



AMERICAN HUMANE

Protecting Children & Animals Since 1877

AMERICAN HUMANE SUPPORTS INCLUDING PETS IN PROTECTIVE ORDERS

Domestic violence-related animal abuse is a national epidemic. Each year, thousands of battered women face the grim reality that their pets will also be victims of domestic abuse, helpless pawns in the game of physical power and emotional control wielded by abusers to ensure submission from human victims and to force their silence.

American Humane knows that individuals who abuse animals rarely stop there. Pets often provide comfort to adult and child victims of domestic violence. Realizing this, abusers torture or kill family pets to retaliate against victims who leave the abusive home, to ensure submission from human victims, and to force silence. Without a court-ordered means of prevention, battered women and their children feel they have no choice but to remain in violent households in order to avoid harm or death to their pets.

Twelve independent surveys have reported that between 18 percent and 48 percent of battered women have delayed their decision to leave, or have returned to their batterer, out of fear for the welfare of their pets or livestock.¹ One study reported that such concern for pets' welfare was seven times more likely for women whose pets had been threatened or abused than those whose pets had not been harmed.

Tragically, children who grow up in an environment of animal abuse live in constant fear that a beloved family member will be harmed. Children often intervene to protect their mothers and pets from being battered. Some children may even allow themselves to be victimized to save their pet from being harmed or killed.²

Over time, children may even become desensitized to the inhumane treatment of animals. Research indicates that children who witness animal cruelty may imitate that behavior. Children who are victims of family violence are nearly three times more likely to engage in animal cruelty than children who are not exposed to such violence.³ A 2005 study revealed that 36.8 percent of boys and 29.4 percent of girls who were victims of domestic violence, including physical and sexual abuse, abused the family pet.⁴

¹ Ascione, Frank R., *Emerging Research on Animal Risk as a Risk Factor for Intimate Partner Violence*. (K. Kendall-Tackell & S. Giacconi, eds.) (Civic Research Institute, 2007, p. 3-1 – 3-17).

² Edelson, J.L., Mbilinyi, L.F., Beeman, S.K., & Hagemester, A.K. *How Children are Involved in Adult Domestic Violence: Results from a Four-City Telephone Survey*. (Journal of Interpersonal Violence, v. 18, 2003 p.18-32).

³ Currie, C.L., *Animal Cruelty by Children Exposed to Domestic Violence*. (The International Journal, v30, 2006, p. 425-435).

Tragically, this behavior is often symptomatic of future abuse toward human beings.⁵ Significant research documents a relationship between childhood histories of animal cruelty and patterns of chronic interpersonal aggression.⁶ A 1988 study of 28 convicted sexual homicide perpetrators revealed that 36% admitted they abused animals as a child, and 46% abused animals as an adolescent,⁷ and a 1986 study of 64 convicted male sex offenders revealed that 48% of rapists admitted animal abuse during childhood or adolescence.⁸

In response to the national recognition of the link between domestic violence and animal abuse, as well as widespread public support, legislatures nationwide are considering—and passing—bills to include pets in protective orders. In 2006, Maine, New York, and Vermont enacted such legislation into law. In 2007, California, Connecticut, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, and Tennessee and in 2008, the District of Columbia and Louisiana enacted such legislation into law. The inclusion of companion animals in domestic violence protective orders is the next logical step in legally protecting all victims of family violence and to stop the cycle of violence.

Legislation that allows judges, at their discretion and on a case-by-case basis, to issue protective orders that include pets is critical toward ending the cycle of violence in abusive homes and keeping all victims safe from harm. This process, which is not addressed by state animal cruelty laws, is a strong means of preventing abusers from manipulating the loving bond between both child and adult victims and their pets. Its potential impact on the lives of humans is so great and so well documented that it would be a grave mistake to view such legislation as just for animals.

As the oldest national non-profit organization dedicated to protecting both children and animals from abuse, neglect, and exploitation, the American Humane Association actively addresses the internationally recognized link between animal abuse and family violence. Through its campaigns against violence, American Humane is a leader in raising public awareness, advocating for stronger legislative initiatives, and providing tools for decision makers, social service providers, animal care and control professionals, veterinarians, parents, and other concerned citizens to recognize problems and take appropriate steps to end abuse and protect its both human and non-human victims. Human and animal victims need immediate protection from domestic abuse. On their behalf, American Humane continues to advocate for legislation that includes pets in domestic violence protective orders.

⁴ Ascione, Frank R., *The Family: Safe Haven or Landscape of Terror?* Children & Animals: Exploring the Roots of Kindness & Cruelty (Purdue University press, 2005, p. 137).

⁵ Boat, B.W., *Abuse of children and abuse of animals: Using the links to inform child assessment and protection.* Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Animal Abuse: Linking the Circles of Compassion for Prevention and Intervention. (F.R. Ascione & P. Arkow, eds.) (Purdue University Press, 1999, p. 83-100); Arkow, P. *The Relationship of Animal Abuse and Other Forms of Family Violence.* Family Violence and Sexual Assault Bulletin, vol. 12, 1996, p. 29-34.

⁶ Kellert, S.R. & Felthous, A.R. *Childhood Cruelty Toward Animals Among Criminals and Noncriminals.* (Human Relations, 1985, vol. 38, p. 113-1129); Hensley, C. & Tallichet, S.E., *Animal Cruelty Motivations* (Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 2005, vol. 20, p. 1429-1443); Merz-Perez, L., Heide, K. M., & Silverman, I. J., *Childhood cruelty to animals and subsequent violence against humans* (International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 2001, p.556-573); Becker, F. & French, L., *Making the Links: Child Abuse, Animal Cruelty, and Domestic Violence* (Child Abuse Review, vol. 13, 2004, p. 399-414).

⁷ Ressler, R., Burgess, A., & Douglas, J.E., *Sexual Homicide: Patterns and Motives* (The Free Press, 1988).

⁸ Tingle, D., Barnard, G. W., Robbins, L., Newman, G., & Hutchinson, D., *Childhood and adolescent characteristics of pedophiles and rapists.* (International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, vol. 9, 1986, p. 103-116).