



NDA

National District Attorneys Association
99 Canal Center Plaza, Suite 510, Alexandria, Va 22314
703.549.9222 / 703.683.0356 fax
www.ndaa-apri.org

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS SUMMARY – TALKING POINTS (March 3, 2006)

To quote Alert Schweitzer, “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.” Domestic animals are the only friend some people may have. Pets protect and guard families. They provide independent living for many disabled people who otherwise would be institutionalized or totally dependent on their family or friends. Dogs tirelessly search disaster sites for signs of human life, they work with firefighters and police to save lives as well as search for drugs, bombs and other types of dangerous materials. They bring comfort and laughter to children, adults and the elderly in hospitals, hospices, and homes for the elderly. Studies prove that people who own pets are healthier, have lower blood pressure, and live longer than those who don’t. Pets ask little in return for their loyalty and love – just food, water and affection. These are reasons enough to investigate, arrest and prosecute those who abuse, torture and kill animals. However, the recognized link between those who abuse animals and go on to commit violent and heinous crimes against people further heightens the need to investigate and prosecute these crimes.

The following is a summary of the Animal Cruelty Talking Points.

1. **Prosecutors should not be perceived as tacitly ignoring cruelty to animals. They *MUST* eliminate the “No, we don’t have time to investigate reports of animal abuse – it’s just a dog or cat,” mentality.** The idea that police and prosecutors have more important crimes against people to worry about – than responding to reports of animal abuse – loses much credibility when such abuse is proven to be linked to serious, aberrant, and deadly criminal behavior. Also, it is interesting to note that when the national media learns about an act of animal abuse that takes place – for example in a small rural town – ***it becomes a national news story the next morning.*** The vast majority of people care about – and are emotionally touched and outraged when they see and hear about – ***cruel treatment of innocent animals.*** The truth is that, animal abuse stories when picked up by the major media will anger more people – and generate a higher level of disgust and public response -- than when they hear about a child abuse case. Therein lies a **vitaly important message for prosecutors, police, investigators, judges, and others within law enforcement – take animal cruelty reports seriously. Arrest and prosecute abusers – seeking the harshest sentence possible. Let your community know about what you are doing to hold animal abusers accountable for their actions.**

2. **The well-established link between animal cruelty and serial killers, violent criminals, young killers, domestic violence, spouse/partner, child, and elder abuse should prompt law enforcement officials to take reports of animal cruelty seriously.** Prosecutors should consider working with experts to develop educational programs for law enforcement professionals, and others within their communities. These programs should teach people about the overwhelming relationship between animal abuse and other violent offenses. It is important that these training programs specifically instruct those who respond to animal cruelty reports about how to evaluate the animal cruelty charges, as well as to recognize and evaluate signs of spouse/partner, child and elder abuse.

3. **When a child or teen is suspected of animal cruelty** – police **should immediately investigate the validity of these reports of abuse and, if validated, the youth should be prosecuted to the full extent allowable through your state’s animal cruelty laws.** According to Robert K. Ressler, who developed profiles of serial killers for the FBI, “Murderers ... very often start out by killing and torturing animals as kids.” If a child or teen is abusing animals they must be taught that this crime will not be tolerated. Prosecutors should consider working with experts to help develop instructional education programs for parents, teachers, coaches, peers and others about the seriousness of animal cruelty, and the signs they should look for in children and teens suspected of animal abuse.

4. **Prosecutors, police and other law enforcement officials who reside in states that have not yet changed their laws to include felony sentence provisions for certain types of domestic animal abuse—should endeavor to work with victim groups and members of their communities, to encourage their state legislature to strengthen animal cruelty laws to include such sentences.** The nine states that do not have felony sentencing for domestic animal abusers are: Alaska, Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi*, North Dakota**, South Dakota and Utah.

* Mississippi has felony provisions for abuse of livestock only.

** South Dakota has a felony bestiality law only.



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TALKING POINTS
ANIMAL CRUELTY AND ITS LINK TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CHILD
AND ELDER ABUSE
(March 3, 2006)

We need to recognize the **strong link between people who abuse animals and also commit acts of domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse and other violence.**

FACT: **There is an alarming association between people who torture, abuse and kill animals – and also torture, abuse and kill their spouses and/or partners, children and the elderly.** The abusers seek to control the animals they abuse and likewise want to control the people that they abuse.

- In one national and other statewide studies – **71 to 83% of women entering domestic violence shelters reported that their partners also abused or killed the family pet.**
- **Researchers found animal abuse in 88% of those families in which there was child abuse,** and numerous other studies indicate there is a high statistical link between animal abuse and child abuse.
- According to the Humane Society of the United States, **“a 1997 survey of 50 out the largest shelters for battered women in the United States found that 85% of women and 63% of children entering [these] shelters discussed incidents of pet abuse in the family.”**
- Some **women** will **not leave** their **abusive spouse and/or partner because they fear for the life of the companion animal they would have to leave behind.** Fortunately, by recognizing this problem, there are increasing numbers of organizations that will work with the victim of domestic violence to either shelter the pet or partner with another group that will provide care and protection to the family pet. This then enables victims of domestic violence to be more willing to leave their abusive environment – secure in the knowledge that their pet will be safe.
- **There** is also a **strong link between those who abuse elders,** generally their caretakers, **and abuse of the elder’s companion pet.** Caretakers frequently threaten to injure the elder’s pet in order to get something from them.
- The **threat of, or act of, animal abuse** is also **used by the abuser to keep their victims silent about the abuse taking place in their homes.** The threat of animal abuse is frequently enough to make a child, adult and elder victims keep quiet about any abuse taking place. The fear that their pet will be tortured or killed keeps them from seeking help – or reporting the abuse.

Therefore, **when a police officer and/or animal control official receives a report of animal abuse it should raise a red-flag.** **When the official responds they should** not only investigate the charge of animal abuse but also **know how to evaluate and check for signs of spouse/partner, child and elder abuse that may be taking place a well.** **If animal abuse or family violence is taking place – the abuser should be arrested and prosecuted.**



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TALKING POINTS
CRUELTY TO ANIMALS BY CHILDREN, SERIAL KILLERS
& OTHER VIOLENT CRIMINALS
(March 3, 2006)

Mahatma Gandhi said, “the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way it treats its animals.” The truth in this statement should prompt police, investigators and prosecutors to vigorously investigate and prosecute – to the fullest degree possible – those who abuse animals in America. While **cruelty to animals is a crime in all 50 states, and carries a felony sentence in 41 states plus the District of Columbia – sadly, it is a crime that is rarely investigated and prosecuted.** The well-worn excuse by many law enforcement officials – that “it’s just a dog,” and “we should be focusing on crimes against people” -- shows a **frightening lack of understanding of the ramifications of animal cruelty and its insidious affects on the animal’s “human family,” and other law abiding citizens. Animal cruelty can be linked to the vast majority of serial killers, many habitual violent offenders, and most children and teens who kill.**

FACT: If we pay attention to children and youth who perform acts of cruelty on animals and take immediate action to stop their behavior, future crimes can be prevented and lives may be saved. Here is a very short list, that’s part of a very long list, of examples of adult serial killers – and young killers -- who predicted their futures by torturing and killing animals in their early years. Their behavior seems to have been ignored. Had someone helped them by taking their animal abuse seriously, and sought the help of law enforcement and others who understand the seriousness of this behavior, who knows how many lives could have been saved?

- The school shootings that took place between 1997 and 2001 in: Pearl, MS; West Paducah, KY; Jonesboro, AK; Springfield, OR; Littleton, CO; Conyers, GA; and San Diego, CA **ALL** contain a **common element**. Prior to killing their classmates and teachers, **ALL of the boys involved in these school shootings had performed acts of animal cruelty such as: shooting dogs, setting cats on fire, blowing up cows and killing other small animals, prior to killing humans.**
- Albert DeSalvo, **The Boston Strangler killed 13 women**. When he was a boy he put cats and dogs into orange crates and shot arrows through the slats to kill them.
- Ted Bundy, **was a serial rapist and killer of at least 30 women**. As a youth he tortured and killed animals.
- Jeffrey Dahmer, **killed and cannibalized at least 17 people**. As a boy, he killed and impaled the heads of cats and dogs on sticks.
- Dennis Rader, **the BTK killer in Wichita, KS, killed at least 10 people**. He abused and killed animals for practice prior to killing people.

The **lesson is** that **many potential killers can be recognized in their youth. Boys who torture and kill animals** are not just “**boys being boys**” or “**going through a phase**.” **Animal abuse is a**

serious warning sign. As anthropologist Margaret Mead once noted, “One of the most dangerous things that can happen to a child is to kill or torture an animal and get away with it.” As shown above, the **results of doing little or nothing are chilling.**

Prosecutors should try to take the lead by helping to educate their peers, police, law enforcement officials, educators, parents, children, teens and others within their communities how to recognize signs of animal cruelty, along with the importance of taking these acts seriously. When acts of animal cruelty are known or suspected, they should be reported to the proper authorities, such as police, local animal control agencies, humane societies and animals shelters. In most instances, these officials have the authority to enforce state and local laws related to animal abuse. Reporting can be done anonymously. By early reporting suspicion of animal abuse by a youth, and providing appropriate punishment and treatment, the number of lives that could be saved is literally incalculable. **Unfortunately, far too often animal abuse reports are overlooked – with devastating results.**



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OTHER FORMS OF – AND FACTS ABOUT – ANIMAL CRUELTY, “TAKING POINTS”
(March 3, 2006)

There are many other forms of animal cruelty that prosecutors, police and others within law enforcement should aggressively pursue.

FACT: Dog fighting and cock-fighting is taking place across America. Dog fighting is banned in all 50 states and cock-fighting is banned in 48 states – (Louisiana and New Mexico legislatures have yet to ban these blood sports). However, these fights do not carry a felony charge in all states. *The* fights can be well-organized and take place in facilities equipped with a pit and space for spectators, or at neighborhood schoolyards, dead-end streets in the middle of town, or in rural area barns and other like places. It is important that prosecutors work with police to investigate and prosecute those who organize and participate in these blood sports. ***These fights not only promote and foster animal abuse, but create an environment that spawns other crimes such as drug trafficking and drug use, gun trafficking, money laundering and other types of both high and lower level criminal activity. The dangers associated with dog and cock fighting are notorious and frequently children are present at these events.*** Additionally, with cock-fighting, there is the added new fear of spreading “avian flu.” Prosecutors and police need to commit themselves to ending these cruel and illegal blood sports and the criminal activities associated with them.

FACT: The Internet is being used to show and promote animal cruelty that reaches to the level of criminal activity. For example, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, ***“The Federal Government’s “Crush Act”*** provides punishment ranging in severity from a fine to five years in prison, for the display of acts of cruelty and sexual abuse intended for commerce. ‘Crush’ videos generally depict women, in stiletto heels, stepping on small animals such as kittens and rodents.” Prosecutors should alert federal agents if they are aware of Internet activity that depicts cruelty to animals, that is criminal in nature, and is being created and disseminated in their jurisdictions.

FACT: Many Puppy Mills thrive because of they are owned and operated by people who practice animal abuse and torture. They keep bitches in cages all of their lives, and breed them from the onset of their first heat until they die from over-breeding. The dogs are rarely let out of their cages. They are kept in filthy conditions. They lack adequate food and water. And, they receive virtually no affection or veterinary attention. Puppies born at Puppy Mills are stuffed into unheated and non-air conditioned trucks. Many die before they reach their destination – Pet Shops. A large number of these puppies are sick and die in the Pet Shop or after they’ve been purchased by unsuspecting customers. ***Prosecutors and police who live and work in jurisdictions that have Puppy Mills should be alert to the welfare of the dogs being housed within them. If animal abuse and cruelty is occurring – the Puppy Mill should be shut down and the owners should arrested and prosecuted.*** If you take the local TV and print media with you – you’ll be a local, if not national, hero.

FACT: Animal hoarding, or people to take in large numbers of animals (from a few dozen to hundreds of animals), while believing that they are helping “stray” animals – ultimately end up keeping them in deplorable and squalid conditions – without adequate food, water and medical care. If there are children or elders in the home – the animal hoarding is a danger to them as well as the animals. In many instances, when the hoarding is discovered, a large number of the animals have been dead for long periods of time. Those animals that are alive usually need a great amount of medical care and many are beyond help and must be euthenized. ***Reports of animal hoarding should be investigated and prosecuted, whenever possible.***