

# In a violent home; everyone is a victim

Resolve conference October 19, 2018

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# Introduction

- Who am I?
- Animal safe keeping coordinator as of March 1, 2017 funded by Community Initiatives Fund
- Second phase of the initiative



# Saskatchewan SPCA

- Introduction
- Established in 1928, the Saskatchewan SPCA is a registered charitable organization working to prevent animal cruelty.
- This is done through education and outreach
- Raise awareness of the human animal bond, promote the humane treatment of animals

# Overview

- The Link: Interpersonal Violence and Abuse and Animal Safekeeping
- STOPS to Violence, PATHS and Saskatchewan SPCA
- Idea grew out of another research project from Alberta SPCA-Cruelty Connection: The role of Animals in Decision Making by Domestic Violence Victims in Rural Alberta, released in 2012
- Surveyed both human and animal service providers about their experience with individuals leaving abusive relationships who had concern for animal care and safekeeping

# Findings

- 71% of individuals seeking refuge from domestic violence and entering a safe shelter reported that the perpetrator had abused a family pet.
- 96% of human service workers taking part in the study agreed that the care and safekeeping of animals can impact planning and decision making for individuals leaving abusive relationships.
- 78% of respondents from the human services sector indicated awareness of someone who did not leave an abusive relationship due to concern for the care and safekeeping of animals

# Human Animal Bond



# Human animal bond

- The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) defines the **Human-Animal Bond** as "a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and **animals** that is influenced by behaviors that are essential to the health and well-being of both."



# Human animal bond

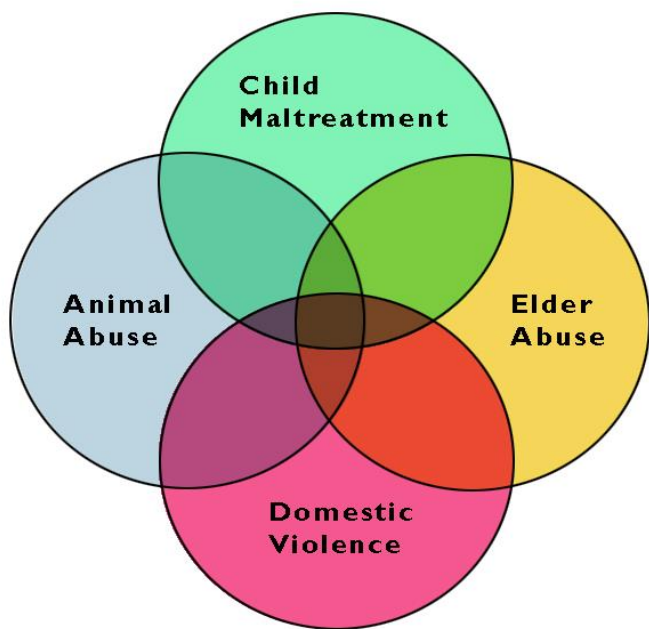
- Fifty seven of Canadian households own pets
- Over 80% percent of people view their pets as members of their family.
- Children are more likely to grow up in a home with a pet than a home with two parents.
- In Canada the pet industry is expected to reach to around \$8.3 billion a year by 2018.



# Human animal bond

- Unconditional love and acceptance
- Pets used as emotional support
- Petting an animal can reduce blood pressure, lowering stress
- Increase serotonin and dopamine levels-calming properties
- The healing touch of petting an animal or nuzzled in return establishes a soothing effect at a time of loneliness.

# “The link”



When acts of violence occur in one of these areas it is usually not an isolated incident, these acts are “linked”

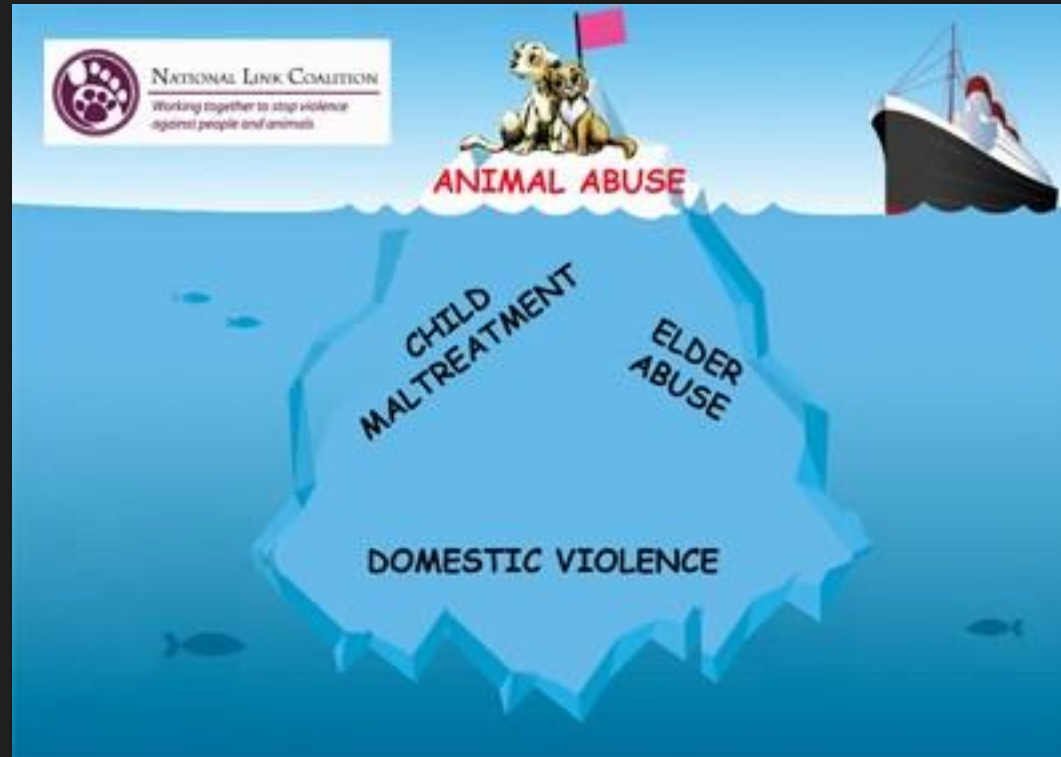
# “The Link”

- “When animals are abused, people are at risk. When people are abused, animals are at risk” (Phil Arkow, 2013). Coordinator of the National Link Coalition
- Where animal abuse or neglect has occurred, other forms of violence are often present.
- The mistreatment of animals is no longer seen as an isolated incident that can be ignored
- Animal abuse is both an indicator crime and/or predictor crime
- A history of pet abuse is one of the four most significant indicators as to who is at greater risk for becoming a batterer.

# Stats

- Incidence of domestic violence in Canada, 309 incidents per 100,000
- Saskatchewan rate of domestic violence is 666 per 100,000 double that of the national average. (Stats Can, 2015).
- 70 % of spousal violence is not reported to the police (Stats Can, 2013).
- 67% of Canadians know someone who has been physically or emotionally abused by their partner

# Tip of the iceberg



# Tip of the Iceberg

- “On New Year’s Day, two police officers in a major Canadian city responded to a call that an animal had been stabbed. The officers determined the animal urgently needed treatment and transported the puppy to a nearby veterinary hospital. Thanks to the expert training they received at the CFHS Canadian Violence Link Conference in December, they made the connection that a person in the home might be a victim of domestic violence. The officers investigated further and formed reasonable grounds that partner abuse had occurred. A suspect was subsequently charged with numerous Criminal Code offences – including two animal cruelty charges.

# The Violence Link in the United States

- Law enforcement agencies in the United States has recently undertaken a data tracking project that uses the violence link to their strategic advantage, collecting and analyzing data on incidents of animal abuse through national FBI data base. (National Incident-Based Reporting System-NIBRS)
- The goal is to prevent violence against animals from escalating to interpersonal violence.



# Barriers to leaving an abusive relationship

- Children
- Finances
- Family
- Safety concerns
- Religion
- Legal issues
- Shame/embarrassment
- Pets

# Animal abuse and domestic violence

## The "Power and Control Wheel" of Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence



**Isolation:** Refusing to allow her to take her pet to her vet. Prohibiting her from socializing her dog with other dogs.

**Threats:** To harm or kill her pet if she leaves or asserts any independence.

**Legal Abuse:** Custody battles over pets. Filing theft charges if she leaves with the pet.

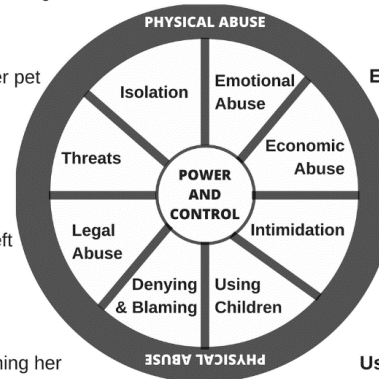
**Denying & Blaming:** Blaming her or the pet for his cruelty. Killing the pet and saying it didn't matter because the pet was old.

**Emotional Abuse:** Disappearing, giving away or killing pets to take away her source of unconditional love. Forced participation in animal sexual abuse.

**Economic Abuse:** Refusing to allow her to spend money on pet food or vet care.

**Intimidation:** Harming or killing pet: "Next time it'll be you..." Targeting pets of family/friends who aid her escape.

**Using Children:** Harming/killing children's pets to intimidate them. Blaming the "disappearance" of the family pet on her to create a wedge between her and the children.



# Animal abuse and Domestic Violence

- Physical abuse-kicking, hitting, punching
- Emotional abuse-disappearing, giving away or killing her source of unconditional love
- Economic abuse-refusing her money for vet bills or basic needs for the pet
- Threats-to harm or kill threat if she tries to leave
- Isolation-refusing her to take the pet to the vet, or socialize the dog with other dogs

# The “link” and Child Abuse



# “The Link” and Child Abuse

- Children witnessing animal cruelty was the largest predictor of future violence, eight times more likely to become a perpetrator.
- Individuals with the highest rates of victimization and perpetration of physical bullying exhibited the highest rates of involvement in multiple acts of animal abuse.

# “The Link” and Child Abuse

- Animal cruelty rates are higher for those children who had been physically or sexually abused.
- Damage children's sense of safety and confidence in the ability of adults to protect them from harm.
- Damage the development of empathy.
- Lead to imitation of abusive behaviors.

# “The link” and Child Abuse

## Inter-Generational Cycle of Violence





# Pets as a Barrier

- Batterers who also abuse pets are more dangerous, more controlling and use more forms of violence than batterers who do not. (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007)
- 68% of battered women reported violence to their animals; 75% occurred in the presence of children.
- Out of 337 domestic violence shelters in Canada with publicly accessible websites, only 155 (46%) mention pets and 70% did not mention any options for off-site pet services.
- Currently out of more than 450 transition houses only 8 accept pets.

# New Canadian research

- In research conducted across 16 Canadian shelters, researchers found that while threats to the safety of a household pet increased women's desire to leave, 56% delayed leaving due to concern about pet's safety
- 60% of the women in the study left their pet with their abuser
- Approximately 33% considered returning to her abuser because he had her pets.

# Current programs

- Pet Safekeeping Program (Calgary Humane Society)
- Safe Places Program (Regina Humane Society)
- Emergency Shelter Program (Saskatoon SPCA)
- North Battleford-informal program
- Ottawa Interval House- just recently began to house pets on site-will be the first women's shelter in Ottawa, and one of only eight nationwide (out of more than 450) to accept pets

# What is happening in our province?

- Working with New Hope Dog Rescue to utilize their pool of foster homes to provide safe homes to animals whose owners are fleeing domestic violence
- Foster homes will receive training on the “link” and parameters of animal safekeeping
- Can remain in the foster home for up to 90 days

# What is happening in our province?

- On September 13<sup>th</sup> presented at town hall meeting in Swift Current to roll out the animal safekeeping in that area.
- MOU's between Southwest Crisis Services and Swift Current SPCA to work together in providing safe homes for the animals
- Utilize foster homes-screening and training prior to fostering animals
- Can remain in the program for up to 90 days.

# What's next?

- More education for professionals and public on the “link”
- Begin recruiting and training foster homes in Swift Current
- Develop more animal safekeeping programs throughout the province

# Resources

- Saskatchewan SPCA 306-382-7722
- Saskatoon SPCA 306-374-7387
- Regina Humane society 306-543-6363
- Swift Current SPCA 306 773-1806
- Animal Protection Services 1-844-382-0002 (for livestock and companion animals where there is no other APO)



This is what it is about...



# Comments/questions

<http://sspca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2016-The-Link-Final.pdf>



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