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Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
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Parliament House
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Dear Committee Members,

Submission on the National Animal Welfare Bill, 2005

As an academic psychologist, I make my submission on the basis of almost a decade of research on human relationships with non-human animals. I am also the founder and convenor of the Psychologists for Animal Welfare interest group of the Australian Psychological Society.

My submission provides a review of current knowledge regarding humans' relationships with animals and their implications for, both, human and animal well-being. In particular I would like to draw your attention to the documented relationship between human abuse of animals and their behaviour toward other human beings. Specifically, a "link" has consistently been shown to exist between humans' (child and adult) cruelty toward animals and violence toward humans in addition to other types of criminal behaviour (including drug-related offences). Given such a demonstrated relationship the leniency with which animal cruelty is treated both in the laws and by law enforcement bodies, including the judiciary, is a major cause for concern. Such leniency communicates the message that aggressive and violent behaviours directed toward other sentient, living beings are only minimally unacceptable. That is, only the most sinister and grotesque of behaviours will *sometimes* attract maximum penalties. Even then, maximum penalties are trivial considering what empirical evidence indicates about the implications and correlates of animal cruelty.

As a society, we have much to gain from appropriately acknowledging the damaging effects of tolerating animal cruelty behaviours, and indeed in legally endorsing some (e.g. hunting - shooting/killing for recreation). Research has consistently shown that deriving pleasure from killing or causing suffering to other sentient beings is predictive of low empathy levels. Relevant questions that need to be asked include; who are the individuals attracted hunting

activities? By legally endorsing hunting as a source of recreation, are we as a society unintentionally promoting “criminal” behaviours through the continued legal status of such activities? Similarly, by imposing negligible penalties, if any, to acts of animal abuse, are we neglecting an important opportunity for identification and rehabilitation of some of society’s most harmful and dangerous individuals? In the case of children or teenagers, are we denying them the opportunity for preventative intervention to stop the cycle of violence that they are at risk of perpetuating in their adult years? Equally, where is the logic or sense in a society criminalising only certain very specifically defined behaviours as constituting cruelty toward animals yet legalising others? Given that engaging in cruel or abusive behaviours toward animals (and that the witnessing of such behaviours by children in particular) is not only associated with engaging in those behaviours toward humans but also with desensitization to the suffering of others generally (including that of humans), it would seem that the only logical, and indeed responsible, position for a society to take would be one that eschews and appropriately legally acknowledges the seriousness of all behaviours deliberately intended to bring about the suffering and/or death of sentient beings.

Yours Sincerely,

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Animal Abuse, Cruelty, and Welfare

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Introduction

One of the major welfare issues for humans related to their treatment of non-human animals, is the increasingly recognised co-occurrence of abuse, violence, and criminality. As with research in other countries, Australian research has provided clear support for the documented links between animal abuse, family violence and criminal behaviour. There are clear implications that results from this link. These are discussed below.

Penalties imposed under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Acts

Penalties vary quite substantially. For example, in South Australia, the maximum penalty is \$10,000.00 (at the current Australian dollar exchange rate of .76, this would equal 7,600.00 US dollars) or imprisonment for one year. In NSW (POCTAA, 1979), the maximum penalty is \$11,000.00 or up to two years imprisonment, and in Western Australia, which has the most recently revised act, there is a higher maximum penalty of \$50,000.00 or up to five years imprisonment. Importantly, maximum penalties under the law are rarely enforced.

Sharman (2002) raised concern about the leniency with which anti-cruelty statutes are applied. In illustrating her position, Sharman gave examples of two particular cases of aggravated cruelty. The first occurred in October, 2001 when Luke Park appeared in a New South Wales court for “allegedly putting his sister’s kitten in a freezer for 40 minutes, attempting to set fire to its whiskers, spraying it with an aerosol can and throwing steak knives at it before stoning it to death (p. 333). The second case described by Sharman is that of Trevor Duffy who was charged with beating his dog to death with an iron bar. Sharman describes “Duffy allegedly attacked his dog, ‘Tess’, after he found her carrying a kitten in her mouth. Tess’ skull was cracked with the force of the initial blow from the iron bar and her eye was knocked out of its socket but the beating continued until she died from massive head injuries.” (p. 333). Although both Park and Duffy pleaded guilty to the charges, both men were released on good behaviour bonds. Even if the maximum possible penalty had been imposed under the NSW Act, as previously noted, this would only have amounted to \$11,000.00 Australian dollars or two years imprisonment.

Such lenient sentencing is not unusual. Between January, 1996 and December, 2000, prison terms were handed down to only 3% of offenders who committed acts of animal cruelty. Further, for as many as 80% of these offenders, the prison terms were for four months or less. A total of 75% of offenders were fined, most (98%) \$1,000.00 or less. A further 20% were dismissed and a further 2% received community service orders. Moreover, the differences in the harshness of sentencing did not adequately reflect the crime with the bulk of aggravated cruelty cases being handed down a fine of \$1,000.00 or less or a bond (Sharman, 2002).

Sharman concludes by arguing that *the maximum penalty must be imposed for the most serious cases if the anticruelty legislation is not to be rendered futile*. However, she also acknowledges that imprisonment is not the only way forward in ending animal cruelty. In particular, Sharman calls for the introduction of cross-reporting requirements in legislation. Acknowledging the documented links between human violence, criminal

behaviour, and animal abuse, Sharman argues that such cross-reporting would require such law enforcers as child protection agencies, fire fighters, police officers, animal cruelty inspectors as well as ambulance officers, to report cases of suspected animal cruelty to relevant authority bodies. Such a position is consistent with that taken by many others (e.g., Green & Gullone, 2005; Gullone, Johnson, & Volant, 2004; Lawrie, 2001).

Companion Animal Ownership in Australia.

As with other countries in the western world, the prevalence of pet or companion animal ownership in Australia is high. This is particularly true in relation to cats and dogs. A national survey involving 1,011 people aged 16 years and above (McHarg, Baldock, Headey, & Robinson, 1995), found that 68% of Australian households cared for one or more dogs, 45% of Australian households cared for one or more cats, and 25% owned birds. The survey also found that pets were part of the family during childhood for more than four out of five Australians.

In a study examining attitudes toward cat and dog ownership, Mackay (1992) concluded that the emerging pattern in the Australian community was one favouring increased pet ownership and a stronger commitment to the care of pets. According to Mackay, this trend can be explained by changes in lifestyle over the last 20 or so years including increased rates of divorce and family break-ups as well as a trend toward smaller households with 50% of Australian households now containing only one or two people. Also, Australia's population is ageing and the aged comprise a large portion of Australian adults living alone. With this increasing trend toward individuals rather than families becoming the most prevalent social unit, there is a growing sense of isolation and loneliness. Under such conditions, pet ownership is increasingly becoming recognised as a positive strategy to alleviate the pain of loneliness (Siegel, 1990).

Wirth (2000) has also argued that, given a predicted acceleration in the pace of change associated with modern living, the keeping of companion animals as an antidote to loneliness will undoubtedly become more popular in the 21st Century. Increased rates of pet ownership are likely to result in many people new to pet ownership acquiring pets. Given the increased prevalence of single adult households, generally longer working hours, and living space restrictions, what will the impact on animal welfare be?

At present, community attitudes and beliefs are that pet ownership is a right that individuals are entitled to exercise with very little accountability. However, according to Wirth (2000), in order to prevent possible increases in animal cruelty and suffering that are likely to coincide with increased rates of pet ownership in the future, animal welfare movements must demand restrictions on the breeding of animals so that only sufficient numbers and species are bred to meet community requirements. Wirth has also argued that control laws need to address all of the principles of responsible pet ownership and that rehoming programs should be given maximum priority for dealing with relinquished or abandoned pets to minimize euthanasia rates.

Australian Abuse Statistics

During the 2001 to 2002 periods, RSPCA received a total of 51,216 cruelty complaints of which 51,205 were investigated. A total of 925 charges were laid (1.81% of all complaints) and a total of 339 prosecutions were instigated (36.7% of charges laid) eventuating in 290 successful convictions (85.5% of prosecutions) (RSPCA, 2004). The greatest number of complaints related to dogs (49%), followed by livestock (15%), horses or donkeys (11%) and cats (10%). The remainder of complaints related to birds, wildlife, or animals not otherwise specified (RSPCA, 2004).

The number of recorded prosecutions compared to the number of charges laid is disappointingly low (36.7%). This low prosecution rate is largely due to RSPCA's reluctance to follow through with cases unless there is a very high degree of certainty that

the charges laid will be upheld. Given that the RSPCA is primarily funded as a charity organisation, the prudence shown in this regard is defensible. However, such remains a cause of serious concern, particularly given the increased evidence for a link between animal abuse, human violence and criminal behaviour as will be discussed in the following section.

Co-occurrence of Human Violence, Criminal Behaviour and Animal Abuse

Over the last decade professionals have become increasingly aware of a link between violence toward humans and animal cruelty (e.g., Ascione, 1998; Flynn, 2000a; 2000b). There is now sufficient evidence to conclude that the two types of violence are strongly associated. Given the comorbidity across different types of violence, it may be that identification of the presence of animal abuse and determination of its severity may play a role in making predictions about other types of violent behaviour. There have been several proposals put forth in an attempt to better explain and understand the link. In particular, an effort has been made to better understand the factors that underlie the abuse of animals.

Proposed Explanatory Factors for the Abuse of Animals

A significant amount of anecdotal and empirical data show that animals are killed or harmed in an effort to intimidate, frighten or control others including battered women or abused children (Arkow, 1996; Ascione, 2001a; Ascione & Arkow, 1999; Boat, 1995). As reported by battered women themselves, in an effort to assert their control or continue their campaign of terror, perpetrators have stabbed, shot, hanged, and otherwise mutilated the family pets. In some cases, the animals disappear or die mysteriously. It has also been proposed that a central common explanatory factor for animal abuse may be an underdeveloped or compromised level of empathy. As argued by Ascione (1999), abusing animals may represent the perpetrator's reduced capacity to empathise with a potential victim (human or animal).

Family Violence and Animal Abuse

A particular focus on research examining the co-occurrence of animal abuse and human directed violence has been in the area of family violence. Indeed, over the past decade there has been an increase in the number of studies that have demonstrated a co-occurrence of animal abuse and family violence. One of the earliest was a study conducted by Arkow (1994) in which 24% of 122 women seeking refuge from domestic violence and 11% of 1,175 women seeking restraining orders or support services reported observing animal cruelty by the perpetrator.

In 1997, Ascione and others (1997) published a study reporting the findings of a U.S. national survey of shelters. One shelter from nearly every U.S. state was selected for participation. All shelter staff were surveyed about the coexistence of animal abuse and domestic violence and children's cruelty toward animals. The results showed that as many as 85% of staff who were interviewed reported that they were aware of incidents of pet abuse. A total of 63% of the staff also reported hearing children talk about animal abuse. Eighty-three percent of workers answered 'yes' to the question "...have you observed the coexistence of domestic violence and pet abuse?"

In a subsequent study, 38 women who sought shelter for domestic violence were directly interviewed (Ascione, 1998). The author reported that 74% (68% owned more than one pet) owned a pet. Of these women, 71% reported that threats of harming, actual harming or killing of pets by the perpetrators had occurred. Also, approximately 30% of children exposed to violence were themselves reported to be abusive toward animals. Ascione also found that a significant proportion (18%) of women delayed seeking shelter for themselves and their children, for fear of their companion animal being harmed.

Quinlisk (1999) reported the findings of another survey conducted as part of the Domestic Violence Intervention Project. The study involved 72 female victims of domestic

violence of whom 58 had pets. Of these women, 68% reported violence directed toward their companion animals. In other cases, women reported experiencing threats to kill or to give away their pets. In 88% of cases the abuse was committed in their presence and in 76% of cases, children had been witness to the abuse. They found that 54% of child witnesses copied the behaviours they had observed. Of particular note is the fact that Quinlisk (1999) reported almost identical results for an additional survey involving 32 women.

In another similar investigation, Daniell (2001) reported the findings of a survey conducted by the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Ontario SPCA). More than 100 women's shelters throughout Ontario were contacted and a total of 21 agreed to participate. This resulted in 130 women being surveyed, 80 of whom owned pets at the time of entering the women's refuge and a further 31 had owned a pet some time in the past 12 months. The results were largely consistent with past studies. Of the 111 women owning pets, 44% stated that their partner had previously abused or killed one or more of their pets and 42% stated that their partner had threatened to hurt or kill one of their pets. Finally, as many as 43% of respondents indicated that concern for their pet's welfare had caused them not to leave their abusive situation sooner.

In a more recently reported investigation, Ascione et al. (2005) included a comparison community sample. The study involved a convenience sample of 101 women recruited through five different domestic violence programmes. The community sample included 120 women. All women currently owned pets or had owned pets in the past year. This study constitutes one of very few incorporating a comparison community sample of women. The findings indicated that shelter women were more likely to report that their partners had threatened to hurt or kill their pets (52.5%) and that their partners had actually hurt or killed their pet (54%). This compared with 12.5% and 5%, respectively in the community sample of women. The shelter women's reports included multiple incidents of killing or hurting pets. This contrasts with the reports of community sample for whom incidents were typically isolated and were more likely to occur within the context of disciplining the animal for bad behaviour (e.g., biting). Overall, 22.8% of the shelter women reported that concern for the welfare of their pet had kept them from seeking refuge sooner. This percentage was markedly higher for those women whose pets had already been hurt (34.3%). There was also a difference between women who delayed leaving and had children (19.5%) and those without children (33.3%).

Ascione et al. (2005) also assessed the experiences and behaviours of children and found that over 61.5% of the shelter women reported that their children had witnessed pet abuse. This contrasted with only 2.9% for the community sample. A total of 38 shelter group children were also directly interviewed. Nearly two-thirds of these children (61.5%) reported that they had witnessed pet abuse incidents as perpetrated by their father, stepfather, or women's boyfriend. As many as 51% of the children said that they had protected one of their pets to save it from being hurt.

Australian Research

In the only Australian investigation carried out to date to determine the extent of co-occurrence between animal abuse and human-directed violence, Gullone, Volant and Johnson (2004) surveyed 102 women recruited through family violence refuge or outreach services and a comparison community sample of 102 women from neighbourhood houses and community centres. The inclusion criterion for participating women was that they owned at least one pet during their current or most recent relationship. For the community sample, there was the additional criterion required that there be no current or past experience of family violence. The findings were highly comparable to those of past similar studies as reported above. Specifically, it was found that 46% of women in the family violence sample reported that their partner had threatened to hurt or kill their pet compared with 6% of women in the community sample. Similarly, a markedly larger percentage of family

violence group women (53%) reported that their partner had hurt or killed their pet compared to 0% of women in the community sample. Out of the 104 family violence cases, 17.3% reported that their pet(s) had been killed.

A total of 34 women in the family violence sample were living in a refuge, crisis accommodation or transitional housing (as opposed to outreach services). Of these 34 women, a total of 33% reported that they had delayed leaving: 3% reported that they delayed leaving for one week, 3% delayed leaving for between 3 and 4 weeks, 21% delayed leaving for 8 weeks, and a further 6% were unable to quantify their period of delayed leaving.

Also, consistent with past similar studies, Gullone et al. (2004) asked the women in the family violence sample about their children's experiences. The comparison sample percentages are given in parentheses. In 29% (1%) of cases, children were reported to witness threats of abuse and 29% (0%) were reported to witness actual abuse. A total of 19% (1%) of the women reported that their child had abused their pet. Further, a total of 5% (1%) of the children were reported to have threatened to hurt or kill their pet(s). The differences were all found to be statistically significant.

The outcomes of the research reviewed above leave little room for doubt that a relationship between human violence and animal cruelty exists. At the very least, *this research suggests that the detection of animal abuse should be of significant concern to professionals and researchers*. The research outcomes also suggest that when children are found to be abusing animals, there is a significant probability that they have witnessed and/or experienced abuse. Children's abuse of animals should be taken very seriously as it may well be a marker of other sinister crimes. Also of importance are research outcomes suggesting that animal abuse is predictive of other types of criminal behaviours.

Criminal Behaviour and Animal Abuse

Arluke, Levin, Luke, and Ascione (1999) conducted an investigation into the relationship between animal abuse and other forms of anti-social behaviour including violence. To overcome many of the limitations of past research (e.g. retrospective reports, potentially biased self-reports from incarcerated adults), they obtained their data from official records of criminality rather than through self-disclosure of criminals. They also included a comparison group. Specifically, they identified people who had been prosecuted for at least one form of animal cruelty from the records of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) between 1975 and 1986.

They defined cruelty as cases "where an animal has been intentionally harmed physically (e.g., beaten, stabbed, shot, hanged, drowned, stoned, burned, strangled, driven over, or thrown)." (p. 966). This resulted in a group of 153 participants of whom 146 were male. The sample had a mean age of 31 years, 58 percent of whom were aged younger than 21. The largest proportion of abused animals was dogs (69%) compared with cats (22%) and the remaining were birds, wildlife, horses or farm animals.

The control group was constituted from individuals matched to the abuse group on gender, socioeconomic status, age, and street of residence in the same year as the cruelty incident. The assumption for including this last variable was that people who reside in the same neighbourhood tend to form homogenous groups on variables such as socioeconomic status and related characteristics. The control group details were obtained from municipal voting lists. Computerised criminal records were used to track criminal cases from the state's criminal justice records system. This was done for both the control and abuse group. Criminal offences were classified into five groups as violent, property-related, drug-related, public disorder, and other.

The study results indicated that animal abusers were significantly more likely than control participants to be involved in some form of criminal behaviour, including violent offences. Specifically, 70% of those who abused animals also committed at least one other offence compared with 22% of the control group participants. The differences ranged from

11% for the control group and 44% for the abusive group on property-related crimes to 12% for the control group and 37% for the abusive group on public disorder related crimes. For violent crimes, the two groups differed substantially (7% and 37% for the control and abusive groups, respectively). Based on their findings, ***the authors concluded that just one single known act of animal abuse was significantly predictive of increased participation in other criminal offences when compared to a matched sample of adults who did not abuse animals.***

Providing strong support for Arluke et al.'s conclusion that animal abuse may provide an important marker for antisocial behaviours, are the findings of a recent investigation carried out by Gleyzer, Felthous, and Holzer (2002) in which 48 criminal defendants with a history of substantial animal cruelty were matched with a sample of defendants who did not have a history of animal cruelty in order to investigate whether a history of animal abuse was associated with a diagnosis of Anti-social Personality Disorder (APD) in adulthood. Support for the proposal was found with a statistically significant correlation between a history of cruelty to animals in childhood and a diagnosis of APD in adulthood. Specifically, a diagnosis of APD and also antisocial personality traits were significantly more frequent in the animal cruelty group.

The aforementioned research findings indicate that ***animal cruelty can constitute an important marker of antisocial or criminal behaviour.*** Therefore, it appears that the same underlying factors that predict or increase the likelihood an individual engaging in animal abuse, may also increase the likelihood that the same individual will engage in other types of criminal behaviour. Providing further support for this proposition are Australian Victoria Police data. These data are considered below.

Criminal Offences and Animal Abuse Offences: Victorian Data

Data were obtained from the Statistical Services Division of Victoria Police for all recorded offences in Victoria, Australia for the years 1994 to 2001 (inclusive). Out of four categories of offence (1. Offences against the person; 2. Offences against property; 3. Drug offences; 4. Other offences) for all alleged offenders, the data clearly showed that the largest proportion of offences was consistently that against property, ranging between 79.52% (number = 344,905) of total offences in 1998 and 80.85% (number = 354,785) in 1999. Over the eight year period, offences against property constituted 80.8% of the total 3,364,078 crimes committed in Victoria. Drug offences consistently constituted the smallest proportion and ranged between 2.84% (n = 12,838) in 2001 and 4.23% (n = 18,354) of total offences in 1998. Of note, offences against the person also constituted a relatively small proportion of the total number of crimes at an average of 7.71% of all crimes over the eight year period with the lowest percentage of 7.98 recorded in 2000 and the highest percentage of 8.01 recorded in 2001.

The above statistics were compared with the equivalent statistics, for alleged animal abuse offenders only. It was immediately apparent that, for animal abuse offenders, the average percentage of offences committed against the person was substantially higher compared to the percentage for all alleged offenders (25% compared to 8%). The category of offences against the person included such crimes as homicide, rape, assault, abduction/kidnap, and harassment. Importantly, these statistics are remarkably similar to those reported by Arluke et al., (1999) as described above.

The other marked difference found was that for offences against property which were found, on average, to be substantially lower for animal abuse offenders compared to all alleged offenders (48.5% compared to 80.8%). Offences against property included such crimes as robbery, arson, property damage, and theft from motor vehicle. Thus, there appears to be a greater likelihood that people alleged to have abused animals will engage in offences against the person, including violent crimes, when compared to all alleged offenders.

Examination of the data as broken down into age categories by sex for each of the classifications provided in revealed that for all alleged offenders, not only animal abuse offenders, and across crime categories, males were overrepresented, with an average percentage difference across age categories of 7.55% in favour of males. From years 26 to 35 onward, there was found to be a steady decrease in the overrepresentation of males compared to females so that by 66 years and over, the male to female ratio was almost 2 to 1. In general, for the Victorian population, the prevalence of alleged offences appears to be highest between the ages of 12 and 35 years for both males and females but particularly for males with a peak for both males and females between the ages of 18 and 25 years.

The particular importance of these statistics lies in their indication that there are clear sex differences in the frequency of criminal behaviours and that there are identifiable age trends. Thus, it appears that people most at risk of offending are male and aged between the ages of 12 and 35, but particularly between 18 and 25 years. Ideally, prevention and interventions efforts should focus on individuals that meet these criteria. Also of particular importance are the data suggesting that people who abuse animals are more likely than alleged offenders who do not abuse animals to engage in offences classified as being those against the person. That this category of offences includes violent crimes such as homicide and rape further supports the claim made by other researchers that animal abuse is an important marker of violent criminal behaviour (Arluke et al., 1999; Dadds, Turner, & McAloon, 2002; Felthous & Kellert, 1986; 1987).

Criminal Offences and Animal Abuse: New South Wales Data.

In 2002 the New South Wales Police Service Forensic Services Group commissioned research to investigate the links between animal cruelty and other criminal offences in an Australian context (Clarke, 2002). While the research did investigate links between animal cruelty and other criminal behaviours, it differed from previous studies because some aims were directly related to how effectively law enforcement agencies can use animal cruelty information in the investigation of crime.

More specifically, the research had three main aims: (i) to investigate whether the link reported between animal cruelty and other criminal behaviours by international researchers would be observed in an Australian context; (ii) to investigate whether incidents of animal cruelty investigated by bodies such as the Australian RSPCA and Australian Animal Welfare League were recorded on the NSW Police Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS); and (iii) to identify any benefits to investigations looking at major serial and violent crime that could result from the NSW police capturing and/or taking action on information relating to animal cruelty incidents.

Three studies were conducted. The first study reported five cases of animal cruelty that demonstrated different motivations underlying a variety of animal cruelty offences. Study two examined frequency and type of criminal behaviours performed by 200 persons convicted of animal cruelty in New South Wales. Participants in study two were randomly selected from a total of 947 cases recorded on the COPS database. Study three examined links between animal cruelty offences (both convictions for and self-reported animal cruelty) in a randomly selected sample of homicide and sexual homicide offenders.

On the basis of these studies, Clarke (2002) concluded that, overall, the results revealed support for the prediction that animal cruelty offenders would also have convictions for other types of criminal offences, though unexpected findings were observed for stalking and homicide convictions. Perhaps the most salient finding was that individuals with a history of animal cruelty were highly likely to be involved in other types of criminal behaviours including, but not limited to assault, domestic violence and stealing. The range of criminal behaviours performed by individuals with a history of animal cruelty was also quite large, averaging four different types of criminal offence. This finding is important because it suggests that not only do individuals with a record of animal cruelty perform violent

offences (e.g., sexual assault, domestic violence and assault), they also appear to perform non-violent offences such as drink driving, stealing, malicious damage, fraud, and drug offences. This generalisation across different types of criminal activity has not been observed in previous research. Importantly, animal abusers were highly unlikely to have a conviction for homicide. This was contradictory to both previous research findings and expectations. This result likely resulted from the fact that homicide offenders are rarely recorded by police for animal cruelty offences.

Implications of the Present Findings for the Investigation of Violent Crime

The NSW Police Animal Cruelty Research Project has a number of implications for the prevention and investigation of both serial and violent crime. Specifically, offender profiling of such offences as homicide, sexual assault, arson, stalking, and child abuse, to name but a few, would benefit a great deal from law enforcement agencies having more information about animal cruelty.

Offender profiling involves inferring personality characteristics from crime scene behaviours. ***Given the research findings that people who are cruel to animals are also more likely to be involved in a variety of serious and serial violent crimes, a database of animal cruelty offenders would be highly useful.*** Unfortunately the operational usefulness of this offender profile characteristic is reduced because it is often the case that very few or no animal cruelty convictions are recorded on the law enforcement database being used. Certainly the NSW Police Research Project suggests that animal cruelty convictions recorded on one law enforcement database do not represent the true rate of animal cruelty in one group of sexual homicide offenders. On the basis of the findings, Clarke (2002) argued that law enforcement databases need to capture all instances where people display cruelty to animals for use in subsequent investigation of crime.

As a result of the issues identified in the NSW Police Animal Cruelty Research Project, a number of recommendations were made as follows:

1. ***A national database be established to record all animal cruelty incidents.*** Contributors to this database should be veterinarians, the Department of Agriculture, RSPCA, Health Department, Child Welfare agencies, Department of Community Services (Government child welfare protection agency in NSW), National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Department of Education and other relevant agencies. This database would ensure that the maximum possible number of animal cruelty incidents would be recorded and therefore available to investigators.
2. ***Effective liaison systems be implemented.*** Such systems would allow better communication between various departments who deal with animal cruelty so that no information is lost between ‘bureaucratic cracks’.
3. ***The judiciary be informed about links between animal cruelty and other forms of criminal behaviour.*** This would ensure that any bail hearings, sentencing hearings, etc, adequately reflect the potential dangerousness of offenders.
4. ***All police officers be educated about the links between animal cruelty and other forms of criminal behaviour during their initial training.*** This recommendation was based on anecdotal evidence that some police officers see animal cruelty as a ‘minor’ crime that is more a matter for the RSPCA than the police.
5. ***A decision-process model be developed for police officers who may encounter different types of animal cruelty.*** Officers could use the decision process model to categorise type of animal cruelty, and then evaluate offender dangerousness level both for officer risk assessments (given high rate of resist arrest and assault on police officer performed by

animal cruelty offenders) as well as other potential crimes (domestic violence, firearms, drugs, sex assault, homicide). It is important that future research investigate whether different types of animal cruelty are associated with different types of crimes.

6. That joint teams be set up between Police, Departments of Health, Departments of Community Services and animal welfare organisations to evaluate the cognitions of children and adolescents who have been identified as animal cruelty offenders. This evaluation could involve detailed, structured interviews investigating such facets as children's escape mechanisms from reality (i.e., fantasy and play patterns), and symptomatology of such psychopathologies as conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder. A risk assessment matrix could identify children for whom early intervention may be valuable in possibly preventing subsequent violent or anti-social behaviour.

Summary and Conclusions

In recent years, several trends have become apparent. First, it is increasingly being recognised by proponents of animal welfare that animal cruelty is not given the recognition that it deserves by legislators or the judiciary. This has brought about a call for more serious sentencing of animal abuse crimes and for mandatory reporting of animal abuse by veterinarians. It appears however that there is still some way to go before mandatory reporting is accepted by Australian veterinarians. Certainly, incorporation into the Australian veterinary training curriculum of specific information regarding the diagnosis of cruelty and appropriate responses to its identification is essential if mandatory reporting is to be perceived as a viable requirement. There is also increasing evidence to support that a link exists between animal abuse and human violence and criminal behaviour. The Australian data demonstrating a high degree of co-occurrence between family violence and animal abuse are concordant with data from international studies. More importantly, however, we have reported data derived from police records in two Australian states (namely Victoria and New South Wales). These data demonstrate that animal abuse is predictive of other criminal behaviours including violent crimes. On the basis of the reported outcomes of the Australian research reviewed, we echo the calls made by others (e.g., Arkow, 2001; Arluke et al., 1999; Ascione, 2001b; Flynn, 2000a) for a coordinated response to identified animal cruelty. There also needs to be increased attention given to developing profiles of animal abusers across developmental stages. More thorough understanding of the role played by animal abuse within families is also needed. In line with the general emphasis, in recent times, on the promotion of mental health through primary prevention, developing a comprehensive knowledge of important screening variables is essential to any successful prevention effort.

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