



[Combat Animal Cruelty]



FIRST STRIKE:
The Violence
CONNECTION



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

I T IS MY PLEASURE TO CONGRATULATE THE HUMANE SOCIETY of the United States (HSUS) on this edition of *First Strike: The Violence Connection*. I am keenly aware of the connection between animal cruelty and other crimes. Standing alone, animal cruelty must be prosecuted to the greatest extent possible; this connection only emphasizes the need for additional attention.

Animal cruelty and animal fighting are not isolated crimes. Children exposed to these activities are at a greater risk of becoming perpetrators or victims of crimes of violence. Animal abuse often occurs in the context of family violence and is frequently associated with other types of criminal activity, such as substance abuse, possession of dangerous weapons, and other offenses. Where animal fighting occurs, all community members are put at risk.

In 2001, the state of Maryland upgraded certain acts of animal cruelty to felony crimes. As state's attorney in Montgomery County, I was proud that our office was the first to successfully prosecute a defendant for felony animal cruelty. During that trial and in other animal cruelty cases, the prosecutors in our office found the information in *First Strike: The Violence Connection* a valuable resource. Based on this experience, I can recommend this publication to all law enforcement officials—prosecutors, judges, and attorneys general.

Douglas F. Gansler
Maryland Attorney General



How does animal cruelty relate to other crimes?

One of the Washington, D.C., area snipers, Lee Boyd Malvo, has been described as a “strikingly obedient child,” with one notable exception—as a child, Malvo hunted and killed cats with a slingshot. According to published reports, Malvo once had a pet cat but grew to hate cats because his mother would beat Malvo when the cat would sleep in his bed and soil the sheets. Whenever he saw a stray cat, he would become angry and shoot the animal.



Introduction

Why should animal abuse be taken seriously? Animal cruelty is a form of violence, and violence rarely, if ever, exists in a vacuum.

- **Animal abuse cases can reveal individuals who are engaging in other criminal activities.** Acts of animal cruelty are linked to a variety of other crimes, including violence against people, property crimes, and drug or disorderly conduct offenses (Arluke & Luke, 1997). Reporting, investigating, and prosecuting animal cruelty can help take dangerous criminals off the streets.
- **Animal abuse cases can expose family violence.** If an animal is being abused in a family, it is likely that a child or other family members are also being hurt or threatened. Animal control officers may have easier access to homes than representatives of other law enforcement and social service agencies.
- **Witnesses or victims are often more comfortable talking about animal abuse than human violence.** A woman afraid to report her partner’s abusive behavior toward her may feel less threatened reporting his cruelty to animals. Likewise, a neighbor of a family in trouble may witness and report the abuse of animals earlier than the abuse of human family members. This can start a dialogue with officials that uncovers the perpetrator’s human-directed violence.
- **Animal cruelty is a warning sign for at-risk youth,** according to the National School Safety Council, the U.S. Department of Education, the American Psychological Association, and the National Crime Prevention Council (Randour, 2004). It is an indicator that children pose a risk to themselves as well as to others. Ongoing longitudinal studies begun in 1987 demonstrate that chronic physical aggression by elementary school boys increases the likelihood they will commit continued physical violence as well as other nonviolent forms of delinquency during adolescence. Animal cruelty is one significant form of physical aggression (Broidy, et al., 2003).
- **Because animal cruelty often begins in early childhood, its discovery may spark earlier and more effective interventions.** Experts agree that the early implementation of prevention and treatment strategies for conduct disorder behaviors, such as animal cruelty, is key to their effectiveness. Some suggest the most strategic point for intervention is in the preschool and early elementary school years. As aggressive children get older, they are less responsive to therapeutic intervention (Kazdin, 1995; Loeber, 1990).
- **Animal cruelty inflicts pain and suffering on innocent victims.** Animal abuse should be taken seriously because it is a serious crime. Like children who are victims of domestic violence, animals cannot defend themselves, cannot understand why they are being hurt or terrorized, and cannot seek outside help.
- **People want animal cruelty to be prosecuted.** In a survey of more than 1,000 U.S. households, 85 percent of respondents thought it was either “very important” or “important” to protect animals from cruelty (Lockwood, 2006).

Links to Other Crimes

The evidence of a link between animal cruelty and violence toward people—including child abuse, spousal battery, and other types of criminal violence—is compelling. In the vast majority of cases, animal cruelty is just one aspect of a social environment marked by violence. The studies and examples cited here reveal more details about the connection.

- **Animal abuse has been consistently linked with other violent criminal behaviors.** Researchers studied 50 violent and 50 nonviolent inmates to determine if and how animal cruelty was associated with their development and behavior (Merz-Perez & Heide, 2003). The results showed that a statistically significant greater proportion of the violent offenders had committed acts of animal cruelty. These results agree with earlier studies (Kellert & Felthous, 1985).
- **Pet abuse is one of four predictors of domestic partner violence,** according to a six-year “gold standard” study conducted in 11 metropolitan cities (Walton-Moss, Manganello, Frye, & Campbell, 2005). By asking questions about the treatment of animals, domestic violence service providers can intervene earlier to protect animals and other family members. In a national survey of battered women’s shelters, 85 percent of shelters reported that women seeking services at safe houses talked about incidents of pet abuse (Ascione, Weber, & Wood, 1997).
- **A survey of college sophomores revealed a link between childhood animal cruelty and a tolerance for interpersonal violence as adults.** Those students who admitted to engaging in animal cruelty as youths were more likely than the nonabusers to agree that it is permissible to slap one’s wife (Flynn, 2000).
- **In a study of 53 families under investigation for suspected child abuse, researchers documented pet abuse in 60 percent of the families** (DeViney, Dickert, & Lockwood, 1983). When only families under supervision for physical abuse of their children were examined, the number rose to 88 percent. In most cases, the abusive parent was the one who injured or killed the companion animal.
- **At the extreme end of the violence spectrum, serial killers and school shooters almost invariably have histories of abusing animals.** Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer, Albert DeSalvo (the confessed “Boston Strangler”), and many others committed heinous acts of animal cruelty. Of 36 convicted multiple murderers questioned in an often-cited study, 46 percent admitted committing acts of animal torture as adolescents (Cohen, 1996). It also has been reported that more than half of the school shooters whose deadly rampages made national headlines during the late 1990s were known to persistently abuse animals (Miner, 1999).



How does animal cruelty relate to other crimes?

One night in rural Oregon, an HSUS investigator, along with Oregon state troopers, local sheriff's deputies, and U.S. Department of Agriculture agents, descended upon a large cockfighting "derby" in progress. More than 340 people were apprehended, and more than 1,000 birds were rescued, many suffering from severe injuries. Authorities seized evidence including drugs and drug paraphernalia, weapons, and approximately \$90,000 in cash from illegal gambling.



Children Abusing Animals

Many young children go through a developmental stage during which they may hurt insects or other small creatures in the process of exploring their world. Such behavior, when rare, has not been linked to abusive or aggressive tendencies in later life. Nevertheless, child behavior experts caution parents, educators, and other adults to gently but firmly intervene at these times, teaching the child about boundaries and the importance of respecting the needs and interests of other beings.

If a child persists in this type of behavior or intentionally injures or kills cats, dogs, birds, or other animals, further action is necessary, including parent training, psychotherapy for the child and family, and, in extreme cases, institutionalization.

Some children who abuse animals come from violent families, and one indicator of child abuse is when children commit cruelty to animals. If a child is reported to abuse animals, there should be a thorough evaluation of the child and family to determine first if other forms of abuse are present in the family and then the child's motives for acting cruelly toward animals. Experts recommend, when possible, that intervention involve the entire family.

Conduct disorder is a serious diagnosis given to children who exhibit severe antisocial behavior and aggressive tendencies. Aggressive behavior in childhood predicts serious antisocial behavior in adulthood, including criminal offenses, spousal abuse, and a tendency to severely punish one's own children (Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz, & Walder, 1984). In addition, it has been estimated that 5–7 percent of youths between the ages of 10 and 20 commit 50–60 percent of all crime in the United States (Eron, Gentry, & Schlegel, 1994). Childhood animal cruelty has serious implications for the child, animals, and society.

First Strike Resources

First Strike: The Violence Connection, a program of The Humane Society of the United States, organizes workshops on coordinating communities' responses to animal cruelty, family violence, and community violence. The workshops are geared to a variety of audiences, including law enforcement officials, antiviolence advocates, veterinarians, animal care and control representatives, social workers, educators, child welfare advocates, and professionals in the adult protective services and mental health fields.

The First Strike program also produces a variety of materials on animal cruelty and its connections to domestic violence, child and elder abuse, and community violence. To download the materials, arrange for a speaker or an event in your community, or find out more about the violence connection and what you can do to help break the cycle, visit humanesociety.org/violenceconnection.



Animal Abuse in Families

Because dogs and cats are considered part of the family in most households, when a family member becomes abusive, it is logical to assume that the pet, as the weakest member of the family, may become a victim of that violence. When animal cruelty co-occurs with spousal or child abuse, the abuser may use violence against animals as a means of further terrorizing his or her human victims. Women who are abused often stay in destructive situations due to threats against or concern for their companion animals.

Abusers can manipulate and control their human victims through threatened or actual violence against beloved family pets. Killing a cherished companion animal can be an act of revenge; it also can be a way of removing an important source of comfort and love, an act that further isolates the abused. Animals may also be used to perpetrate sexual abuse (i.e., the abused may be forced to engage in bestiality).



Types of Animal Cruelty

According to the American Prosecutors Research Institute (Lockwood, 2006), the types of animal cruelty include the following:

- **Simple neglect** (failure to provide adequate food, water, shelter, or veterinary care; this is the most common form of cruelty)
- **Gross, willful, cruel, or malicious neglect** (intentionally or knowingly withholding food or water, causing dehydration or starvation)
- **Intentional abuse and torture**
- **Animal hoarding** (accumulating a large number of animals and failing to provide minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation, and veterinary care; to act on the deteriorating condition of the animals; and to recognize or correct the negative impact on the health and well-being of the people in the household)
- **Organized abuse** (dogfighting and cockfighting)
- **Ritualistic abuse**
- **Animal sexual abuse** (bestiality)

Motives for Animal Cruelty

Specific reasons that a juvenile or adult might abuse or threaten to abuse an animal can be complex and varied. A thorough assessment of the abuse should include:



- **Severity of the animal abuse** (degree of injury, frequency, number of animals, co-occurrence with fire setting)
- **Culpability** (age, developmental level, degree of planning)
- **Psychodynamics/motivation** (curiosity/experimentation, peer pressure, coercion by or retaliation against another person)
- **Attitudes and beliefs** (lack of awareness of the physical and psychological needs of animals; prejudice against a species; cruelty as a form of discipline, cultural practice, or acceptance)
- **Emotional intelligence** (capacity for empathy, capability of forming attachments)
- **Family history** (child, partner, elder, or animal abuse; harsh and inconsistent discipline)
- **Mitigating circumstances** (acceptance of responsibility, remorse, willingness to assist law enforcement)

Interagency Cooperation

Animal abuse is a crime of violence that affects not only animals but also children, families, and communities. The safest community is one in which all members are protected.

With the growing awareness of the link between animal cruelty and human violence, groundbreaking coalitions are forming in many communities between major service agencies to coordinate responses to animal cruelty, domestic violence, child abuse, and other violent crimes. One example is the Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team in Colorado Springs, Colo. In Maine, the Linkage Project brings together an array of groups from sectors such as child advocacy, animal welfare, health and human services, education, corrections, and law enforcement. Communities in Florida, Maryland, and Virginia also have developed such coalitions.

A Model Response: Broward County

The Special Victims and Family Crimes Section of the Broward County (Fla.) Sheriff's Office takes one of the most advanced approaches to recognizing the link between animal cruelty and other crimes. The section addresses all crimes that stem from family dysfunction and result in interpersonal violence. Section units are the Sex Crimes Unit, the Missing Persons Unit, the Domestic Violence Unit, the Victims Services Unit, and the Abuse and Neglect Unit, which handles crimes of abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of children, elderly people, and people with disabilities, as well as animal cruelty.

For more information, contact the Special Victims and Family Crimes Section, Criminal Investigations Division, Broward County Sheriff's Office, 2601 W. Broward Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33312; 954-321-4239.

One important output of community coalitions is the development of "safe haven for pets" programs. These programs can be organized according to local needs and resources but typically involve a cooperative agreement between a domestic violence agency and a humane society or animal protection organization. Safe haven programs remove one of the most common barriers to someone leaving an abusive partner—fear that the partner will harm or kill companion animals left behind. *Safe Havens for Pets*, by Frank Ascione, Ph.D. (available in PDF format), is the most comprehensive resource for developing and running a safe haven program. (See "Additional Resources" on page 13.)

Including pets in protection orders is another example of communities working together to offer greater protection to animals and families. At the time of this edition, 10 states—California, Connecticut, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Nevada, New York, Tennessee, and Vermont—allow family animals to be included in protection orders. A number of other states are considering similar legislation so that the well-being of animals residing in a household can be safeguarded under the provisions of a court order of protection. And in any state, a judge can require the addition of pets to a protection order if requested.

Cross-reporting—the mandated or authorized sharing of information between animal services agencies and child and elder protection agencies—demonstrates another way that attention to the violence connection can support the goals of both animal and human welfare agencies. Eighteen states and Puerto Rico have mandated reporting laws that require all residents to report suspected child and elder abuse or neglect, regardless of profession. California, Maine, and Massachusetts do not require all residents to report, but humane officers in these states are specifically cited as mandated reporters of elder and child abuse (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). In California, Colorado, Minnesota, and West Virginia, veterinarians are required to report suspected child abuse.

The full benefits of cross-reporting are not realized until the sharing of information goes in both directions, between child and elder protection agencies and animal service agencies. To encourage professionals in child and elder protection services to be alert to potential animal abuse, California, Louisiana, Nebraska, and Tennessee permit (but do not mandate) employees of these agencies to report animal cruelty and neglect.

The Attorney General's Role

The attorney general of a state, as the state's chief legal officer, can play an important role in bringing animal cruelty cases to justice. South Carolina Attorney General Henry McMaster set an example for his colleagues by demonstrating zero tolerance for animal cruelty crimes. He created a statewide task force to combat animal fighting and guided the prosecution of one of the nation's largest breeders of fighting dogs, as well as another organizer of hog-dog fights. In recognition of his efforts, The HSUS named McMaster the 2005 Humane Law Enforcement Official of the Year.



The Prosecutor's Role

The following individuals are two examples of prosecutors who take the crime of animal cruelty seriously.

In addition to other prosecutorial duties, Montgomery County, Md., Assistant State's Attorney Alex Foster handled animal cruelty cases. Montgomery County was the first county in Maryland to gain a conviction under the state's felony animal abuse statute, enacted in 2001, and continues to energetically investigate and prosecute animal cruelty crimes.

In 2006, Dallas County, Texas, Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Bennett vigorously prosecuted an egregious animal cruelty case. The crime had occurred three years before the investigation, but thanks to a reward and to Bennett's thorough investigation and presentation, the defendant was found guilty and sentenced to eight years in prison.

How does animal cruelty relate to other crimes?

Individuals may abuse a family pet to control and intimidate a domestic partner. In Virginia Beach, Va., Jason T. Portock, 32, was sentenced to six months in jail for beating his wife's cat to death while she was away on a business trip. He threw the cat against the wall and kicked the animal against the door, leaving her to die. When his wife arrived home, she immediately took the cat to a veterinarian. The cat—who suffered five broken ribs, a broken sternum, a swollen left eye, and a broken front leg, teeth, and claws—did not survive. This crime resulted in the first felony conviction for animal cruelty in the state of Virginia.



In addition to state legislation, some communities have adopted cross-reporting procedures or memorandums of understanding. In San Diego, social workers must report suspected cases of animal abuse to animal control officials. At times the cross-reporting is done on an informal basis, without any written agreements or state laws. For example, in Frederick County, Md., animal control officers carry information about the local domestic violence shelter. When visiting a home, if they suspect domestic violence is occurring, they discreetly offer that information to the suspected victim.

Monitoring individuals or locations with known links to violence is also crucial, but constrained budgets call for other creative measures. Judges and prosecutors may wish to explore

the potential role of court-appointed special advocates (CASAs) in cross-disciplinary efforts to curb both animal and human violence. Trained to recognize the signs of animal abuse and understand the implications for the children they represent, CASAs can alert proper authorities should such signs become visible.

Such coalition efforts can be mutually beneficial; a tip from animal control officers that trouble may be on the rise in a particular family or area, as indicated by an increased incidence of animal abuse, may allow law enforcement and social service agents to intervene before the situation escalates to include human victims. Similarly, police investigations may uncover animal cruelty requiring the prompt attention of animal care professionals. When both social service agents and animal control officers are involved with a family, that family receives double coverage. Animal control officers can coordinate their visits with social service agents to ensure that the family receives the most effective attention.

The handbook *A Common Bond: Maltreated Children and Animals in the Home: Guidelines for Practice and Policy* (Randour & Davidson, 2008) is another collaborative effort, in this case between the



American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, The HSUS, the American Humane Association, and ACTION for Child Protection. Designed for all court personnel—judges, prosecutors, public defenders, probation officers, social service personnel, and others—*A Common Bond* provides a rationale and practical guidelines for addressing the link between animal abuse and child abuse, as well as devising policy solutions.

Animal Cruelty and Law Enforcement

Shifts in thinking about the seriousness of animal cruelty are further reflected in recent changes in the law. At the time of this edition, 45 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands have felony animal cruelty laws, up from only four in 1990. Yet, despite progressive changes in the law and a growing recognition of the gravity of animal cruelty, the crime is too often viewed as a secondary offense, with many cases never even reaching the courts.

Prosecutors who face a heavy caseload of murder, rape, and battery cases and other violent crimes with human victims may not be able to make animal cruelty cases

a priority. When animal cruelty cases *are* successfully prosecuted, sentencing varies. t times, judges may not assign the maximum sentencing, failing to recognize the connection between animal cruelty cases and crime control and community safety.

Investigating, prosecuting, and sentencing individuals who commit animal abuse can be an effective weapon for law enforcement by expanding the possible causes for the investigation and arrest of suspected offenders; providing prosecutors another crime to charge, which strengthens their case; and enabling judges to add time to a sentence.



State Anticruelty Laws

At the time of this edition, 45 states have laws making certain types of animal cruelty a felony offense, in addition to the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The five states without felony cruelty provisions are Arkansas, Idaho, Mississippi, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

Visit humansociety.org for updates on state anticruelty laws and related issues.

How does animal cruelty relate to other crimes?

Animal control officers received an anonymous complaint that a pit bull was being kept in a filthy yard without adequate food, water, or shelter. Upon entering the house, the officers found a woman, her two young children, and her mother living in squalid conditions with no running water or electricity. Human filth and garbage filled the bathroom, and the kitchen was virtually bare. Police officers were notified and authorities took the children and dog into foster care while the children's mother was entered into a drug treatment program.



How does animal cruelty relate to other crimes?

In 1997, 15-year-old Joey Bader admitted to New Hampshire State Police that he had roasted his mother's parakeets in the oven. This brutal act was part of a campaign of terror apparently sanctioned by the boy's father that ended with the murder of the boy's mother, Vicki Buzby Bader, in August 1996. The teenager told police that he had helped his father carry out his mother's murder. It was Joey's job to dig a grave for her in Maine then distract his 3-year-old brother while their father waited for her in their Stratham, N.H., home. Joey led investigators to his mother's body in April 1997, eight months after she was reported missing.

Psychological Counseling for Juvenile and Adult Offenders

Animal cruelty is a complex crime requiring cross-disciplinary attention. Punishment alone, particularly for juveniles, often is not the answer.

Psychological counseling can be a positive supplement to sentencing. Twenty-eight states—Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia—have counseling provisions in their animal cruelty laws.

California, Indiana, Iowa, and Tennessee require counseling for anyone convicted of animal cruelty. Colorado orders counseling for a second offense and Florida for acts of intentional torture or torment. Kansas and West Virginia stipulate a psychological evaluation. Six other states (Maine, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah) mandate counseling for juvenile offenders. Counseling can involve the perpetrator as well as his or her immediate family, particularly when it is believed that counseling might serve to uncover and/or alleviate child or spousal abuse that may also be occurring. It is recommended that parents of children who abuse animals participate in the treatment.

A good counseling provision in an anticruelty law should:

- **Require an evaluation and recommendation** for treatment by a licensed mental health professional who has training in the assessment and treatment of animal abusers
- **State that counseling is a mandatory** additional term of probation and is not to be used as an alternative in lieu of a fine or term of imprisonment, when such a sentence is appropriate



how to take responsibility and experience a caring relationship while also acquiring practical vocational skills, such as dog grooming and behavior management. Other well-respected programs in which interaction with animals builds empathy, trust, and the ability to nurture in troubled children and teenagers include Green Chimneys in Brewster, N.Y., and Forget Me Not Farm in San Francisco, Calif.

The psychological assessment and treatment of juvenile and adult animal abusers is an emerging field of practice. To date, there are only two published handbooks for mental health professionals on the assessment and treatment of animal abusers: *AniCare Child: An Assessment and Treatment Approach for Childhood Animal Abuse* (Randour, Krinsk, & Wolf, 2001) and (for adult offenders) *The AniCare Model of Treatment for Animal Abuse* (Jory & Randour, 1999). Recent cases in Colorado, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Vermont, and Washington have specified the use of the AniCare approach for treatment during court proceedings.

To date, AniCare workshops for mental health professionals have been given in 20 states. Sponsors include the Maryland Psychological Association, the Pennsylvania Psychological Association, and the New Jersey Psychological Association. The Animals and Society Institute has provided comprehensive AniCare workshops to more than a dozen senior-level clinicians so that they can train mental health professionals on the assessment and treatment of animal abusers. (For more information, e-mail office@animalsandsociety.org.)

Finally, the Arizona State University of Social Work offers an online professional development certificate program in treating those who have abused animals. (Call 602-496-0800 for more information.)

In addition, a good counseling provision should never specify the form of treatment—for example, anger management, community service, or another method. Only a proper evaluation of the individual by a trained mental health professional can determine the most suitable treatment.

Innovative programs that include hands-on interaction with animals have also recently been developed to provide treatment for juvenile offenders. For example, a partnership between the Youth Diagnostic and Development Center in Albuquerque, N.M., and the Animal Humane Association of New Mexico developed Project Second Chance. In this six-week program, adjudicated boys use positive, nonphysical means to teach better behavior to shelter dogs. The dogs become more adoptable and the boys learn

How does animal cruelty relate to other crimes?

In a recent trial in New York, John Jefferson pleaded guilty in a Brooklyn courthouse to robbery, burglary, stalking, criminal contempt, and animal cruelty. Jefferson, who had been stalking his ex-girlfriend, Eugenia Miller, hurled Ribsy, Miller's 16-year-old terrier-poodle mix, off her balcony. State Supreme Court Justice James Yates sentenced Jefferson to 12 years in prison; the judge said that two of those years were for Ribsy.



HSUS Resources and Services

- **Legal research and writing**—The HSUS provides detailed and reliable memoranda of law directly to prosecutors on specific cruelty cases.
- **Expert witness advice and testimony**—The HSUS maintains a substantial network of animal cruelty experts who can testify in animal cruelty cases, including species-specific veterinarians, animal scientists, and psychologists.
- **Media assistance**—The HSUS has media experts to assist prosecutors in obtaining favorable media coverage of their animal protection work.
- **Amicus assistance**—The HSUS, via its in-house attorneys with access to substantial pro bono assistance, offers amicus briefings for prosecutors in order to give the court a new perspective.

For inquiries about resources and services, call the First Strike toll-free line at 1-888-213-0956 or e-mail firststrike@humanesociety.org.

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- ## Additional Resources
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For more on the connection between
animal cruelty and human violence, visit
humanesociety.org/violenceconnection.

For more information on animal
cruelty and fighting issues and
training from The HSUS, visit
humanesociety.org/animalfighting.

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