

The Links Between Animal Abuse and Family Violence: *Implications for the Medical Professions*



Connecticut Academy of Family Physicians, Plantsville, CT, Oct. 27, 2011

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National Link Coalition -- The Latham Foundation
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Consider...

71% of battered women report their batterers harmed or killed their pets

52% of these women were forced to leave their animals behind with the batterer...



Case Study #1 –

Animals are harmed to control battered women

Family violence often begins with pet abuse

By Sandy Bauers
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

As Sandra Ruotolo explained to the judge, she was thinking of her dogs when she pulled the trigger.

For 13 years, she said, her husband had battered her. But on a March night in 1991 in their Juniata Park home, he not only whipped her with a vacuum-cleaner cord, he also punched one of her four German shepherd herds. If Ruotolo left him, he warned, he would find her and slit their throats in front of her.

Later, as her husband slept, she loaded a .38-caliber pistol and pointed it at herself. A moment away from suicide, however, she saw her eldest female dog and was seized by the thought that "if I die, Duchess, what's going to happen to you?"

So, she told the judge, she "walked into the bedroom and shot him."

Ruotolo is serving 10 to 20 years for third-degree murder.

Diane Hall, counseling director at Women Against Abuse in Philadel-

phia, remembers the case with regret. Ruotolo had contacted the agency about going into a shelter. But Ruotolo would not leave her dogs, and the shelter could not take them.

That tragic scenario might play out differently today, as social-welfare experts home in on a link between family violence and animal

**Area agencies
are homing in
on the link
between the
two types of
abuse.**

abuse. A batterer's first target, researchers have found, often is a pet, which then may be systematically threatened, tortured or killed in order to control human victims — to keep a wife from fleeing or to enforce a child's silence.

Recognition of an animal's precarious place in what is called the "cycle of violence" already has led to changes in the way police and protective agencies — for people and animals — deal with domestic rows. This month, for instance, the Pennsylvania SPCA in Juniata Park inaugurated a program, PetNet, that provides foster care for the pets of

See **ABUSE** on A24

Case Study #2 – “Just when you think you’ve seen everything....”



Davis: Charged with domestic violence, he's being held on bond in the Lucas County jail.

Man who allegedly beat wife, killed kitten is held

BY ROBIN ERB
BLADE STAFF WRITER

An East Toledo man accused of killing his wife's kitten by putting it in an oven set at 500 degrees and then telling her "Your dinner's ready" appeared in court yesterday on animal cruelty and domestic violence charges.

Dennis Davis, 56, of Main Street, was ordered held in the Lucas County jail in lieu of \$8,500 bond by Judge Mary Trimboli of Toledo Municipal Court. "Just when you think they've found every way possible to manipulate someone,

somebody comes up with something new," said Sam Nugent, chief prosecutor. "This is quite brutal, quite unnerving."

"I've never had anything like this," Kevin Warner, a Toledo Humane Society investigator, said.

The case began about 3:30 p.m. Jan. 9, according to a police report filed by Roberta Davis, 41, who told officers that she is seeking a divorce from her husband.

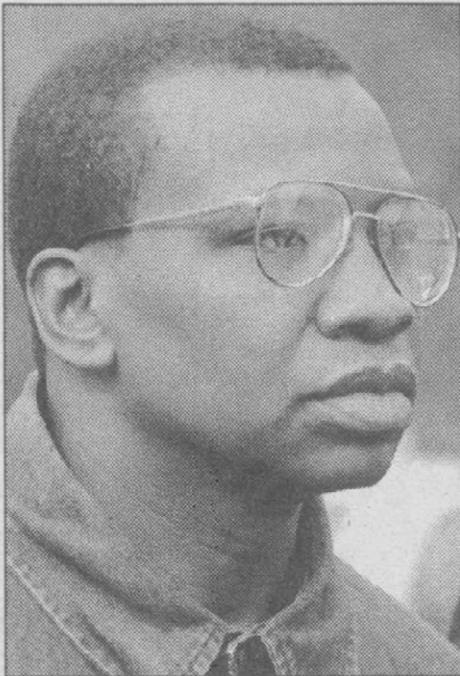
Ms. Davis, who did not call police at the time but went to the downtown police station

See **KITTEN**, Page 18 ►

***Case Study #3: Animal welfare investigators
are often the first responders...***

**“A 4-year-old is beaten to death;
a pastor and family vanish”**

-- Philadelphia Inquirer, Jan. 11, 1999



The Rev. Javan McBurrows of
Third Christian Church in the city



AKIRA SUWA / Inquirer Staff Photographer

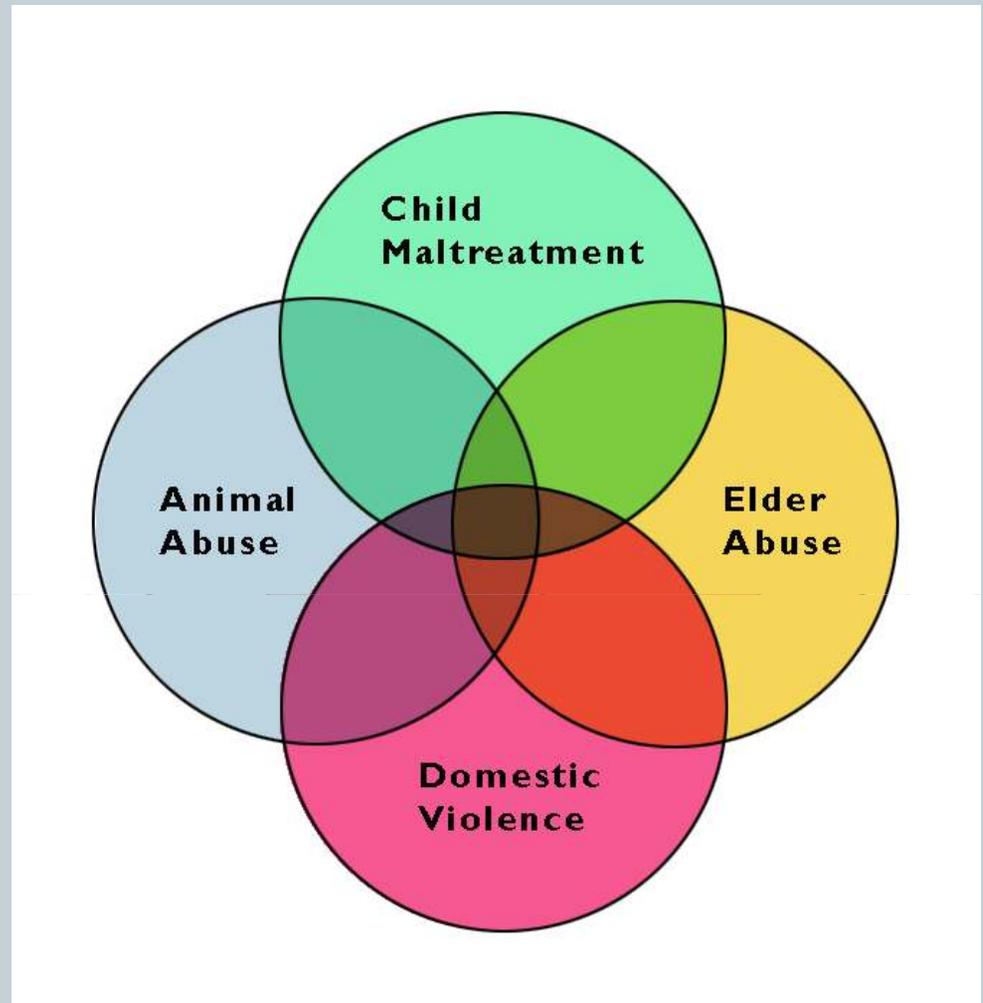
Authorities yesterday condemned the Rev. Javan McBurrows' home in North Hills, Upper Dublin Twp.

What is The Link?

The “Link” between animal abuse and other forms of family violence

“When animals are abused, people are at risk;

When people are abused, animals are at risk.”





Summary: Types of Animal/Human Abuse Links

Domestic Violence

- 1. Abusive partner harms, kills or threatens pets to humiliate, intimidate, or force partner into compliance and silence**
- 2. Battered women are afraid to leave home for fear that partner will kill pets, or because there is no one to care for pets**

Child Sexual Abuse

- 3. Abuser kills, harms or threatens pets to coerce children into sexual acts or silence**

Child Development

- 4. Children kill or harm animals, or witness acts of animal cruelty**

Hoarding

- 5. Disturbed persons, often elderly, hoard pets**

Animal Fighting

- 6. Adults and youths participate in dog fights**
- 

Pets -- ALL IN THE FAMILY!



- **More American homes have pets than have children**
- **There are nearly as many dogs in the US as there are people in any country in Europe**
- **There are more cats in the US than dogs**
- **We spend more \$\$ on pet food than baby food**
- **Pets are the 7th largest U.S. economic sector**
- ***A child in the US today is more likely to grow up with pets than with a father***

**-- Who cares for
all these pets?**



FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN!

67.7% of households with children < 6

74.6% of households with children > 6

**Female is the primary caregiver
in 74.5% of pet-owning households**

AVMA: U.S. Pet Ownership
& Demographics
Sourcebook, 2007

Particular implications for...



Pediatrics



OB/GYN



Family practice



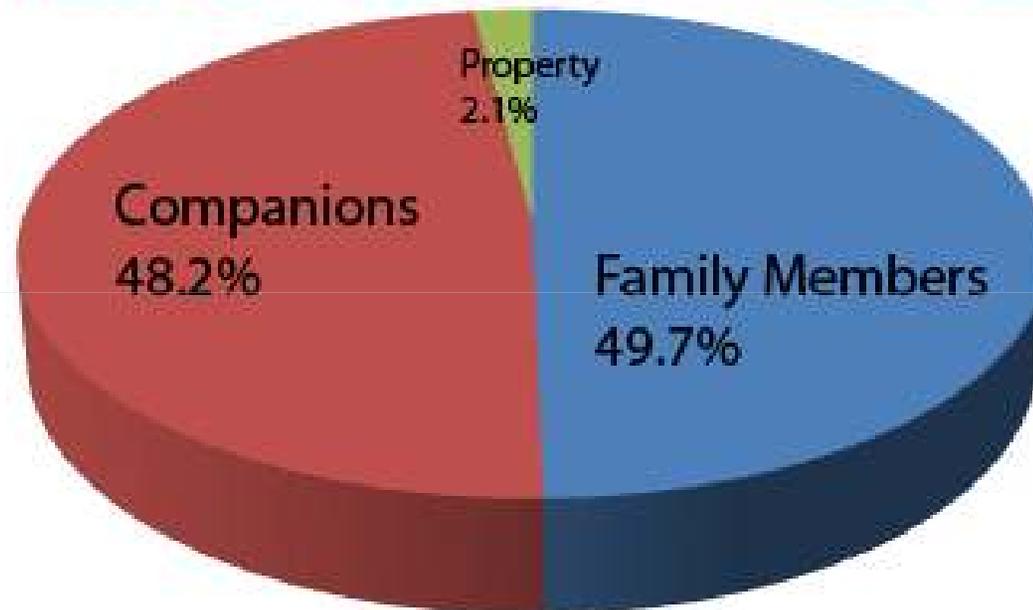
Nursing



Dentistry

How do people see these pets?

Roles of Pets in U.S. Households



AVMA: U.S. Pet Ownership
& Demographics
Sourcebook, 2007

The human-animal bond in a disaster...



**Fukushima
Earthquake,
Tsunami,
Nuclear
accident**

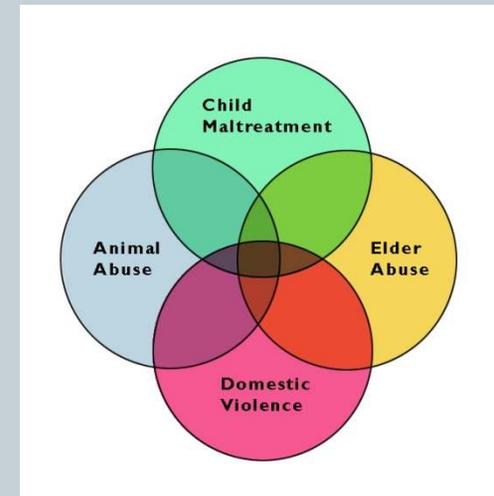


**Hurricane
Katrina**



KEY PREMISES

1. Animal abuse must be perceived and documented as a *human* welfare issue.



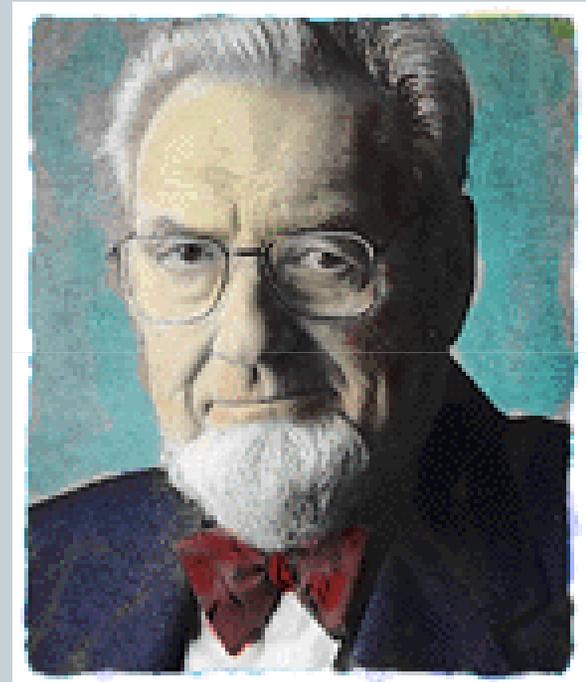
2. Animal abuse must be re-defined as *family* violence.

3. The network of community caregivers must be **cross-trained to recognize and report *all* forms of family violence.**

What does all this mean for medical professionals?

“Regarding violence in our society as purely a sociologic matter, or one of law enforcement, has led to unmitigated failure.

It is time to test whether violence can be amenable to medical/public health interventions.”

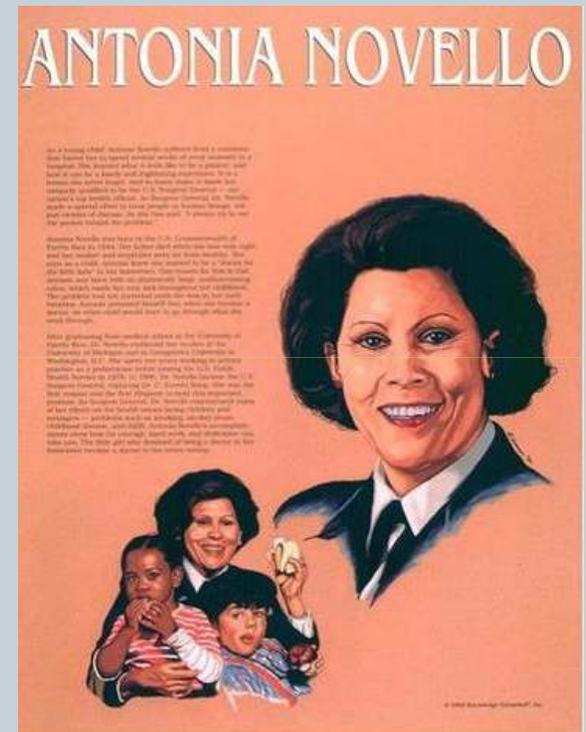


*C. Everett Koop, MD
George D. Lundberg, MD
(Editor, JAMA)
1992*

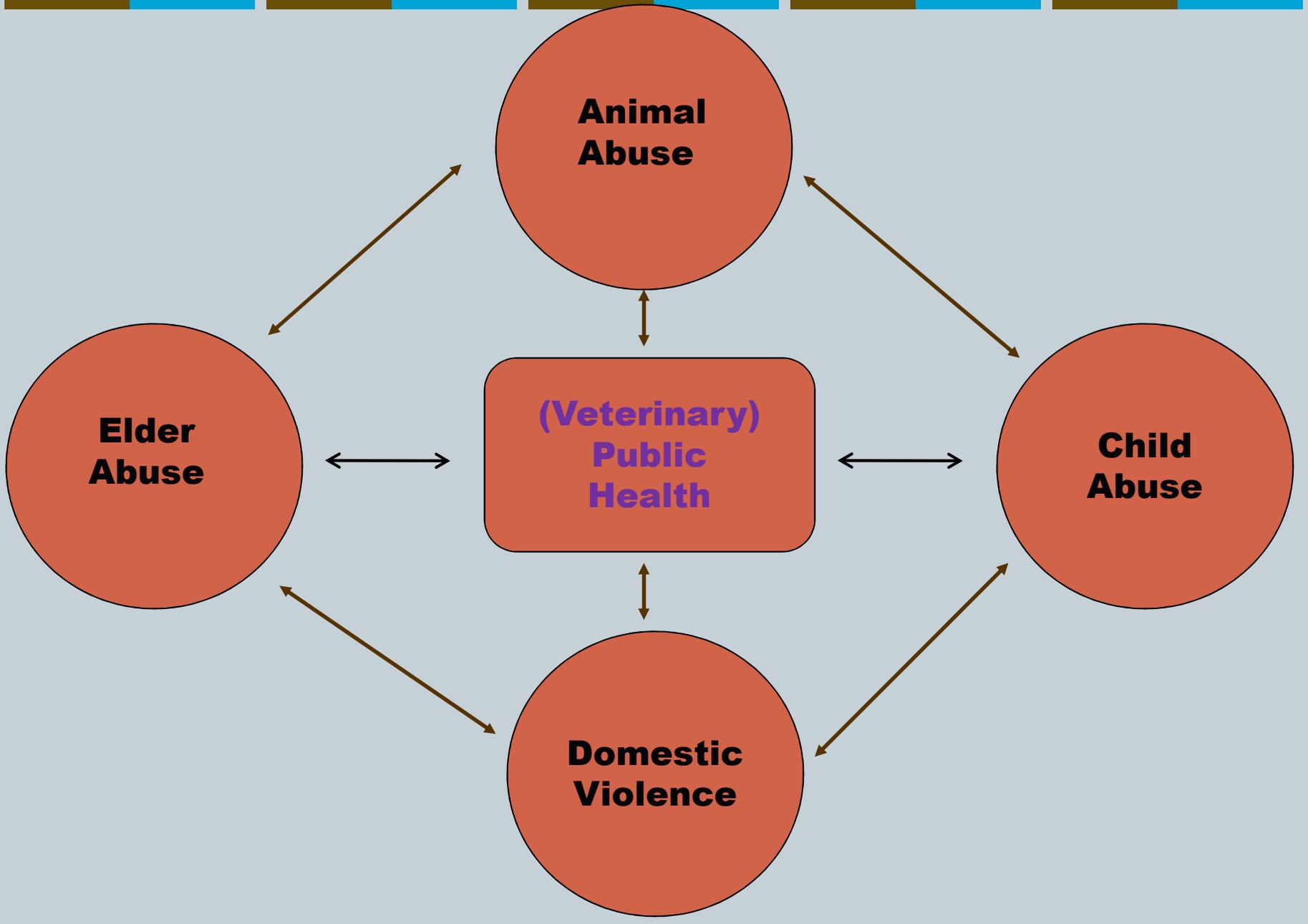
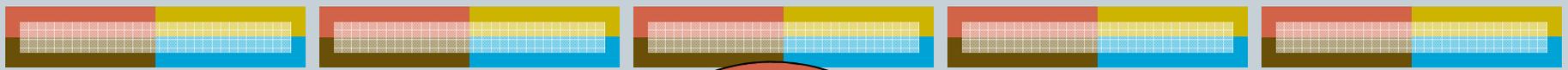
What does all this mean for medical professionals?

“Physicians and other health professionals are firsthand witnesses to the consequences of violence. We see, diagnose, treat, mend, patch, console, and care for the victims of violence and their families thousands of times each day.

Violence in the United States is a public health emergency.”



Antonia C. Novello, MD, MPH, et.al
1992



Medicine

Agriculture



Research

Public Health

Clinical Practice

Medical Education

Zoonoses prevention

Physiological health & wellness

Mental health

Prevention of family violence



The Veterinarian's Oath

(revised 2010)

Being admitted to the profession of veterinary medicine, I solemnly swear to use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal health **and welfare, the prevention and relief of animal suffering,** the conservation of animal resources, the promotion of public health, and the advancement of medical knowledge.

I will practice my profession conscientiously, with dignity, and in keeping with the principles of veterinary medical ethics.

I accept as a lifelong obligation the continual improvement of my professional knowledge and competence.



Roles and responsibilities of veterinary professionals

- **Witness, identify, diagnose and treat animal abuse and neglect**
- **Reporting abuse when client education fails**
- **Forensics (CSI, labs, necropsy)**
- **Providing services to animal victims of domestic violence**
- **Expert witnesses**
- **Community coalitions against family violence**





“ONE HEALTH” RESPONSES: Human medicine & veterinary medicine

- Assessing for animal ownership, attachment, and welfare in intakes, referrals, screening**
- Including animals in safety planning**
- Foster care for animal victims**
- Strengthening anti-cruelty laws**
- Stronger enforcement & prosecution**
- Client education and information services**
- Multidisciplinary community coalitions**

How do you define animal abuse or cruelty?

cruelty the infliction of pain or distress unnecessarily.
c. to animals an offence under the Protection of
Animals Act or similar legislation. The definition of
unnecessary varies between countries and from time
to time in the one country. Under the impetus of a
great body of community compassion the threshold
has been greatly lowered in recent times.
Determination of the prevailing standard of cruelty
can only be decided by the courts.

It is now taken to include, besides physical assault
and surgery without anesthesia, deprivation of food,
water and shelter. The worst kinds of cruelty are sus-
ceptible to the heaviest penalty, under the classifica-
tion of aggravated cruelty.



Animal abuse: “Non-accidental, socially unacceptable behavior that causes pain, suffering or distress to and/or death of an animal.”



**Connecticut General Statutes: Chap. 945
(Offenses Against Humanity and Morality: Cruelty to Animals)**

Sec. 53-247. Cruelty to animals.

- (a) Any person who overdrives, drives when overloaded, overworks, tortures, deprives of necessary sustenance, mutilates or cruelly beats or kills or unjustifiably injures any animal, or ... unjustifiably administers any poisonous or noxious drug or substance to any domestic animal ... or, having charge or custody of any animal, inflicts cruelty upon it or fails to provide it with proper food, drink or protection from the weather or abandons it or carries it or causes it to be carried in a cruel manner, or fights with or baits, harasses or worries any animal for the purpose of making it perform for amusement, diversion or exhibition, shall be fined not more than \$1,000 and/or imprisoned not more than 1 year.
- (b) Any person who maliciously and intentionally maims, mutilates, tortures, wounds or kills an animal shall be fined not more than \$5,000 and/or imprisoned not more than 5 years. (Exemptions: Veterinarians, approved methods of slaughter, medical research, generally accepted agricultural practices, or lawful taking of wildlife.)
- 



How do you define animal abuse or cruelty?

ANIMAL WELFARE CONCERNS

- pet in poor physical condition
- inadequate food, water, shelter
- lack of veterinary care
- dehydration
- malnutrition
- excessive matting of fur
- infestation of parasites
- animal is abandoned

PHYSICAL INJURIES TO ANIMALS

- bruising
- fractures
- lesions
- burns, scalds
- recreational drugs given to pets
- gunshot, dart, bow & arrow wounds
- collar has grown into neck

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

- filth and poor sanitation
- overcrowding; hoarding animals
- dead animals on property
- inadequate lighting, ventilation or temp.
- feces and/or urine
- animals housed in motor vehicles

OTHER CONCERNS

- sexual abuse of animals
- dog fighting
- religious or satanic sacrifice

Arkow, P.: *Breaking the Cycles of Violence: A Guide to Multi-Disciplinary Interventions.*
(Alameda, CA: Latham Foundation, 2003)

Legal definitions vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and public perceptions may not match legal standards.

c. 95% of cases are neglect



Why Are Some People Abusive to Animals?

- 1. Ignorance, inability to empathize**
- 2. Lack of adequate coping skills**
(more sensitive to stress, including pet's behavior; release frustration and anger)
- 3. Socialized to abuse**
- 4. Believe abuse is justified and beneficial**
(violence, power and control)
- 5. Sense of entitlement**
(animals not worthy of moral consideration)
- 6. Personality dysfunction, poor impulse control**
- 7. Religious and regional subcultures**



Pamela Carlisle-Frank & Tom Flanagan: Silent Victims (2006)



Why Do Batterers Target Animals?

Because they can...

Because they're convenient...

- **To demonstrate and confirm power and control over the family**
"You're next!"
 - **To isolate the victim and the children**
 - **To force the family to keep the violence a secret**
 - **To prevent the victim from leaving, or to coerce a return**
 - **To punish the victim for leaving**
 - **To degrade the victim through involvement in the abuse**
- 

The Cycles of Violence - 1970s



Tapia, F. (1971). Children who are cruel to animals. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development* 2, 70-77.

Wax, D. & Haddox, V. (1974). Enuresis, fire setting, and animal cruelty in male adolescent delinquents: A triad predictive of violent behavior. *Journal of Psychiatric Law*, 2(1), 45-72.

The Cycles of Violence - 1980s

The “Tangled Web”



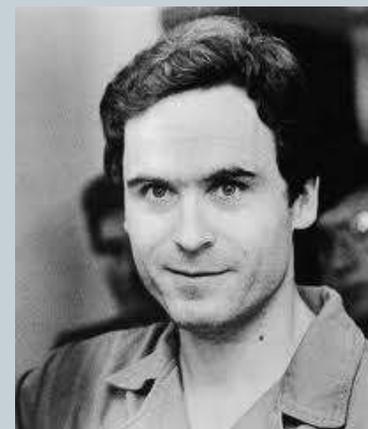
David Berkowitz
“Son of Sam”



Albert DeSalvo
“Boston Strangler”



Keith Jesperson
“Happy Face
Killer”



Ted Bundy

“Clues to a Dark Nurturing Ground
for One Serial Killer”

-- *New York Times*, Aug. 7, 1991



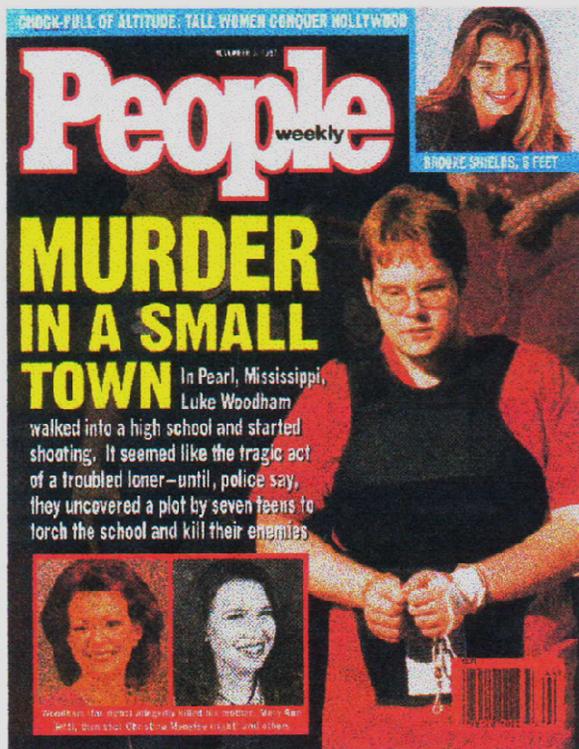
Jeffrey Dahmer.....



and his dog Frisky

Note: not every abuser becomes a psychopath – but he should receive help!

Schoolyard Shooters - 1990s



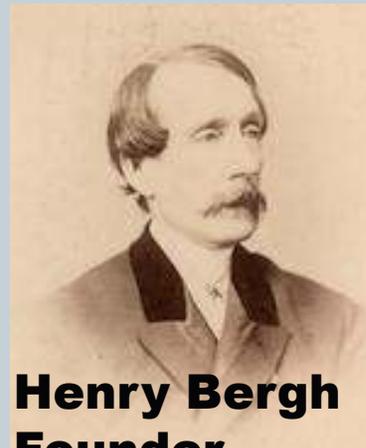
Luke Woodham
Pearl, Miss.
Age 16



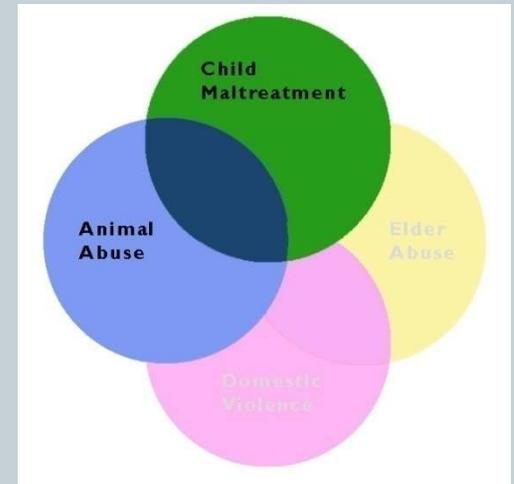
Andrew Golden
Jonesboro, Ark.
Age 11

Animal Abuse and Child Abuse

The “Little Mary Ellen” Case (1874)



**Henry Bergh
Founder,
ASPCA**



The Battered-Child Syndrome

*C. Henry Kempe, M.D., Denver, Frederic N. Silverman, M.D., Cincinnati, Brandt F. Steele, M.D.,
William Droegemueller, M.D., and Henry K. Silver, M.D., Denver*

*Reprinted From The Journal of The American Medical Association
July 7, 1962, Vol. 181, pp. 17-24
Copyright 1962, by American Medical Association*

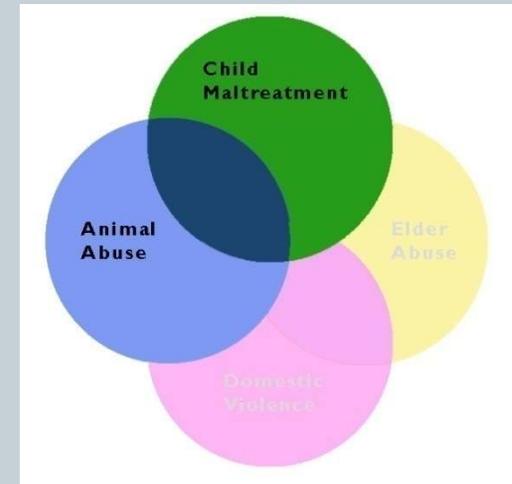
Animal Abuse and Child Abuse

- **60% of pet-owning families meeting New Jersey's criteria for child abuse or neglect also had abused or neglected pets**

- **Animal abuse occurred in 88% of families with physical child abuse**

- **Bite rate was 11x greater**

- **Utilization of veterinary services was similar to general population**



(DeViney, Dickert & Lockwood, 1983)

Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

Impact of domestic violence on children:

- In homes with domestic violence, risk of co-occurring child abuse 45% - 60%; children abused 15x higher than norm
- “No safe place”
- “Adults can’t protect themselves or us”
- Child takes on responsibility of protecting the victims
- Ambivalent feelings over abuser/parent
- Chronic fear leads to aggression



-- Betsy McAlister Groves,
Child Witness to Violence Project, Boston MA, 2004

Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence

71% of pet-owning women entering a shelter reported their husband or boyfriend killed, harmed or threatened an animal;

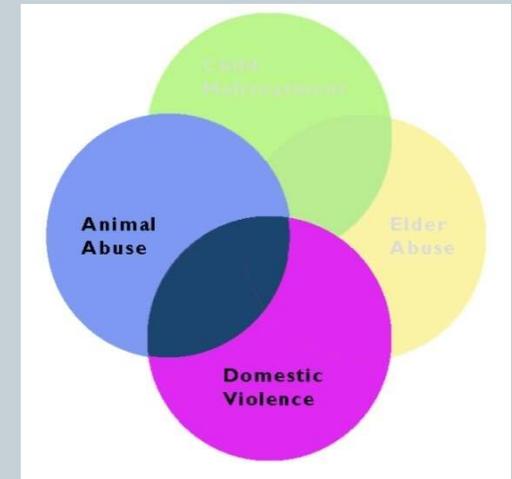
32% reported their children had hurt or killed animals

(Ascione, 1998)

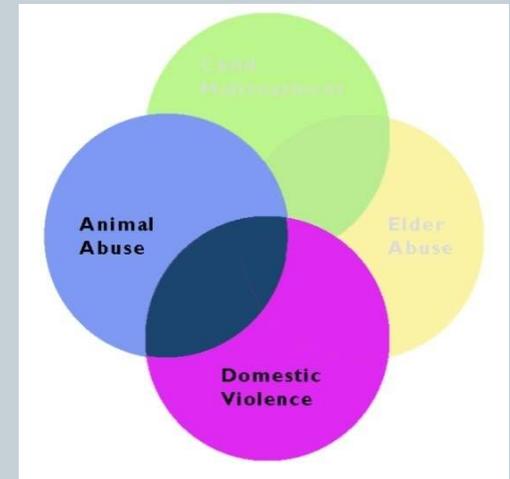
68% of battered women reported violence toward their animals;

87% of incidents occurred in presence of women –
75% occurred in presence of the children

(Quinlisk, 1994-95)



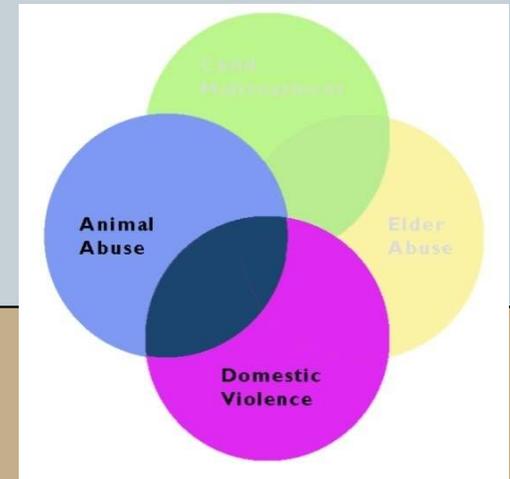
Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence



One Women's Shelter's Experience...

“I was referred to Crossroads about 4 months ago, but there were no openings. There were other shelters in the area, but they didn't have a foster care program for animals. I lived in my car with the dogs. I tried Crossroads 4 months later, and they had an opening.”

Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence



“It wasn’t just the cats and dogs, it was the sheep and the chickens. I was terrified for their welfare. I knew if I were to leave, he wouldn’t hesitate to kill them. He had done it before.”

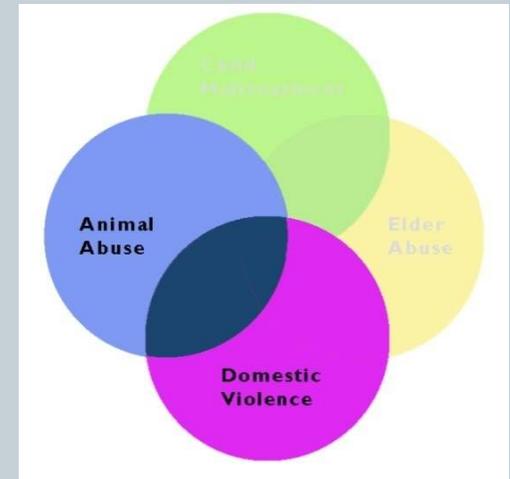
-- *New York Times* 4/1/06



**Susan Walsh, 50,
Ellsworth, ME**



Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence



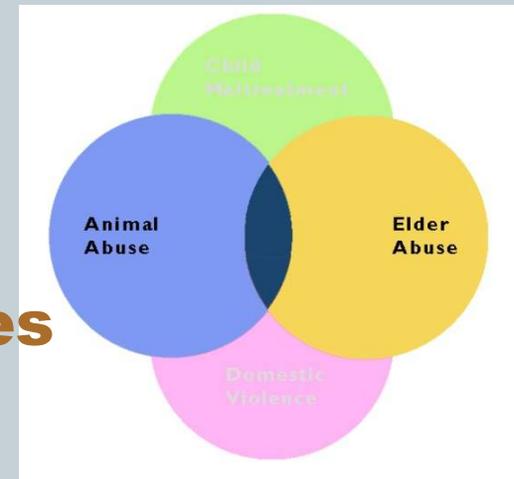
18% - 45% of battered women cannot find refuge in a safehouse out of fear for their animals' welfare

Animal Abuse and Elder Abuse

Issues for Adult Protective Services

- 1. Neglect of pet**
- 2. Neglect self to care for pet**
- 3. Hoarding/collecting animals**
- 4. Attachment and pet loss**
- 5. Safety of caseworker, home health aide, homemaker services, or patient**
- 6. Animal abuse as coercion/control**

Interventions when animals are involved require creative solutions by professionals who are sensitive to animals and patients' attachments to them



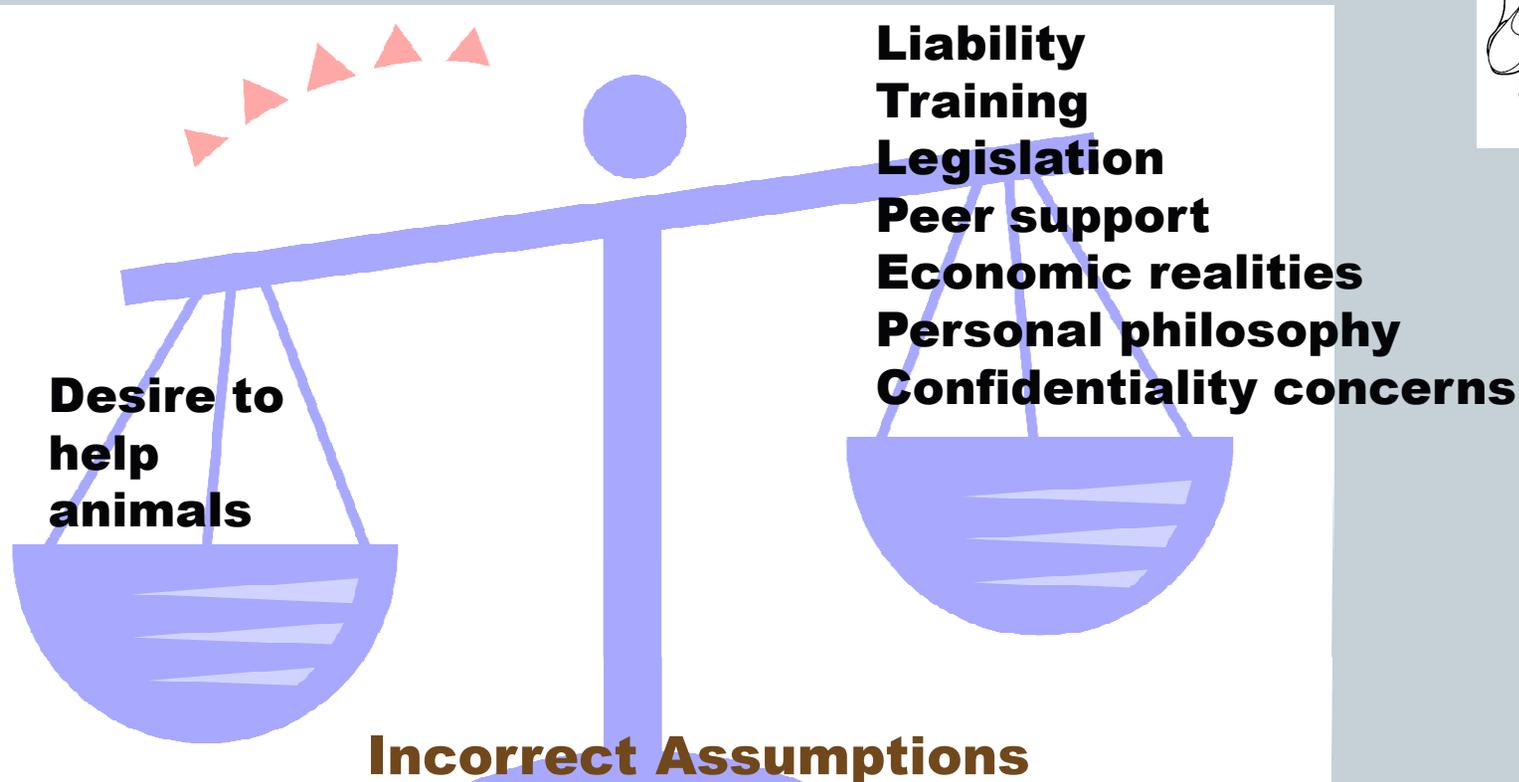
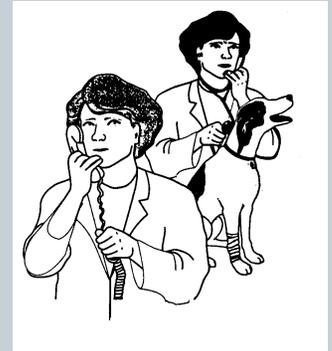
Medical Responses

PSYCHOLOGY: Six assessment scales for cruelty offenders -- AniCare (www.animalsandsociety.org)

VETERINARY MEDICINE: Clinical criteria for Non-Accidental Injury (NAI) – veterinary forensics, Animals CSI. Veterinary student & CVME training. Practice management guidance.



Medical Responses



Incorrect Assumptions

1. "I'm an animal expert -- I won't see human abuse."
2. "Anyone who cares enough about their pets to see the vet won't harm them."
3. I'm a physician – animals aren't an issue."

Medical Responses

Challenge #1:
Consider abuse as a differential diagnosis

Challenge #2:
Unaccustomed to dealing with client histories that are deliberately misleading

Challenge #3:
Identify risk factors and diagnostic and environmental indicators that should cause professionals to suspect abuse

Challenge #4:
Establish protocol for cross-reporting with safeguards to limit liability



Barriers Cited by Human Health Professionals

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- **Did not consider domestic violence as a diagnosis**
- **Fear of offending patients by discussing private matters**
- **Sense of powerlessness, inadequacy**
- **Feeling that medical intervention is useless**
- **Time constraints of a busy practice**



(Sugg & Inui, 1992)

Arkow, P., & Munro, H. (2008): The veterinary profession's roles in recognizing and preventing family violence: The experiences of the human medicine field and the development of diagnostic indicators for non-accidental injury. In, F.R. Ascione (ed.): *The International Handbook of Animal Abuse and Cruelty: Theory, Research, and Application*. W. Lafayette, IN: Purdue Univ. Press.

Barriers Cited by Human Health Professionals

CHILD ABUSE

- **Inadequate training**
- **Fear of alienating/stigmatizing family**
- **Lack of confidence in local officials**
- **Fear of personal, legal, financial risks**
- **Do not want to be “policeman” or confront hostile clientele**
- **How to define “child abuse”?**



(Morris, Johnson & Clasen, 1985)

Arkow, P., & Munro, H. (2008): The veterinary profession's roles in recognizing and preventing family violence: The experiences of the human medicine field and the development of diagnostic indicators for non-accidental injury. In, F.R. Ascione (ed.): *The International Handbook of Animal Abuse and Cruelty: Theory, Research, and Application*. W. Lafayette, IN: Purdue Univ. Press.

Public Policy Responses

LEGISLATION: 21 state laws & DC + PR include pets in domestic violence protection orders

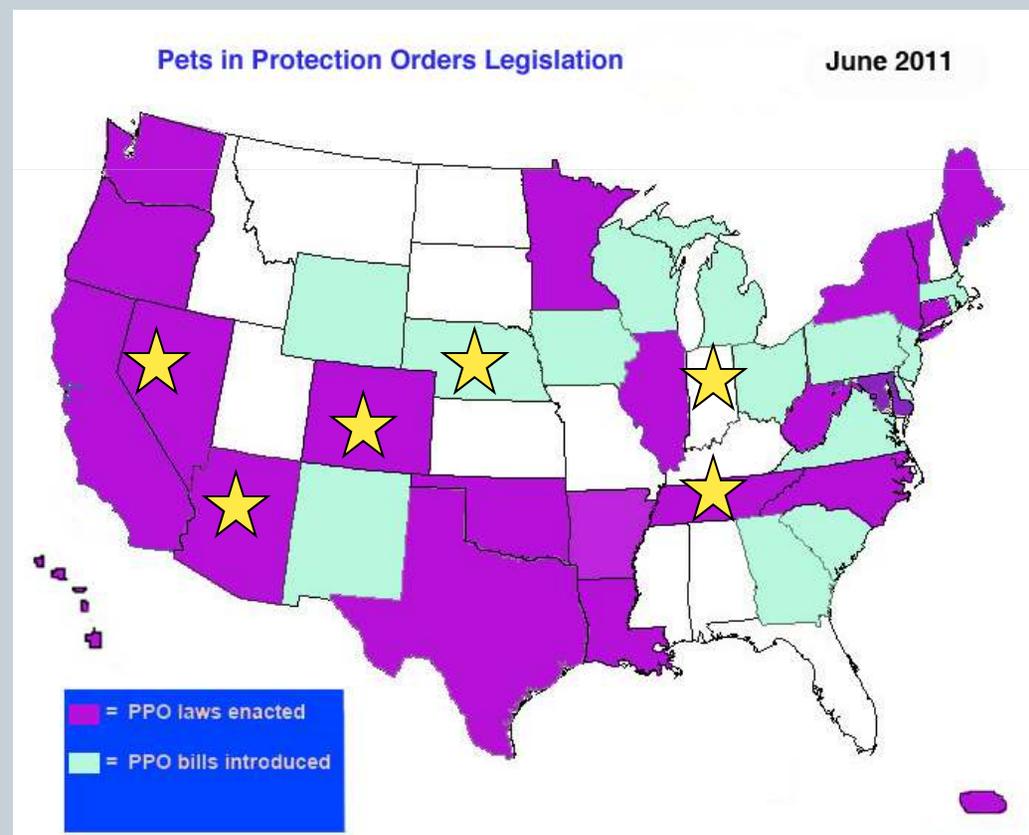


***Include animal cruelty among definitions of domestic violence and/or elder abuse**

PUBLIC POLICY:

State laws authorizing cross-reporting of various forms of family violence

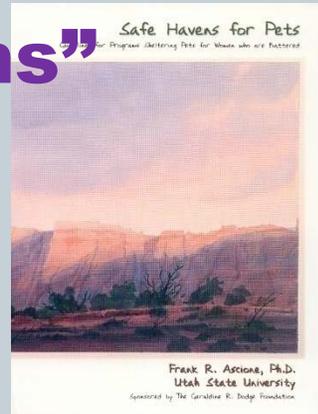
- Vets report cruelty
- Vets report child abuse
- *CT MDs report DV*



Programmatic Responses

“Safe Havens”

**900 women’s
shelters report
a referral or
housing program**



**(Hamilton, Ontario:
50% → 20%
after Safe Haven started)**

Conn: The Umbrella Program (Ansonia)
Center for Women and Families (Bridgeport)
Women’s Center of Greater Danbury (Danbury)
Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary (Madison)

“SAF-T”

**73 women’s shelters
report on-site housing
(none in CT)**



What Advocates Can Do for Battered Women with Pets

- Direct clients to animal shelters & adoption programs
- Include pets in safety planning
- Help clients prove animal ownership (licenses, vaccinations, vet bills, pet store receipts, pedigrees)
- Obtain pet info on intakes & assessments
 - **“Are there animals at home?”**
 - **“How are they cared for?”**
 - **“Are you worried about their welfare?”**
- Secure pet protection orders
- Help clients obtain transitional & permanent housing with pets
- Get involved in community and state-wide coalitions



ASK THE QUESTION!

Nashville, TN: Lethality Assessment:

3 top indicators that a woman will be killed by her batterer



- » Suicide threats?
- » Access to weapons?
- » Threats to mutilate or kill pets?

DV cases increased 50%

DV fatalities decreased from 80%

Resources

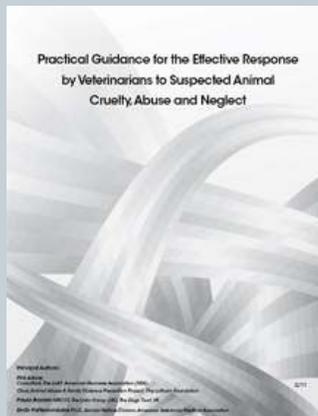


NATIONAL LINK COALITION

*Working together to stop violence
against people and animals*

Speakers Bureau, LINK-Letter
www.nationallinkcoalition.org

Veterinary forensics
www.asPCA.org



Guidance for Vets
www.avma.org



Latham Foundation
Manuals, Films, Magazine
www.latham.org



AniCare/Child
www.animalsandsociety.org

Research bibliography
www.animaltherapy.net

Connecticut Link Coalition: CT SafePet
SafePet@ourcompanions.org

The evolution of animal companions



Fear



Worship



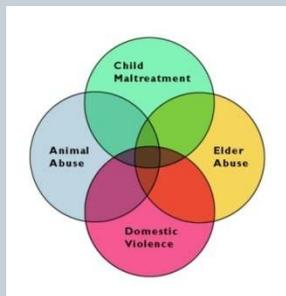
Domestication



Pets



Healthful partners



The Link



Neuro-chemistry



“Walk a hound, lose a pound”



Social capital



Animal-Assisted Therapy



The Links Between Animal Abuse and Family Violence: Implications for the Medical Professions



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**Phil Arkow, Link Consultant
ASPCA – Animals & Society Institute
National Link Coalition -- The Latham Foundation
arkowpets@snip.net**

