improve cognitive, social-emotional
  Moral development...
Pets are Part of the Family…. Right?

- 94% of dog owners and 89% of cat owners have a pet as a companion
- 51% of dog owners and 44% of cat owners buy holiday gifts for their pets
- 25% of dog owners and 12% of cat owners buy B-day gifts
- 2013: $55.5 BILLION
Almost 82.5 million (68%) American homes have pets
- 67% of homes with children under age 6 have at least one pet
- 74% of homes with children over age 6 have at least one pet
- 72% of homes have women as the primary caretaker of pet

Source: 2013-14 National Pet Owner’s Survey and American Veterinary Medical Association; U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook
Pets are Family.....

- In 2010
- 90% of pet owners would choose their pet over money in divorce
- 66% pet owners would reject a presidential candidate who was not pet friendly
- 73% of pet owners would choose a pet over a human of only allowed to have one best friend

- “Being a member of the family means that not only do humans and other animals benefit from that association... They can also be victims of it...”

  Christina Risley-Curtiss Associate Professor
  PhD, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
  Fellow, Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics and
  Affiliate Professor, Women and Gender
Not all abusers are serial killers....

- Mary Lou Randour of the Animal Welfare Institute.
- “Because you harm an animal once in your life doesn’t mean you’re going to become a serial killer. But research is very clear that people who engage in animal cruelty and continue to throughout their life – childhood, adolescence, and adults – commit many more serious offenses and serial killers are one example of that.”
- (National Link Coalition newsletter July/August 2016)
The LINK:
Why we should ALL care about animal abuse

The Veterinarian is the Only Healthcare Professional to “see” both pets and people...Hugh B. Lewis, BVMS, DACVP

Let’s change that......
Over the past 30 years, researchers and professionals in a variety of human services and animal welfare disciplines established significant correlations between animal abuse, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, elder abuse and other forms of violence.

Mistreating animals is no longer seen as an isolated incident that can be ignored: it is often an indicator or predictor crime and a “red flag” warning sign that other family members in the household may not be safe.
Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Violence

- “Recognizing animal abuse as an indicator that something is wrong in a household may be the FIRST STEP in stopping the cycle of violence”  Kimberly J. Adams ed., Kentucky Children’s rights Journal 8(2). Winter 2000

![Diagram showing the cycle of domestic violence and animal abuse](image-url)
Why should animal abuse be taken seriously

- Animal Abuse presents a risk of child abuse
- Animal violence MAY predict future violence
- Animal abuse is used to threaten human victims
- Animal abuse is used to prevent families from leaving
- Co-Occurance of multiple forms of violence increases future violence
Animal Abuse and Other Crimes

- Domestic Violence
- Child abuse
- Elder Abuse
- Drug Abuse
- Prostitution
- Sexual assault
- Firearms
- Gambling
- Fraud
- Pornography.... Bestiality....Child Pornography

99% of animal cruelty offenders had committed other crimes, averaging 4 different offenses

A history of animal abuse was a better predictor of sexual assault than were prior convictions for homicide, arson or firearms offenses

Why are Animals Abused?

- Control the Animal
- Retaliation against the animal
- Retaliation against a human
- Species prejudice
- Aggression: using the animal to enhance aggression
- Displacing aggression from person to animal
- Non-specific sadism

Kellert & Felthouse (1985) Childhood cruelty towards animals among criminals and non-criminals. Human Relations 38/12, 1113
Why are Animals Abused?


- To normalize violence
- To gain perverse satisfaction and instill fear
- Punish the animals for a person’s misbehavior
- Jealousy of a pet
- To demonstrate intolerance for rules being broken
- Threats to keep the woman from leaving
- As collateral violence (animal is not the target)
- No fear of police action
- Bestiality-related pornography
- Cruelty to animals after leaving the relationship: force to return home, punish for leaving, retribution to others for helping her leave
Why Children Abuse Animals

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

- **Domestic Violence**: 66.7% observed animal abuse, 37.5% harmed or killed pets (Ascione, 2007, *Battered pets and domestic violence…*, Violence Against Women 13(4) 354-73)

- **Hoarding**: Strained relationship with hoarder and other family, Handling mental health issues of the hoarder, Social Isolation from friends and family, health and safety risks, worry

- **Animal Fighting**: Used as bet runners, to raise dogs to fight, to throw animals into the ring, watch animals being violently killed, grow up with violence, desensitization to harm, lower empathy, animal bites
Risks to Children: Childhood Toxic Stress

- 14 year long CDC study, 17000 families
- ACE's (ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES) Examined over the lifespan
- 10 types of adversity including child abuse and exposure to domestic violence (but not animal abuse....)
- 4+ ACEs had significantly increased the likelihoods of negative outcomes including chronic pulmonary lung disease (390%)
- Hepatitis (240%)
- Depression (460%)
- Suicide attempts (1220%)
- "Childhood exposure to animal cruelty should be considered an adversity and included in such interviews. Child welfare, legal, medical and mental health professionals can use the information obtained about abusive treatment of animals to highlight its contribution to toxic stress and the subsequent risks to the child’s brain development, impaired potential, and negative health outcomes."

Dr Barbara Boat (The Childhood Trust)
Case examples and The Laws

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Penal Code § 597(a)
Penal Code § 597(b)
PENAL CODE § 597(A)

Every person who maliciously and intentionally maims, mutilates, tortures, or wounds a living animal, or maliciously and intentionally kills an animal

- General Intent Crime

- Defendant intentionally does the prohibited act

- “Wobbler”
Penal Code § 597(b)

“Everything Else Crime” -
Every person who subjects any animal to needless suffering, or inflicts unnecessary cruelty upon the animal, or in any manner abuses any animal, or fails to provide the animal with proper food, drink, or shelter.
PC § 597(H)

Requires mandatory counseling, “designed to evaluate and treat conduct disorders.”
FAMILY LAW CODE § 6350(B)
Upon a showing of “Good Cause,” a Court may include in protective orders animals.
Reporting of Animal Cruelty:

- Any employee of a county child or adult protective services agency
- Who has knowledge of or observes an animal who he knows or reasonably suspects
- Victim of cruelty, abuse, or neglect,
HELP PROTECT OUR ANIMALS

Animal Cruelty is a CRIME!

Please report incidents of animal cruelty and help us protect our communities animals.

Report Animal Abuse or Cruelty Anonymously!

WeTip 1-800-78-CRIME

1 8 0 0 7 8 2 7 4 6 3

up to $1000 REWARD
24 Hours a day, 365 Days a year

www.wetip.com
Remsen case: 1998 Redlands CA
14 year old Tristian Jensen’s body found in a well after being missing for 6 weeks

15 year old JP Remsen confesses to the crime of stabbing Tristian to death

Few friends

Bully to younger children

A loner

Explosives and firearms found in the home

Torturing and killing defenseless animals (no action taken)

Likely raised in a highly dysfunctional and abusive home
Lopez Case
FACTS: Neighbors call 911 to say children crying next door. PD arrives child says dad kicked puppy into sliding glass door and puppy was dead.

Lorna Lopez appears at every hearing. Claims no abuse. Says Victor Lopez (defendant) is a good dad to her four boys.

March 12, 2013 Lorna Lopez goes missing
CHINO: Body believed to be missing Fontana woman Lorna Lopez
Bunny Case
FACTS: Sister (who is hiding underneath her bed) calls Dad. Sister tells dad Defendant is killing the family rabbits. Defendant is heard yelling “Tell dad to bring back the car otherwise I will keep killing these rabbits.”

Dad calls 911

OPD arrives and finds Rabbit in hole. Defendant said he kicked the rabbit and when it would not die he buried it to “put it out of it’s misery.”
Stabbed two dogs Just because....
Boys will be Boys....
Recovering Alcoholic ???
- Young adult male, living with father and family dog
- Supervised visit denied for child’s Birthday
- Gets Drunk and VERY angry
- Stabs the dog twice, slits his throat, stomps skull to pieces
- Threw the body in the dumpster, cleaned up the blood
- Father comes home, helps father look for the dog, then confesses
- Father takes son to the hospital for evaluation
- Released.
- **Deemed “not a danger to himself or others”**
Well... Know that we know about the LINK... what do we do about it?

- Handouts available: San Bernardino Animal Cruelty Task Force Booth
- Anicare: Animals and Society
- Anicare for Children: Animals and Society
- Step by step guides available