



Regina
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Society

The Violence Link:



Animal Cruelty and Domestic Abuse

Reducing vulnerability through the Safe Places Program

Agenda

- The Regina Humane Society – Who we are and what we do
- The violence link and why animal abuse is important
- RHS Safe Places Program
- Questions

A hand is shown writing the word "AGENDA" in large, black, capital letters on a whiteboard. The hand is holding a black marker and is positioned at the bottom right of the word, with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

Regina Humane Society



The Regina Humane Society is a holistic animal community centre integrating animal services, community outreach and education programming which ensures the health, safety and well-being for Regina's people and animals.



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Animal Services



Each year the Society accepts over 4,200 animals providing:

- Lost and found services
- Assessment, vaccination, housing and care
- Veterinary Hospital treatment and rehabilitation
- Animal behavior training
- Adoption programs



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Safe and Healthy Pets/People

Animal Protection Officers ensure public/animal health and safety through service delivery in the following areas:

- Animal cruelty investigation, enforcement and prosecution
- Stray, abandoned, injured, diseased or dead animals
- Bites and attacks
- Animal Bylaw violation
- Police/Fire Service Requests



Building Humane Communities



RHS supports humane communities through engagement strategies and outreach programs including:

- Youth Humane Education
- Service Learning
- Vocational Training
- Violence Prevention
- Bite Safety
- Pet-Assisted Therapy
- Domestic Violence Pet Foster
- Spay/neuter/microchip/pet wellness services to at-risk communities



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Pets in Canada



- Approximately 8.8 million cats considered household pets in Canada in 2016, up from an estimated 7.0 million in 2014
- Approximately 7.6 million dogs considered household pets in Canada in 2016, up from 6.4 million in 2014.



Pets in Canada

- Approximately 37% of Canadian households include at least one cat.
- Approximately 41% of Canadian household include at least one dog.



The Role of Pets

- Pets play a vital role in our lives
- Provide companionship
- Keep us active
- Contribute to improved mental and physical well-being (reduce stress and blood pressure, improve immunity etc.)
- Teach responsibility and compassion
- The relationship we share with our pets contributes to our quality of life



The Connection

Animal Welfare = Human Welfare

- Violence against pets traditionally disregarded because society values pets less than people.
- Pets are viewed as integral part of family and, either directly or indirectly, are affected by domestic violence.



“The Violence Link”

- Developed by Phil Arkow and Frank Ascione.
- The cycle of violence also includes pets.
- Case workers often discover forms of family violence concurring, including:
 1. Animal Abuse
 2. Domestic Violence
 3. Child Abuse
 4. Elder Abuse



“The Violence Link”

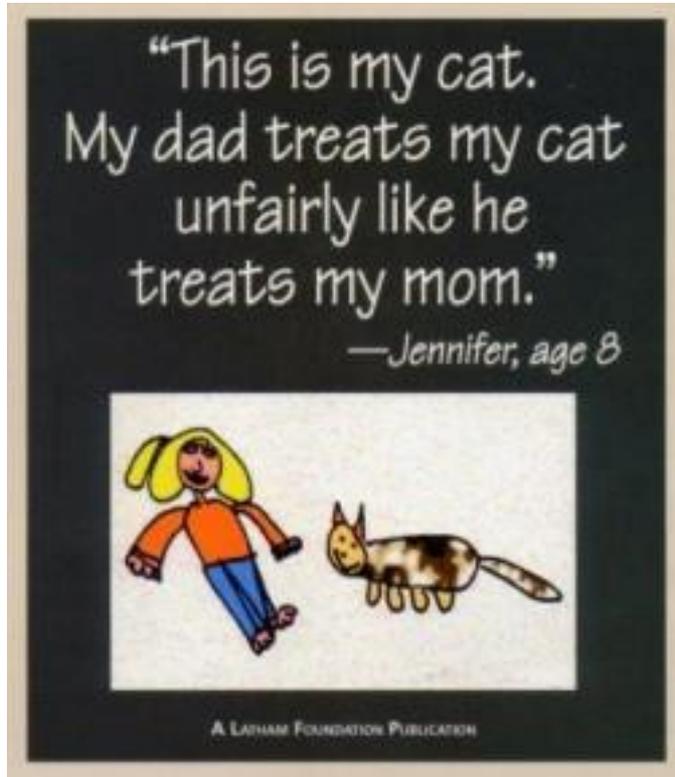
- Animal abuse is often the first sign of other family and community violence.
- Could be an early “red flag” warning sign of concurrent or future violent acts.



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Children, Domestic Violence & Animal Abuse



- Abusers may kill, harm or threaten animals to exert power and dominance.
- Shows victims what could happen to them.
- Animal abuse silences victims, and is a significant barrier preventing them from leaving violent relationships.



Children, Domestic Violence & Animal Abuse



When children are cruel to animals, it is not necessarily an exploratory stage of development.

It could be a result of:

- Early stages of conduct disorder
- Gang initiation
- Act of revenge
- Peer pressure
- Way for an abused child to exert control over his/her own victim and gain a sense of power



Children, Domestic Violence & Animal Abuse

- Exposure to animal cruelty desensitizes children to all forms of violence.
- Those exposed to domestic violence are three times more likely to be cruel to pets than children who have not been exposed.
- Children who are cruel to pets are five times more likely to become violent offenders themselves.



Elder Abuse

Senior citizens may be at risk of:



- Not being able to care for their pets adequately
- Neglecting themselves in order to care for their pets
- Being exploited by those who take advantage of their attachment to pets
- Keeping too many animals in inhumane hoarding conditions



Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Violence

- Gary Ridgway, the “Green River Killer”
- Growing up, witnessed violent arguments between his parents
- Mother was very abusive
- Enjoyed mutilating and killing small animals, including birds
- Killed the family cat by suffocating it in a small refrigerator
- Stabbed a 6-year-old boy when he was 16



Child Abuse and Animal Abuse



- David and Angela Lore
- Police responded to complaints of pets not being fed, dying in the house, and carcasses left on the side of the house.
- Police found four children, ages 7, 9, 14, and 16, living in filth in the home.
- They were never allowed to leave and had never attended school.



Animal and Human Welfare: a Collaborative Effort

Cross reporting can become one of the most relevant forms of intervention because:

- Animal abuse by children is one of the earliest warning signs of future violent behavior or conduct disorder.
- Animal abuse is often the first type of abuse to be seen in a home.
- Discovery of that could lead to discovery of child or spousal abuse as well.



An “Everywhere” Issue

- 60,341 admissions of women, representing a rate of 403 admissions per 100,000
- Saskatchewan had the highest rate of admissions among the provinces (717 admissions per 100,000 women) and has the highest rate of intimate partner violence, intimate partner homicide and sexual assault per capita.



What is Safe Places?

- Developed by the Regina Humane Society
- Addresses barriers abuse victims with pets face when escaping violence
- Ensures animal members of family have a safe, temporary place to go
- Works in partnership with Regina Police Service and social service agencies



What is Safe Places?

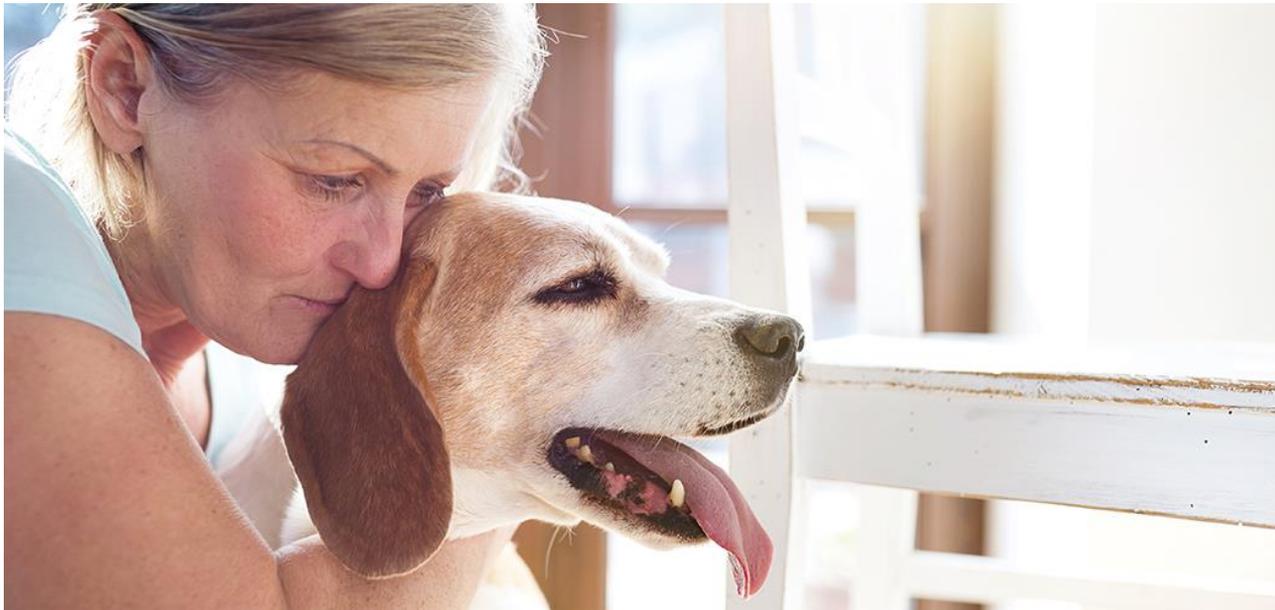


- Protects pets from further harm
- Gives domestic violence survivors a better chance at successfully leaving
- Keeps families together in times of crisis
- If domestic violence survivors are forced to leave their pets behind, the family unit is damaged



What is Safe Places?

RHS can help survivors leave abusive homes and enter domestic violence shelters without the fear that their beloved pet will be left behind in a potentially dangerous situation.



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What is Safe Places?

- Most abuse shelters do not have the ability to house pets
- Abuse victims may delay leaving their abusive partner to ensure their pets' safety
 - 44% of women stated that their partner had abused or killed one or more of their pets.
 - 42% stated that their partner had threatened to hurt or kill a family pet.
 - 16% confirmed that other family members had either abused or killed a family pet.
 - 43% stated that concern over their pets' welfare had prevented them from leaving the abusive situation earlier.



What is Safe Places?



- RHS receives no funding for operating costs of Safe Places Program.
- Must balance the need with existing resources and at times, must limit assistance.



Safe Places Criteria

- Client must have a pet
- Client must be entering a domestic violence shelter or advocacy program
- Advocate must confirm that the client is going to be staying at their facility and provide a referral.



Safe Places Criteria



- Duly Authorized Agent
- Admittance to the Safe Places Program is considered after all criteria have been met, provided there are available placements, and at the discretion of the RHS.



Safe Places Process

- Explain the program to the client or advocate.
- Have all required forms given to the client/client advocate and ensure they are filled out.
- Forms include the client contract and pet information sheets.



Safe Places Process

- Determine the availability of shelter space or foster care and verify the client's eligibility to participate in the program
- In situations which are emergent or occur after hours, the RHS often accepts the animal(s) into shelter care for up to 72 hours prior to program acceptance



A Safe Places Client May:

- Call to check in on their pet any time. (They will be given a direct contact number.)
- Receive emails with updates, upon request.
- Pick up their pet earlier than the contract date, with 24 hours notice.



A Safe Places Client May Not:

- Send someone in to pick up the pet without prior consent.
- Come and visit the pet. For two reasons:
 1. Confidentiality between client and foster parent prohibits a meeting;
 2. Visiting the pet in the shelter is detrimental to the pet.



Transportation

- If the client does not have transportation, RHS staff will assist. However, RHS personnel cannot remove animals from a property without consent of the homeowner(s)



Contracts

- Referral Form - This form must be filled out by a recognized service agency or professional.
- Pet Information Sheet - This form gathers all the information about the pet coming into the Safe Places program.
- Owner Agreement - This is the official contract and designates the Regina Humane Society as the duly authorized agent



Safe Places Staff

- Patient, and willing to discuss options and available resources
- Calm and compassionate
- Free from judgement
- Provide reassurance and support



What is a Foster Family?



- A nurturing home environment can provide animals with things a shelter can't.
- Foster families might even have a hand in saving an animal's life, or even their owner's life, by taking the family pet in until everyone can be in a safer environment.
- The RHS strives to place Safe Places pets in appropriate foster homes wherever possible.



Foster Families

- Screened by RHS
- Trained by RHS
- RHS provides all needed supplies
- RHS provides ongoing support during the foster period
- 100% confidential



Foster Families

"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard."



- It is difficult to say good bye to a foster animal.
- However, knowing you were an integral part of offering hope to a victim of domestic violence is very rewarding.



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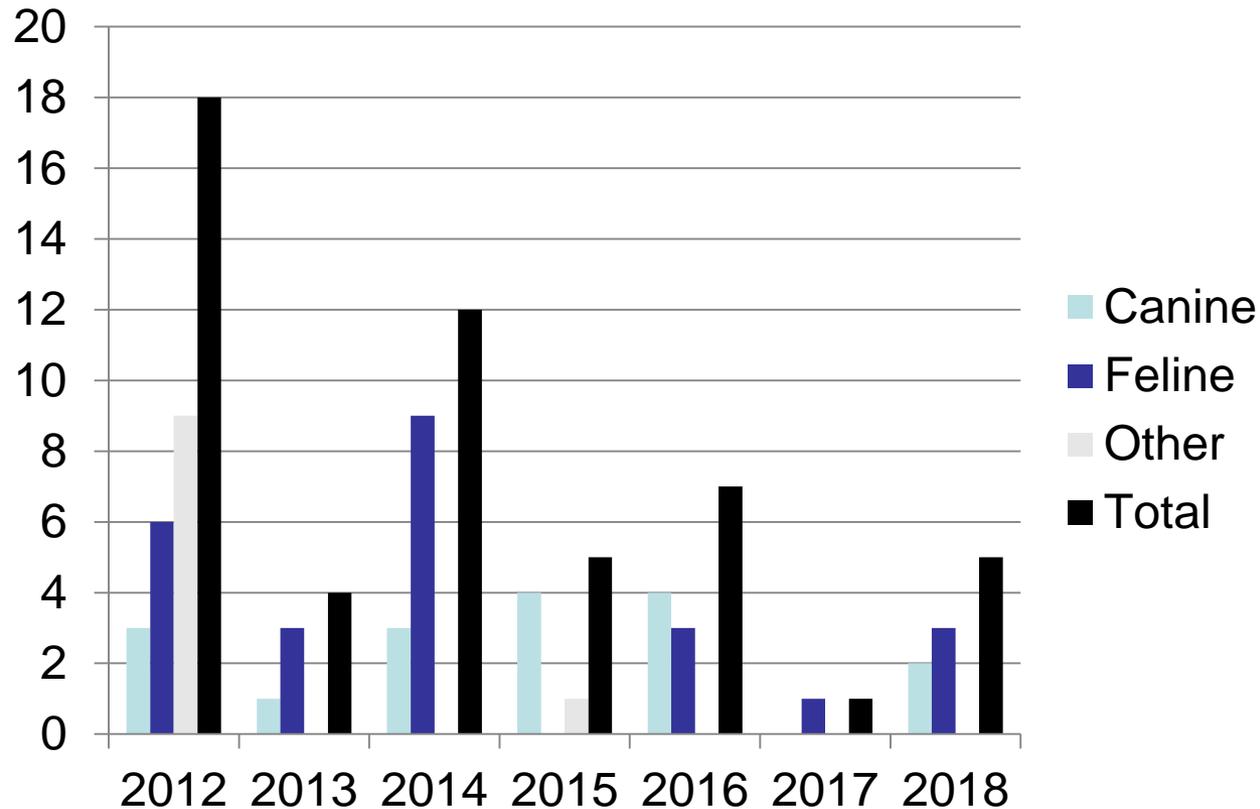
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Program Statistics

- The Safe Places Program places approximately 5-10 animals per year on average.
- The RHS has provided placements for birds, cats, dogs, gerbils etc.
- The average length of stay is 2 weeks.

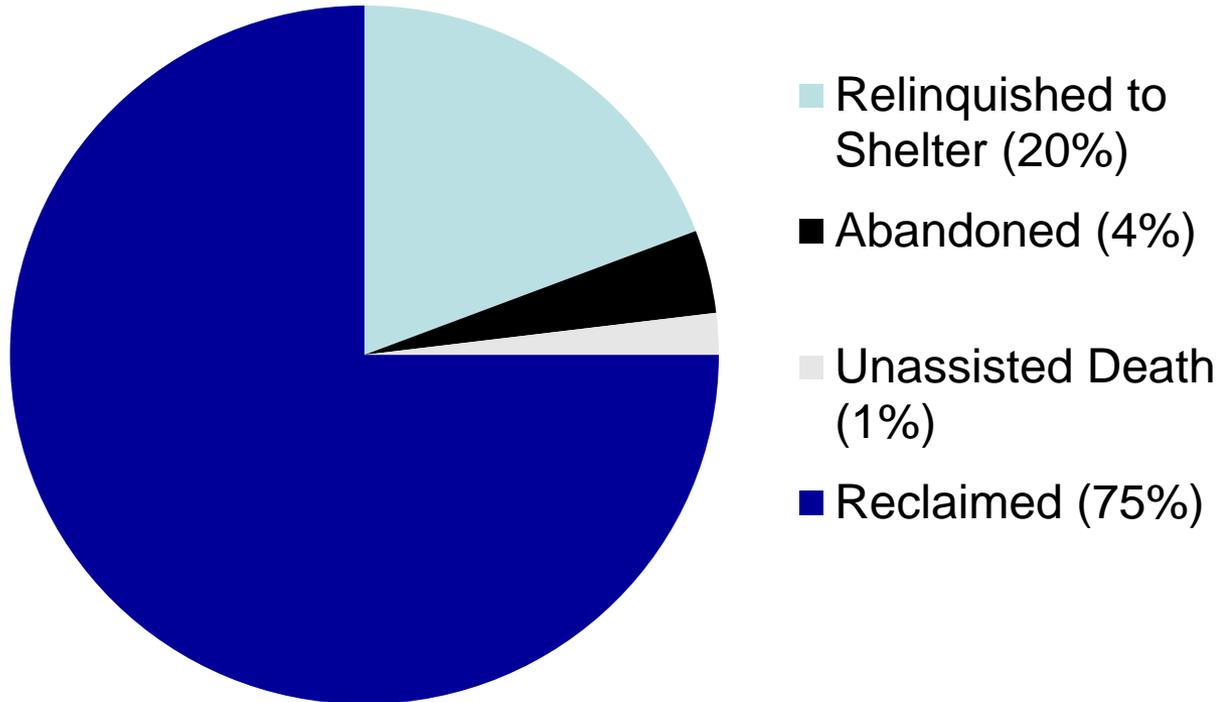


Yearly Safe Places Intakes



Safe Places Outcomes

2012 to Present



Why is Safe Places Important?



- Allows survivors to begin creating better lives for themselves and their families without permanently separating the family unit.
- Without this service, many people may choose to stay in abusive homes so as not to leave their pets behind in a potentially dangerous situations.



What Can Advocates Do?

- Ask those requesting help if they have pets
- Inform the client about the Safe Places Program
- Seek pet-friendly transitional housing
- Advocate for more pet-friendly shelter/housing options



What Can Everyone Do?

- Report animal abuse
- Become a foster parent
- Begin redefining animal abuse as family violence.
- Educate others about the cycle of violence.



Questions?



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