

# Memorandum



DATE March 4, 2010

TO Honorable Members of the Quality of Life Committee: Pauline Medrano (Chair), Vonciel Jones Hill (Vice Chair), Carolyn R. Davis, Angela Hunt, Sheffie Kadane, David A. Neumann, Steve Salazar

SUBJECT The Relationship Between Animal Cruelty and Human Violence

On Monday, March 8, 2010, you will be briefed on The Relationship Between Animal Cruelty and Human Violence by Yolanda Eisenstein, Animal Law Attorney. The briefing material is attached for your review.

If you have questions or need additional information, please let me know.



Forest E. Turner  
Assistant City Manager

cc: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
Mary K. Suhm, City Manager  
Deborah A. Watkins, City Secretary  
Thomas P. Perkins, Jr., City Attorney  
Craig D. Kinton, City Auditor  
Judge C. Victor Lander, Administrative Judge Municipal Court  
Ryan S. Evans, First Assistant City Manager  
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Jeanne Chipperfield, Chief Financial Officer  
Frank Libro, Public Information Office  
Helena Stevens-Thompson, Assistant to the City Manager

# The Relationship Between Animal Cruelty and Human Violence



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# Yolanda Eisenstein Bio

- ▶ Solo practice in Animal Law in Dallas
- ▶ Juris Doctor, cum laude, SMU Dedman School of Law
- ▶ Adjunct, Animal Law, SMU Dedman School of Law
- ▶ Chair, State Bar of Texas Animal Law Section
- ▶ Co-Chair, International Law Subcommittee, ABA TIPS Animal Law Committee
- ▶ Member, Dallas Animal Cruelty Alliance
- ▶ Board member, Texas Humane Legislation Network
- ▶ International Human Rights Advocate

# Sources and Resources

The following sources are referenced in the slide presentation by number:

1. American Humane: [www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org)
2. *The Link Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*, Andrew Linzey, ed. 2009
3. *The International Handbook of Animal Abuse and Cruelty: Theory, Research, and Application*, Frank Ascione, Ph.D., ed., 2008
4. *Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Animal Abuse: Linking the Circles of Compassion for Prevention and Intervention*, Frank Ascione and Phil Arkow, eds., 1999

# Defining Animal Cruelty

»» What  
Who  
Why

# Animal Abuse is a Crime

- ▶ Texas Penal Code § 42.09 Cruelty to Livestock Animals (1997):
- ▶ Texas Penal Code § 42.092 Cruelty to Nonlivestock Animals (2007)

*Tortures; fails unreasonably to provide necessary food, water, care, shelter; abandons; cruelly transports or confines; fights; seriously overworks ...*

# Treatment of Animals

- ▶ Texas Health & Safety Code Title 10, Chapter 821: Treatment and Disposition of Animals.
- ▶ Texas Health & Safety Code Title 10, Chapter 822: Regulation of Animals
- ▶ Local Ordinances – Dallas City Code Chapter 7

# Potential Animal Abusers

- ▶ Hoarders
- ▶ Spouse/Partner Abusers
- ▶ Puppy Mill Owners
- ▶ Children
- ▶ Dog/Cock Fighters
- ▶ Criminals
- ▶ Violent Criminals
- ▶ Serial Killers
- ▶ Next-Door Neighbor

# Intentional Abuse by Adults

- ▶ Control the animal
- ▶ Retaliate against an animal
- ▶ Satisfy a prejudice – “I hate cats”
- ▶ Express aggression through an animal
- ▶ Enhance personal aggressiveness
- ▶ Shock people
- ▶ Retaliate against people
- ▶ Assaulting a human too risky
- ▶ Sadism

*See 3, at 181*

# Animal Abuse by Children

- ▶ Curiosity or exploration
- ▶ Peer reinforcement
- ▶ Forced by a more powerful person
- ▶ Kills to prevent abuser from torturing
- ▶ Phobia
- ▶ Identification with child's abuser
- ▶ Post-traumatic play
- ▶ Imitation
- ▶ Practice before violence against a person

# Negligent Abuse

- ▶ Ignorance
- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Apathy
- ▶ Greed

*“Abuse occurs whenever the animal’s basic needs are not met, regardless of whether the abuse is inflicted intentionally or out of ignorance . . . .”*

# The Face of Neglect and Apathy



# Human Costs of Animal Cruelty

*Whether Intentional or Negligent,  
there are human costs to children, families,  
and the community.*

Animal abuse should not be viewed in isolation  
– part of a broader “Ecology of Violence” –

Linked to crimes and other social problems

*See 3, at 7–30*

# Historical Views Animal Cruelty and Human Violence

»» 13<sup>th</sup> Century and  
Beyond

# History

- ▶ St. Thomas Aquinas (13<sup>th</sup> Century)
- ▶ Montaigne (16<sup>th</sup> Century)
- ▶ John Locke (17<sup>th</sup> Century)  
“They who delight in the suffering and destruction of inferior creatures, will not be apt to be very compassionate or benign to those of their own kind.”

*See 3, at 7–30*

# History

## 19<sup>th</sup> Century

- ▶ Animal Cruelty Societies emerged based on *the link*\* between human and animal violence

## Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- ▶ Interest waned

## Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- ▶ Relationship rediscovered.

\* American Humane Association

*See 3, at 7–30*

# The Link

Graduation Theory: Individual starts abusing animals, then graduates to human violence.

## The Violent Crime link to Animal Abuse

- ▶ Violent criminals were nearly *three times* more likely than nonviolent criminals to have abused animals as children.
- ▶ Violent criminals were nearly *four times* more likely to abuse their own pets.

# The Link

## The Animal Abuse link to Violent Crime

- ▶ Animal abusers were *five times* more likely to have a violent criminal record.
- ▶ Animal abusers were more than *three times* more likely to have a criminal record.

# Cruelty is a Continuum

## Cruelty to Animals and Cruelty to Humans is a Continuum

Animal cruelty *does not* provide an outlet that prevents violence against people.

“It is a warning sign that this individual is not mentally healthy ... . Abusing animals does not dissipate those violent emotions; instead it may fuel them.”

– Alan Brantley –

See 2, at 224–26

# Children and Animal Cruelty

» Victims and Abusers

# Damage to Children

## Witnessing Animal Abuse

- ▶ Long-term damage with exposure between the ages 3 and 6 years.
- ▶ Desensitizes and damages a child's capacity for empathy.
- ▶ Fosters the idea that animals and therefore *people* are expendable.
- ▶ Damages a child's sense of safety.
- ▶ Leads to acceptance of physical harm and violence.

*See* 1; 3, at 133–153

# Victimization Linked to Abuse

- ▶ Research has documented a relationship between childhood histories of animal cruelty and patterns of chronic interpersonal aggression.
- ▶ Sexually abused children are **five times** more likely to abuse animals.
- ▶ Children who are exposed to domestic violence are **nearly three times** more likely to mistreat animals.
- ▶ By hurting animals, the child may be rehearsing his/her own suicide.

# Changing Lives with Empathy

The capacity to empathize is critical to the proper emotional development of children.



# Building Empathy

## PREP: Youth Village Dog Training Program

**P**atience, **R**esponsibility, **E**mpathy, **P**artnership

- Non-violent juvenile offenders train dogs as a way to develop personal skills
- Professional dog trainers provide training
- Psychological evaluations measure results
- New skills
- Adoptable dogs

[www.youthvillagefoundation.org](http://www.youthvillagefoundation.org)

# Giving Skills, Building Empathy

All participants have shown positive changes in their behavior and attitudes toward people and animals.



# Giving Skills, Building Empathy

Graduates of the program receive training certificates from Canine Dimensions evidencing their successful completion of the program.



# Family Violence and Animal Cruelty

» Victims and Abusers

# Animal Abuse—An Early Warning

*Research shows that in families where serious animal abuse has occurred, other forms of family violence are often occurring and other family members may be at increased risk of abuse.*

– American Humane Association

See 1 generally

# The Relationship

- ▶ 71% of battered women reported that their abusers had harmed animals.
- ▶ 32% reported that their children had hurt or killed animals.
- ▶ 25–40% of battered women are unable to escape abusive situations – they worry about what will happen to their animals.

*See 1, “Facts About Animal Abuse & Domestic Violence”*

# The Relationship

- ▶ Pet abuse has been found to be associated with more frequent, severe, and different types of domestic violence.
- ▶ Incidence of dog bites is **11 times** greater in violent homes.
- ▶ 88% of homes with physically abused children also include abuse/neglect of the family pet.
- ▶ 62–76% of animal cruelty in the home occurs in front of children.

# Family Victims

- ▶ Spouse/partner – often won't leave without taking the animal
- ▶ Elderly family members – abuse used to keep them quiet
- ▶ Children – long-term consequences of witnessing animal and family abuse

# Why the Pet?

- ▶ Abuser is empowered through the suffering of the animal and its affect on the victim.
- ▶ By killing a pet, the abuser removes what may be the victim's only source of comfort .
- ▶ Another way to inflict pain.
- ▶ Abusers use family pets to intimidate and control. (Keep children and elderly quiet).
- ▶ Keeps the victim from leaving.
- ▶ Humiliate.

# Family Violence in Texas

In Texas in 2008:

- ▶ There were 193,505 *reported* incidents of family violence
- ▶ There were 136 women killed
- ▶ 11,776 Adults sheltered
- ▶ 15,591 Children sheltered
- ▶ 22.63% Adults denied shelter

# The Victims

»» The Community

# Communities Support Animal Protection

Public interest in and support for fighting animal cruelty is high:

- ▶ 97% considered “protecting animals from cruelty and abuse” to be important.
- ▶ 85% agree: “It has been demonstrated that people who repeatedly and intentionally harm animals are more likely to show violence toward people.”

# Community Attitudes

The public sees animals as helpless victims, often making animal cruelty more disturbing than person-on-person violence.



# Animals Suffer



# The Community

## Animal Cruelty Destabilizes Communities and Neighborhoods

The condition of a society in part is reflected in:

The extent to which we obey or violate the law  
The extent to which the law is enforced

*Animal cruelty seen as reflecting general level of  
lawlessness*

# “Healthy People Don’t Abuse Animals”

*“Healthy people have a moral awareness that guides them toward responsible and compassionate care toward animals and humans.”*

*“Seeing compassionate care predisposes others to imitate it and feel better about duplicating similar behaviors.”*

– Dr. Ken Magid –

# Strategies

- » Collaboration
- » Education
- » Commitment

# Strategies

- ▶ Early Intervention
  - Proactive v. Reactive Position
- ▶ Public Education
  - Raise awareness of the consequences through all channels
- ▶ Investigation
  - Assure the public
- ▶ Reporting and Tracking
  - Accurate statistics important

# Strategies

- ▶ Training: Police, Prosecutors, Animal Control, Lawyers, and Judges
- ▶ Best Practices
  - Learn from others' successes
- ▶ Enlist and Utilize Community Support
  - Animal Shelter Commission
  - Concerned Citizens and Professionals
  - Dallas Animal Cruelty Alliance
  - SPCA of Texas

# Strategies

- ▶ **Pass Stronger Laws**
  - Companion Animal Protective orders
  - Puppy Mills
  - Animal Fighting
- ▶ **Better Language/Definitions in the Law**
  - Eliminate confusion
- ▶ **Collaboration among various entities**
  - Clarify areas of responsibility
  - Enhance communication

# Strategies

- ▶ Greater Enforcement of Existing Laws
- ▶ Strengthen Veterinarian Reporting
  - Immunity
  - Mandatory reporting
- ▶ Dedicated Prosecutors, Judges, Courts, Law Enforcement
  - Streamline/Expedite processes
- ▶ Support from all levels of government

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