

Another Link in the Chain
By Carrie Allan

 [e-mail this page](#)



In surveys conducted by the authors of "Selective battering of the family pet" (*Anthrozoös*, Vol. 17, No. 1), victims of domestic violence were asked about their abuser's behavior toward family pets. In comparing the behaviors of batterers who hurt their pets to that of batterers who hurt only people, researchers found that pet abusers more frequently scapegoat their pets and are frequently angered by their pets' behavior.

Ninety-five percent of pet-abusing batterers talked to their pets only through commands or threats, and 70 percent viewed their animals as property (compared to non-pet-abusing batterers, 64 percent of whom viewed pets as "members of the family").

While the sample of victims surveyed was quite small, the responses still showed some interesting psychological links. Results indicated a correlation between the propensity to hunt and the likelihood of committing violence against pets. Fifty-two percent of the respondents whose abusers harmed their animals said the abusers were also hunters, compared with only 11 percent of those abusers who did not hurt their pets.

"Batterers ... are far from being a monolithic group," concluded the authors, Pamela Carlisle-Frank, Joshua M. Frank, and Lindsey Nielsen of the Foundation for Interdisciplinary Research and Education Promoting Animal Welfare (FIREPAW). "Some abusers appear unable to distinguish—or to care—that both their human and nonhuman victims experience great suffering at their hands, while others engage in a bizarre justification process for battering and terrorizing the human family members while protecting the nonhuman ones."



Reproduced from the May-June 2005 issue of Animal Sheltering magazine.

