

May 2010

Animal cruelty has wide reaching and devastating consequences. Not only does it directly affect the harmed animals and their abusers, it impacts society by increasing the cost of living due to higher taxes used to remove dead animal's bodies from public places, care for animals in animal shelters, and euthanize animals that have not been adopted.

Animal abuse has been defined as “socially unacceptable behavior that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering, or distress to and/or the death of an animal” (Becker & French, 2004). The most common forms of animal abuse are intentional cruelty and neglect. According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) (2010), other forms of abuse include hoarding, puppy mills, factory farming and cockfighting.

Types of animal abuse cases investigated in 2003 included:

| Types of Animal Abuse | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Intentional (Acts of Commission) | % of Violent Cases | Intentional (Acts of Commission) | % of Violent Cases |
| Shooting | 17 | Poisoning | 4 |
| Animal Fighting | 17 | Stabbing | 3 |
| Torturing | 11 | Kicking | 3 |
| Beating | 11 | Dragging | 3 |
| Mutilation | 10 | Animal | 1 |
| Throwing | 7 | Hanging | 1 |
| Burning | 6 | Run Over with Vehicle | 1 |
| Neglect (Acts of omission) | % of Neglect Cases | | |
| Malnourished | 70 | | |
| Emaciated | 30 | | |

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), (n.d.)

The Humane Society of Utah (n.d.) cites a number of reasons for cruelty towards animals:

- Desire to control or retaliate against an animal
- Desire to retaliate against the animal's owner
- Fear or prejudice against a species or breed of animal
- Desire to express aggression by making an animal violent or aggressive
- Desire to enhance a person's own aggressiveness
- To shock others for amusement or for a person's own pleasure
- As displacement of hostility from a person to an animal
- Not caring or thinking about an animal's feelings or needs
- To fit in with a person's peer group
- For financial gain (animal fighting, breeding and/or puppy mill and factory farming)

The Abusers

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) (n.d.), in a report of 1,373 documented animal cruelty cases in 2003 involving at least 1,682 perpetrators, reported that the vast majority of intentional cruelty and animal fighting incidents were committed by men. Women had a higher percentage of involvement in animal hoarding cases. Adults represented the highest percentage of abusers. A summary of these results is as follows:

| Gender | All Cases | Intentional Cruelty | Animal Fighting | Neglect | Animal Hoarding |
|----------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|
| Males | 75% | 92% | 93% | 54% | 34% |
| Females | 25% | 8% | 7% | 46% | 66% |

(HSUS, n.d.)

| Age | Intentional Cruelty | Male | Female |
|----------------------------|---------------------|------|--------|
| Child (7-12) | 1% | 100% | 0% |
| Teen (13-19) | 22% | 95% | 5% |
| Adult (20 and over) | 77% | 91% | 9% |

(HSUS, n.d.)

Animal Cruelty and Violent Crime

Research demonstrates a link between animal abuse and delinquency, violence, and domestic abuse. One study (Henry, 2004) established that people who participated in or witnessed animal cruelty were more likely to be involved in a wide variety of delinquent behaviors throughout their lifespan. According to Pet-Abuse.com (2009a), many studies from the past 25 years in criminology, psychology, and sociology have shown that aggressive offenders, including serial killers, usually committed or had a history of committing animal abuse during their childhood and adolescent years. In fact, the American Psychiatric Association labels animal cruelty as one of the diagnostic criteria of conduct disorder (Pet-Abuse.com, 2009a).

In many cases, animal cruelty is also considered the first step towards committing child and/ or spousal abuse. While some perpetrators abuse animals without cause, others abuse as a way to gain cooperation from the pet’s owner (usually a woman or a child) to commit unsavory acts or to prevent the victims from seeking help. In an article titled, “The Whole Picture,” research indicated that of battered women, 57 percent of those with pets said their partners had harmed or killed the animals and one in four said that she stayed with the batterer because she feared leaving the pet behind (Pet-Abuse.com, 2009b).

In its 2003 *Report of Animal Cruelty Cases*, HSUS (n.d.) cited that approximately 15% of the reported intentional animal cruelty cases also involved some form of family violence as follows:

| Type of Family Violence | Gender of Perpetrator | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------|
| | Male | Female |
| Domestic Violence | 100% | 0% |
| Child Abuse | 60% | 40% |
| Elder Abuse | 67% | 33% |

(HSUS, n.d.)

In cases where there was a co-occurrence of animal cruelty and family violence as a whole, males had the highest percentage of violations; however, the gender gap was much smaller with the co-occurrence of animal cruelty and child abuse.

Witnessing animal cruelty within the family appears to increase the chance of generational animal cruelty. A recent scientific study of adolescents (Thompson & Gullone, 2006) reported that witnessing animal abuse by a friend, relative, or parent was correlated with increased levels of animal cruelty in the adolescent. Interestingly, when

witnessing strangers abusing animals, the adolescents actually reported fewer instances of animal cruelty.

Several shelters have developed programs in response to the growing concern of co-occurrence of domestic violence and animal cruelty. One such program is the Safe Havens for Animals™ Program, which allows victims of domestic violence to leave their animals in foster care while they are receiving or seeking medical care, counseling and help. Within the four counties (Kendall, Comal, Bexar and Bandera), Comal County is the only county with a center, the Crisis Center of Comal County (CCCC), that participates in the Safe Havens for Animals™ Program (HSUS, 2009b).

Treatment

According to Dodman (n.d.), animals abused within the first few weeks of life are rarely suitable as pets. For instance, cats that have not been exposed to people within seven weeks of life will not be fully accepting of people. When abused in the first few weeks of life, cats are more likely to be hostile toward humans for the rest of their lives. The same is true for dogs; however, the need for human interaction must occur by 12-14 weeks of age.

Treating or rehabilitating an abused animal requires time and patience. Like an abused human being, an abused animal will be wary, untrusting, and potentially aggressive in its attempt to protect itself. While most animals can be rehabilitated, there are some that cannot, either because of the age when they were first abused or because the abuse happened over such an extended period of time that the animals are not able to recover. It often takes up to a year to rehabilitate an abused pet.

Contributing Factors

Overpopulation is a major contributing factor of animal cruelty. For every person born each day in the United States, seven puppies or kittens are born. The following presents a picture of the problem:

- Cats can start breeding as early as six months old
- Two breeding cats with all of their offspring in six years will generate 420,000 cats
- Two breeding dogs with all their offspring in seven years will produce 67,000 dogs
- 70,000 puppies and kittens are born every day in the United States
- Comparatively, 10,000 humans are born every day in the United States

Spaying and neutering (surgical sterilization) helps control the animal population and benefits both pets and owners. The risk of numerous animal health problems is reduced, the tendency toward aggressive

behavior, including biting and scratching, is reduced, and pets are less likely to roam the neighborhood, run away, or get into fights. Neutered pets also tend to live longer (HSUS, 2009d).

Animal Care Facilities/Shelters

Approximately 6 to 8 million dogs and cats are sent to animal shelters each year. While 3 to 4 million are adopted annually, another 3 to 4 million are euthanized (HSUS, 2009c).

According to the National Council on Pet Population Study & Policy (NCPSP) (2005, p.7), the term “shelter” is a generic term used to describe a number of different types of housing for homeless companion animals. Among shelters, there remains a disparity in the concept of a “kill” or “no kill” shelter. The HSUS (2009a) points out that “no kill” shelters are generally limited-admission facilities. They are selective about the animals they take in either by breed, number, or condition. While they play a role in helping homeless companion animals find responsible homes, a need still exists for shelters whose doors are open to all homeless animals in every community. Municipal Animal Care and Control facilities generally fill this need. They are also responsible for enforcement of state and local animal health and safety codes and, in most cases, investigating reports of animal cruelty and abuse.

The NCPSP explains that “estimates on the number of dogs and cats who enter shelters (and how they are disposed of) in the United States vary greatly, and data collection and analysis are limited... There are no national data reporting requirements for animal care and control organizations or a centralized data collection source” (2005, p.6). Though many shelters make efforts to gather data and maintain statistics for their areas of interest, there are no “industry standard” definitions for terms such as adoptable, unadoptable, and treatable (NCPSP, 2005, p.7).

The *Asilomar Accords* is a set of guiding principles, standard definitions, and statistical formulae adopted by a group of animal welfare industry leaders in 2004 to “enable uniform and accurate collection, analysis and reporting of animal-sheltering data and statistics” (Asilomar Accords, 2004, p.5). Voluntary adoption of these proposed national industry standards will allow communities to more accurately judge their own accomplishments as well as provide objective comparisons between communities. Many communities around the nation are now using the *Asilomar Accords* definitions and tables to track their animal welfare efforts (Maddie’s Fund, 2006).

Animal Issues facing the San Antonio area

The following issues are common to all four Kronkosky Charitable Foundation counties:

- No central point of contact for reporting all animal cruelty and other statistics
- Fragmented and incomplete information
- Proliferating feral cat populations pose a health risk
- Overpopulation and limited resources resulting in animal euthanasia
- Rabies are a problem in Bandera and Kendall Counties
- Instances of dog bites are underreported
- Stray dogs pose both an animal bite and health risk

A challenge within each county is to improve coordination between government animal control offices, animal shelters, animal rescue groups, health care officials, and the public. Coordination will allow for more accurate reporting, identification of critical issues, and the opportunity to develop comprehensive plans for the future.

One such effort, lead by the Humane Society of San Antonio (HSSA), gathered data for all animal control and animal shelter efforts in Bexar County for the years 2007 and 2008 using the *Asilomar Accords* definitions and tables (HSSA, 2009). Two generally accepted indicators of community animal services are the Annual Live Release Rate and Animal Deaths per 1,000 Human Population (HP). Bexar County indicators are:

| Indicator | 2007 | 2008 |
|--------------------------|------|------|
| Annual Live Release Rate | 33% | 46% |
| Animal Deaths/1,000 HP | 22 | 15 |

(HSSA, 2009)

While there is no accepted national average for live release rates, Maddie’s Fund gathered data from 459 organizations around the country. The 2008 national average of animal deaths/1,000 HP was 10.2 and the Community Live Release Rates for the nation were reported as:

| Region | Rate |
|-----------|------|
| National | 50% |
| West | 61% |
| Midwest | 51% |
| Northeast | 70% |
| South | 36% |

(Maddie’s Fund, 2009)

These data indicate that Bexar County, while having significant room for improvement, has also made significant progress. In addition, of the 758 reports of rabies investigated in the Kronkosky charitable area in 2009, 26 cases tested positive but none were cats or dogs. However, 4 cats did test positive for

rabies in 2008 (Texas Department of State Health Services, 2009).

The San Antonio community has made considerable efforts over the past few years to improve animal welfare. In August 2006, the City of San Antonio adopted a new Animal Care Strategic Plan that calls for the community to achieve a “no kill” goal by 2012. The plan outlines five strategic priorities to achieve that goal:

1. Increase community awareness and owner responsibility
2. Reduce the number of strays/homeless animals
3. Promote best practices among all animal care & protection organizations
4. Implement effective public policy and ordinances
5. Secure needed human and financial resources
6. Foster the development of a consortium of partners

For “the purposes of this plan, the Advisory Board has established the preliminary definition of ‘no kill’ to mean that all healthy and/or treatable animals find a home and that the only animals euthanized are so sick or behaviorally impaired as to not be adoptable” (Animal Care Services Advisory Board, 2006, p.2).

As a major step towards accomplishing this goal, San Antonio leaders approved changes to the animal care ordinance in December 2007 including:

- Use of microchips in lieu of licenses for identification
- Permits required for unaltered pets
- Permits required for litters of puppies or kittens
- Trap-Neuter-Return policy for feral cat colonies
- Stiffer penalties for animal cruelty convictions
- Limits on number of pets per household with permits available for excess animals
- New Vicious Dog category
- Increased minimum number of days an impounded animal shall be held prior to adoption or euthanasia (City of San Antonio Animal Care Services (ACS), 2007)

Resources for Animals in the San Antonio area

As stated earlier, increasing awareness and making spaying and neutering services available are essential for reducing the number of homeless and unwanted puppies and kittens born each year. Two low-cost spay/neuter facilities in San Antonio are The Animal Resource Center (ARC), now known as SpaySA, and the Spay/Neuter Assistance Program (SNAP).

SpaySA was formed in 1997 by a coalition comprised of the City of San Antonio Animal Care Services, the Animal Defense League, the Humane Society of San Antonio, and the Veterinary Medical Association of Bexar County. In 2009, SpaySA

reported performing 14,245 spay and neuter surgeries of which 7,701 were free of charge for San Antonio residents. The total surgeries represented a 9% increase over the previous year.

SNAP, open to both income-qualified families and the general public, provides a mobile clinic for the San Antonio area as well as the outlying counties. Services include spaying or neutering surgeries, rabies vaccination, reduced cost vaccination, flea prevention, heartworm testing, and heartworm prevention. In 2009, SNAP sterilized 3,087 animals in Bexar County and provided wellness services to 495 clients. Spay/neuter services were also provided to Bandera (82 animals) and Comal (115 animals), counties.

The San Antonio Animal Care Services moved to a new, larger, and better equipped facility in January 2008. It is expected that no-cost spay and neuter surgeries will soon be offered to the public (Sanborn, 2008).

There are approximately 20 animal shelters in Bexar, Bandera, Kendall, and Comal Counties (not including breed specific rescue organizations). No-Kill, limited intake shelters include (this is not a comprehensive listing):

- Animal Defense League
- Animal Friends Forever
- Animal Welfare Society of Bandera
- Canyon Lake Animal Shelter Society
- Responsible Pet Owners Alliance
- Wags to Whiskers

Many private shelters also offer various programs and services to the public. For example, the Animal Defense League provides the following services:

- Adopts homeless dogs and cats
- Full-time staff veterinarian
- Low cost spay/neuter program for pets of low-income families
- Only area ambulance for picking up injured animals
- Humane education programs in schools and the community
- Pet-a-Pup pet therapy program for nursing homes
- Low-cost boarding

Other area shelters are considered “Low-Kill” in that “if the animal becomes stressed, aggressive, or sick at the shelter, or if space becomes a problem, euthanasia may be considered” (HSUS, 2009a).

The Humane Society of San Antonio falls into the low-kill category and offers additional services including:

- Finding temporary shelter and homes for abandoned or unwanted animals
- Preventing cruelty to animals
- Promoting the spaying and neutering of dogs and cats
- Educating the community on responsible animal care

SNIPSA, Inc. (Spay-Neuter-Inject-Protect) is a rescue organization whose purpose is to rescue animals from “kill” shelters (predominantly from ACS), provide any rehabilitation and/or medical treatment necessary, and find adoptive homes. Animals are placed in volunteer foster homes until permanent placement is found (SNIPSA, 2007).

With continued humane education programs, volunteer efforts, and other forms of community support, it is highly likely that:

- Fewer animals will be put to death each year
- Fewer animals will have an untimely death due to an accident or health issue
- Fewer people will be injured by animals
- More animals will find homes through adoption
- Costs in running animal control shelters will drop
- A greater number of lost pets will be reunited with owners
- Many pets and animals will experience a better quality of life

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