

What Humane Investigators Need to Know



*The First Strike®
campaign was
developed by
The Humane Society
of the United States
(HSUS) to increase
public awareness
of the connection
between animal
cruelty and
human violence.*



What is animal cruelty?

Animal cruelty encompasses a range of behaviors harmful to animals, from neglect to malicious killing. Most cruelty investigated by humane officers is unintentional neglect that can be resolved through education. *Intentional* cruelty, or abuse, is knowingly depriving an animal of food, water, shelter, socialization, or veterinary care or maliciously torturing, maiming, mutilating, or killing an animal.

Is there any evidence of a connection between animal cruelty and human violence?

Absolutely. Many studies in psychology, sociology, and criminology during the last 25 years have demonstrated that violent offenders frequently have childhood and adolescent histories of serious and repeated animal cruelty. The FBI has recognized the connection since the 1970s, when bureau analysis of the life histories of imprisoned serial killers suggested that most, as children, had killed or tortured animals. Other research has shown consistent patterns of animal cruelty among perpetrators of more common forms of violence, including child abuse, spouse abuse, and elder abuse.

How do law enforcement agencies use this evidence?

The FBI identifies animal cruelty as one of a cluster of juvenile behaviors associated with increasingly violent behavior and uses animal cruelty in analyzing the threat potential of suspected criminals.

How can humane agencies help stop human violence?

People who abuse animals may harm their partners or spouses, children, or elderly members of their households. Because humane agencies have experience dealing with animal cruelty, they are best prepared to teach other emergency responders and social service workers about it. Humane agencies can play a vital role in shaping interagency networks your community develops to prevent violence of all types and intervene when violence occurs.

What patterns of violence should humane investigators be aware of?

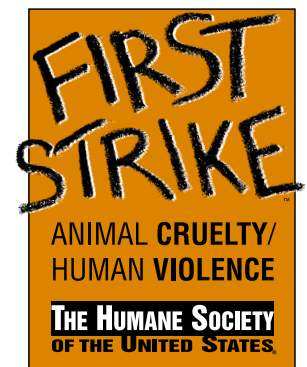
The FBI advises anyone investigating animal cruelty to look for possible continuums of violence in a situation. Initially many abusers fantasize about violence, then act it out against inanimate objects. If this chain of violence is not broken, animals are often the next objects of attack. Violence that increases in severity or frequency should be brought to the attention of law enforcement officials immediately.

Who abuses animals?

Most people who abuse animals are adolescent or young adult males, although children as young as four have been known to harm animals. Many animal abusers have a history of other antisocial or criminal activities, including vandalism, assault, and arson, and many are the victims of physical or sexual abuse. Animal cruelty is often associated with children who do poorly in school and have low self-esteem and few friends.

Why would anyone abuse animals?

There can be many reasons. Animal cruelty, like any other form of violence, is often committed by a person who feels powerless, unnoticed, and under the control of others. The motive may be to



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shock, threaten, or intimidate, or to demonstrate rejection of society's rules. Some who are cruel to animals copy things they have seen or that have been done to them. Others see harming an animal as a safe way to get revenge on someone who cares about that animal. In some cases, animal abuse is associated with deviant arousal.

Are other violent behaviors associated with animal cruelty?

Recent studies have identified connections between animal cruelty and many different forms of family and societal violence. 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 two-thirds of those cases, the abusive parent had injured or killed a pet. Several surveys of women seeking protection from domestic violence report that up to 70 percent of the women with pets indicated that their pets had been threatened, hurt, or killed by their abusive partners.

What can be done to prevent young animal abusers from developing into violent adults?

Crimes against animals are not isolated events. FBI experts advise all appropriate agencies—law enforcement, social service, and humane—to share case information with one another. A comprehensive approach, with parental cooperation, school

support, and psychological counseling, is essential.

Cross-reporting between humane investigators and local social service agencies should become routine.

How can law enforcement officers and humane investigators work together?

When law enforcement officers and humane investigators communicate regularly with each other, each may provide information that can help the other. The connection between animal cruelty and other violent crime can be a topic for police newsletters and training seminars. Also, humane investigators can help local police and prosecutors become familiar with and understand existing anticruelty laws.

Is animal cruelty a crime?

Yes. Anticruelty laws exist in all states. In more than 40 states animal cruelty is a felony offense under certain circumstances.

How can humane investigators respond to the comment, "It is more important to prevent child abuse than animal abuse"?

Both are serious and should be investigated at first report. Because of the strong connection between animal cruelty and human violence, preventing one may also prevent the other. Animal cruelty may actually fuel an abuser's appetite for violence, and abusers sometimes do not differentiate between two- and four-footed victims.

Should humane investigators report child abuse, spouse abuse, and elder abuse in their communities?

Absolutely. Humane investigators should establish a working relationship with local social service agencies so that cross-reporting of all abuse becomes routine. They should report any information that indicates that any members of a household are in danger.

Do animal shelters have emergency housing programs for companion animal victims of family violence?

Many do. Some victims of family violence are afraid to leave home for fear their abuser will harm their companion animals, so more and more animal shelters are arranging for the temporary care of animals. Safe Havens for Animals™

programs require careful coordination al service organizations, as well as guidelines that address the health and safety of the animals, the people seeking protection, and the staff that provides it. For information on forming a Safe Havens for Animals program in your community, visit www.hsus.org/firststrike or call 1-888-213-0956.



To learn more about the First Strike campaign, call toll free 1-888-213-0956, e-mail firststrike@hsus.org, visit www.hsus.org/firststrike, or write to us at the address below. The 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.

Most animal abusers have a history of criminal activities including vandalism, assault, and arson, and many are the victims of physical or sexual abuse.

Promoting the protection of all animals

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