



GERMAN SHEPHERD RESOURCE AND RESCUE CENTER

HUMANE EDUCATION PROGRAM

THE BOND BETWEEN ANIMAL CRUELTY AND HUMAN VIOLENCE

ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ANIMAL CRUELTY AND INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

Animal cruelty has been defined as socially unacceptable behavior with the purpose of causing unnecessary pain, suffering, or distress to and/or death of an animal, exclusive of socially condoned behavior such as legal hunting and certain agricultural and veterinary practices (Ascione, 1993).

The Humane Society of United States (HSUS) reports that animal cruelty is often an early warning sign of violent tendencies that will be acted out eventually against people. Recent studies have found that individuals who have committed repeated acts of animal cruelty were more likely to have engaged in recurrent acts of interpersonal violence, lending support to the possible link between recurrent acts of childhood and adolescent cruelty and subsequent violent crime and to repeated acts of interpersonal aggression (Tallichet & Hensley, 2004). It may be even more important to understand this violence in consideration of the graduation hypothesis (Hensley & Tallichet, 2007), an assertion that youthful abusers graduate to later aggression against humans.

It is already well known that serial killers Jeffrey Dahmer, Theodore Bundy, Edmund Kemper III, Albert DeSalvo, and David Berkowitz had histories of abusing, torturing, and killing animals, in ways that sometimes mirrored the monstrous acts they later committed against their human victims (Merz-Perez & Heide, 2004; Wright & Hensley, 2003). The past histories of adolescent perpetrators of recent school shootings have revealed that the Bethel, Alaska, school shooter Evan Ramsey was known to throw rocks at dogs for amusement, Littleton, Colorado, school shooters Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold frequently discussed their mutilation of animals with friends, the Springfield, Oregon, school shooter Kipland "Kip" Kinkel bragged to peers about his animal cruelty which included beheading cats and blowing up a cow with explosives, and finally the Pearl, Mississippi, school shooter Luke Woodham, prior to killing his mother and two schoolmates, tortured and killed his own pet dog (Verlinden, 2000).

Members of humane law enforcement of The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) have long believed that an animal abuser is more often a potential danger to society and more likely to be involved in other crimes. In a study conducted with Northeastern University in 1996, The MSPCA reported that 70% of those who committed crimes

against animals had also been involved in other violent, property drug, and disorderly crimes. More specifically, the study indicated that a person who has committed animal abuse is:

- 5 times more likely to commit violence against people, 4 times more likely to commit property crimes;
- 4 times more likely to commit property crimes;
- 3 times more likely to be involved in drunken and disorderly offenses.

In addition:

- The FBI sees animal cruelty as a predictor of violence against people and considers past animal abuse when profiling serial killers.
- National and state studies have established that from 54 to 71 percent of women seeking shelter from abuse reported that their partners had threatened, injured or killed one or more family pets (Anicare Model workshop, Tacoma, 2004. Created in 1999, the [AniCare Model of Treatment for Animal Abuse](#) treats people over 17 by bringing abusers and animals together. A companion program treats children.)
- In assessing youth at risk of becoming violent, the U.S. Department of Justice stresses a history of animal abuse.
- More than 80 percent of family members being treated for child abuse also had abused animals. In two-thirds of these cases, an abusive parent had killed or injured a pet. In one-third of the cases, a child victim continued the cycle of violence by abusing a pet.

WHAT'S BEING DONE ABOUT IT?

American Humane reports that in many communities, human services, animal services and law enforcement agencies are sharing resources and expertise to address violence. Professionals are beginning to engage in crosstraining and cross-reporting through inter-agency partnerships. Humane societies are also teaming with domestic violence shelters to provide emergency shelter for pets of domestic violence victims. And some states have strengthened their animal-cruelty legislation. For example:

- There are now felony-level penalties for animal cruelty in nearly all states.
- Several states require veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse and offer veterinarians who report cruelty immunity from civil and criminal liability.
- Some states require animal control officers to report suspected child abuse or neglect and receive training in recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect.
- A few states permit child and adult protection workers to report suspected animal abuse or receive training on identifying and reporting animal cruelty, abuse and neglect.
- Nearly half the states call for psychological counseling for individuals convicted of animal cruelty.

The HSUS offers First Strike® campaign materials in a downloadable format with the goal of providing information and solutions toward preventing animal cruelty and human violence.

The materials have been created for various violence responders, including law enforcement, social service workers, and animal care and control officers, as well as educators, veterinary professionals, victims of violence, teens, children, and concerned citizens and address such topics as suggestions for community action, how to build an anti-violence coalition in your community, how to be an observant neighbor and look out for the animals in the community, action plans for recognizing and responding to animal cruelty tailored for particular professions, guidance for those who have companion animals and are seeking help in situations involving domestic violence. The HSUS encourages the public to download and photocopy the materials and only requires that individuals copy them in their entirety and provide credit to The HSUS. They also encourage sharing these resources with fellow professionals and citizens in the community.

WHERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BOND

HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES (HSUS)

The First Strike® campaign was created in 1997 to raise public and professional awareness about the connection between animal cruelty and other violent crime. The campaign works with local animal protection agencies around the United States to promote inter-agency collaborations to reduce animal cruelty, family and community violence. First Strike also provides investigative support, rewards, expert testimony and information on the animal-human cruelty connection to law enforcement and works jointly with legislators and activists throughout the United States to press for the passage of well-enforced, felony-level anti-cruelty laws.

Web Address:

http://www.hsus.org/hsus_field/first_strike_the_connection_between_animal_cruelty_and_hum_an_violence/

AMERICAN HUMANE ASSOCIATION: RESOURCE CENTER ON THE LINK

American Humane's National Resource Center on The Link Between Violence to People and Animals is available to assist professionals interested in preventing violence by providing resources and training regarding the connections between human violence and animal cruelty. The Resource Center provides training and technical assistance to community organizations and coalitions; a Speakers Bureau for local, regional and national workshops; and a growing library of nearly 1,000 print and multimedia Link-related resources and a multidisciplinary contact database. Contact the National Resource Center on The Link Between Violence to People and Animals at (800) 227-4645 ext. 461.

Web Address:

<http://www.americanhumane.org/human-animal-bond/programs/the-link-of-violence/national-resource-center.html>

THE LATHAM FOUNDATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF HUMANE EDUCATION

A clearinghouse for information about humane issues and activities, the human companion animal bond (HCAB), animal-assisted therapy, the connections between child and animal abuse and other forms of violence, producer and distributor of affordable videos and publications on the above topics, publisher of the Latham Letter, creator and sponsor of the "Search for Excellence" Video Awards.

Web Address:

<http://www.latham.org/index.html>

Animals and Society Institute

The Animals and Society Institute is a nonprofit, independent research and educational organization that advances the status of animals in public policy, and promotes the study of human-animal relationships. The ASI seeks to advance institutional change for animals by helping to establish the moral and legal rights fundamental to a just, compassionate and peaceful society. They are an independent think tank as well as a producer of educational resources, publications and events.

Web Address:

<http://www.animalsandsociety.org/>

Society and Animals Forum (formerly Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)

Non-profit organization that works with social scientists, mental health providers and other animal protection organizations to reduce the suffering and exploitation of both human and nonhuman animals. The Society & Animals Forum produces educational programs and materials on the relationship between human and nonhuman animals. The ultimate objective of these programs is to reduce violence against human and nonhuman animals. The organization's activities include providing training workshops; publishing, designing, producing, and distributing journals, professional manuals, and other educational materials; and creating and running advocacy programs.

Web Address:

<http://www.societyandanimalsforum.org/>

Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF)

The Animal Legal Defense Fund fights to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. ALDF has advanced stronger enforcement of anti-cruelty laws and more humane treatment of animals and has pushed the U.S. legal system to end the suffering of abused animals. Supported by hundreds of dedicated attorneys and more than 100,000 members.

Web Address:

<http://www.aldf.org/index.php>

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)

Animal Abuse and Youth Violence. Juvenile Justice Bulletin. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Program. September, 2001.

Web Address:

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/188677.pdf>

RESOURCES

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- Hensley, C., & Tallichet, S.E. (2007). The effect of inmates' self-reported childhood and adolescent animal cruelty: Motivations on the number of convictions for adult violent interpersonal crimes. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 52, 175-184.
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- Verlinden, S. 2000. Risk factors in school shootings. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Pacific University, Forest Grove, OR.
- Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
www.mspca.org/
- American Humane
<http://www.americanhumane.org/>
- Humane Society of the United States
www.humanesociety.org/

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