



Violence has become one of the defining characteristics of our age. We are confronted daily with its images in the news and its effects on our lives. We fear becoming its victims, if we have not been touched by it already.

We all want to know what we can do to reduce violence in our communities, but it seems so widespread, so random. Is there anything we can do?

Yes. We can become more vigilant about reporting and intervening in animal cruelty. Intentional animal cruelty, or abuse, is often a warning. It indicates either that an individual has already experienced violence or that the individual may be predisposed to committing other crimes such as vandalism, arson, domestic violence, and even murder. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has launched the First Strike™ campaign to increase public awareness of the animal cruelty/human violence connection and to help you and your community identify some of the origins of violence, predict some of its patterns, and prevent its escalation. The first strike against an animal may be the first strike in a lifetime of violence.



For more information, contact  
First Strike  
The Humane Society  
of the United States  
2100 L Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
or toll free, 1-888-213-0956.



*Promoting  
the protection  
of all animals*

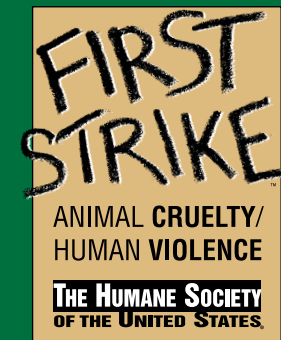
**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**  
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**MAKING THE  
CONNECTION**

# *A Campaign Against Violence*



## ■ IT'S A FACT ■

Evidence of the connection between animal cruelty and human violence is everywhere. Headlines scream it: “Teen Runaway Charged in Pet Shop Break-In Attack on Animals,” “Battered Wife Says She Snapped When Husband Attacked Dog.” Studies in psychology, sociology, and criminology clearly show that violent offenders frequently have childhood and adolescent



histories of serious and repeated animal cruelty. The FBI has used this correlation for years in profiling serial killers. Recent research also shows that animal cruelty often occurs in tandem with family violence—child abuse, spouse abuse, and elder abuse. A 1983 survey of 57 pet-owning families under treatment by New Jersey’s Division of Youth and Family Services for

child abuse revealed that in 88 percent of the families at least one person had abused animals. In many cases an abusive parent had injured or killed a pet; in other cases children were the animal abusers. A 1996 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services study indicated that the number of child-abuse and child-neglect cases rose from an estimated 1.4 million in 1986 to 2.8 million in 1993. Undoubtedly, animals in those households are suffering, too.

Animal cruelty is a serious issue in itself. It is a crime in all 50 states and a felony, under certain circumstances, in more than 40. But it doesn’t happen in a vacuum. It is a clear signal that either a family is already suffering from violence or a youth may someday turn hostile, aggressive, and violent toward humans.

## ■ THE HSUS’S GOALS ■

The HSUS, through its research, investigations, and work with law enforcement agencies, has acquired unique and in-depth knowledge of the ways animal cruelty and human violence intersect. The First Strike campaign is designed to share that knowledge—to increase public awareness of the animal cruelty/human violence connection and to encourage everyone to take animal cruelty seriously.



### The campaign has six main goals:

- To promote and facilitate cooperative action within communities and among antiviolence agencies so that they can respond promptly to incidents of animal cruelty and human violence and assist victims immediately
- To help community-action groups use available resources to develop coordinated responses to violence in their communities
- To monitor and review reports of animal cruelty from across the country
- To assist legislators and activists in communities throughout the United States as they seek to enact and strengthen anticruelty laws
- To promote the standardization of animal-cruelty reporting and tracking
- To educate and train law enforcement officers and others regarding the connection between animal cruelty and violence in society

## ■ WHAT YOU CAN DO ■

- **Take animal cruelty seriously.** It’s not only a crime but also a warning of other violence, past, present, or future.
- **Learn to recognize animal cruelty.** Most cruelty investigated by humane officers is unintentional neglect and can be resolved through education. Intentional cruelty, or abuse, is depriving an animal of food, water, shelter, socialization, or veterinary care or maliciously torturing, maiming, mutilating, or killing an animal.
- **Report animal cruelty to your local animal shelter or the police.** If the offender is a child, report the incident and consider speaking with the child’s parents or school principal, teacher, or guidance counselor. Don’t let anyone tell you the situation isn’t serious. Animal cruelty is always serious. Use the information in this brochure and supplemental information available through the First Strike campaign to explain your concern to the child’s parents or officials.
- **Share First Strike information with others** in your community, including veterinarians, law enforcement officers, animal-control officers, humane officers, clergy, teachers and school administrators, and child-welfare workers. Urge them to share information with one another and work cooperatively to identify offenders and protect victims. Tell them to contact the First Strike campaign for more information about what they can do to stop the violence.
- **Form a community antiviolence coalition** made up of representatives from the different agencies involved in violence prevention and response. The First Strike campaign has information on how to do this. If an antiviolence coalition already exists in your community, volunteer to help.
- **Support strong laws against animal cruelty.** Demand strong enforcement of those laws.
- **Support humane education** in your schools.

Remember, the first strike is deadly serious—and it’s time we heed its warning.