



Victims are often reluctant to talk about abuse that has been perpetrated on them, but may be more comfortable talking about abuse to their pets, which can then lead into talking about their own abuse. If children talk about having many pets that have died or gone missing, this could be a sign that their pets have been killed or abused and that further investigation is necessary.

Abusers often do not perceive animal abuse as a serious crime and will therefore admit to, and even brag about, animal abuse - even if they do not admit to family violence.

Determining factors of potential for violent crimes

Dr. Randall Lockwood, Senior Vice President of the ASPCA and an internationally-recognized expert on the animal cruelty/human violence connection, has identified a number of risk factors to evaluate if an animal abuser is at risk of committing violence against others in the future. Determining factors include:

- The number of victims, severity of injury, and repeated injuries individual victims.
 - Several animals killed or injured in the same instance or infliction of multiple wounds suggest a greater potential for uncontrolled violence.
- Victim vulnerability
 - Violence against particularly small, harmless or non-threatening animals indicates that perpetrators gain a sense of power and control through violence against those least like to retaliate.
- The act was premeditated; the act involved overcoming obstacles to initiate or complete the abuse; victim was bound or otherwise physically incapacitated.

- Long-term planning of violent acts suggests the possibility of psychopathic thought processes. Abuse that includes binding, securing with tape, confining to a box or otherwise rendering an animal incapable of escape is suggestive of a higher degree of intentional, premeditated violence.
- Intimacy of infliction of injury
 - Abuse that involves direct physical contact or restraint and obvious opportunity to witness the victim's response (e.g., beating, strangling, crushing) may be a more serious indicator than actions that are more remote (e.g., shooting, poisoning, hitting with a car).
- Absence of economic motive
 - Suggests that the act itself was sufficiently rewarding to the perpetrator.
- The animal victim was sexually assaulted or mutilated in genital areas or the perpetrator indicated sexual arousal as a consequence of the abuse
 - Many serial rapists and sexual homicide perpetrators report sexual arousal through violent dominance of animals, and so eroticisation of violence toward animals should be considered a warning sign for more generalized violence.
- Perpetrator documented the act of animal abuse through photos, video, or diary entries; perpetrator returned at least once to the scene of the abuse to relive the experience.
 - The documentation of cruelty indicates that acts of violence are a continuing source of pleasure for the perpetrator and may indicate the likelihood of re-enactment, repetition or escalation of violence to reach the same rewarding emotional state.
- Animal victim was posed or otherwise displayed
 - This indicates the use of violence to gain feelings of power and domination or to alarm or intimidate others and should be considered a serious warning sign of potential for escalated or repeated violence.