

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

Animal abuse has been defined as “nonaccidental, socially unacceptable behavior that causes pain, suffering, or distress to and/or the death of an animal” (Ascione & Shapiro, 2009). The most common forms of animal abuse are intentional cruelty and neglect. Animal cruelty can be broken down into two main categories: *active* and *passive cruelty* also referred to as *commission* and *omission*, respectively.

**PASSIVE CRUELTY**

Passive cruelty (acts of omission) is characterized by cases of neglect, in which the crime is lack of action as opposed to the action itself. Severe animal neglect can cause large amounts of pain and suffering to an animal. Starvations, dehydration, inadequate shelter in extreme weather conditions, or allowing a collar to grow into an animal’s skin are all examples of neglect (Pet-Abuse.com, 2017a).

**ACTIVE CRUELTY**

Active cruelty (acts of commission), sometimes known as non-accidental injury, implies malicious intent where a person has intentionally caused harm to an animal. Animal abuse in violent homes can take many forms

and can occur for many reasons. Many times an abusive parent or domestic partner may kill or threaten the household pets to intimidate family members into sexual abuse, to remain silent about past or present abuse, or merely to psychologically torture the victims, by exerting their "power" (Pet-Abuse.com, 2017a).

A breakdown of animal abuse classifications in the U.S. is as follows:

TYPES OF ANIMAL ABUSE			
Neglect	32.4%	Unclassified	1.8%
Hoarding	12.4%	Vehicular	1.8%
Shooting	11.3%	Poisoning	1.8%
Fighting	8.7%	Kicking/Stomping	1.4%
Beating	7.0%	Choking	1.4%
Mutilation	5.5%	Sexual Abuse	1.3%
Throwing	2.5%	Other	0.9%
Stabbing	2.5%	Hanging	0.7%
Burning	2.1%	Drowning	0.7%
(Pet-Abuse.com, 2017b)			

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
- 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)

**THE ABUSERS**

Pet-abuse.com (2017b; 2017f), reports that in its database of 81 documented animal cruelty cases in 2014, the vast majority were neglect/abandonment and animal hoarding incidents.

Women had a higher percentage of involvement in animal hoarding cases, while men were more involved in animal fighting and neglect. Adults represented the highest percentage of abusers. A summary of these results is as follows:

Gender	Animal Fighting	Neglect	Animal Hoarding
<b>Males</b>	93%	56%	37%
<b>Females</b>	7%	44%	63%

(Pet-Abuse.com, 2017c)

Age	Overall	Male	Female
<b>Under 10</b>	0.4%	98%	2%
<b>10-17</b>	6.0%	92.4%	7.6%
<b>Adult (18 and over)</b>	93.7%	74.2%	25.8%

(Pet-Abuse.com, 2017e)

**ANIMAL CRUELTY AND VIOLENT CRIME**

Research demonstrates a link between animal abuse and delinquency, violence, and domestic abuse. Multiple studies (Humane Society of the United States [HSUS], 2011) established that people who participated in or witnessed animal cruelty were at increased risk for involvement in crimes against humans. Additionally, groups of identified animal abusers were five times more likely than non-abusers to have a history of criminal behavior. 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, 2017d).

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 (Pet-Abuse.com, 2017g). “Researchers have found that between 71% and 83% of women entering domestic violence shelters reported that their partners also abused or killed the family pet. And another study found that in families under supervision for physical abuse of their children, pet abuse was concurrent in 88% of the families” (HSUS, 2011, p.1).

Bullying has also been linked to animal abuse. “Studies suggest that boys and girls who reported participating in direct school bullying are twice as likely to have committed some form of animal abuse when compared to their non-bullying peers” (Sanders, Henry, Guliani, and Dimer, 2013).

Witnessing animal cruelty within the family appears to increase the chance of generational animal cruelty. A scientific study of adolescents (Thompson & Gullone, 2008) 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, sponsored by the Humane Society, 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 Kronkosky Charitable Foundation counties of interest, Littlegrass Ranch, Inc. in Comfort, and the Crisis Center of Comal County in New Braunfels, are the only organizations that

participate in the Safe Havens for Animals™ Program (HSUS, 2017b).

“In 2014, the FBI announced that it will add cruelty to animals as a category in the agency’s Uniform Crime Report, a nationwide crime-reporting system. While only about a third of U.S. communities currently participate in the system, the data generated will help create a clearer picture of animal abuse and guide strategies for intervention and enforcement. Data collection began in January 2016 and covered four categories: simple/gross neglect, intentional abuse and torture, organized abuse (such as dogfighting and cockfighting) and animal sexual abuse” (HSUS, 2017a).

#### **TREATMENT FOR ABUSED ANIMALS**

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 the first seven weeks of life will never 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 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 (Dodman, 2015).

#### **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:

- Two breeding cats with all of their offspring in seven years could generate 420,000 cats
- Two breeding dogs with all their offspring in

- six years can 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
- (Georgia SPCA, 2015; American Humane, 2016)

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 (American Humane, 2016).

#### **ANIMAL CARE FACILITIES/SHELTERS**

Approximately 6 to 8 million dogs and cats are sent to animal shelters each year. While approximately 4 million are adopted annually, another 3 to 4 million are euthanized, 80% of whom are adoptable (HSUS, 2017c).

There remains a disparity in the concept of a “kill” or “no kill” shelter. “No kill” shelters are generally limited-admission facilities. They are selective about the animals they take in either by breed, number, or condition, and play an important role in helping homeless companion animals find responsible homes. Limited admission shelters do not euthanize animals based on space availability or length of stay. However, the need still exists for “Open Admission” 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 (Campbell, 2015).

Tracking data from animal shelters has long been a problem since there is no national reporting requirement for individual shelters. The *Asilomar Accords*, a set of guiding principles, standard definitions, and statistical formulae, were developed in 2004 and represented the first animal welfare industry standards (Shelter Animals Count, 2017). Adoption

of those standards remains voluntary but has become widespread. In 2011 work began on *Shelter Animals Count: The National Database Project*, a collaborative initiative to create and share a national database of sheltered animal statistics. A standard set of statistics, the *Basic Data Matrix* (based on the *Asilomar Accords*), will be collected from participating shelters through an online database that will also provide public access to the data. Data and statistics from 2,255 shelter organizations are currently available for viewing online. Eighteen (18) animal welfare organizations in the KCF counties of interest have signed-up thus far, including the three largest shelter facilities in Bexar County (Maddie’s Fund, n.d.a; Shelter Animals Count, 2017).

**ANIMAL ISSUES FACING THE SAN ANTONIO AREA**

The San Antonio community has made considerable efforts over the past few years to improve animal welfare. “In 2006, the City’s Animal Control Services [ACS] Advisory Board sponsored the development of a strategic plan with the goal of making San Antonio “No-Kill” by 2012. Although City Council has acknowledged that the 2012 target was not attainable, the plan provides the framework for ACS to develop and prioritize programs moving forward that will enhance enforcement, control the stray pet population, and increase the live release rate” (ACS, 2011, p.3). The Advisory Board defined “no kill” as, “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” (ACS, 2011, p.3).

One generally accepted indicator of community animal services is the Annual Live Release Rate. The following is the most recent data representing Bexar County; however, the data is not a full representation of the county as only Animal Care Services is reported:

INDICATOR	2014	2015	2016
Annual Live Release Rate	81%	85%	88%
<small>(ACS, 2015; 2016)</small>			

While there is no accepted national average for live release rates, Maddie’s Fund gathered data from over 500 organizations around the

country. The Community Live Release Rates for the nation in 2015 (most recent available) were reported as:

Region	Rate
National	86.1%
West	85.7%
Midwest	87.2%
Northeast	87.2%
South	84.4%
<small>(Maddie’s Fund, n.d.b)</small>	

This data indicates that Bexar County has made noteworthy progress. In fact, “The City of San Antonio Animal Care Services Department achieved a 90% Live Release rate for all animals coming into the shelter in December 2015, January and February 2016. This historic high makes San Antonio the largest city in the nation to achieve this level of Live Release Rate” (ACS, n.d.a).

During fiscal year 2017 Animal Care Services took in 32,318 animals. Of these animals, 22% were adopted directly from the shelter to a permanent home, 39% were transferred to a rescue group who in turn found a home for the animal, 22% were returned to their owners, 4% went directly to foster care, 3% were trapped, neutered, and released, 8% were euthanized, and 2% died while in shelter care (ACS, n.d.b).

In addition to managing the animal care shelter, ACS is also responsible for handling all reports of animal bites and animal cruelty. The risk of rabies infection from animal bites continues to be an important concern. There were 805 reports of possible rabies (animal bites) investigated in the Kronkosky area in 2016, 46 cases tested positive:

- 4 cases in Bandera County
  - 1 fox
  - 1 bat
  - 2 raccoons
- 23 cases in Bexar County
  - 22 bats
  - 1 cat
- 15 cases in Comal County
  - 13 bats
  - 2 skunks

## ➤ 4 cases in Kendall County

- 1 skunk
- 1 raccoons
- 1 bat
- 1 cat

(Texas Department of State Health Services, 2017)

**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.

There are many low-cost spay/neuter facilities in San Antonio. Additionally, Animal Control Services sponsors free spay/neuter services through its partner clinics for residents of eligible zip codes:

***Pet Shotz, Inc.*** partners with ACS to provide free spay/neuter to qualified residents as well as free ACS Rabies vaccinations and microchips through weekly mobile clinics in addition to its physical location (Pet Shotz, Inc., n.d.).

***SNAP (Spay/Neuter Assistance Program)***, open to both income-qualified families in partnership with ACS and the general public, provides a mobile clinic for San Antonio and the outlying counties as well as a regular spay/neuter clinic. Services include spaying or neutering surgeries, rabies vaccination, reduced cost vaccination, flea and tick prevention, heartworm testing and prevention, and microchipping (SNAP, 2017).

There are approximately 20 animal shelters in Bexar, Bandera, Kendall, and Comal Counties (not including breed specific rescue organizations). Open Admissions shelters include The City of San Antonio Animal Care Services and (not a comprehensive list):

***Humane Society of the New Braunfels Area (HSNBA)*** is an Open Admissions shelter that serves Comal County. In addition to pet adoption services it also provides foster care, Trap-Neuter-Release program, and end of life euthanasia for the community (HSNBA, 2017).

No-Kill, limited intake shelters include (this is not a comprehensive listing):

***Animal Defense League of Texas (ADL)***

provides foster care for animals in addition to adoptions. A month of pet insurance through ShelterCare is provided for free at the adoption of a pet. Spay and neutering, with additional services such as vaccinations and microchipping are performed at a low cost. A dog training program and humane education programs are also available (ADL, 2017).

***San Antonio Humane Society (SAHS)*** offers low-cost services including feral cats in addition to spay and neutering procedures on pets. It is also a partner with ACS to provide free services to qualified individuals. Other services include finding temporary shelter and homes for abandoned or unwanted animals, preventing cruelty to animals, and educating the community on responsible animal care (SAHS, 2017).

***SNIPSA, Inc.*** (Spay-Neuter-Inject-Protect of San Antonio) 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. “Several times a year, SNIPSA holds Big Fix clinics. These MASH style operations provide sterilization, vaccinations, and microchipping to over 350 cats and dogs in a single day” (SNIPSA, n.d.).

***Cowboy Capital Pet Assistance League (CCPAL)*** is an organization that provides fostering and adoptions for homeless animals. It also offers a sponsorship program for animals that are hard to place for health or behavioral reasons, and offers quarterly obedience classes for dogs (CCPAL, n.d.).

***Canyon Lake Animal Shelter Society*** has a thorough adoption process that begins with an adoption counselor. All pets adopted from the Canyon Lake Animal Shelter Society are spayed and neutered, vaccinated, and microchipped (Canyon Lake Animal Shelter Society, n.d.).

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