



**The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)
First Strike® Campaign
2002 Report of Animal Cruelty Cases**

Since 2000, The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has compiled reports of high-profile cases of animal cruelty and neglect from across the country. The following report covers incidents committed from January through December 2002. It contains available information on the demographics of animal abusers, the types of animals abused, and other factors such as the incidence of family violence.

It is important to note that this is not a scientific study. Unfortunately, it is not possible to accurately determine the total universe of animals who are victims of cruelty because there is no national tracking system in place to monitor all animal cruelty cases. This report is based on information from 1400 animal cruelty cases involving at least 1674 perpetrators, taken from well-documented sources including media reports as well as some reports from local humane societies and other animal welfare organizations. While the statistics reflect these specific cases, the report provides a relevant snapshot of animal cruelty and neglect in the United States. And because statistics have been relatively consistent from year to year, we can intuit that it presents a valid reflection of patterns of perpetrators, crimes, and victims.

Of the animal cruelty cases in the report, 830 (59%) involved intentional cruelty toward animals and 570 (41%) involved extreme animal neglect. The compilation also included cases of animal fighting (dog fighting and cockfighting), and animal hoarding/collecting. The types of animal cruelty that are covered in the findings include:

- **Intentional cruelty or abuse**, when a person knowingly deprives an animal of food, water, shelter, socialization, or veterinary care or maliciously tortures, maims, mutilates, or kills an animal. People who are intentionally cruel to animals take satisfaction in causing harm.
- **Neglect**, when a person fails to provide an animal with proper shelter, food, water, attention, grooming or veterinary care. Cases of neglect are acts of omission rather than commission and do not give satisfaction to the person whose animals are neglected.
- **Cockfighting**, when two or more specially bred birds, known as gamecocks, are placed in an enclosure to fight, for the primary purposes of gambling and entertainment. A cockfight usually results in the death of one of the birds; sometimes it ends in the death of both.
- **Dog fighting**, a contest in which two dogs—specifically bred, conditioned, and trained to fight—are placed in a pit (generally a small arena enclosed by plywood walls) to fight each other, for the spectators' gambling and entertainment.
- **Animal hoarding**, the accumulation of a large number of animals, where the caregiver provides minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation and veterinary care; and fails to act on the deteriorating condition of the animals and/or the environment.



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Discussion

This is the third report from The HSUS about high-profile animal cruelty cases. Overall, some of the results are consistent with findings in the 2001 Report, such as:

- Adult and teenage males commit a high percentage of intentional animal cruelty.
- Males have a higher percentage of involvement in animal neglect than females, but the gender gap is much more significant with regard to intentional cruelty.
- Females have a higher percentage of involvement in animal hoarding cases than males.
- Companion animals are the most common victims of animal cruelty, though cruelty to cats is not reported as frequently as cruelty to dogs.
- Shooting, beating, torturing, and mutilation are the most common forms of intentional cruelty.
- Males are significantly more often the perpetrators when animal cruelty occurs in connection with family violence.

This report also shows that more news articles reported that animal abusers were charged with animal cruelty in 2002. In 2001, the media reported that 68% were charged with animal cruelty, but in 2002, 75% of the perpetrators were charged with animal cruelty. It's not possible to know definitively whether this means that more perpetrators are actually being charged, that the media is reporting more cases in which perpetrators are charged, or a combination of factors. But since media outlets often rely on police reports, law enforcement press releases, and police blotters to get the facts for the story, we believe it indicates that law enforcement agencies are recognizing the importance of taking animal cruelty seriously and making perpetrators accountable for their acts.

HSUS Recommendations: Legislative and Community Solutions to Violence

Although the cases covered by this report only represent a sample of the thousands of animal cruelty cases that local humane societies, animal care and control agencies, and law enforcement agencies investigate each year, the results provide us with a snapshot of who commits these acts, how they are penalized, and what kinds of animals become victims. It is important to point out that many of the animals in these cases could have been rescued or saved had neighbors, family members, friends, or concerned citizens stepped forward to intervene.

It is vitally important for individuals to stay alert to signs of animal cruelty in their own communities. Starting a Neighborhood Watch for Animals is one way to make a community safer for everyone who lives there. As part of the annual Animal Cruelty/Human Violence Awareness Week in 2003, The HSUS is offering tips for citizens on how to start a Neighborhood Watch for Animals. Some of the suggestions include getting to know neighbors' pets; staying alert to abuse, neglect, and abandonment; watching for pets in parked cars; and being aware that animals are also victims in domestic violence situations.



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The Neighborhood Watch for Animals tips are available through The HSUS' First Strike® campaign, a multi-year program dedicated to raising public and professional awareness about the animal cruelty/human violence connection. They can be downloaded at: www.hsus.org/firststrike or requested by calling 1-888-213-0956 or e-mailing firststrike@hsus.org.

Community members can also make a difference by forming anti-violence coalitions that include representatives from different agencies involved in violence intervention or by working within coalitions that already exist. Anti-violence coalitions usually include representatives from the local police department, social service agency, domestic violence shelter, and school system, but they should also include a representative from the local humane society or animal care and control agency. Animal protection advocates not only provide a voice for the animal victims, they can also serve as a valuable resource for information on offenders. Overall, anti-violence coalitions help to create an interagency network that encourages cross-reporting and coordinated responses to investigations and the prevention of violence.

Instances of animal abuse and extreme neglect are of great concern to the general public. There is also growing appreciation of the fact that such incidents are often related to other crimes, including domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and community violence. Currently, 40 states have adopted felony level animal anti-cruelty laws. This has prompted many law enforcement agencies to devote more training, time, and resources to investigating and prosecuting animal cruelty.

Overall, we seem to be moving in a direction where we're seeing more perpetrators being charged with animal cruelty, greater awareness through the media, and stronger laws on the books. To continue that success, citizens must be proactive. Animal cruelty is a crime that doesn't happen 'somewhere else' as many people would like to believe. It can happen anywhere, and by all indicators, it does.

Who commits animal cruelty?

Male perpetrators were involved in the majority of all animal cruelty cases as well as nearly all those involving intentional violent cruelty and animal fighting. Interestingly, females had a much lower percentage of involvement in intentional cruelty and animal fighting cases as compared to males, but they had a higher percentage of involvement in animal hoarding cases. This data is consistent with The HSUS' findings in the 2000 and 2001 Reports.

Of cases in which teenagers were responsible for intentional cruelty, male teenagers were the perpetrators in 97% of the cases. This is also consistent with the findings in 2001 cases. In addition, children under 13 continue to have a low percentage of involvement in intentional cruelty.



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The following table shows the percentages of men verses women involved in various types of animal cruelty in high profile cases:

Gender	All Cases	Intentional Cruelty	Animal Fighting	Neglect	Animal Hoarding
<i>Males</i>	77%	92%	89%	56%	43%
<i>Females</i>	23%	8%	11%	44%	57%

The table below provides a breakdown of intentional animal cruelty by offender age.

Age	Intentional Cruelty
<i>Child (7-12)</i>	2%
<i>Teen (13-19)</i>	22%
<i>Adult (20 and over)</i>	76%

This table shows the percentage of intentional animal cruelty committed by age and gender.

Intentional Cruelty		
Age	Male	Female
<i>Child (7-12)</i>	93%	7%
<i>Teen (13-19)</i>	97%	3%
<i>Adult (20 and over)</i>	92%	8%

Who are the victims of animal cruelty?

Companion animals were the most common victims of animal cruelty in 2002. Again, these numbers are similar to those reported in 2000 and 2001. In 2000, 76% of the high-profile cases compiled for the report involved companion animals; 12% involved farm animals; 7% involved wildlife; and 5% involved multiple types of animals. In 2001, 74% involved companion animals, 14% involved farm animals, 6% involved wildlife, 2% involved exotic animals, and 4% involved multiple types.

The following is a percentage breakdown of animal abuse victims for 2002.

Animal Type	Percentage of Cruelty Cases
<i>Companion Animals</i>	76%
<i>Farm Animals</i>	15%
<i>Wildlife</i>	5%
<i>Exotic Animals</i>	2%
<i>Multiple Types</i>	2%



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Do certain age groups appear to target particular types of animals for cruelty?

Children, teens, and adults all have a high percentage of committing acts of cruelty against companion animals—at least 70% in each age category. The following table shows a breakdown of cruelty by offender age and type of animal.

Animal Type	Offender Age		
	<i>Child</i>	<i>Teen</i>	<i>Adult</i>
<i>Companion Animals</i>	80%	70%	74%
<i>Farm Animals</i>	0	12%	20%
<i>Wildlife</i>	13%	14%	2%
<i>Exotic Animals</i>	7%	4%	1%
<i>Multiple Types</i>	0	0	3%

How many dogs vs. cats are victims of cruelty?

As in 2000 and 2001, cruelty incidents involving dogs were more commonly reported than cruelty cases against cats in 2002. This does not necessarily mean that dogs are at greater risk for being victims of cruelty than cats. In fact, many animal care and control agencies report a higher incidence of cat abuse. These findings may suggest that cat cruelty incidents are underreported by the public and media. It may also suggest that law enforcement is less likely to respond to and prosecute acts of cruelty against cats than acts against dogs.

The following table shows a percentage breakdown of dog and cat cruelty.

Animal Type	All Cases of Cruelty
<i>Dog</i>	71%
<i>Cat</i>	29%

What are the offenses?

In cases of intentional animal cruelty, the most common offenses involved shooting, beating, torturing, and mutilation. Males were involved in over 90% of the majority of the offenses. Females had the most involvement in suffocating and hanging cases. These findings are also consistent with the 2001 Cruelty Report, except women had a higher percentage of involvement (27%) in poisoning cases for 2001 compared to 6% for 2002.



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The following table is a breakdown of common offenses perpetrated on animals.

Common Offenses	Percent of Violent Cases	Percent of Cases Involving Males	Percent of Cases Involving Females
<i>Shooting</i>	20%	97%	3%
<i>Beating</i>	16%	95%	5%
<i>Torturing</i>	11%	90%	10%
<i>Mutilation</i>	11%	92%	8%
<i>Throwing</i>	8%	94%	6%
<i>Burning</i>	6%	100%	0
<i>Animal Fighting</i>	8%	89%	11%
<i>Kicking</i>	3%	100%	0
<i>Suffocating</i>	2%	78%	22%
<i>Poisoning</i>	3%	94%	6%
<i>Stabbing</i>	5%	95%	5%
<i>Hanging</i>	3%	83%	17%
<i>Dragging</i>	2%	100%	0
<i>Animal Sexual Abuse</i>	1%	89%	11%
<i>Drowning</i>	2%	85%	15%

Is there a connection between animal cruelty and human violence?

Approximately 12% of the intentional animal cruelty cases also involved some form of family violence, including domestic violence, child abuse, spouse/child witnessing animal cruelty, or elder abuse. In cases where there was a co-occurrence of animal cruelty and either domestic violence or child abuse, males had a higher percentage than females as perpetrators. There was only one high-profile reported case that involved elder abuse and animal cruelty.

In cases where there was a co-occurrence with domestic violence, child abuse, or where the spouse/child witnessed the abuse, the most common offenses included suffocating, throwing, and torturing the animal. Here is a breakdown of the co-occurrence of animal cruelty and family violence by gender.

Type of Family Violence (Co-occurrence with animal cruelty)	Gender of Perpetrator	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<i>Domestic Violence</i>	96%	4%
<i>Child Abuse</i>	80%	20%
<i>Elder Abuse</i>	100% (1 case)	0



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The following table shows a breakdown of animal cruelty cases that involved a simultaneous report of a spouse or child witnessing the act of cruelty or where the perpetrator was charged with domestic violence or child abuse.

Offense	Percentage of Co-Occurrence with Domestic Violence, Child Abuse, or Spouse/Child Witness
<i>Suffocating</i>	38%
<i>Throwing</i>	29%
<i>Torturing</i>	20%
<i>Stabbing</i>	19%
<i>Beating</i>	16%

How many perpetrators are charged with animal cruelty?

74% of the perpetrators for all forms of animal cruelty were charged. In addition, more than three-quarters of teens and adults were charged with animal cruelty. Compared to the other age groups, children were not charged as frequently. At the time of printing this report, statistics were not available for conviction rates because many cases are still pending trials in the court systems.

The following tables provide a breakdown of who was charged with animal cruelty by looking at gender and age of the offenders.

Gender	Charged
<i>Male</i>	86%
<i>Female</i>	90%

Age	Charged
<i>Child</i>	47%
<i>Teen</i>	77%
<i>Adult</i>	88%

One final, sad statistic: of the cases compiled for this report, 55% of the animals involved in the incidents of cruelty, neglect, and hoarding were killed by the perpetrators or had to be euthanized as a result of their injuries.