

INFORMATION FOR PROSECUTORS, JUDGES,  
AND LAW-ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

**PETA**



## Animal Abuse & Human Abuse: Partners in Crime

“The link between animal abuse and more violent conduct has clearly been established. The dismembered remains of dogs and cats today could well be that of children tomorrow.”

—Humboldt County District Attorney Terry Farmer

# Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime

Violent acts against animals have long been recognized as indicators of a dangerous psychopathy that does not confine itself to animals.

“Anyone who has accustomed himself to regard the life of any living creature as worthless is in danger of arriving also at the idea of worthless human lives.”  
—Albert Schweitzer

“Murderers ... very often start out by killing and torturing animals as kids.”  
—Robert K. Ressler, who developed profiles of serial killers for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Acts of cruelty toward animals—they can be the first sign of a violent pathology that includes human victims.

Animal abuse is not just the result of a minor personality flaw in the abuser but a symptom of a deep mental disturbance. Research in psychology and criminology shows that people who commit acts of cruelty toward animals don’t stop there; many of them move on to their fellow humans.

The FBI has found that a history of cruelty to animals is one of the traits that regularly appear in its computer records of serial rapists and murderers, and the standard diagnostic and treatment manual for psychiatric and emotional disorders lists cruelty to animals as a diagnostic criterion for conduct disorders.



**Five times more likely**  
A study conducted by Northeastern University and the Massachusetts SPCA found that people who abuse animals are five times more likely to commit violent crimes against humans. The majority of inmates scheduled to be executed for murder at California’s San Quentin penitentiary “practiced” their crimes on animals, according to the warden.



## The “Happy Face Killer”: Crossing Species Lines

“How can we expect an individual with such disregard for the life of an animal ... to respect human life?”  
—Ronald Gale, Assistant State’s Attorney,  
13th Judicial Circuit Court of Florida

**Serial killer Keith Jespersion is serving consecutive life sentences in Wyoming, Oregon, and Washington for a killing spree that claimed the lives of at least eight women in the early 1990s.**

Jespersion got his “first taste of killing” at the age of 6 by bludgeoning gophers. When he was 20, he reportedly “graduated” to larger animals, killing stray cats and dogs by beating them with a shovel and

shooting them with a BB gun. Jespersen admitted enjoying strangling the animals as well. “It’s the same feeling,” he explained to a reporter when comparing choking humans and animals. “You’ve already felt the pressure on the throat of them trying to grab air. You’re actually squeezing the life out of these animals

and there isn’t much difference,” Jespersen answered. “They’re [going to] fight for their lives just as much as a human being will.”  
  
Eventually, the “Happy Face Killer,” as he would come to be known, moved on to human victims. “No longer did I search for animals to mistreat,” Jespersen stated. “I now looked for people to kill. And I did. I killed over and over until I was caught.”

Writing from his cell in the Oregon State Penitentiary, Jespersen recognized, “Abusive behavior towards animals is one of the symptoms on the road to being a murderer.” He wrote that “we should stop ... cruelty ... before it develops into a bigger problem, like me.”

While animal abuse is an important sign of child abuse, the parent isn't always the one harming the animal. Children who abuse animals may be repeating a lesson learned at home; like their parents, they are reacting to anger or frustration with violence. Their violence is directed at the only individual in the family more vulnerable than themselves: an animal. One expert says, "Children in violent homes are characterized by ... frequently participating in pecking-order battering," in which they may maim or kill an animal. Indeed, domestic

violence is the most common background for childhood cruelty to animals.

A study published in *Violence Against Women* found that of 111 battered women with companion animals in shelters in South Carolina, almost half reported that their current or former male partners had threatened or abused their animals. A study of women living in Wisconsin shelters because of domestic abuse found that 80 percent of their batterers had been violent to their animals.

- Wisconsin's Leonard Kritz received time served for chopping the heads off three cockatiels, a conure, a chinchilla, a python, a boa constrictor, and another snake, after his wife told him that she had had an abortion. Kritz used a World War II bayonet to decapitate the animals and claimed that he did so in order to "teach his wife about the sanctity of life."
- For 13 years, the husband of Sandra Ruotolo of Pennsylvania battered her. The last time, he took a break from beating her with a vacuum cleaner cord and punched

- Ruotolo's dog in the face, warning her that if she left him, he would find her and slit her four dogs' throats in front of her. After contemplating suicide, Ruotolo looked at her dog and thought, "If I die, Duchess, what's going to happen to you?" and shot her husband to death instead.
- Stephen Williams, of LaGrange, Ga., was charged with aggravated cruelty to animals, first-degree child cruelty, and aggravated assault after allegedly hacking to death his wife's puppy with an ax and threatening to decapitate her with the same weapon—all in front of three horrified children.

- After Melissa Davis of Ocala, Fla., moved out because her husband repeatedly beat her, he found her and threatened to kill her dogs unless she came home. Davis refused and was presented with the head of her 4-month-old puppy later that day.
- John Witham of Randolph, Maine, in an apparent attempt to intimidate a woman he was previously accused of assaulting, allegedly took a pregnant cat to the woman's home and told her to choose between him and the animal. Later, he reportedly backed over the cat with his truck, crushing her and her newborn kittens to death.



# The Cruel Household: Animal Abuse and Family Violence

Researchers have found that a batterer's first target is often an animal living in the home, the second—a spouse or child. Often, batterers are able to control their victims, such as a spouse, by threatening, torturing, and/or killing the victim's animal companions. Here are a few examples:



"As a young prosecutor, I witnessed the direct correlation between animal cruelty and violence perpetrated against others. The abuse of a family pet was often the first indicator of domestic violence. A criminal who abuses animals exhibits disdain for life and a willingness to target and abuse the most defenseless of creatures."

—Jeanine Pirro, District Attorney, Westchester County, N.Y.

Because domestic abuse is directed toward the powerless, animal abuse and child abuse often go hand in hand.

- Guillermo Lerma of Edinburg, Texas, who is serving a life sentence for killing his girlfriend's 2-year-old daughter, decapitated a live puppy in front of a different girlfriend's children, warning that he would decapitate them as well if they told their mother.

- Scot Maust of Lemont Furnace, Pa., was charged with corruption of minors, making terroristic threats, and cruelty to animals after allegedly shooting his family's dog with a .22-

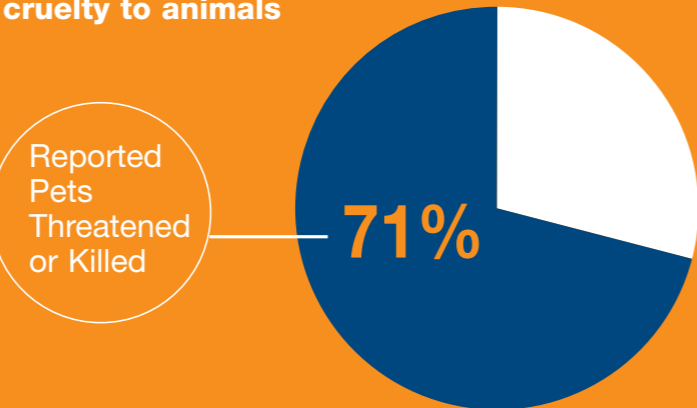
caliber firearm, ordering his four children to clean up the bloody scene, and threatening to kill them if they told anyone.

"[Animal abuse] is symbolic homicide. They're practicing a murder in their head. When you see that, you realize that this is a dangerous situation."

—Michael Lindsey, Domestic Violence Administrator, Miami Police

“There is some sense that this is the child modeling what is being played out at home, that the child is seeing what Daddy is doing to Mommy or that someone is being abused.”  
—Joan Zorza, editor of *Domestic Violence Report*, on juvenile animal abuse

Battered women’s reports of their partners’ cruelty to animals



Nearly three-quarters of women studied reported that their male partners have killed or have threatened to kill or injure their pets, according to a 1998 study by Frank Ascione, Ph.D.



“Animals become another tool for the batterer to reinforce power.”  
—Roberta Hacker of Women in Transition, a Philadelphia counseling and resource agency

Cruel Kids: Future Problems

case in point

A 13-year-old Augusta, Ga., boy—a month after allegedly stabbing a classmate in the back and threatening to kill a bus driver—reportedly stomped a kitten to death. Neighbors claimed to see the child twisting his foot into the kitten as if he were “grinding ... a cigarette out.”

Three New Jersey teens reportedly stoned a goose to death and—using a rake and shovel—fatally bludgeoned eight large exotic birds at a local zoo. The suspects were also suspected of arson, painting swastikas on an area business, and shattering a church’s windows.

A 16-year-old Nova Scotia boy tortured and hanged a stray cat less than two years after orchestrating the derailment of a passenger train, injuring 23 people.

At age 13, Gary Long Jr. of South Dakota allegedly encouraged a dog to fatally maul a kitten for his own amusement. Within two years, he shattered a beer bottle on an 8-year-old child’s head and raped and killed a 31-year-old woman.



“Of course, not all youthful animal abusers go on to become serial killers, but a great many go on to perpetrate a broad range of aggressive and abusive threats and actions.”

—Dr. Neal D. Barnard, President, Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine

“These are the kids who never learned it’s wrong to poke out a puppy’s eyes.”  
—Robert Ressler, Founder of the FBI’s behavioral sciences unit

“One of the most dangerous things that can happen to a child is to kill or torture an animal and get away with it.”  
—Margaret Mead, Anthropologist

# Notorious Killers



Jeffrey Dahmer

**Brenda Spencer**, who opened fire at a California school, killing two children and injuring nine others, had repeatedly abused cats and dogs, often setting their tails on fire.

**Serial killer and cannibal Jeffrey Dahmer** impaled the heads of dogs and cats on sticks.

**David Berkowitz (a.k.a. “Son of Sam”)**, who pleaded guilty to 13 murder and attempted murder charges, shot a neighbor’s Labrador retriever.

**Lee Boyd Malvo**, convicted in connection with the 2002 Washington, D.C., sniper attacks, reportedly hunted and killed stray cats for nearly five years, beginning at age 8 or 9.



Lee Boyd Malvo

As a child, **serial killer and rapist Ted Bundy**—ultimately convicted of two killings but suspected of murdering more than 40 women—witnessed his father’s violence toward animals, and he himself subsequently tortured animals.

**Earl Kenneth Shriner**, who raped and stabbed a 7-year-old boy, was known in his neighborhood for hanging cats and torturing dogs.

# School Shooters Share Violent Past

April 1999/Littleton, Colo.  
**Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold** shot to death 12 fellow students and a teacher and injured more than 20 others. Both had reportedly boasted about mutilating animals.

May 1998/Springfield, Ore.  
**Kip Kinkel**, 15, killed his parents and opened fire in his school cafeteria, killing two and injuring 22 others. He had a history of animal abuse and torture, having boasted about killing animals by putting lit firecrackers in their mouths.

March 1998/Jonesboro, Ark.  
**Mitchell Johnson**, 13, and **Andrew Golden**, 11, pulled their school’s fire alarm and then shot and killed four classmates and a teacher. Golden reportedly used to shoot dogs “all the time with a .22.”

December 1997/West Paducah, Ky.  
**Michael Carneal**, 14, shot and killed three classmates during a prayer meeting. Carneal had been heard talking about throwing a cat into a bonfire.

October 1997/Pearl, Miss.  
**Luke Woodham**, 16, shot and killed two classmates and injured seven others after stabbing his mother to death. Woodham’s journal revealed that he had beaten, burned, and tortured his own dog, Sparkle, to death.



Kip Kinkel



# Crimes of Omission and “the Link”

Animals often suffer alongside human dependents in neglectful homes. Such disregard for life does not recognize species lines and may turn into violence.

- **Four Indianapolis, Ind., residents** faced multiple felony charges stemming from authorities’ alleged discovery and rescue of three children—one of whom “reeked of urine”—and 21 wound-covered and parasite-ridden dogs from their feces-strewn residence.
- **New Jersey’s Charles Cullen**, who purportedly killed up to 40 patients in his care as a nurse, was said to leave his dog—eventually confiscated by humane officers— “chained outside in bitterly cold weather.”
- **Before Rev. Javan M. McBurrows of Pennsylvania** was charged with beating to death a 4-year-old boy, he had been found guilty of two counts of cruelty to animals for mistreating two dogs and convicted of choking his wife, who testified that McBurrows had beaten all eight children living in their house. In the back of the house, police found a neglected dog who was confined to a pen, malnourished, and covered with sores.
- **Rebecca M. Byrd of Brunswick, Maine**, was charged with beating her two children, breaking nine bones in her 4-month-old daughter’s body, and punching her son’s head. Shortly before her arrest for these crimes, Byrd’s dog was found dead at the end of a chain tied to an oil tank, left to starve to death with no protection from the elements.



Photo: Mike Dirks/The EnquirerJournal

# Bestiality and the Sexual Abuse of Humans

A recent study by Jory, Fleming, and Burton showed that 96 percent of offenders who had engaged in bestiality also admitted to sexual assaults on humans. The authors found that “sex with animals may be an important indicator of potential or co-occurring sex offenses against humans and may be a sign of severe family dysfunction and abuse that should be addressed in the arenas of psychological intervention, juvenile justice programs, and public policy.”

**Joseph Bateson, of Northern Ireland**—who allegedly engaged in sex acts with farmed animals—was found guilty of 17 counts of gross indecency with a child and indecent assault after he sexually abused a 6-year-old boy (whom he continued to abuse for nine years).

**A 30-year-old Clovis, N.M., woman** was charged with the sexual exploitation of children after officials reportedly found pictures of her sexually abusing a child. Photographs of the suspect engaging in sex acts with a dog were also allegedly found in her possession.



**Jerry Cook, of Norman, Okla.**, was convicted of cruelty to animals and assault and battery following a 2000 incident in which he raped a dog—fatally injuring her in the process—and attacked the owner of a home he was burglarizing. Cook’s history of violence began nearly two decades earlier when he was convicted of first-degree rape.



# Stopping the Cycle of Abuse

## ■ Cross-Reporting: a Multiagency Approach

Animal abuse is often discovered earlier than child or domestic abuse because it so often occurs in plain view.

**While hiding their own abuse, human victims may talk openly of animal abuse or neglect occurring in the family. Since laws governing animal abuse and child abuse investigation and intervention differ, animal control agents can often enter homes when social service workers cannot. Working together through cross-reporting, these agencies can help one another gain information about possible neglect and abuse.**

Baltimore police who file domestic violence reports are required to note the presence and condition of companion animals. The Boston Police Department partners with the New England Animal Control/Humane Task Force to detect

and respond to domestic violence associated with cruelty investigations. The New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women works with animal control to identify signs of domestic violence. California lawmakers passed legislation that requires child and adult protective agents to report cruelty to animals. Animal control officers in the state are “mandated reporters” of child abuse or neglect.

Studies that have found that up to 40 percent of women have delayed seeking safety from their batterers for as long as two months because of concern for their companion animals have led to collaboration among social service and government agencies to develop programs to provide foster

care for these animals. There are at least 116 of these programs planned or in existence in the United States. The oldest program is Colorado Springs’ Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team (DVERT). Twenty-six agencies, including the district attorney’s office, court advocates, human services, domestic violence groups, and the local humane society, work with police when an animal is living in the home where a domestic violence investigation is taking place. The humane society may shelter the animals involved.

A national public opinion survey by the Humane Society of the United States showed enormous support for cross-reporting: More than four out of five Americans support having teachers, social workers, animal welfare officers, and law-enforcement officials share information on juveniles who abuse animals. Four out of five American adults support requiring social workers, animal welfare workers, and law-enforcement officials to share information on cases of animal abuse to help identify potential situations of child abuse. Seventy-seven percent favor establishing a system to track adult animal-cruelty offenders to identify other kinds of likely violent offenses.

In addition to local veterinarians’ becoming involved in cross-reporting, many provide foster care for the animal companions of the victims of domestic violence.



# The Community's Safety at Stake: Your Response

## Safeguards

Law-enforcement officials are in a position to seek or impose safeguards against future violent crime. Imposing a ban on keeping animals, requiring psychological assessments and counseling (to include anger management, if applicable), and pushing for or ordering incarceration for abusers can prevent future violence.

## Recidivism

Repeat crimes among those who abuse and neglect animals are the rule rather than the exception. Recidivism is likely if convicted abusers are permitted to own or harbor any animals. It is imperative that all animal abusers be barred from personal and, if applicable, professional contact with animals for the maximum period allowable by law. Animals already in their custody should be confiscated.

Furthermore, abusers must never be ordered to perform community service, which inevitably consists of dirty work, at animal shelters. Animal abusers forced into such work are more likely to develop resentment than to recognize the implications of their crimes. Risks posed to animals are substantial, and shelter employees—overworked and overwhelmed as it is—cannot properly supervise the convicted.

## Sample Sentences

**A life-long ban on contact with animals:**  
England's Barry McCullough left his exotic reptiles to die from dehydration and starvation inside plastic containers.

**Five years in prison:**  
Michael Singleton of Illinois bludgeoned a dog with a hammer and hanged her from a chain while burglarizing her guardian's business.

**Four years in prison followed by five years of extended supervision:**  
Wisconsin's Matthew Schaub slammed a friend's kitten to the floor, killing her, and then attacked the animal's guardian as she tried to call the police.

**Two years in prison:**  
Maryland's Terry Love whipped, chased, dragged through a field, and then punched his dog after she jumped out of his truck while he drove drunk.

**Twenty-one months in prison and anger-management counseling:**  
Joseph Mullozzi of Illinois fatally kicked his roommate's dog. Mullozzi had previously been convicted of throwing a puppy against a wall.

**Ten months in prison:**  
New York's Joseph Gadomski left his elderly, "severely malnourished" dog to freeze to death without shelter.

**Five months in prison followed by four years of probation:**  
Wisconsin's Richard Pesch killed two dogs and made a third dog ill by placing a container of antifreeze in their enclosure.

**Twelve years in prison:**  
Wisconsin's Barry Herbeck tortured and killed five cats he obtained through "free to a good home" ads.

**Ten years of hard labor without parole:**  
Louisiana's Jeromie L. McCann dragged a dog to his death and then threw him through a stained-glass church window.

**Seven years in prison:**  
Wyoming's Travis Wilson mutilated and burned a dog. The judge recommended that he serve part of his sentence at the prison's boot camp, which provides anger-management education.

**Two years in prison, three years on probation and psychological counseling, and a ban on owning companion animals while on probation:**  
17-year-old Victor James Goodman set a dog on fire.

## Resources

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)**  
501 Front St.  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
757-622-PETA  
757-622-0457 (fax)  
info@peta.org  
**HelpingAnimals.com**

Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF)  
2103 S.E. Belmont Ave.  
Portland, OR 97214  
503-231-1602  
info@aldf.org  
**www.aldf.org**

Attorney members can help prosecutors with legal research, drafting friend-of-the-court briefs, locating expert witnesses, and more.

**Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PSYETA)**  
P.O. Box 1297  
Washington Grove, MD 20880  
301-963-4751  
kshapiro@igc.org  
**www.psyeta.org**

Created the first professionally developed psychological intervention program for animal abusers (AniCare Model of Treatment for Animal Abuse) and offers referrals to mental health professionals using this approach.

## Useful Addresses

**Pet-Abuse.com**  
P.O. Box 2995  
Del Mar, CA 92014  
1-866-240-1179  
775-659-5430 (fax)  
info@pet-abuse.com  
**www.pet-abuse.com**

An extensive database of animal abusers, their cases, and resources on the link between cruelty to animals and interpersonal violence.

**The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)**  
2100 L St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20037  
202-452-1100  
301-258-3081 (fax)  
**www.hsus.org**

Operates the First Strike® campaign to raise awareness about the connection between cruelty to animals and human violence. Provides investigative support, expert testimony, and information on the animal-human cruelty connection to law enforcement and prosecutors.





"We plan to aggressively prosecute these two as adults—aggressively. ... These kids need to be locked up and the key thrown away ... the citizens of Pinellas County have a right to be outraged by such conduct ..."

—**Chief Assistant State Attorney Bruce Bartlett**, regarding 18-year-old Robert Pettyjohn and 17-year-old Brandon Eldred's felony animal cruelty charges

"Some offenders kill animals as a rehearsal for targeting human victims and may kill or torture animals because, to them, the animals symbolically represent people."

—**FBI Special Agent Alan C. Brantley**

"No animal should be in your care. I will say to you, and anyone else who may appear before me in the future, I won't hesitate to give you another jail sentence again."

—**Holland District Judge Hannes Meyers Jr.**, sentencing Tina Timm to 30 days in jail after she locked her dog in a cage without food or water

"I am pleased to say that prosecutors in our office are well aware that people with a history of animal abuse are especially at risk for violence [toward] other people."

—**Portland Deputy District Attorney Megan L. Elam** to PETA

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510 • 757-622-PETA • [HelpingAnimals.com](http://HelpingAnimals.com)



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