

July 17, 2026

Amanda Lewis
Interim CED | Family and Consumer Sciences/4-H Educator
Marshall County 4-H/OSU Extension

Via email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Lewis,

I'm writing from [TeachKind](#), which works with thousands of schools and youth organizations nationwide to help educators foster compassion, critical thinking, and respect for animals. We saw a recent disturbing [report](#) from Marshall County that local authorities are investigating the killing of a rooster who had apparently become known as an unofficial mascot at Lake Texoma. The rooster, identified in news coverage as "Rusty the Rooster," was allegedly killed on the islands at Lake Texoma over the Fourth of July holiday weekend, and witnesses reportedly told authorities that children beat him to death.

Whether or not the individuals involved participate in Marshall County's 4-H Youth Development programming, incidents like this understandably raise serious concerns for families, educators, and the community at large. Many people have expressed their [fears of future violence](#), and the children you serve may already be aware of the news as well. TeachKind is dedicated to providing free resources and support to help them process such information and assist leaders like you in preventing potential hostility and aggression.

With numerous comparable cases occurring at an alarming rate, Marshall County is not alone, underscoring the urgent need to promote prosocial behavior and prevent acts of cruelty to animals. Incidents like this are not only deeply troubling for the individuals directly involved, but they can also signal broader risks to community safety. As mental health and law enforcement experts widely recognize, [cruelty to animals](#) and **violence against humans are inextricably linked**—a connection documented by researchers and reflected in national violence prevention frameworks, including Sandy Hook Promise's list of "[10 Critical Warning Signs of Violence](#)."

Fortunately, this link works both ways: A [study](#) on the connection between violence against animals and violence against humans concluded, "**Teaching children to be more humane, compassionate, and respectful towards living beings can help reduce all types of violence.**" Not only that, but [research](#) indicates that humane education can also help students academically. With many 4-H programs directly incorporating other animals, leaders have a powerful opportunity to help students learn about animal care and our food systems through sustainable, innovative approaches, ultimately fostering compassion and respect that can naturally extend to their peers.



To support this important work, we're sending you [Empathy Now](#), our step-by-step guide for educators to address and prevent youth violence against animals. This research-based tool was developed with trauma-informed principles at its core as a direct response to frequent similar instances that have occurred nationwide. We're also sending assorted student-friendly, standards-aligned resources, a selection of [books](#) about kindness toward animals, and a set of our [Empathy for All posters](#) for you to display. We would be happy to send additional copies of our resources for all of your students and staff.

Our team comprises [former classroom teachers](#) who understand the demanding realities of education providers. Our services are far from one-size-fits-all, and we welcome the opportunity to connect and [explore how TeachKind can support your important work](#). If you have a few minutes, we would welcome a brief reply indicating whether incidents of cruelty to animals have been a concern in your community and how TeachKind might best support your staff and students.

On behalf of PETA and our many members and supporters in Oklahoma, thank you for your leadership and for considering this important opportunity to support students and strengthen your program's commitment to empathy and safety. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Julie Everett
Senior Writer and Engagement Coordinator
[TeachKind](#) | PETA's Humane Education Division

Cc: Amanda Barnes, Marshall County 4-H Educator ([REDACTED])

