



Helping Canadians Help Animals

**Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS)**

Fédération des sociétés canadiennes d'assistance aux animaux (FSCAA)

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## Human/Animal Violence Connection

Family violence involves the abuse of predominately women, children and animals. People who abuse animals are often respible for family violence. Abusers exercise power and control through the physical, psychological and emotional torture of victims who abusers know to be defenseless. The same power and control-based abuse is found across the spectrum in instances of child, elder, spousal, animal, or sexual abuse. Canadian research indicates that roughly 1 in 4 women experiencing domestic violence and who own pets significantly delay their escape to safety if it means leaving a pet behind. (Sue C. McIntosh collaborative 2001 study Calgary Humane, YMCA Family Violence Prevention Centre and RESOLVE Alberta) If we do not address the connection between human and animal violence we will continue to allow pet ownership to act as a barrier for victims of violence.

If you are an abused woman, [click here](#)

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### About this Project

The CFHS obtained funding from the Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) summer student program 2008 for a pilot project to address the problems faced by women with pets when trying to escape domestic violence in the Ottawa Community. The goal for the project is that it will become a model that can be implemented in any community across Canada. A group of service providers in the Ottawa region have come together to address the barriers that abused women with pets face and to work together to create a program to assist women with pets escape violence.

#### In Support of this Project

The CFHS wishes to thank all the organizations that have contributed to this program.

[Click here](#)  to obtain a list of organizations that support this project.

### Goals

- **Educate the community and service providers about the link between domestic violence and animal abuse, and to raise the proathome.inc of the issue.**
- **Provide individuals with the knowledge and tools to allow for early intervention and rehabilitation by identifying people who have demonstrated violent tendencies.**
- **Facilitate cross-sector community and collaboration to help women and children with pets escape violence.**
- **Promote cross training and cross-reporting so that all forms of abuse are identified and addressed by animal cruelty inspectors and social workers. There are many benefits of this including: shared resources, collaboration within the community, earlier identif of abuse and a reduction of violence that goes unnoticed.**

### Historical Overview

Humane societies and SPCAs have taken the lead in creating greater awareness of the link between human and animal violence and in building bridges among those who work to address violence in society, whether toward women, children or animals. Dr. Randall Lockwood, Senior Vice President of Anti-Cruelty Initiatives and Training with the American SPCA, and Phil Arkow, Chair of the Child and Animal Abuse Prevention Project with the Latham Foundation, are two of the leading, world-renowned experts on the connection between animal abuse and human violence.

In 1995, the CFHS co-hosted with the British Columbia SPCA the first violence prevention seminar in Canada. This seminar featured Dr. Lockwood as the keynote speaker as well as speakers working in law enforcement, family violence and animal protection. The aim was to educate people who work in violence prevention and to encourage cross-reporting of abuse. The fact is that when animals are at risk, people are at risk, and when people are at risk, animals are at risk.

Several violence prevention seminars have since been held in various parts of the country. In 2000, the CFHS co-hosted with the Moncton SPCA the first ever Atlantic-based seminar on the violence link featuring Phil Arkow. Another first was the "Tangled Web of Abuse" seminar held in the north also in 2000, hosted by the Humane Society Yukon with Dr. Lockwood as the keynote speaker.

These seminars and the work of the CFHS have educated the general public, the media and even the government about the link between domestic violence and animal abuse. In December, 1999 Justice Minister Anne McLellan introduced Bill C-17 to amend Canada's federal animal cruelty law in the House of Commons. The Minister's

press release stated: "Amended legislation to deal with cruelty to animals signifies the seriousness of these acts that are often warning signs of violent behaviour aimed at people."

In addition to raising awareness of the link between human and animal violence, humane societies and SPCAs also play an important role through humane education programs aimed at teaching children compassion and respect for animals.

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### The Violence Link – women, children and pets

Animal abuse and family violence do not exist in isolation; animal abuse is often a sign of problems within the family. People who abuse animals are often responsible for family violence. Abusers exercise power and control through the physical, psychological and emotional torture of victims who abusers know to be defenseless. The same power and control-based abuse is found across the spectrum in instances of child, elder, spousal, animal, or sexual abuse. When a person or animal is being abused in the home the possibility of other forms of violence occurring in the home should be considered as well. In reality, violence is not isolated. Compartmentalizing violence (the silo approach) merely hinders the victims and those who work to help them. Understanding and addressing the connection between animal abuse and human violence can better protect victims, arrest those who commit violent acts and prevent future abuse by identifying those with violent tendencies.

Pets are especially important to victims in violent relationships as they provide a strong emotional connection and are often the only source of support for victims in times of fear and isolation. Abusers use the vulnerability of animals to control their victims and keep them in violent relationships. When animals are at risk of violence, children and women are at risk too.

- People who abuse animals are often responsible for family violence
- Children who abuse pets tend to be victims too, or have been exposed to abuse and learn to behave aggressively toward other people and animals
- Animal abusers are five times more likely to commit violent crimes against people (Study done by the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal, 1997)
- Nearly all animal abusers have been victims of abuse or exposed to abuse as a child
- Animal abuse and human violence are inseparable and if they are not addressed as an interconnected cycle of violence it will only continue to poison our society from generation to generation

### Why do abusers threaten, harm or kill animals?

- To create an environment which intimidates and terrorizes their victims
- To demonstrate power over the family
- To use the pet as a warning to family members that "Next time it could be you"
- To punish victims for acts of independence and self-determination: such as leaving
- To prevent the victim from leaving or coerce her to return by threatening the pet's well being
- To degrade the victim and/or shift the responsibility of abuse through involvement in abuse
- To force the family to keep violence a secret
- To eliminate competition for attention

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### Effects on Women

Women usually have strong emotional ties to their pets and are often their primary care-givers. This makes women especially vulnerable to abusers who use this to exert power. For many victims, pets are a part of the family, and as stated earlier, the emotional connection and support that pets provide women in times of fear and isolation is not something to be overlooked. The safety of a pet must be taken into consideration when victims are faced with the decision to leave an abusive situation. If pets are not taken into consideration, women and children are placed at higher risk because they may delay leaving their abusive partner to ensure their pets' safety. A 2000 study conducted by the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Ontario SPCA) reports that:

- 44% of women seeking refuge from violence in women's shelters stated that their partner had previously abused or killed one or more of their pets
- 42% stated that their partner had threatened to hurt or kill a family pet
- 16% confirmed that other family members had either abused or killed a family pet



- 43% stated that concern over their pets' welfare had prevented them from leaving the abusive situation earlier.

## Effects on Children

Children and animals that are abused often share similar experiences of abuse. Children feel powerless against abusers and some children find their own victims over which to practice control. Therefore, some children who grow up with violence are motivated to harm animals. Children who abuse animals are often mimicking the abuse they have been exposed to or experienced themselves, protecting their pet from abuse or practicing their own suicide. Children may also have been forced to harm animals to coerce them into silence about the abuse they experience. Therefore when a child is being cruel to animals it must not be disregarded as the exploratory stages in a child's development. A deeper understanding of the reasons behind why a child is behaving in this way must be explored.

Children who have been through the traumatic experiences of abuse or have been exposed to abuse of a pet need help to learn the empathy skills they lack when they are perpetrating their own abuse of animals. Children need to understand that all living beings experience pain and suffering. Teaching empathy and discussing how animals and humans can experience the same physical and emotional pain is an effective way of preventing violence and cruelty in the future.

**“Children abusing animals is the earliest and most reliable predictor of violent behavior.”**

Kathleen M. Quinn, The Brown University, Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter

The FBI has used the human/animal violence connection since the 1970's when profiling serial killers. Some serial killers with a history of animal abuse include: Jeffery Dahmer, Paul Bernardo, Ted Bundy, Albert De Salvo, and Clifford Olsen. Not all children who are cruel to animals grow up to be violent criminals but nearly all violent criminals have a history of animal abuse. Nearly all violent criminals and serial killers come from dysfunctional families with experiences of parental neglect, brutality, rejection and hostility. It is important to remember that where there is one form of abuse- whether it be child or animal- all members of the family could be at risk.

**“The worst thing that can happen to a child is for him to harm an animal and get away with it. Animal cruelty kills respect for life.”**

Margaret Mead, American Anthropologist

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## Benefits of Recognizing the Link

- Reducing incidents of violence and helping women, children and pets to get out and stay out of violent relationships.
- Understanding and addressing the link between animal abuse and family violence provides us with another tool to prevent violence in our community. By working together and sharing this information with others we can increase intervention in the prevention of violence.
- Animal abuse is an indicator of future violence when identified and reported, which allows for early intervention and rehabilitation.
- Reported acts of animal abuse may act as additional evidence against an abuser.
- Victims, especially children, find it easier to talk about the abuse toward a pet than themselves. This can build rapport in therapeutic relationships and create alternative ways to reach target areas of therapeutic intervention.
- It would be helpful for therapists, psychologists, counsellors, social workers, as well as doctors and nurses to recognize animal abuse as an early indicator. This will help to assess the risk of victims and help women prepare their pets for escape.

**“Children will often speak more readily about abuse inflicted upon their pets than upon themselves.”**

Mary Zilney MSW, RSW, Executive Director of Women's Crisis Services Waterloo



## What we can do?

- Learn about the human/animal violence connection
- Talking to your friends and colleagues about the connection between animal abuse and family violence may help to encourage people to report any suspected abuse. Someone who suspects domestic violence but is too afraid to get involved may be more comfortable reporting animal abuse.
- Emergencies -911
- Report less urgent matters – Police line
- Report Animal Abuse to a [humane society/SPCA](#)
- Report suspected child abuse and neglect to Family and Children's Services
- Be a positive role model to children.
- Teach empathy to children.
- Learn the signs of abuse and what to do if you suspect someone you know is being abused. [Click here](#) to learn how to recognize the signs.
- If you know someone who wants to escape a violent relationship, offer a safe place for an animal to stay (ensure that the abuser will not be able to find the animal- this is to protect yourself, the victim and the animals)

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## Signs of Abuse

It is important to recognize that animal abuse is a sign of domestic abuse.

- Recognize that abusers harm and threaten pets to intimidate and control their victims.
- If someone kicks, punches, throws or hurts an animal they have demonstrated that they are capable of violence.
- If they have harmed or threatened your pet you may be in danger and you should consider leaving.
- Using animal violence as an indicator can help a woman escape violence earlier on.

**“Often victims are reluctant to talk about abuse to themselves but may be more comfortable talking about abuse to their pets, which can lead into talking about their own abuse”**

The Violence Link Project, British Columbia SPCA

## Risk Assessment

- Learn to identify the risk factors to evaluate if an animal abuser is at risk of committing violence against people in the future.
- It is important to recognize the correlation between domestic violence and animal abuse as service providers when evaluating, and as individuals experiencing abuse.
- If your partner has harmed your pet consider filing a report with the Humane Society/SPCA or the police. It will help you in the future if it comes to the point where you need to put a case to file for a restraining order to protect yourself and your children.
- Animal related factors to consider:
  - Number of victims
  - Severity of injury
  - Repetition of individuals victims
- Several animals injured in the same instance or infliction of multiple wounds suggest greater potential for violence
  - Dr. Randall Lockwood – expert on animal cruelty/human violence link, Humane Society of The United States
  - To learn more about risk assessment please [click here](#)

## Safety Planning Kit

If you suspect that you are in an abusive relationship it is important to prepare yourself, your children and your pet for escape, whether you have decided to leave or not. When it comes to the crisis point it can be difficult and dangerous to organize yourself to leave. Safety planning includes thinking about the actions that you will have to take to protect yourself, your children and your pets. Starting now can only help you.

## Safety Planning for Women

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## Safety Planning for Pets

- Register or licence your pet with your city in your name to prevent any problems that may occur with ownership issues. Contact your city hall to learn where to obtain licence/registration.
- Find a safe place ahead of time. Ask friends and family that you trust who might be willing to take your pets temporarily.
- An abuser will often try to take control of a pet to take control of the victim. The pet’s location should be secret in case your partner decides to look for the pet and you should change pet’s identification tags to the new address.
- Check out local save havens for pets in your area.
- Know your pet’s hiding spot so you don’t have to spend time looking for them in the case of emergency.
- Put all necessities in one place so that you are prepared before the point of crisis
- Licence and/or proof ownership (municipal by-law, police and other services providers may not be able to help without the proof of ownership)
- Vaccination and medical records
- Collar and identification tags



- Medication
- Bowls, bedding, toys, grooming supplies, etc.
- Cat carriers (Use carrier because cats can escape easily. If you don't have one a pillow case will work in an emergency)

*Violence Prevention Initiative, Calgary Humane Society*

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## How to Clear your Internet History

### Internet Explorer

1. Click on the **Tools** menu, which is found on the top portion of the browser;
1. Select **Internet Options**;
1. Select the **General** tab, which is found near the top of the dialogue box;
1. Click on **Delete Files**, which is found under Temporary Internet Files section (located near the middle of the dialogue box);
1. In the new dialogue box, check the box that says **Delete All Offline Content**, and then click OK;
1. Click on **Clear History**, which is found under the History section (located near the bottom of the dialogue box); and then
1. Click **OK** to exit dialogue box.

### Netscape Navigator

1. Click on the **Edit** menu, which is found on the top portion of the browser;
1. Select **Preferences**;
1. Select **History**, which is found under Category (located on the left side of the dialogue box);
1. Click on **Clear History**, which is found under the Browsing History section (located on the top right side of the dialogue box);
1. Click on **Clear Location Bar**, which is found under the Location Bar History section (located near the middle of the right side of the dialogue box);
1. Select **Cache**, which is found under the Advanced section (located on the left side of the dialogue box);
1. Click on both **Clear Memory Cache** and **Clear Disk Cache** buttons; and then
1. Click **OK** to exit the dialogue box.

### Mozilla Firefox

1. Click on the **Tools** menu, which is found on the top portion of the browser;
1. Select the **Privacy** tab, which is found on the left side of the dialogue box;
1. Select **History** and click on the clear button;
1. Select **Cache** and click on the clear button; and then
1. Click **OK** to exit dialogue box,

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