

Spring 2009 Update

*The Linkage Project*TM



Kids and Critters

What Happens When Children See or Commit Animal Cruelty?



Children and Pets: Caring for and respecting our four-legged friends.

** The following article appeared in American Humane's "The National Humane Review" Winter 2008 edition and is used with permission from American Humane and the author, Phil Arkow.*

Kids and critters go together naturally: three-quarters of households with children over the age of 6 have pets. Pets are an important aspect of children's environment, and the experience becomes part of the makeup of their childhood memories.

Unfortunately, many pets are

threatened or harmed by children or controlling adults, which causes emotional damage that reverberates across those children's lifetimes. This is an area addressed by American Humane's program on The Link* between violence to people and violence to animals.

How serious is The Link for children?

It's very serious. Children's acts of animal abuse are early indicators of conduct disorder. Children who witness or perpetrate animal cruelty

continued on page 3

Animal Hoarding

Intervention and Multidisciplinary Response

There are always several cases of animal hoarding discovered in Maine each year. When the horrific conditions of people and animals are reported it seems unbelievable that this sort of situation could exist. Under the current economic conditions, it is likely that there will be more stressed caregivers with too many animals that will need intervention. In previous issues of the e-newsletter, various phases of hoarding have been discussed. In this issue the value of multidisciplinary response in assessing the type of hoarder is highlighted. When hoarding occurs both animals and people are at very serious risk. Appropriate intervention includes at least four aspects of services: animal welfare, city/town services such as codes enforcement and the fire department, law enforcement and social services to fully address the situation.

Also note that longer-term solutions may also include district attorneys and the court systems. In Maine the Animal Welfare Program will always contact Adult Protective Services and, if children are present, Child Protective

continued on page 2

For more information on
The Linkage ProjectTM contact:

Linda Jariz, Project Coordinator
ljariz@yaimaine.org
207-874-1175 ext 6042

Community Partnerships for Protecting Children (CPPC) and the Linkage Project



part of training for CPPC partners, and promote community resources that care for pet needs. This is the latest work of the Linkage Project and it focuses on the integration of the link within existing service systems, pilots and/or models of service delivery.

The overall goal is to have the link so well integrated that whenever a family team meeting is held and pets are part of that family, any pet concerns or needs will be addressed along with the needs of other family members. Since CPPC is a model, pilot program that will expand to the entire state at some point, it is imperative to include the link at the pilot sites in order to achieve integration before going statewide. 🐾

The Linkage Project is working with the CPPC effort to include pet questions as part of the intake and assessment process, include the link as

Pets and Policies for Residences



Youth Alternatives Ingraham (YI) has just drafted policies that guide the inclusion of staff pets into the everyday lives of clients within residential programs. The policy emphasizes that pets are for the benefit of clients and are valuable in their ability to help with the teaching of humane education and potential career opportunities, to facilitate discussion around the role of pets in the lives of residents, and to provide a sense of normalcy/cohesiveness in the group residence. Policy and guidelines are pending final approval. Please contact Linda Jariz for more information. 🐾

Hoarding *(Continued from page 1)*

Services to coordinate a response that address people and animals. There is also a group meeting to develop an appropriate mental health assessment protocol and intervention strategies'. Stay tuned for more on that effort.

The Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium indicates in a report published in 2006 that hoarders exist in primarily three categories: the overwhelmed caregivers, rescue hoarders and exploiter hoarders. Each type of hoarder has a set of characteristics and motivations that are necessary to consider when responding to the situation. For a copy of the full report please go to: www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding.

Matching Strategy to Type of Hoarder*

| Type of Hoarder | Persuasion with Verbal Agreement | Threat of Legal Action | Prosecution |
|-----------------|--|--|--|
| Exploiter | Unlikely | Unlikely to be intimidated | Probably essential |
| Rescuer | Unlikely, at least in the initial stages | Driving motivation is to continue with rescue efforts, so threat must offer a potential for scaled down operations | May be required when threats fail |
| Overwhelmed | Most likely to be receptive to help and downsizing | May be sufficient to reduce the likelihood of recidivism | Often unnecessary and may be counterproductive |

*Animal Hoarding: Structuring Interdisciplinary Responses to Help People, Animals and Communities at Risk, Edited by Patronek, Loar, Nathanson; 2006

Kids and Critters *(Continued from page 1)*

may themselves be victims of abuse. Acts of cruelty may indicate a child needs counseling, professional intervention or even prosecution.

What is the impact of animal abuse?

In addition to the animal's suffering, children's exposure to animal cruelty can lead to their desensitization to violence, inability to empathize with others, and using suffering to gain control and domination.

Like other forms of violence, it may reflect a child who feels powerless, unnoticed or under the control of others.

isolation. Like other forms of violence, it may reflect a child who feels powerless, unnoticed or under the control of others. The child may be trying to shock, intimidate, seek revenge, reject society's rules or redirect aggression aimed at them against creatures over whom they have power and control.

Will children who harm animals become violent to people?

Possibly, but not always. Innocent curiosity or exploration, accidents or acts of which the child did not understand the consequences may often be resolved by talking to the child. However, calculated cruelty is cause for serious concern. Animal cruelty should never be dismissed as boys will be boys" or as a natural phase of child development.

How do I know if my children are harming animals?

Talk with them. Know where they are going and what they are doing. Being attuned to your children's animal-related activities gives you good insight into what they are doing and feeling.

What should I do if a child discloses animal abuse?

A child may disclose animal cruelty to impress someone, or may want the abuse to stop. The child may be asking for help – perhaps the only way he or she knows how. Be supportive, demonstrate kindness and explain why such behavior is wrong.

Why do children harm animals?

There are many theories. Some researchers believe that childhood animal abuse is linked to later violence, while others consider it a common activity that most children outgrow. Animal abuse doesn't occur in

Try to discover what caused the incident. Your goal should be to have the child understand that animals have feelings too. In some cases, professional counseling or prosecution may be required.

Where can a child get professional help?

Some humane societies, child advocacy centers and animal-assisted therapy organizations have programs for abused and at-risk youth. The Animals and Society Institute (www.animalsandsociety.org) has a list of counselors trained to work with children who abuse animals.

How can I teach my children to respect animals?

Contact your school or humane society to learn about humane education opportunities. If your children's schools are not taking advantage of those opportunities, contact American Humane.

Children learn best from their families, so teach by example. Work with your children to instill a respect for all living things. Read books together about animals. Have your children help you feed the birds and care for your pets. Encourage your children to speak up for animals.

Not all children who harm animals are headed down a road of violence, but many are. Pets are "our children's children". The best way we can help our children is to help them become better "parents" to animals.

Children learn best from their families, so teach by example.

For more information on the link visit:

www.americanhumane.org/link

From an article by Phil Arkow in the American Humane Association's The National Humane Review, Winter 2008."

For more resources on teaching humane education, log onto: www.linkageproject.org and go to humane classroom education or the empathy connection. 🐾

National Town Meeting Monograph is



STRATEGIZING THE LINK *National Town Meeting*

National Town Meeting Logo

Available

Did you miss the National Town Meeting held in Portland, Maine last June? Are you interested in a monograph covering the proceedings? You may access this document either on-line at www.linkageproject.org or we will send one to you by mail just contact ljariz@YIMaine.org. 🐾

New From Frank Ascione

Elder Adult Abuse and Animal Cruelty

Frank Ascione, Ph.D. and Terry Peak, Ph.D. recently completed a project regarding elder adult abuse and animal cruelty. This includes an assessment protocol for all and a more in-depth follow-up protocol for individuals indicating that some abuse or threat of abuse has occurred. To download copies of this work, please go to: http://www.usu.edu/psychology/people/Frank_Ascione.php 🐾

County Update

The Linkage Project is currently working with interested organizations in Hancock County to provide training on various topics related to the link, including information on developing a foster home program for pets of domestic violence victims. This training will take place on April 23rd at 1:00 in Ellsworth. For more information or to register, please contact Linda Jariz (ljariz@YIMaine.org). The Linkage Project is available to work with organizations in each county to bring a training program on the link to your area. 🐾



For more information on the Linkage Project™ and other resources, including past issues of the newsletter and information on becoming trainers on the link, please log on to linkageproject.org.

For more information on the link between animal cruelty and human violence, log on to the Humane Society of the United States at

hsus.org and search the site for First Strike or the American Humane Association at www.americanhumane.org. Publications are available to download or order.

For information about teaching empathy and humane education, log on to www.nahee.org or the ASPCA at www.aspca.org and

search under humane education.

For more information on The Linkage Project™ contact:

Linda Jariz, Project Coordinator
ljariz@yimaine.org
207-874-1175 ext. 6042