

Animal abuse: an indicator of violence towards vulnerable people

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There are at least 32 studies carried out worldwide on the link between animal abuse and human violence.

A high percentage of serial killers and school shooters have a history of abusing animals, and children abusing animals is now recognised as one of the strongest indicators of conduct disorder.

A US study revealed that up to 76% of incidents of animal abuse occur in front of children, which can cause violent behaviour in later life. 73% of the prison inmates in an Italian study witnessed animal abuse and/or killing in their childhood.

One US study found that 70% of animal abusers had criminal records including crimes involving violence, property, drugs or disorderly behaviour. That same study revealed that in search warrants executed for animal abuse or dog fighting, 35% resulted in the seizure of drugs or guns. Imprisoned convicts in the US for sexual homicide and child abuse showed that 41% has mistreated animals in the same way they had children.

In a Canadian study, 70% of people charged with animal cruelty also had other reported incidents of violent behaviour, including homicide.

An Australian study revealed 61.5% of convicted animal abusers had also committed an assault against humans, 17% had committed sexual abuse, and all sexual homicide offenders were reported to have been cruel to animals.

In South Africa, 63% of incarcerated aggressive criminals had deliberately inflicted harm on an animal in the same way they had a child.

Ukrainian Police have recognised the importance of tackling animal abuse, and forces from thirteen cities are taking part in specialised development training on how to fight animal crime.

In Ukraine, allegations of animals being poisoned, hung, beaten, shot and dropped from multi-storey buildings flood social media sites. Dog fighting is also reported to be a thriving money-making industry. In a particularly serious case in Ukraine, three teenagers who abused animals by poisoning and hanging them, moved on to killing twenty-one people in a similar fashion to how they had killed animals.

The Police Training Programme mirrors that being applied in other western countries, and is being delivered across Ukraine by two British Animal Welfare NGOs, Naturewatch Foundation and Hidden-in-Sight. Both are committed to bringing professional training to Ukraine, to help animal welfare groups, police, prosecutors and the municipality work together to fight animal cruelty.

The next police training course is taking place in Mykolaiv on 26th September 2018. Representatives from the Mykolaiv Municipality will also attend alongside the Mykolaiv Police. On 27th September, local animal protection NGOs will receive training on what constitutes evidence and how to work with police to fight animal abuse.

Mark Randell, a retired senior Police Officer and director of Hidden-in-Sight, says: "Globally, there are numerous examples of animal cruelty leading to crimes against people. I spoke recently to one law enforcement professional who told me of man who broke the leg of his partner's cat. It was not acknowledged as a red flag crime and the next day the man stabbed his wife to death. Dealing with animal cruelty professionally can have a positive impact in preventing other crimes too and it is therefore very exciting that Patrol Police of Ukraine have agreed to undertake this innovative community policing training."

Naturewatch Foundation Campaign Director, Jennie Rudd, says: "We've been running projects to protect animals from abuse and suffering for over twenty-five years, and we're delighted that Ukrainian Police are showing such enthusiasm and dedication to fighting animal crime. Already we're hearing from NGOs that trust is beginning to grow between them and the police, which is fundamental to achieving results."

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