

First Strike: An Introduction to the Connection Between Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Violence

Webinar Overview

Research has shown that those who abuse animals do not often stop there. Animal abusers often are also perpetrators of other types of violence, including domestic abuse, gang related offenses and has been found to be a common thread for those convicted of serial killing. Understanding the connection between these types of crimes helps to create programs that can break the cycle of abuse and violence and teach people to treat crimes against animals more seriously.

What is animal abuse?

Frank Ascione, a prominent professor and researcher into the connection between animal abuse and interpersonal violence has defined animal abuse as: non-accidental, socially unacceptable behavior that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering or distress to and/or the death of an animal.

How does family violence intersect?

When there is animal cruelty or neglect in a home, chances are that children, partners or elderly family members are being hurt too. When animals are abused, people are at risk: when people are abused, animals are at risk. (National Link Coalition, www.nationallinkcoalition.org)



Image from the National

What the research says

- Animal abuse was found in 88% of homes under investigation for physical child abuse. (DeViney, E. Dickert, J., & Lockwood, R. (1983). The care of pets within child abusing families. *International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems*, 4, 321-329.)
- 60% of surveyed college students who witnessed or perpetrated animal cruelty as children, reported experience with child mistreatment or domestic violence (DeGue, Sarah, and David DiLillo. "Is animal cruelty a "red flag" for family violence? Investigating co-occurring violence toward children, partners, and pets." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 24.6 (2009): p1049.)
- Children exposed to domestic violence are three times more likely to be cruel to animals than children living in non-violent households. (Currie, C. L. (2006). Animal cruelty by children exposed to domestic violence: *Child Abuse & Neglect* Vol. 30(4)
- A U.S. survey of male undergraduates found that those who had been involved in multiple acts of animal abuse were significantly more likely to have both been bullied and been a bully. (Henry, B. C., & Sanders, C. E. (2007). Bullying and animal abuse: Is there a connection? *Society and Animals*, 15(2), 107-126.)

Ways to Prevent Violence and Increase Awareness

- **Humane education programs through animal welfare organizations and shelters**
 - Safe Haven (up to 60 days of shelter for animals of domestic violence)
 - PACK (Promoting Animal Care and Kindness) Program (partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters)
 - Milwaukee Animal Cruelty Task Force (informal task force made up of Animal Control, Wisconsin Humane Society, Milwaukee Police Department, the District and City Attorney and the health department.
 - PAL (Wisconsin Humane Society) involved youth in working with animals and developing empathy, responsibility and respect
- **Specific rehabilitation programs for children who have committed violence against animals**
 - AniCare rehabilitation program (AniCare Model of Treatment for Animal Abuse) by the Animals and Society Institute www.animalsandsociety.org
- **Cross-reporting and collaboration with various agencies to work against violence in communities**
 - E.g. 25 states allow courts to include pets in protection from abuse orders
 - Reporting abuse to one agency could trigger support from other agencies and increase protection for all involved
- **Understanding your role in reporting and supporting those who confide in you**
 - Are you a mandated reporter?:
https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/manda.pdf.

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Presented by Dezarae Jones-Hartwig, August 2014

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