

Domestic violence victims and their children often have significant bonds with their pets, with the pet offering unconditional love and solace, and often serving as trusted confidants.

- Up to 70% of domestic violence victims have pets. Of those with pets, 48% to 71% report that their pets have been abused or killed.
- Abusive partners often use the bond between victims and their companion animals to control, manipulate, and isolate.
- Research indicates that 20% to 65% of domestic violence victims delay leaving a dangerous situation because they don't know where to place or how to protect their pets. Some survivors return because they fear for the animals' safety.

Among the families we have served, pets have shown to be very helpful to the families' wellbeing, healing and cohesion in the following ways:

Animal abuse is one of four significant predictors of who will likely use abusive behaviors and tactics in future intimate partner relationships.

- Research has found that men who abuse pets are more likely to abuse their female, intimate partners than men who do not abuse pets.
- Abusers threaten, injure, and at times kill pets in order to create an environment of fear within the home. They may force children in the home to witness or even participate in harming the pet.
- Especially troubling for children's exposure to pet/animal abuse, one study found that witnessing animal cruelty to be a significant predictor of future violence on the part of the witness.

Examples of ways in which domestic violence and animal welfare advocates can collaborate to prevent violence perpetration:

How and why are domestic violence and animal abuse related?

There are programs and policies that attempt to preserve the bond between domestic violence survivors and their pets by protecting them both.

- *Safe Havens for Pets* are services to help victims of domestic violence place their companion animals out of harm's way so that they may seek safety for themselves, such as foster care homes, use of kennel space with a local humane society or veterinarian, or in domestic violence shelters that house pets with survivors.
- Courts also play a role in supporting the bond between the domestic violence survivors and their companion animals. Many states (27) have laws that allow judges to include companion animals (in some states also livestock) in protection orders. Most state protection order statutes give courts discretion to permit additional orders such as including the pet in an order along with other possessions.

Our program provides the following information for domestic violence survivors who have companion animals:

Illustrative survivor story:

Program Information:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

How and why are domestic violence and animal abuse related?

References and Citations

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- Up to 70% of domestic violence victims have pets. Of those with pets, 48% to 71% report that their pets have been abused or killed.
Source: Ascione, F. R., Weber, C. V., Thompson, T. M., Heath, J., Maruyama, M., & Hayashi, K. (2007). Battered pets and domestic violence: Animal abuse reported by women experiencing intimate violence and by non-abused women. *Violence Against Women*, 13, 354-373.
- Abusive partners often use the bond between victims and their companion animals to control, manipulate, and isolate. Abusers threaten, injure, and at times kill pets in order to create an environment of fear within the home. They may force children in the home to witness or even participate in harming the pet.
Source: Flynn, C. P. (2000). Woman's best friend: Pet abuse and the role of companion animals in the lives of battered women. *Violence Against Women*, 6(2), 162-177.
- Research indicates that 20% to 65% of domestic violence victims delay leaving a dangerous situation because they don't know where to place or how to protect their pets. Some survivors return because they fear for the animals' safety.
Source: Carlise-Frank, P., Frank, J. M., & Nielsen, L. (2004). Selective battering of the family pet. *Anthrozoos*, 17(1), 26-41.

Animal abuse is one of four significant predictors of who is likely to use abusive behaviors and tactics in future, intimate partner relationships.

- Research has found that men who abuse pets are more likely to abuse their female, intimate partners than men who do not abuse pets.
Source: Walton-Moss, B. J., Manganello, J., Frye, V., & Campbell, J. (2005). Risk factors for intimate partner violence and associated injury among urban women. *Journal of Community Health*, 30(5), 377-389.
- Abusers threaten, injure, and at times kill pets in order to create an environment of fear within the home. They may force children in the home to witness or even participate in harming the pet.
Source: Flynn, C. P. (2000). Woman's best friend: Pet abuse and the role of companion animals in the lives of battered women. *Violence Against Women*, 6(2), 162-177.
- Especially troubling for children's exposure to pet/animal abuse, one study found that witnessing animal cruelty to be a significant predictor of future violence on the part of the witness.
Source: Currie, C. L. (2006). Animal cruelty by child exposed to domestic violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 30, 425-435.

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Source: [Safe Havens Mapping Project](#); Phillips, A. (2012). *Start-Up Manual*. Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T Program).
- Courts also play a role in supporting the bond between the domestic violence survivors and their companion animals. Many states (27) have laws that allow judges to include companion animals (in some states also livestock) in protection orders. Most state protection order statutes give courts discretion to permit additional orders such as including the pet in an order along with other possessions.
Source: [Animal Legal & Historical Center: Domestic Violence Related Statutes](#).