



Evaluating Our Focus

The national move toward population health must include humane animal care/control and law enforcement professionals

By Peggy A. Rothbaum, Ph.D.

In today's stressful and unsettled world, the men and women in humane animal care/control and law enforcement continue to give themselves fully to our society. Their jobs deal with a combination of law enforcement, vulnerable animals, and way too often with bad behavior on the part of humans. Mahatma Gandhi always included animals in his beliefs and actions about nonviolence, stating, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." Although there are increasing numbers of organizations and individuals advocating for animals, the professionals in humane animal care/control and law enforcement are on the front lines, witness, and must address up close and personally, the failure of our society to be great in this way by respecting all aspects of life.

Unbelievably, we are only beginning to expand the comprehension that animal life has intrinsic value. They

are not "just animals." Recent news stories help to spread the word. A chimpanzee in a zoo signed to human onlookers his desire to be freed. Psychologists have long known of the communicative abilities of apes. Birds communicate with complex patterns of song. Dogs increase safety and save lives by functioning as guide dogs, therapy dogs, search and rescue dogs, emotional support dogs, K-9's, and watch dogs. The NhRP works to secure fundamental rights for dolphins, great apes, whales, and elephants via litigation, legislation, and education. Their most recent work clearly shows the complex social and emotional lives of elephants, which demands our respect. The outrage and grief over their beloved dog Logan's brutal death has inspired Matt and Nancy Falk to advocate for legislation better protecting animals and punishing abusers. Laws prohibiting leaving animals outside in adverse weather conditions are gaining traction in many states.

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My home state, New Jersey, just saw legislation introduced to allow law students to serve as court advocates for pets (bill A-4840). The recognition of the strong link between animal abuse and domestic violence has led to increasing numbers of shelters accepting pets as part of the victimized family members, although we still have a long way to go. In addition to individual abuse, there is still an underlying disrespect shown by the continuation of organizational animal "experiments" and using animal "models," when it is clear that these models do not translate to human wellbeing, nevermind the fact that they are cruel. Animals feel pain and suffer, as do all living beings.

Because abuse of animals is clearly linked to abuse of humans, the men and women of humane animal care/control on the front lines are intimately involved with this problem. The need for power and control expressed toward a living sentient being whether a human or an animal, is clearly a mental health problem. Yet, the mental health infrastructure in our country has been decimated by the insurance companies (see www.drpeggyrothbaum.com, under "Writer"). This leaves the men and women of animal care/control and law enforcement without adequate support, backup, and referral options for human offenders.

In addition, as I will discuss in my upcoming webinar (PROTECTING THE PROTECTOR" Who Is Taking Care Of You?! <https://justiceclearinghouse.com/webinar/protecting-the-protector-who-is-taking-care-of-you/>), there is inadequate backup for coping with the stress and distress of the job. Our disrespect for animals is also reflected in the inadequate recognition for the support needs of men and women in humane animal care/control and law enforcement. As our country moves toward promoting population health, there is increased focus on helpers, caregivers, and healthcare providers. The men and women of humane animal care/control and law enforcement must be included in this focus, as they are providing an invaluable service to our society which is intimately related to our nation's health and wellbeing. This inclusion will greatly benefit overall population health and our animal friends as well.

Dr. Peggy A. Rothbaum (drpeggyrothbaum.com) is a psychologist in private practice in Westfield, New Jersey. Before starting her psychotherapy practice, Dr. Rothbaum worked in research, educational, medical and healthcare settings. She is the author or coauthor of numerous articles (in print and online) and book chapters, as well two books (including Taking Care of Little Snookie: A Story About Pet Loss for Adults. She is a passionate community activist for humans and non-humans. ❖

WHAT DOES THE LINK BETWEEN PET ABUSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE "LOOK" LIKE?

8

Signs that may indicate an abusive relationship

Has your partner ever...

1

THREATENED

Threatened to get rid of your pet, or took it away from you?

2

SCARED

Deliberately threatened, harmed or scared your pet to intimidate you or your children?

3

KILLED

Smacked, kicked, beat, or killed your pet?

4

HARMED

Thrown an object at your pet?

5

TAKEN

Refused to grant you custody of the pet?

6

REFUSED

Refused to allow you to spend money on your pet or to socialize with other pet owners?

7

STARVED

Refused to feed or provide vet care for your pet?

8

WARNED

Warned you of what would happen to your pet if you left?

If you feel that you may be experiencing any of these or are afraid to leave an abusive situation call 1-800-799-SAFE. If you are unable to leave an abusive relationship because of concern for your pets, visit RedRover's website: SafePlaceForPets.org

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ANIMAL CARE & CONTROL TODAY

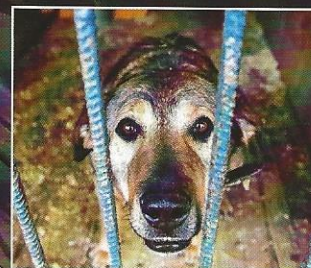
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