

Animal Abuse Co-Occurring with Child Maltreatment

A Bibliography



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Scope

This bibliography covers literature significant to the study of child maltreatment that co-occurs with animal abuse. Included are English language articles, reports, book chapters, and books.

Organization

Publications are listed in date-descending order. Links are provided to publicly available publications when possible.

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Animal Abuse Co-Occurring with Child Maltreatment

A Bibliography

Mota-Rojas, D., Monsalve, S., Lezama-García, K., Mora-Medina, P., Domínguez-Oliva, A., Ramírez-Necoechea, R., & Garcia, R. C. M. (2022). [Animal abuse as an indicator of domestic violence: One health, one welfare approach](#). *Animals*, 12(8), 977. DOI:10.3390/ani12080977

Animal abuse is widely recognized as both a risk factor for and a potential consequence of interpersonal violence. In children, especially, factors such as dysfunctional families, antisocial personality, physical, psychological, or intimate abuse, and frequent exposure to domestic aggression or animal abuse have been confirmed as factors that can predispose young people to perform acts of animal cruelty. It is important to recognize warning signs such as those identified as the McDonald triad (bedwetting, pyromania, animal cruelty). A one health, one welfare approach, incorporating physicians, veterinarians, other health care professionals, social workers, and humane education, is critical for the recognition, management, and prevention of domestic violence, involving both humans and other animals.

Muri, K., Augusti, E. M., Bjørnholt, M., & Hafstad, G. S. (2022). [Childhood experiences of companion animal abuse and its co-occurrence with domestic abuse: Evidence from a national youth survey in Norway](#). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(23-24), NP22627–NP22646. DOI:10.1177/08862605211072176

It is increasingly acknowledged that companion animal abuse often occurs in the same contexts as other types of abuse, particularly domestic abuse. However, the co-occurrence and strengths of these associations in the general population have not been well established in research. With data from a large representative sample of Norwegian adolescents, we aimed to determine 1) the extent to which Norwegian children are exposed to companion animal abuse in the family, 2) whether and how companion animal abuse is linked to other forms of domestic abuse that children experience, and 3) background factors associated with companion animal abuse. A total of 9240 adolescents aged 12–16 years (M_{age} 14.7) participated in the digital school-based survey. Four percent ($n = 380$) reported that they had ever witnessed a parent being violent towards a family companion animal, whereas 1% ($n = 125$) had experienced that an adult in the household had threatened to harm a companion animal. There was a substantial overlap between companion animal abuse and child abuse, and it most frequently co-occurred with psychological abuse and

less severe forms of physical child abuse. This resonates with conceptualizations of domestic abuse as an ongoing pattern of psychological abuse and coercive control. The risk factors identified for companion animal abuse in this representative sample of adolescents were similar to known risk factors for domestic abuse. Low socioeconomic status and parents' substance abuse, parents' psychiatric illness, and parents' history of incarceration entailed a greater risk of experiencing companion animal abuse. We conclude that companion animal abuse co-occurs with other forms of domestic abuse and that it may be considered a part of the repertoire of domestic abuse that impacts children.

Riggs, D. W., Baum, N. G., Taylor, N., & Beall, J. (2022). Reports of animal abuse in child protection referrals: A study of cases from one South Australian service. *Child Abuse Review, 31*(1), 91–98. DOI:10.1002/car.2720

Key Practitioner Messages: There is a well-established link between animal- and human-directed violence. Reports of animal abuse in child protection referrals may indicate more severe cases of child abuse. Cross-reporting of abuse is important, both in the context of child protection and animal welfare. 'There is a well-established link between animal- and human-directed violence.

Swemmer, S. (2022). Protecting Fido, protecting the family: Developing domestic violence law to include companion animals. *SA Crime Quarterly, 71*, 75–86. DOI:10.17159/24133108/2022/vn71a7928

This article argues that by developing domestic violence laws to include and protect individual companion animals in the home, it might be possible to prevent violence against other victims in the home. Protecting a companion animal from persistent violence by, for example, having properly integrated reporting systems between government departments, could protect various vulnerable members of the family. The article briefly sketches the status of intimate partner violence in South Africa and explores the current implementation of the Domestic Violence Act. The status of companion animal abuse in South Africa and other jurisdictions is briefly explored. The article then shows that an intersection of violence exists in the home between women, children and companion animal and that protecting specific victims of violence (such as companion animals) can potentially act as a mechanism that can protect all victims from future or persisting violence.

Tomlinson, C. A., Murphy, J. L., Matijczak, A., Califano, A., Santos, J., & McDonald, S. E. (2022). [The link between family violence and animal cruelty: A scoping review](#). *Social Sciences, 11*(11), 514. DOI:10.3390/socsci11110514

There is some evidence that family violence (intimate partner violence, child maltreatment, elder abuse) co-occurs with animal cruelty (i.e., threats to and/or actual harm of an animal), which is often referred to as “the link.” The aim of this scoping review was to comprehensively search the literature to determine the extent of empirical evidence that supports the co-occurrence of family violence and animal cruelty and that provides prevalence rates of the co-occurrence. We searched eight electronic databases (e.g., Academic Search Complete, PsycArticles, PubMed) for peer-reviewed articles published until September 2021. Articles were eligible for inclusion if they were written in English and included the empirical study of at least one form of family violence and animal cruelty. We identified 61 articles for inclusion. The majority of articles ($n = 48$) focused on co-occurring IPV and animal cruelty, and 20 articles examined child maltreatment and animal cruelty. No articles examining elder abuse and animal cruelty were found. Prevalence rates of “the link” ranged from <1% to >80%. Findings regarding the association between family violence and animal cruelty varied. Some studies found that family violence was significantly associated with animal cruelty (or vice versa), but there was also evidence that the association was not statistically significant. Associations between family violence and animal cruelty were not significant in most studies that adjusted for sociodemographic factors. This suggests that sociodemographic factors (e.g., exposure to multiple forms of violence, and income) may explain the co-occurrence of family violence and animal cruelty. Based on the results of our scoping review, we recommend that caution should be taken regarding assertions of “the link” without further research to better understand the co-occurrence of family violence and animal cruelty and the factors and mechanisms that influence their co-occurrence.

Jegatheesan, B., Enders-Slegers, M.-J., Ormerod, E., & Boyden, P. (2020). [Understanding the link between animal cruelty and family violence: The bioecological systems model](#). *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17*(9), 3116. DOI:10.3390/ijerph17093116

Violence towards animals and violence towards people are often interconnected problems, and as such, this phenomenon has been termed the Link. Violence towards animals is a strong predictor that the abuser may inflict violence on people. However, it must not be assumed this is always the

case. Professionals treating an animal or a human patient/client who has been subjected to abuse are uniquely situated to act in the role of ‘first responders’ when they suspect or recognize animal abuse, human abuse, or family violence. To more fully understand the Link the authors introduce Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological systems model through which to examine the complexity of the problem. Using data from earlier studies in which they interviewed police officers, other law enforcers, veterinarians, social workers, and community and family members, the authors discuss the correlation between animal cruelty and family violence. Furthermore, they examine how Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological systems model has the potential to better support animal and human health and welfare professionals in the identification of strategies for animals and humans caught in abusive settings. The authors recommend that these professionals become familiar with the bioecological systems model, which will enable them to better understand the psychological problems of animal cruelty and family violence and the different bioecological contributing factors. The authors emphasize transdisciplinary collaboration as vital in the recognition, prevention, and protection of animal and human victims trapped in family violence.

Randour, M. L., Smith-Blackmore, M., Blaney, N., DeSousa, D., & Guyony, A. A. (2019).
Animal abuse as a type of trauma: Lessons for human and animal service professionals.
Trauma, Violence, & Abuse. DOI:10.1177/1524838019843197

Animal abuse frequently occurs at the same time and the same place as other types of violence, particularly family violence. Because of that close association, this article proposes that it is the responsibility of both animal service and human service professionals to be aware of its occurrence, understand its significance, and promote appropriate professional and policy responses to it. Research literature addressing the link between animal abuse and other forms of violence (“the link”) is discussed. Articles selected for review were published in a peer-reviewed journal, relevant to some aspect of the link between animal abuse and child abuse and/or domestic violence, used either a national or a longitudinal database, or relied on random sampling or a comparison group. If a study was retrospective or drawn from a convenience sample, it had to have been replicated by another study for inclusion. Finally, any measurement instruments used by the study under review must have had acceptable reliability and validity. Legal databases, such as LexisNexis, were used to identify legislation that has been passed and/or court cases that have

been decided that were relevant to the topic of “the link.” Strong associations were found between domestic violence, child abuse, and animal abuse; animal abuse, whether witnessed or committed, is a form of trauma. Severe animal abuse as a predictor for severe domestic violence recently emerged as a promising association. However, some of these findings on “the link” have not been translated into practice, for example, domestic violence advocates and child protection workers frequently do not ask questions about pets in the family. At the same time, the past 20 years have seen an increase in state and federal legislation and policies that have been enacted, in part, because of the growing body of evidence on the link. Knowledge of the link also has influenced a number of court cases deciding parental rights. Moreover, awareness of the link is illustrated by the passage of pet protection orders for victims of domestic violence as well as the inclusion of pet abuse as a form of domestic violence. Human service and animal service professionals should articulate more ways in which they can communicate with one another, thus adding more information and resources to any intervention or treatment of family violence.

Bright, M. A., Huq, M. S., Spencer, T., Applebaum, J. W., & Hardt, N. (2018). Animal cruelty as an indicator of family trauma: Using adverse childhood experiences to look beyond child abuse and domestic violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 76, 287–296.
DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.11.011

Youth who engage in animal cruelty are known to be at increased risk of perpetrating violence on other people in their lives including peers, loved ones, and elder family members. These youths have often been exposed to family violence, including animal cruelty perpetrated on their beloved pets by violent adults. The current study utilizes a data set of 81,000 juvenile offenders whose adverse childhood experiences are known and includes 466 youth who self-report engaging in animal cruelty. Compared to the larger group of juvenile offenders, the children admitting to engaging in animal cruelty are younger at time of first arrest, more likely to be male, and more likely to be White. When looking at their reports of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), they are more likely than other juvenile offenders to have an array of adverse experiences beyond family violence and to have four or more ACEs. Although the youth who are cruel to animals are already troubled, the fact that they present to law enforcement at early ages provides early opportunities for intervention. Service providers outside the law enforcement field, such as teachers, physicians, veterinarians and animal control officers may be able to identify these vulnerable youth, and refer them to needed services before violence is visited on other humans.

Macios-Mayo, A. R. (2018). The link between animal abuse and child abuse. *American Journal of Family Law*, 32(3), 130-136.

Floyd and Barbara Schambon were the parents of five children. The couple's eldest daughter was emancipated and did not live with the couple. The remaining four children, two boys and two girls, were all under the age of 13.¹ Like many other American families, the couple had several animals in their home, including dogs, cats, and even a guinea pig. Barbara Schambon was an obstetrics nurse at a local hospital.² Floyd Schambon worked outside of the home as well. The Schambons were also in the business of breeding and selling various breeds of small dogs. From the outside, they may have appeared relatively normal; however, the Schambons were hiding a horrendous secret. In the summer of 1989, animal control officers responded to information regarding animals in the Schambons' garage. They found over 20 small dogs in the hot, unventilated garage without food or water. They also observed 3-5 inches of feces covering the garage floor. Two of the three responding animal control officers took the animals to the animal shelter. The third officer stayed behind to investigate. The animal control officer found Barbara Schambon in the home. She invited the officer into the house through the back door that led into the kitchen. When inside the kitchen, the officer saw animal cages lining the kitchen walls and litter boxes overflowing with feces. He observed dirty dishes throughout the kitchen and fungus growing on the stove. A dead, decomposing dog was lying on the kitchen floor. A guinea pig was in its cage on top of the kitchen counter. The animal control officer was so nauseated by the smells in the kitchen that he had to leave the house for fresh air. The officer later returned to the house after obtaining a search warrant for the Schambon house. Floyd Schambon was present and arrested for animal cruelty.

McDonald, S. E., Cody, A. M., Booth, L. J., Peers, J. R., O, C. L. C., Williams, J. H., & Ascione, F. R. (2018). Animal cruelty among children in violent Households: Children's explanations of their behavior. *Journal of Family Violence*, 33(7), 469–480.
DOI:10.1002/bsl.2369

Despite increased recognition that childhood animal cruelty (CAC) is a risk factor for subsequent interpersonal violence, there is a dearth of research examining motivations for children's animal cruelty behaviors in the context of violent households. The purpose of this study is to build on prior research in this area using a qualitative child-centered design to explore themes in children's narratives about harming animals. We were specifically interested in learning: (1) what contextual or situational factors are related to CAC behaviors in the context of adverse family

settings? (2) what do children's accounts of their behaviors reveal about their beliefs about animal minds?, and (3) what are motivations for children's perpetration of harm against animals? Forty-six children and their maternal caregivers were recruited from community-based domestic violence services. Children were asked to describe times when they had harmed animals; caregivers were interviewed separately about children's harm to pets, and these data were used to triangulate patterns in the child data. Data were analyzed in Atlas.ti using the qualitative coding process of template analysis. Our thematic findings included: history of witnessing animal cruelty; history of witnessing pet neglect/abandonment; CAC with family members; minimization of animal harm; anthropomorphic beliefs about animal sentience; punishing pets out of anger; and curiosity. Our findings demonstrate that asking about children's experiences with animals is an important part of the evaluation process for professionals who encounter children exposed to, or at risk for, experiencing family violence. Implications for research and intervention efforts are discussed.

McDonald, S. E., Dmitrieva, J., Shin, S., Hitti, S. A., Graham-Bermann, S. A., Ascione, F. R., & Williams, J. H. (2017). The role of callous/unemotional traits in mediating the association between animal abuse exposure and behavior problems among children exposed to intimate partner violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 72, 421–432.
DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.09.004

Children exposed to intimate partner violence are at increased risk for concomitant exposure to maltreatment of companion animals. There is emerging evidence that childhood exposure to maltreatment of companion animals is associated with psychopathology in childhood and adulthood. However, few studies have explored developmental factors that might help to explain pathways from animal maltreatment exposure to children's maladjustment. The present study addresses this gap in the literature by examining relations between children's exposure to animal maltreatment, callous/unemotional traits (i.e., callousness, uncaring traits, and unemotional traits), and externalizing and internalizing behavior problems. A sample of 291 ethnically diverse children (55% Latino or Hispanic) between the ages of 7 and 12 was recruited from community-based domestic violence services. A mediational path model indicated that child exposure to animal maltreatment was associated with callousness ($\beta = 0.14$), which in turn was associated with greater internalizing ($\beta = 0.32$) and externalizing problems ($\beta = 0.47$). The effect of animal maltreatment exposure on externalizing problems was mediated through callousness. Results suggest that callous/unemotional traits are a potential mechanism through which childhood exposure to animal

maltreatment influences subsequent behavior problems. Future research is needed to evaluate the extent to which exposure to animal maltreatment affects children's adjustment over time in the context of other co-occurring adverse childhood experiences.

Trentham, C. E. (2016) [The link between recurrent childhood animal cruelty and recurrent interpersonal violence](https://scholar.utc.edu/theses/467/). *Master's theses and Doctoral dissertations*.
<https://scholar.utc.edu/theses/467/>

In the early 1960s, researchers began to examine the potential link between childhood animal cruelty and future interpersonal violence. Findings since then have been inconsistent in establishing a relationship between the two. This may be due to researchers failing to measure the recurrency of childhood animal abuse and the recurrency of later violent acts committed in adulthood. The current study, using data from 257 inmates at a medium-security prison in a Southern state, is a replication of research conducted by Tallichet and Hensley (2004) and Hensley, Tallichet, and Dutkiewicz (2009), which examined this recurrency issue. The only statistically significant predictor of recurrent adult interpersonal violence in this study was recurrent childhood animal cruelty. Inmates who engaged in recurrent childhood animal cruelty were more likely to commit recurrent adult interpersonal violence. Respondents' race, education, and childhood residence were not significant predictors of the outcome variable.

[Animal abuse and child abuse: Examining the link](https://www.nativeamericahumane.org/uploads/6/4/2/5/64257269/child_abuse.pdf). (2014). *Virginia Child Protection Newsletter*, 101, 1-4.
https://www.nativeamericahumane.org/uploads/6/4/2/5/64257269/child_abuse.pdf

Girardi, A., & Pozzulo, J. D. (2012). The significance of animal cruelty in child protection investigations. *Social Work Research*, 36(1), 53-60. DOI:10.1093/swr/svs012

The purpose of this study was to investigate the frequency with which child protection workers (CPWs) in Ontario, Canada, seek information about animal cruelty during investigations of child maltreatment and the extent to which they consider information about animal cruelty when making decisions about whether intervention is required. The CPWs ($N = 78$) responded to an online survey about their experiences with animal cruelty during child protection investigations in the previous year. Few CPWs routinely asked questions about animal cruelty during investigations, but those who did ask questions were significantly more likely to report disclosures of animal

cruelty by children and caregivers than those who did not ask questions. Many CPWs had directly observed children and caregivers physically harming animals. Almost all respondents indicated that animal cruelty was an important factor to consider when making intervention decisions. The results suggest that CPWs should consider routinely asking children and caregivers questions about animal cruelty and observe the behavior and living conditions of family pets when conducting risk assessments. Future research should determine whether animal cruelty is a reliable indicator of exposure to family violence.

Schwartz, R. L., Fremouw, W., Schenk, A., & Ragatz, L. L. (2012). Psychological profile of male and female animal abusers. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 27(5), 846-861. DOI:10.1177/0886260511423254

This study had three purposes: to explore psychological characteristics of animal abusers (criminal thinking styles, empathy, and personality traits), to replicate previously reported results (past illegal actions, bullying behavior), and to examine potential gender differences. The self-reported animal abuser group was 29 college students who reported two or more incidents of animal abuse; controls were 29 college students matched on age and gender. Participants completed self-report measures of criminal thinking, illegal behaviors, bullying, empathy, and the five-factor personality traits. Results indicated animal abusers had more previous criminal behaviors, were more likely to bully, and had the highest scores on the power orientation criminal thinking scale. Abuser by gender interactions were detected; female animal abusers scored significantly higher on several measures of criminal thinking, were found to be more likely to bully, and exhibited lower scores on measures of perspective taking and empathy compared to female controls.

DeGue, S. (2011). A triad of family violence: Examining overlap in the abuse of children, partners, and pets. In C. Blazina, G. Boyraz, & D. Shen-Miller (Eds.), *The psychology of the human-animal bond: A resource for clinicians and researchers* (pp. 245-262). Springer. DOI:10.1007/978-1-4419-9761-6_14

The relationship between cruelty to animals and the abuse of women and children has been informally recognized throughout history (Ascione & Arkow, 1999). A folk proverb advised, “A woman, a horse, and a hickory tree; The more you beat ‘em, the better they be” (cited in Adams, 1995). Similarly, George Cannon, leader of the Church of Latter Day Saints in the 1890s, warned, “Young ladies, never put yourself in the power or under the control of young men who treat their

animals badly, for if you become their wives, they will abuse you” (cited in Quinlisk, 1999). More recently, popular belief in a link between animal- and human-directed violence has been codified in state legislation establishing cross-reporting systems that permit or require animal cruelty and child welfare investigators to refer families to parallel agencies for investigation (Long, Long, & Kulkarni, 2007). Such laws are based on the assumption that families experiencing one form of violence victimization will be at an increased risk for other forms of violence (DeGue & DiLillo, 2009). This chapter provides an overview of current knowledge regarding the extent and nature of this overlap, discusses possible explanations for the exposure of family members (human and nonhuman) to multiple types of violence victimization, and highlights potential implications for prevention and early intervention.

Flynn, C. P. (2011). Examining the links between animal abuse and human violence. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 55(5), 453-468. DOI:10.1007/s10611-011-9297-2

Empirical research has increasingly found evidence for the coexistence of animal abuse and various forms of interpersonal violence. Some researchers have even argued for a specific version of this relationship, namely, that individuals tend to move from violence toward animals, particularly in childhood, to subsequent violence toward humans. Others have suggested that the evidence for this graduation or progression hypothesis is weak and inconsistent, and that an approach to animal abuse that focuses on the link is misguided. This article begins by reviewing the research on the connections between animal abuse and interhuman violence. Then it critically assesses the evidence for and against the link, and discusses the issues and challenges facing future research in this area.

Vaughn, M. G., Qiang, F., Beaver, K. M., DeLisi, M., Perron, B. E., & Howard, M. O. (2011). Effects of adversity on bullying and cruelty to animals in the United States: Findings from a national sample. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26(17), 3509-3525. DOI:10.1177/0886260511403763

This study examined effects of type of and cumulative burden of childhood adversities on bullying and cruelty to animals in the United States. Data were derived from Waves I and II of the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions, a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults. Structured psychiatric interviews were completed by trained lay interviewers between 2001-2002 and 2003-2004. Although the effects of childhood adversity diminished with the

inclusion of confounding variables, several adversities remained significant. For bullying, these included being made to do chores that were too difficult or dangerous, threatening to hit or throw something, pushing, shoving, slapping, or hitting, and hitting that left bruises, marks, or injuries. With respect to cruelty to animals, swearing and saying hurtful things, having a parent or other adult living within the home that went to jail or prison, and adult/other person fondling/touching in a sexual way were significant. The final models indicated that the cumulative burden of childhood adversities had strong effects on the increased likelihood of bullying behavior but not cruelty to animals.

DeGue, S., & DiLillo, D. (2009). Is animal cruelty a “red flag” for family violence? Investigating co-occurring violence toward children, partners, and pets. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 24*(6), 1036-1056. DOI:10.1177/0886260508319362

Cross-reporting legislation, which permits child and animal welfare investigators to refer families with substantiated child maltreatment or animal cruelty for investigation by parallel agencies, has recently been adopted in several U.S. jurisdictions. The current study sheds light on the underlying assumption of these policies—that animal cruelty and family violence commonly co-occur. Exposure to family violence and animal cruelty is retrospectively assessed using a sample of 860 college students. Results suggest that animal abuse may be a red flag indicative of family violence in the home. Specifically, about 60% of participants who have witnessed or perpetrated animal cruelty as a child also report experiences with child maltreatment or domestic violence. Differential patterns of association were revealed between childhood victimization experiences and the type of animal cruelty exposure reported. This study extends current knowledge of the links between animal- and human-directed violence and provides initial support for the premise of cross-reporting legislation.

McPhedran, S. (2009). Animal abuse, family violence, and child wellbeing: A review. *Journal of Family Violence, 24*(1), 41-52. DOI:10.1007/s10896-008-9206-3

Animal abuse and family violence appear to be “linked” and tend to co-occur in the same households. Companion animals are often regarded as family members, if not by the abuser, then by others within the family. Consequently, in families where any given form of violence exists, animal abuse is also more likely to exist. This paper examines animal abuse in the context of

abusive home environments, and the relationship between an abusive home in childhood and the range of behavioral problems that may extend into adulthood. Existing investigations are reviewed with reference to prevalence, epidemiology, and child development theory. It appears that holistic interventions to counter abusive home environments may represent the most effective way to break the association between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence, by addressing the shared situational characteristics common to a range of violent behaviors.

Arkow, P. (2007). [Animal maltreatment in the ecology of abused children: Compelling research and responses for prevention, assessment, and intervention](#). *Protecting Children*, 22(3-4), 66-79.

Montminy-Danna, M. (2007). Child welfare and animal cruelty: A survey of child welfare workers. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 7(3), 83-96.
DOI:10.1080/10926798.2007.10766833

Twenty-two percent of the child welfare workers surveyed indicated they have been assigned child maltreatment cases where there is a subsequent disclosure of animal cruelty. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to understand how the issue of animal cruelty is addressed within the child welfare system. At present there is no standard protocol for inquiring about and addressing the issue of animal cruelty. Some workers have expanded their assessment protocol to include questions about experiences with animal cruelty. Perpetrators include boys, girls, relatives, and caregivers. Challenges for the child welfare system on all system levels are addressed.

Onyskiw, J. E. (2007). The link between family violence and cruelty to family pets. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 7(3), 7-30. DOI:10.1080/10926798.2007.10766830

Family violence remains a prevalent social problem crossing racial, geographic, social, and economic boundaries (World Health Organization, 2002). Different forms of family violence often exist in the same households. In the 1980s, researchers observed a connection between acts of animal cruelty and family violence. Since then other researchers have corroborated their findings. Despite these articles appearing in the scholarly literature, there has been relatively little attention given to this issue in mainstream literature on family violence and little evidence that this information has been used to inform prevention or intervention efforts. This article summarizes the empirical evidence on the link between family violence and cruelty to family pets and discusses

the implications of these connections for professionals who work with women, children, families, or animals.

Randour, M. L. (2007). Integrating animals into the family violence paradigm: Implications for policy and professional standards. In M. T. Loring, R. Geffner, & J. Marsh (Eds.), *Animal abuse and family violence: Linkages, research and implications for professional practice* (pp. 97-116). Routledge. DOI:10.1080/10926798.2007.10766834

Noting the established link between animal abuse and family violence, this paper outlines the implications for policy and professional standards. Federal policies related to the collection of crime statistics by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as well as the collection by federal agencies of data on family violence, including domestic abuse and child abuse and neglect, are cited and proposals for including questions about animal cruelty into these federal databases are offered. Various types of state legislation, such as cross reporting and increased penalties for individuals who commit violence in the presence of minors, are described, and the implications for the link between animal abuse and family violence are discussed. Finally, the important area of professional standards-how the mental health profession sets and maintains standards for education and training-is reviewed and suggestions for the inclusion of animal cruelty as an important component for assessment and treatment are proposed.

Schaffner, J. E. (2006). [Linking domestic violence, child abuse, and animal cruelty](https://ssrn.com/abstract=1001255). *ABA-TIPS Animal Law Committee Newsletter, Fall 2006, GWU Legal Studies Research Paper No. 307*. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1001255>

For years social science has demonstrated a link between animal abuse and human violence but the legal system has been slow to recognize this link. This article discusses the link among domestic violence, child abuse and animal abuse in the home and how one jurisdiction, the District of Columbia, is addressing this complex and integrated cycle of abuse as family abuse. The legal proposals include mandatory cross-reporting of abuse between child services and animal protection services, recognizing pet abuse with the intent of injuring a human family member as grounds for an intra-family abuse protective order, providing companion animal protection in protective orders, and creating safe havens for all abused family members, including the pet.

Baldry, A. C. (2005). Animal abuse among preadolescents directly and indirectly victimized at school and at home. *Criminal Behavior and Mental Health*, 15(2), 97-110.
DOI:10.1002/cbm.42

Animal abuse by preadolescents has been associated with their later family violence and/or criminal behaviour; less is known about animal abuse and concurrent experience of being a victim at home and/or school, or of contemporaneous aggression to peers. To establish the prevalence of animal abuse among Italian preadolescents and its relationship with experience of abuse at home and school (direct and witnessed), and to peer abuse (bullying). An Italian community sample of 268 girls and 264 boys (aged 9–12) completed a self-reported questionnaire about victimization at home and school, animal abuse and bullying. Two in five preadolescents admitted abusing animals at least once in their life, and one in three bullying peers at school, with a higher prevalence among boys. Over three-quarters of all participants reported at least one type of victim experience: one-third had experienced inter-parental violence; over one-third had themselves been abused by one or both parents; two in five had been directly or indirectly victimized at school. Individual tests of association suggested gender differences. Multivariate regression analyses conducted separately for boys and girls showed that the independent variable accounted for more than 25% of the variance for the girls, but less than 10% for the boys. Experiences of abuse were the key independent variables for the girls; other expressions of aggression were the key variables for the boys. The results suggest that discovery of animal abuse should prompt further enquiries about other problems that a child may have. Detection of animal abuse by a child could offer an early opportunity for intervention to alleviate internalized damage or other aggressive behaviour.

Becker, F., & French, L. (2004). Making the links: Child abuse, animal cruelty and domestic violence. *Child Abuse Review*, 13(6), 399-414. DOI:10.1002/car.878

The paper sets out the research evidence on the correlation, or the ‘links’, between child abuse, animal abuse and domestic violence, explores the evidence base available to professionals working with animals or children and describes the process of establishing a national multidisciplinary group known as the Links Group. The paper goes on to consider the challenges in setting up a working group of this kind and its subsequent progress in terms of influencing policy and practice. Finally, the authors make a series of recommendations aimed at continuing the process of change within organizations charged with the welfare of animals, children and vulnerable families.

Bell, L. (2001). Abusing children—Abusing animals. *Journal of Social Work, 1*(2), 223-234.
DOI:10.1177/146801730100100207

Research suggests that if an individual is cruel to animals then he/she is more likely to be aggressive towards his/her partner and children; that children who are abused are more likely to be cruel to animals; and that children who are cruel to animals are more likely to be aggressive towards humans. Because of the potential seriousness of the link between cruelty to animals and a child's experiences and behaviour, a survey was undertaken in the UK to explore what services were available to children who were cruel to animals. This paper summarizes some of the existing research and describes the study of services. The findings show that a small number of children are already receiving services, but that most agencies do not routinely include cruelty to animals as part of their assessment. There is no therapy or counselling specifically focused on cruelty to animals, but agencies could provide a range of services appropriate to the needs of the child and/or the family. This article highlights the fact that a child's cruelty to animals may be an important symptom of negative experiences and/or predictor of future aggressive behaviour and that cruelty to animals should be included in assessments of vulnerable children.

Flynn, C. P. (2000). Why family professionals can no longer ignore violence toward animals. *Family Relations, 49*(1), 87-95. DOI:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2000.00087.x

The issue of violence to animals has been virtually ignored by family scholars and other family professionals. After looking at why animal abuse has not received attention, it is argued that those who study and work with families need to attend to animal abuse for seven reasons: (a) animal abuse is a serious antisocial behavior by children and adolescents; (b) it is a relatively common childhood occurrence; (c) it has potential negative developmental consequences; (d) violence toward animals is related to interpersonal violence; (e) it is connected to and may be a marker of family violence; (f) the well-being of companion animals is being neglected; and (g) it will help achieve a less violent society. The implications for research, policy, counseling and human services, and family life education are discussed.

Arluke, A., Levin, J., Luke, C., & Ascione, F. R. (1999). The relationship of animal abuse to violence and other forms of antisocial behavior. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 14*(9), 963-975. DOI:10.1177/088626099014009004

Results from this study challenge the assumption that animal abusers commonly “graduate” from violence against animals to violence against humans. The criminal records of 153 animal abusers and 153 control participants were tracked and compared. Animal abusers were more likely than control participants to be interpersonally violent, but they also were more likely to commit property offenses, drug offenses, and public disorder offenses. Thus, there was an association between animal abuse and a variety of antisocial behaviors, but not violence alone. Moreover, when the time order between official records of animal abuse and interpersonal violence was examined, animal abuse was no more likely to precede than follow violent offenses. Although these findings dispute the assumption that animal abuse inevitably leads to violence toward humans, they point to an association between animal abuse and a host of antisocial behaviors, including violence. Also discussed are the methodological problems of demonstrating sequential temporal relations between animal abuse and other antisocial behaviors.

Boat, B. W. (1999). [Abuse of children and abuse of animals: Using the links to inform child assessment and protection](#). In F. R. Ascione & P. Arkow (Eds.), *Child abuse, domestic violence, and animal abuse: Linking the circles of compassion for prevention and intervention* (pp. 83-100). Purdue University Press.

Flynn, C. P. (1999). Animal abuse in childhood and later support for interpersonal violence in families. *Society and Animals, 7*(2), 161-172. DOI:10.1163/156853099X00059

A survey of university students tested whether committing animal abuse during childhood was related to approval of interpersonal violence against children and women in families. Respondents who had abused an animal as children or adolescents were significantly more likely to support corporal punishment, even after controlling for frequency of childhood spanking, race, biblical literalism, and gender. Those who had perpetrated animal abuse were also more likely to approve of a husband slapping his wife. Engaging in childhood violence against less powerful beings—animals—may generalize to the acceptance of violence against less powerful members of families and society—women and children. This paper discusses the implications of this process.

Boat, B. W. (1995). The relationship between violence to children and violence to animals: An ignored link? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 10*(2), 229-235.
DOI:10.1177/0886260595010002008

The association between violence to children and violence to animals remains largely unacknowledged in the child abuse/neglect arena. Several reasons justifying further exploration of this link are discussed, along with suggestions for enhancing our awareness, knowledge, and services.

DeViney, E., Dickert, J., & Lockwood, R. (1983). [The care of pets within child abusing families.](#) *International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems, 4*(4), 321-329.

The treatment of animals was surveyed in 53 families (average age of adults 33.25 yrs; average age of children 8.2 yrs) in which child abuse had occurred. Patterns of pet ownership, attitudes toward pets, and quality of veterinary care did not differ greatly from comparable data obtained from the general public. However, abuse of pets by a family member had taken place in 60% of the families. The families in which animal abuse was indicated tended to have younger pets, lower levels of veterinary care, and more conflicts over care than nonabusive families. There were several parallels between the treatment of pets and the treatment of children within child-abusing families, suggesting that animal abuse may be a potential indicator of other family problems. Findings suggest that it may be helpful to review the role of pets in these families as part of the therapeutic process.