



PETA Research and
Education Foundation
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(Registered charity: 1056453)

Information for Prosecutors, Police Officers, Magistrates and Judges

*"Animals and children
have one thing in
common - they're both
easy to hurt.
Maltreatment of animals
in a family can sound a
warning bell that
children are also at risk.
We need to recognise
the cruelty connection."
- Mary Marsh, NSPCC
chief executive*



Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime

Violent acts against animals have long been recognised as indicators of a dangerous psychopathy that does not confine itself to animals.

“Non-violence leads to the highest ethics, which is the goal of all evolution. Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages.”

- Thomas A. Edison, *Harper's magazine*, 1890

“The establishment of the common origin of all species logically involves a readjustment of altruistic morals, by enlarging the application of what has been called the Golden Rule from the area of mere mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom.”

- Thomas Hardy, *Letter to The Humanitarian*, 1910

“This tendency [toward cruelty] should be watched in [children], and, if they incline to any such cruelty, they should be taught the contrary usage. For the custom of tormenting and killing other animals will, by degrees, harden their hearts even towards men.”

- John Locke, *Thoughts on Education*

Animal abuse is not just the result of a minor personality flaw; it's a symptom of a deep mental disturbance. Research in psychology and criminology shows that people who commit acts of cruelty toward animals don't stop there. Many move on to harm their fellow humans.

In America, where much of the research into this issue has been conducted, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has found that a history of cruelty to animals is one of the traits that regularly appear in the records of serial rapists and murderers.

Cruelty to animals is one of three predictors used to determine a juvenile's potential of becoming psychopathic. Robert Ressler, founder of the FBI's Behavioral Sciences Unit, says, “These are the kids who never learned that it was wrong to poke out a puppy's eyes”.



Mary Bell: Crossing Species Lines

Growing up, Mary Bell endured extraordinary abuse, and the warning sirens were wailing long before she killed two children when she was still a child herself.

Born to a 17-year-old single mother, Mary was an unwanted child. Her mother gave her away to strangers and even tried to kill her on a number of occasions. At the age of 4, Mary was prostituted by her mother. She was regularly beaten and whipped, and the dysfunctional little girl was a constant bed-wetter.

Journalist Gitta Sereny wrote extensively about Mary's life and was convinced that Mary was desperate to be saved from her violent ways long before she killed the two boys.

Reports indicate that for years, Mary bit, kicked, scratched and nipped other children and that she lied constantly and blatantly. But these cries for attention were ignored, and Mary began to kill pigeons by throttling them.

She later put her hands around the throat of a newborn baby and pushed her younger cousin off the

top of a two-metre-high air-raid shelter. The very next day, Mary squeezed the necks of two 6-year-old girls, asking whether they would die if she choked them. Her violence was escalating, but she wasn't stopped. Two weeks later, she strangled 4-year-old Martin Brown to death. Two months after that, she killed 3-year-old Brian Howe the same way.

Thankfully, Mary's desperate childhood is highly unusual, but there are thousands of children living in violent homes who could easily follow the same tragic path.

Mary's anger and frustration clearly needed an outlet, and others in her household may have set the example of cruelty to animals. Two documented events give us a clue as to how the family dog was treated. Every time Mary wet the bed, her mother rubbed the young girl's face in it. On one occasion, when Mary had used all the hot water, her mother beat her so viciously with the dog chain that police were called to the house.

Mary also believed that the same dog died two or three times, when, in fact, the dog died of unspecified causes and was repeatedly replaced by Mary's step-father.

The Cruel Household: Animal Abuse and Family Violence



Researchers have found that a batterer's first target is often an animal living in the home and that the second tends to be a spouse or child. Many batterers are able to control their human victims by threatening, torturing and/or killing the victim's animal companions. With one in four women experiencing domestic violence at some time in her life, all of society is affected.

Studies

While animal abuse is a potential sign of child abuse, the parent isn't always the one harming the animal. Children who abuse animals may be repeating a lesson learned at home; like their

parents, they are reacting to anger or frustration with violence. Their violence is directed at the only individual in the family more vulnerable than themselves: an animal. One expert says, "Children in violent homes are characterised by frequently participating in pecking-order battering, in which they maim or kill an animal. Indeed, domestic violence is the most common background for childhood cruelty to animals."

A 1981 study of 23 British families with a history of animal neglect showed that 82 per cent had children at risk of abuse or neglect. This study inspired a similar study in the United States, in which among 53

families, 60 per cent could have been prosecuted for cruelty to animals, but all escaped prosecution.

Paws for Kids conducted a survey of 50 women in British refuges in 1997. All had companion animals. Sixty-six per cent said that their partners had threatened to harm their animal companions. Thirty-eight per cent said that their partners had actually harmed the animal.

In the US, an unpublished survey by Frank Ascione of Utah State University showed that 50 out of 57 families who were being treated for child abuse also had animals in the home who had been abused.



Women Speak

- "My ex-partner threatened to kill all our animals if we left; he threatened to kick my cat to death. It upset my daughter greatly."
- "The reason I couldn't leave before was my cats."
- "Staying at home and suffering beatings on a daily basis became more acceptable than leaving with the children without their pets."
- "My ex-partner threatened to kill all our animals if we left. I know for certain he would have, as in one case, he did, but it could never be proved, plus any allegations against him would have put all of us (including the animals) at an even greater risk. He beat my son's dog in a rage. She was only trying to protect us. I tried to stop him so he beat me instead."

Cruel Kids: Future Problems

And So It Continues ...

As animal abuse can lead to domestic abuse, perpetrators of domestic violence are likely to progress to acts of violence toward strangers. A study of 400 offences and perpetrators found that at least 70 per cent of those who had physically assaulted their partners had additional criminal histories. Around one in 12 had been either convicted of sexual abuse or – according to intelligence – involved in other rapes or assaults. Laura Richards, a senior behavioural consultant with London Metropolitan Police's Racial and Violent Crime Taskforce said, "There is a definite link between domestic violence and stranger rape".



Case in Point

Robert Thompson was a troubled child. His father was a heavy drinker who regularly beat his mother. Robert had four older brothers, and they, as well as both his parents, hit him. He was 6 when his father left and his mother turned to drink. His oldest brother took charge, but unable to cope with the responsibility, he tied his siblings up or left them locked in the pigeon shed. The brothers also stole things and set fires. At the age of 8, Robert took his younger brother to the canal, kicked him, punched him and left him there.

With this backdrop of violence, it's not surprising that Robert Thompson took out his anger and frustrations on animals. He reportedly pulled the heads off live baby pigeons and displayed "noted cruelty to pets". If someone had intervened at this stage, Robert's life may have evolved very differently ... but no one did. At the age of 10, Robert Thompson was convicted of the murder of toddler Jamie Bulger.

Of course, not every child who abuses animals becomes a killer, but some do, and many more display violence in their personal relationships.

Newspapers regularly report on children who have been caught hurting animals: A 15-year-old Berkshire schoolboy doused a cat in lighter fluid and set fire to her; a teenager from County Durham poured boiling water over a hedgehog, causing the animal to scream; and a 14-year-old Wiltshire boy beat a cat to death and walked away smiling to himself.

These young people may not have thought themselves lucky to have been caught, but had their crimes not been reported and acted upon, they too may have progressed along the continuum, committing greater and greater acts of violence until they shared Robert Thompson's fate.

Airguns

Dunblane murderer Thomas Hamilton and Michael Ryan, perpetrator of the Hungerford massacre, both had a fascination with airguns, later collecting other weaponry. Hamilton encouraged young boys to shoot at any animal they saw; he reportedly spent his youth squashing rabbits' heads beneath the wheels of cars.

Airguns provide a particularly easy way for young people to kill and maim animals. The RSPCA estimates that 1,100 animals are killed or injured every year by airguns, and hundreds of other cases are thought to go unreported.



Notorious Killers

- Moors murderer Ian Brady abused animals as both a child and an adult.
- David Mulcahy and John Duffy, the so-called railway killers, raped and/or murdered 15 women between 1982 and 1986 in London and the Home Counties. At the age of 13, Mulcahy was caught torturing and killing a hedgehog on the playground while Duffy watched.
- Gavin McGuire committed a catalogue of violence against animals, including setting fire to pigeons when he was just 14. His crimes escalated to sexual assault, rape and murder.
- Peter George Dinsdale (aka Bruce Lee) strangled pigeons on the same night he set fire to their owner's house, killing him. At the age of 21, he was charged with 26 counts of manslaughter and 10 counts of arson.
- Harold Jones gained notoriety in 1920s Wales as a teenage sex killer. His attempted rape and subsequent murder of two young girls, the second just a fortnight after he was acquitted of the first attack, was preceded by an incident in which he pulled the wings off baby birds as he collected eggs.
- US serial killer and cannibal Jeffery Dahmer impaled the heads of dogs and cats on sticks.
- Lee Boyd Malvo, convicted in connection with the 2002 Washington sniper attacks, reportedly hunted and killed stray cats for nearly five years, beginning when he was only 8 or 9 years old.
- Australia's "Frankston murderer", Paul Denyer, stabbed and slashed three women to death. As a child, he slit the throats of his sister's toy bears before progressing to the family kitten, slitting her throat with his brother's pocket knife and hanging the dead animal from a tree. He also disembowelled his neighbour's cat and slit the throats of her kittens, spreading the entrails around her flat.
- Anatoly Onoprienko, Ukraine's most notorious serial killer, murdered more than 50 people between 1989 and 1996. He started out by shooting deer in the woods.
- Scottish-born Archibald Beattie McCafferty was in trouble with police from a very young age. By 24, although not deemed violent toward other people, he told a psychiatrist that he enjoyed strangling chickens, dogs and cats to see what it was like. He later beat, kicked and stabbed three people to death.



Bestiality and the Sexual Abuse of Humans

Research in the US revealed that injuries to children caused by companion animals could be indicative of an abusive home life. The events run thus: A parent hurts a child, the child hurts the animal and, consequently, the animal lashes out at the child. As a result of these findings, Cincinnati Children's Hospital looks deeper into any situation in which a child arrives with injuries sustained by an animal. Because of this policy, it emerged that a 3-year-old child who came in with multiple severe cat scratches had been scratched while sodomising the cat. Professionals asked where he had learnt such behaviour and concluded: "Clearly, he was a victim of sexual assault and was simply practising what had been done to him".

Research conducted at the Young Abusers Project in London confirmed this link, revealing zoophilia in 10 per cent of the young people who had been referred there for sexually abusing other children. Cruelty to animals was documented in 18 per cent of cases. Of the 12 female child abusers referred to the project, three had committed zoophilia.

One American study found that 96 per cent of children who admitted to engaging in sex with non-human animals had also committed sex

offences against humans. Researchers concluded that "sex with animals may be an important indicator of potential or co-occurring sex offences against humans and may be a sign of severe family dysfunction and abuse that should be addressed in the arenas of psychological intervention, juvenile justice programs, and public policy".

Case in Point

Australian John Travers was a troubled child, using marijuana at age 12 and becoming an alcoholic by 14. He got a job at a local meat plant, where he learned butchery. He stole chickens and pigs to kill and butcher for the table. Witnesses stated that Travers also raped sheep, pigs, goats, chickens and lambs. It was alleged that he sodomised a sheep, and as he was about to have an orgasm, he pulled the animal's head back and cut her throat.

With his gang, Travers repeatedly attacked and raped women and homosexual men. In 1986, they repeatedly raped, beat and kicked a woman named Anita Cobby. Fearing she would tell police if she survived, Travers went back to her prone body, sat astride her, pulled her head back and cut her throat, just as he had done to the sheep in his backyard.

In the UK, Stephen Hall of Hull was sentenced to six months in jail after pleading guilty to sodomising a goat. Hall already had a conviction for indecent assault against a 6-year-old girl.

Henry Lee Lucas, possibly America's most famous paedophile and killer, trapped and raped animals before torturing them to death. He later tracked, raped and murdered women, sometimes having sex with the corpses.



Crimes of Omission

Animals often suffer alongside human dependents in neglectful homes. Such disregard for life doesn't recognise species lines and may turn into violence.

When an Edinburgh family went on holiday for two weeks, neighbours became concerned about the dog who had been left behind and called the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA). After breaking in, the SSPCA found both the neglected animal and an abandoned elderly man who had been tied to the toilet and left with a packet of cornflakes, some biscuits and a few cans of fizzy drink.



Legal Cruelty

Stephen R. Kellert of Yale University initiated a study to examine the relationship between childhood cruelty to animals and aggressive behaviour among adults. His first task was to define animal cruelty: "While the perception of animal cruelty is somewhat dependent on subjective judgment, it will be defined here as the willful infliction of harm, injury, and intended pain on a nonhuman animal."

While certain jobs do involve the wilful infliction of harm on animals, we must question the impact those jobs have on the people who hold them.

It is believed that working as a butcher at a slaughterhouse had a profound effect on Gloucester serial killer Fred West. According to Colin West, author of *The Corpse Garden*, "[E]vidence suggests that necrophilia and desire to mutilate corpses began during his period as a butcher". Similarly, Denis Nilsen, who was convicted of six counts of murder and two counts of attempted murder in 1983, was also a

trained butcher. Both men butchered their victims after killing them.

Somerset gamekeeper Peter O'Hare's job involved "controlling" wild animal populations - shooting, poisoning and trapping. In September 2002, he shot his wife, her child and himself.



Stopping the Cycle of Abuse: A Multi-Agency Approach

Animal abuse is often discovered earlier than child or domestic abuse because it often occurs in plain view. While hiding their own abuse, human victims may talk openly of animal abuse or neglect occurring in the family. Cruelty to animals,

therefore, should be easier to uncover and deal with and can, if reported to other agencies, also lead to the discovery of human abuse or neglect within the home. This can only work if animal-protection agents inform social services of their findings.



In 2001, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) joined forces to host the "Making the Links" conference. They not only wanted to highlight the connection between the abuse of animals and the abuse of humans, they also hoped to forge links between different agencies to combat all abuse.

Recommendations arising from the conference included the following:

- RSPCA workers and veterinary surgeons should be trained to recognise animal abuse and should be familiar with its link with child abuse.
- Field workers should be encouraged to cross refer between agencies should they become aware of cruelty to animals or child abuse occurring in the home.
- More animal-fostering schemes need to be set up to assist women and children who are fleeing domestic violence.
- Domestic violence forums should include animal-welfare agencies.
- Animal-welfare agencies need to keep clear records of why animals are being handed over for rehoming to establish how many are being given up by women fleeing domestic violence.
- More research, including predictive research, on the link between animal and human abuse should be conducted.
- Social-work training programs should give more consideration to animal welfare.

In America, various states and cities have introduced guidelines requiring police who file domestic violence reports to note the presence and condition of companion animals. It is not a nationwide initiative yet, but those working in this area clearly believe that a multi-agency approach can only help human and animal victims.



Community Safety at Stake



Resources and Useful Addresses



Safeguards

Prosecutors, police and judges are in a position to seek or impose safeguards against future violent crime. Imposing a ban on keeping animals, requiring psychological assessment and counselling (to include anger management, if applicable) and pushing for or ordering a custodial sentence for abusers can prevent future violence.

Recidivism

Repeat crimes among those who abuse and neglect animals are the rule rather than the exception. Recidivism is likely if convicted abusers are permitted to continue owning or harbouring animals. It is imperative that all animal abusers be banned from personal and, if applicable, professional contact with animals for the maximum period allowable by law. Animals already in abusers' custody should be confiscated.

Animal abusers who are required to perform community service at animal shelters are more likely to develop a deep resentment of the "dirty work" that they are forced to do than to come to recognise the implications of their crimes through their work with animals. For this reason, we do not recommend ordering community service at animal shelters.

Sample Sentences

- Three months in prison and banned from keeping animals for life: Jonathan Maxfield of Shropshire trussed up his dog, wrapped her in a bin bag and dumped her in a culvert
- £250 compensation and a 10-month referral order: Two teenagers hacked a tame deer to death in Devon and cooked her carcass.
- Sixty hours' community service and banned from keeping animals for 15 years: Carol Bates starved her boyfriend's dog to death.
- Five months in jail: Wade Beere from South Wales stabbed and shot a dog to death.
- Ninety days in jail: Lee Burden roasted a hedgehog to death.
- Six months in jail and banned from keeping animals for five years: Robert Howsam killed two puppies by hanging them from a tree with their leads.
- Six months in jail and banned from keeping animals for life: Andrew Gough from Caerphilly mutilated and shot a greyhound, leaving the animal to die.
- Three months in jail and banned for life from keeping animals: Angela Nelmes from Somerset allowed two dogs in her care to die of starvation.
- Eleven months in jail: David Faulder, Michael Faulder and Joseph Dixon broke into a Cumbrian animal sanctuary and shot, beat and burned the animals there, leaving 20 dead.
- Two-year community rehabilitation order and banned for life from keeping animals: Rochdale resident Alan Helps left two dogs in his house for a fortnight without food or water. One dog died, and the other was found just in time.

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

Weston House
42 Curtain Road
London EC2A 3NH
020 7825 2500
www.nspcc.org.uk

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

Wilberforce Way
Southwater
Horsham
West Sussex RH13 9RS
0870 33 35 999
www.rspca.org.uk

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)

2100 L St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20037
www.hsus.org

The HSUS launched its First Strike campaign in 1997 to raise public and professional awareness about the connection between animal abuse and violence toward humans. It also produces information and launches workshops in the US on this issue.

Together, the NSPCC and RSPCA hosted the "Making the Links" conference, which explores the link between cruelty to animals and interpersonal abuse. The conference report costs £5 and is available from the NSPCC, 3 Gilmour Close, Beaumont Leys, Leics LE4 1EZ. The NSPCC also produced a free booklet for professionals entitled "Understanding the Links", which can be downloaded from www.nspcc.org.uk.

The Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA)

Braehead Mains
603 Queensferry Road
Edinburgh
EH4 6EA
0131 339 0222
www.scottishspca.org

The Scottish SPCA launched First Strike Scotland in 1997 to examine the link between cruelty to animals and violence toward humans. It has produced a booklet that can be downloaded from www.scottishspca.org.

Paws for Kids

PO Box 329
Bolton BL6 5LT
01204 698999
www.pawsforkids.org.uk

This charity fosters the companion animals of women and children fleeing domestic violence. Women in 36 refuges in the northwest of England are able to use its services.

Pet Fostering Service Scotland

PO Box 6
Callander
FK17 8ZU
01877 330996
www.pfss.org.uk

This charity coordinates short-term foster care for animals throughout Scotland.

Smaller groups, such as the Pet Easement Project in Hertfordshire (07789 697398) also offer short-term animal care for victims of domestic violence.

"We have found examples of domestic violence, child abuse and animal abuse in the same house. It looks like a pattern is developing."

- Inspector Jim Cameron of Tayside Police

"Some offenders kill animals as a rehearsal for targeting human victims and may kill or torture animals because, to them, the animals symbolically represent people."

- FBI Special Agent Alan C. Brantley

"As a survivor of domestic violence towards me and my dog, I know how pets can be used to intimidate and control those in an abusive situation."

- Wendy Turner-Webster, Pet Rescue presenter



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