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**TALKING POINTS**  
**CRUELTY TO ANIMALS BY CHILDREN, SERIAL KILLERS**  
**& OTHER VIOLENT CRIMINALS**  
(March 3, 2006)

**Mahatma Gandhi said, “the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way it treats its animals.” The truth in this statement should prompt police, investigators and prosecutors to vigorously investigate and prosecute – to the fullest degree possible – those who abuse animals in America.** While cruelty to animals is a crime in all 50 states, and carries a felony sentence in 41 states plus the District of Columbia – sadly, it is a crime that is **rarely investigated and prosecuted.** The well-worn excuse by many law enforcement officials – that “it’s just a dog,” and “we should be focusing on crimes against people” -- shows a **frightening lack of understanding of the ramifications of animal cruelty and its insidious affects on the animal’s “human family,” and other law abiding citizens.** Animal cruelty can be linked to the vast majority of serial killers, many habitual violent offenders, and most children and teens who kill.

**FACT: If we pay attention to children and youth who perform acts of cruelty on animals and take immediate action to stop their behavior, future crimes can be prevented and lives may be saved.** Here is a very short list, that’s part of a very long list, of examples of adult serial killers – and young killers -- who predicted their futures by torturing and killing animals in their early years. Their behavior seems to have been ignored. Had someone helped them by taking their animal abuse seriously, and sought the help of law enforcement and others who understand the seriousness of this behavior, who knows how many lives could have been saved?

- The school shootings that took place between 1997 and 2001 in: Pearl, MS; West Paducah, KY; Jonesboro, AK; Springfield, OR; Littleton, CO; Conyers, GA; and San Diego, CA **ALL** contain a **common element.** Prior to killing their classmates and teachers, **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, prior to killing humans.**
- Albert DeSalvo, **The Boston Strangler killed 13 women.** When he was a boy he put cats and dogs into orange crates and shot arrows through the slats to kill them.
- Ted Bundy, **was a serial rapist and killer of at least 30 women.** As a youth he tortured and killed animals.
- Jeffrey Dahmer, **killed and cannibalized at least 17 people.** As a boy, he killed and impaled the heads of cats and dogs on sticks.
- Dennis Rader, **the BTK killer in Wichita, KS, killed at least 10 people.** He abused and killed animals for practice prior to killing people.

The **lesson is** that **many potential killers can be recognized in their youth.** **Boys who torture and kill animals** are not just “**boys being boys**” or “**going through a phase.**” **Animal abuse is a**

**serious warning sign.** As anthropologist Margaret Mead once noted, “One of the most dangerous things that can happen to a child is to kill or torture an animal and get away with it.” As shown above, the **results of doing little or nothing are chilling.**

**Prosecutors should try to take the lead by helping to educate their peers, police, law enforcement officials, educators, parents, children, teens and others within their communities how to recognize signs of animal cruelty, along with the importance of taking these acts seriously.** When acts of animal cruelty are known or suspected, they should be reported to the proper authorities, such as police, local animal control agencies, humane societies and animals shelters. In most instances, these officials have the authority to enforce state and local laws related to animal abuse. Reporting can be done anonymously. By early reporting suspicion of animal abuse by a youth, and providing appropriate punishment and treatment, the number of lives that could be saved is literally incalculable. **Unfortunately, far too often animal abuse reports are overlooked – with devastating results.**