

## **Links Between Cruelty to Animals and Human Violence - Recommendations**

Protect animals - protect children - -protect families - stop the cycle of violence

Empathy is sympathy and compassion for other beings whether they are people or creatures, and a capacity to imagine how they may feel. The opposite is lack of concern for others. Lack of empathy results in hostility, cruelty, bullying and violence. Children who witness repeated animal abuse or practice it are more likely to become violent. Cruelty to pets is also a strategy used by domestic abusers to control their victims.

A study by the Calgary Humane Society (2010) and others found that repeated exposure to cruelty to animals desensitizes children, stunts empathy and can actually cause observable physical changes to the brain.

### **Application to SC**

South Carolina statistics indicate serious social problems including high rates of domestic violence, spouse murder, and child abuse and perpetrating violent. Considerable research indicates strong links between cruelty to animals and these other problems.

Statistics support the appearance of a culture of violence and abuse among part of the population in SC. In addition to the human and other consequences, these negative statistics reflect poorly for business considering relocating to SC.

### **Observations**

Repeat Cruelty Offenders: There are many cases in SC of people who repeatedly commit terrible abuses of equines and other animals. If charged, they pay fines and continue to abuse. Some even brag about their misdeeds on the Internet.

Overbreeding: There are too many equines, yet some individuals continue to breed them, often without veterinary or other care. In particular, people allow donkeys and mini-horses to breed in pasture and sometimes turn them loose. Some people dump old or disabled horses. The horse racing and horse showing industry is responsible for a many of these.

Dogfighting: Continues to be an issue in SC, is associated with many other types of criminal and violent activity.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***LEGISLATE AND ENFORCE***

- Make extreme animal abuse a felony. Strengthen legislation and consequences to prevent cruelty
- Encourage/require local Law and Animal Control to enforce existing laws concerning animal abuse.

- Help Law Enforcement clearly identify cases of abuse and neglect. (e.g. provide visual aids of equines showing indicators of condition level, indicators of abuse). These visuals could be shared with the public at no cost by linking on social media. (note, such visuals already exist).
- Ensure repeat abusers comply with requirements to (including registering with LE, and enforce fines. Impose additional fines for noncompliance.
- Make it illegal to attend cruel animal events (such as dogfights). Impose large fines as a disincentive.
- Study legislation in other states to see how they have addressed these problems.

### ***EDUCATE AND INFORM***

- **Set Up an Offender's Registry Web Site:** An offender's website similar to the site would be helpful to many. People concerned about animals c check out the website before selling animals. This should be inexpensive to implement. At the same time, links to it would be shared through social media sites and would inform the public.
- Consider an Internet tips location where concerned citizens can submit tips and images of abused animals to support LE. This could be linked to the Offenders Site.
- Recommend that LE find and use ways to communicate incidents of animal cruelty not only to other agencies but also to the public.
- Consider imposing a small luxury tax (especially on racing and show) equines to generate funds to support animal rescue. Exempt rescue groups that are attempting to mitigate the problem.
- Support legislation for funding to assist rescues as they assist Law Enforcement
- Support efforts to to educate the public empathize with animals and the consequences of cruelty.
- Help agencies such as Animal Control to enforce the law by providing tools to help

### **References**

New York Times - Davidson University of Wisconsin found that therapies using animals to were effective for teaching people to have empathy and regulate themselves emotionally.

2010 Calgary Humane Society study investigated teaching social emotional literacy to children who have witnessed animal abuse and put or perpetrated it and how exposure to animal beers affects a child's ability to empathize with animals and with people

Texas study on cruelty to animals and violence.

Phil Arkow

Domestic violence damages a child socially and emotionally. They learn that violence as a means for McIntasosh Ohio. " injury to animals is one way that a child signals that something is wrong.

Link: [American humane.org](http://Americanhumane.org) .

California law SP 353 threat to animals."Teach social-emotional literacy to children who have witnessed animal abuse or perpetrated it" (Calgary 2010)... "animals influence how children see the world, their feelings of competence, importance and belonging".