

Pets and Domestic Violence

Pets are part of the family in many American households. In homes where there is violence, pets are often threatened or injured by the violent partner. In several recent surveys of women entering shelters for protection from domestic violence, nearly half report that their pet had been threatened, injured, or killed by their partner. Others report that they delayed leaving their homes because they feared that their pet would be hurt when they left.

If your partner has threatened to harm your pet, both you and your pet may be in danger. We urge you to make plans to protect all members of your family—you, your children, and your pets.

There may be a Safe Havens for Animals™ program in your community that provides temporary housing for pets when there is violence in the home. For a listing of some of these programs, go to www.hsus.org/firststrike or contact your local animal shelter. For more on the animal cruelty/family violence connection, call 1-888-213-0956.



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES (HSUS) was founded as a nonprofit organization in 1954 to protect animals through legal, educational, legislative, and investigative means. The HSUS has 10 regional offices throughout the country and operates outside the United States as Humane Society International.



Promoting the protection of all animals

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

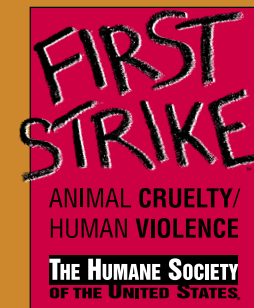
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MAKING THE CONNECTION

Protecting Your Pet from Domestic Violence



PROTECTING YOUR PET FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If my partner harms an animal, will he or she hurt me?

It's possible. If a person punches, kicks, throws, or hurts an animal in any way, it's a clear sign that he or she can be violent with humans, as well. If your partner has harmed or seriously threatened your pet, you may be in danger and should think about leaving.

How can I protect my pet?

When there's violence in the home, it's very important to have an emergency plan for sheltering your pet, yourself, and other family members.

If I leave, who will take care of my pet?

If possible, find a friend or family member to care for your pet. If this isn't an option, contact your local animal care and control agency, battered women's shelter, boarding kennel, or veterinarian. Ask if they know of a Safe Havens for Animals™ program that provides temporary housing for pets. If they don't, briefly explain your situation. If your pet is sheltered or placed in foster care by a humane society, or if a friend can care for your pet temporarily, you will have time to make long-term plans.

Will my pet be in any danger in a sheltering program or with friends?

Although it's unlikely that a violent partner will come looking for your pet, it's wise to be cautious. Tell your pet's caretakers to keep the animal's location a secret from anyone who might give this information to your partner. You may be discouraged from visiting your pet in the temporary home to make sure you, your pet, and the temporary caretaker are safe.



J. ROSS BAUGHMANN

Does my pet need to be current on all vaccinations?

Yes. Almost all veterinary clinics, kennels, and animal shelters require animals to be vaccinated. If you don't have a copy of your pet's vaccination record, he or she may need to be vaccinated again.

Keep vaccination and other veterinary records in a safe place so you can take them with you if you need to leave home in a hurry. If you don't have these records but know your pet is up to date on vaccinations, ask your veterinarian to send you a copy of the records.

If your pet is due for vaccinations, make an appointment with your veterinarian. Some local humane agencies provide low-cost or free vaccinations. Check your local *Yellow Pages* under "animal shelters" or "humane societies."

How can I prove that I own my pet?

Your partner may attempt to get control of your pet in order to intimidate you. An animal license, proof of vaccinations, or veterinary receipts in your name will help prove you own your pet. You can also have your pet microchipped under your name.

What should I take when I move my pet to safety?

If you're able to prepare for your pet's departure, try to have the following pet items in a safe place and out of your partner's reach.

- Vaccination and medical records
- License that proves you own your animal
- Bowls, bedding, toys, grooming supplies, a favorite blanket, etc.
- Identification tag *without* your home address but *with* a phone number of a trusted friend or your veterinarian
- Dog leashes
- Cat carriers

- Medication, if any
- An information sheet on food and feeding schedules, medical conditions, medications and schedules, likes and dislikes, and any possible behavior problems to give to a temporary caretaker

Note: If you leave your home, remove identification tags that identify the household you're leaving and attach tags with the alternative information (such as a trusted friend's or your veterinarian's phone number). Cat carriers are important, too. Unconfined cats can easily get scared and escape. If you don't have a carrier for your cat, a pillowcase can work in an emergency.

What if I have to leave my pet behind?

Ask a law enforcement agent to accompany you when you return home to reclaim your pet. Most communities recognize pets as property.

Would my pet be better off if I put him or her up for adoption?

Only you can make this decision. Giving up a beloved pet is sad, but it may be best for both of you. For one thing, many housing situations don't permit pets, or if they do, they may cost more. Realizing that your pet is safe in a new home can make your decision to leave a violent situation easier—emotionally and financially.

While animal shelters can't guarantee to place every animal, they do find permanent homes for many. It's easier for shelter staff to find a home for your pet if they know if the animal is house trained, obedience trained, and good with children or other animals. Try to give shelter staff a detailed description of your pet's medical history, behavior, and likes and dislikes. Also make sure shelter staff know how to contact you if they

have more questions. To ease the pain of separation, you may want to take photos of your pet for you and your children.



KYLE SAMPERTON