

Substantial Evidence Linking Animal Abuse to Other Forms of Violence

There is substantial evidence linking animal abuse to other forms of violence, including domestic abuse, child maltreatment, and even homicide. This connection, often referred to as "The Link," has been recognized by law enforcement and legal professionals in Florida and across the United States. Sources:

<https://aldf.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Animal-Legal-Defense-Fund-Link-Factsheet.pdf>

<https://www.sheriffs.org/animal-cruelty-and-crimes-against-humans>

Key Findings on the Correlation

- **Domestic Violence:** Studies have shown that women residing in domestic violence shelters are nearly 11 times more likely to report that their partner had hurt or killed pets compared to women who have not experienced intimate violence (see attachment please).
- **Child Abuse:** Research indicates that children exposed to domestic violence are three times more likely to be cruel to animals.
- **Predictor of Future Violence:** Animal cruelty is a better predictor of sexual abuse compared to a history of homicide, arson, or weapon convictions (see attachment from FBI website please).

Florida's Legal Response

Recognizing the significance of this correlation, Florida has enacted legislation to protect both human and animal victims:

Inclusion in Protection Orders: As of July 1, 2020, Florida law allows for family pets to be included in domestic violence protection orders, ensuring that victims can seek safety without leaving their pets behind.

<https://www.floridabar.org/the-florida-bar-journal/americas-unifying-banner-erasing-animal-cruelty/>

Aggravated Animal Cruelty: Florida's HB 255, known as "Dexter's Law," provides harsher penalties for aggravated animal cruelty cases, acknowledging the link between animal abuse and potential violence towards humans.

<https://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=80848&SessionId=105>

Educational Resources and Training

- **University of Florida:** Offers courses on the connection between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence, aimed at professionals in veterinary, legal, and law enforcement fields (see National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges resolution attached please).
- **National Sheriffs' Association:** Provides resources and training materials highlighting the link between animal abuse and human violence, emphasizing the importance of cross-reporting and collaborative interventions.

<https://forensics.vetmed.ufl.edu/courses/cruelty-to-animals-and-interpersonal-violence/>