

# FAMILY VIOLENCE + ANIMAL ABUSE

## FACTS ABOUT FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence is abuse that takes place in the family, in an intimate relationship, or in a situation of dependency or trust.

- Abusers use violence to establish power and control over those who are vulnerable because of their gender, age, ability, or other factors.
- The abuse can include: threats, emotional abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, destruction of property, injury to pets, physical assault, sexual assault and homicide.
- Different forms of abuse often go together, and the pattern of the abuse may be similar. People who abuse animals may also abuse a spouse, child, a senior, or a family member with a disability. In most abuse that happens in an intimate relationship, the woman is abused by her male partner or ex-partner.
- Animal abuse may be an early sign of an individual or a family in trouble.

## ANIMAL ABUSE

### SIGN OF A FAMILY IN TROUBLE

- People who abuse animals are more likely to abuse other family members. For example, they may abuse a wife, a child, or an elderly parent.
- Children who witness or experience abuse are more likely to abuse family members when they grow up.
- Children who are abused are more likely to abuse animals, both as children and as adults.
- Children who abuse animals are more likely to commit violent crimes as adults.
- Adults who commit serial or mass criminal violence have often used animals as "rehearsal" in their adolescence.



Become  
aware of  
the link

- Family violence tends to move across generations and across victims, unless there is effective intervention.

## HOW IT WORKS

- Abusers use violence to get or keep power and control over other members of the family.
- Abusers may threaten and/or harm the family's pets in order to control, frighten or punish family members.
- If the family members do not get help, the abuse becomes worse.

## WHAT IT MEANS

- In violent homes, when animals are abused, people are at risk.
- In violent homes, when people are abused, animals are at risk.

## RECOGNIZE THE WARNING SIGNS

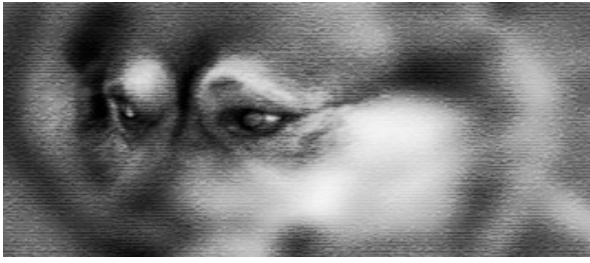
- Cruelty to animals may be a sign of other family violence, past, present and future. It is also a crime in itself.
- Children's intentional acts of cruelty towards animals should always be taken seriously. Cruelty is not a phase of normal childhood development. It may be a sign that the child needs help.

## WORKING TOGETHER TO STOP THE VIOLENCE

You can help create a compassionate society:

- Be alert to the signs of family violence and animal abuse.
- Be aware that concern for a pet may make it difficult for a woman to leave an abusive relationship.
- Be aware that local agencies can provide support. For example, the local transition house or victim service may be able to help victims of violence develop a safety plan that includes the safety of their pets.
- Talk with friends, family, and members of the community about the links between family violence and animal abuse.
- Show and encourage kindness and compassion for all living things. Be a positive role model. This sends an important message that caring counts.
- Teach and show children and adults that conflicts can be settled in non-violent ways.
- Be proactive in your community. You can advocate for or support
  - programs for young people that teach alternate behaviours to bullying, violence in dating relationships, and abuse of animals
    - violence prevention policies and practices in schools, families, and communities
    - visible and consistent law enforcement to deal with violent behaviour against victims of all types
      - improved animal welfare legislation
      - treatment programs for animal abusers
      - programs that demonstrate how caring can be learned

*The devaluation of animal life is a kind of training ground for devaluing all life.*  
- Gloria Steinem



## PRACTICAL STEPS WE CAN ALL TAKE

If you think any **child is being mistreated you have a legal duty to report it.** Abuse or neglect by a parent, guardian, caregiver, or person in a position of trust may result in injury or significant emotional or psychological harm to the child.

To report suspected abuse or neglect:

- Call the Helpline for Children: **310-1234** (toll-free, BC-wide, no area code needed). You do not have to identify yourself. Ask to speak to an intake child protection social worker.
- Do not hesitate to call because your suspicions are vague and you feel you need "more proof." Describe what you suspect. A Ministry worker can investigate. For more information, see the website of the Ministry of Children and Family Development: <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca>  
**Support anyone who may be abused** by a family member. Encourage the person to call VictimLINK to find services in their community:
- **Phone 1-800-563-0808** toll free from anywhere in BC 24 hours a day, 7 days a week The service is **free** and **confidential**. Trained staff are available to provide help and information to victims of family and sexual violence and all other crimes.
- If you have a hearing or speech disability, call TELUS Message Relay Centre at 711 (TTY users) or Voice activated line: 1-800-855-0511.

- Call the police (911) if there is an immediate emergency.

**Report animal abuse.** Report all instances of suspected animal abuse to the BC SPCA or police. If you need the phone number of the local SPCA, call toll free: **1-800-665-1868**. Local SPCA phone numbers are listed in the phone directory under Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

## LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE LINK

- To find out more about the links between animal abuse and family violence, contact the BC SPCA Education Division: **1-800-665-1868**. On the Internet, go to [www.sPCA.bc.ca](http://www.sPCA.bc.ca).
- For information about family violence and how to get help, contact **VictimLINK: 1-800-563-0808**. Ask about the supports available in your community to help victims and perpetrators of abuse. Also ask about information pamphlets you can distribute locally.

· If anyone is abusing you or your children, you have a right to get the help and support you need. Phone **VictimLink: 1-800-563-0808**

· If anyone is abusing your pet, call your local SPCA. If you need the number, call **1-800-665-1868**

· The website **[www.bcifv.org](http://www.bcifv.org)** carries current information on call lines.

This pamphlet is one in a series of three. The other two are for the animal care professionals and for victim service workers and justice system personnel. For copies of any of these materials, or to link with them online, go to:

### BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA)

Phone: 604-682-7271  
Toll free in BC: 1-800-665-1868  
Fax: 604-681-7022  
Web: [www.sPCA.bc.ca](http://www.sPCA.bc.ca)  
Email: [info@spca.bc.ca](mailto:info@spca.bc.ca)

### BC Veterinary Medical Association

Tel: 604-929-7090  
Toll free in BC: 1-800-463-5399  
Fax: 604-929-7095  
Web: [www.bcvma.org](http://www.bcvma.org)  
Email: [info@bcvma.org](mailto:info@bcvma.org)

### The BC Institute Against Family Violence

Phone: 604-669-7055  
Toll free in Canada: 1-877-755-7055  
Fax: 604-669-7054  
Web: [www.bcifv.org](http://www.bcifv.org)  
Email: [bcifv@bcifv.org](mailto:bcifv@bcifv.org)

### BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses

Phone: 604-669-6943  
Fax: 604-682-6962  
Web: [www.bcysth.ca](http://www.bcysth.ca)



This project is funded in part through the Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy