Bad to the Bone:
THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF PET ABUSE, CHILD ABUSE, & INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

BY: ANDREW M CAMPBELL

“It wasn’t until I told him I was leaving that he began to target my children and cats.”
“He said if I left it would be a death sentence for my Beagle. My kids loved that dog so much and I knew he would kill it if I left... so I stayed for 5 more years.”

“The cats are completely different now that we have them. I remember how skittish they were in her home. It’s as if they were absorbing the fear and stress my daughter was experiencing.”

FAMILY
Pets in America

- **Prevalence**: Recent nationwide survey
  - 68% of U.S. homes have at least one pet
    - 80% in homes where domestic violence is known to occur
  - Dogs (53%)
  - Cats (40%)

Campbell IPV Study (2018)

- **Journal of Interpersonal Violence**
  - Intimate Partner Violence and Pet Abuse: Responding Law Enforcement Officers' Observations and Victim Reports From the Scene
  - [Thompson, Tesa L. Harris, Sarah E. Wahr](https://example.com/)
  - Published March 2, 2018 - Research Article

Family Violence Timeline?

1. Pet Abused
2. Pet Threatened
3. Pet Abused and Child Threatened
4. Child Physically Assaulted
5. Child Sexually Assaulted
6. Victim Threatened with Gun
7. Victim Seeks Shelter
8. Hit with lamp (Physical/Emotional)
9. Punched in face (Physical/Emotional)
10. Hit with TV remote (Physical/Emotional)
11. Pushed down stairs (Physical/Emotional)
12. Strangulation/Sexual Assault
13. Pet Killed
14. Head slammed into wall, sexual assault
15. 911 Call
16. Child Sexually Assaulted
17. Hit with car keys (Physical/Emotional)
18. Black Eye (Physical/Emotional)
19. Shoved on to couch (Physical/Emotional)
20. Verbal Assault (Emotional Abuse)
History of Animal Abuse?

- Rape
  - History of Forced Sex
    - IPV Suspect: 8%
    - IPV Suspect (History of Animal Abuse): 25%

- Strangulation
  - History of Strangulation Attempt
    - IPV Suspect: 47%
    - IPV Suspect (History of Animal Abuse): 76%

- Toxic Stress (Emotional Abuse)
  - Controls Daily Activity
    - IPV Suspect: 55%
Toxic Stress (Emotional Abuse)

- 35%
- 0%
- 10%
- 20%
- 30%
- 40%
- 50%
- 60%
- 70%
- 80%
- 90%
- 100%

IPV Suspect

Victim Thinks Suspect May Kill Them

70%

IPV Suspect (History of Animal Abuse)

History of Animal Abuse?

- Toxic Stress (Emotional Abuse)

IPV Suspect

Victim Thinks Suspect May Kill Them

Child-Pet Bond

- Protection
- Comfort
- Friendship
- Sense of Purpose
- Acceptance
- Stability
- Hope/"Light in the Darkness"
- Entertainment/Laughter

ALL critical components for emotional health and well-being.
McDonald et al. (2015)

- "My dad last week said that he was very upset with my mother and that he was going to burn the bird's wings with a lighter"

- "That day that my dad said he would burn my dog on the grill, I took him into my room and locked him in the closet with food and water until the next day"

- "My dog always sleeps with me in my room so that my dad doesn't hurt him"

The Beginning of the End?

"75% of the pet abuse that occurs in the home is seen by children."

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Daniel, Richard & streamline
Domestic Violence Animal Incidents

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An increasing risk of family violence during the Covid-19 pandemic: Strengthening community collaborations to save lives.

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Improving prevention of family violence during (and after) disaster: Lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Reporting of Domestic Violence

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Animal Abuse: Perpetration as an Indicator of Risk for Responders

- History of Mental Illness or Substance Abuse
  - IPV Suspect: 47%
  - IPV Suspect (History of Animal Abuse): 74%

Forensic Science International: Animals and Environments

- Behind the mask: Animal abuse perpetration as an indicator of risk for first responders to domestic violence

Risk for Responders
- History of Mental Illness or Substance Abuse
Risk for Responders

- History of Suicide Threats/Attempts

  - IPV Suspect
  - IPV Suspect (History of Animal Abuse)

- Access to Firearm

  - IPV Suspect
  - IPV Suspect (History of Animal Abuse)

- Used Weapon against Partner

  - IPV Suspect
  - IPV Suspect (History of Animal Abuse)
Arrest Rate (History of Pet Abuse)

Officer Observations on Scene

Suspects with History of Pet Abuse most commonly reported as:
- Calm
- Apologetic
- Crying

Community Partners
Animal Welfare and Human Welfare

- Child welfare in the U.S. birthed from animal welfare efforts
  - Henry Bergh – Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NY, 1866)
    - To provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States and to enforce the laws of each State to the utmost extent, to defend animals, to aid and protect them from acts of violence causing such harm.
  - Industrial Revolution/Civil War (Child Abuse Risk)
    - Alcoholism and Poverty
    - Rapid population growth (NYC)
  - Etta Wheeler – religious missionary, reached out to Bergh
  - Mary Ellen – Severe Abuse and Neglect
  - New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (1874)

https://www.aspca.org/about-us/history-of-the-aspca

“Pet dog presence significantly buffered the perceived stress response in comparison to children in the alone and parent present conditions.”
Violence and Pets

- Victims of IPV report experiencing significant concern for their pets after fleeing their home.
- Limit to progress?
- Reason to return?
- According to a recent survey, 90% of victims of IPV feel having a safe place to bring their pet would make their decision to leave easier.

Only 20% of Domestic Violence Shelters across the U.S. accept pets.

References
References


27. C.Nelson (2000). Graph from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University


