

Editors' Guest

Help uncover veterinary experiences of abuse in animals and people

Catherine Tiplady, BVSc, BAppSci (Hons)

Being a veterinarian means you are in a unique and privileged position to see the human-animal bond in action. It is great to see evidence of the positive relationship between people and animals—the lives of children, adults, and the elderly can all be enriched by the social, physical, and psychological benefits of pet ownership.

range of reasons, but, disturbingly, this can be a sign they are themselves being directly harmed or are witnessing violence at home. These children may later become violent toward people, and so the cycle of abuse continues.

So why are veterinarians involved?

Over 50% of veterinarians see suspected cases of animal abuse annually.¹

While most veterinarians agree there is a link between abuse of animals and people, many feel ill-equipped to assist in these cases.

Animals are important members of our community, providing love and companionship as best they can.

Sadly, however, some animals are not treated as our best friends but are used as weapons to hurt and intimidate others. Why would anybody do this? The bond between people and animals, as we know, can be very strong, and perpetrators of violence are well aware of this. In domestic violence situations, the abusive partner may identify this bond and threaten or harm the animal to keep the victim frightened and under control. This is understandable—"If you leave, I'll kill your cat" is a strong deterrent, and many victims delay leaving for considerable time because of fear for the animal's well-being if it is left behind.

Children may harm animals for a

While most veterinarians agree there is a link between abuse of animals and people,^{1,2} many report feeling ill-equipped to assist in these cases.^{1,3}

Do you feel your training was adequate to help you recognize and support animal abuse or neglect? If not, then how do you think veterinarians should be trained? Do you think veterinarians should be taught how to recognize domestic violence in their clients? What do you think about mandatory reporting of animal abuse? These are all important questions, and knowing the answers will help us develop ways to support human and animal victims of violence. We need you to support research in this area.

I am a veterinarian in Australia and am undertaking a PhD in animal cruelty and human interpersonal violence. I am



Dr. Tiplady with her dog, Poppy. Dr. Tiplady is a veterinary graduate from the University of Queensland, Australia, who, since graduation in 2008, has worked in practice at the Animal Welfare League Queensland Veterinary Clinic. She is studying for her PhD in the area of people, animals, and cruelty, specifically on the relationship between domestic violence and animal abuse.

seeking qualified veterinarians in the United States who are willing to complete a short, anonymous survey about their attitudes toward and experiences of animal cruelty and related human violence. Even veterinarians who may not have seen or suspected abuse are needed to take part.

My research has ethical approval from the University of Queensland, and my supervisors are Professor Clive Phillips, BSc, MA, PhD, at the Centre for Animal Welfare and Ethics and Deborah Walsh, PhD, BSocWrk, MSocWrk, family violence practitioner and researcher. ❖

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Link to survey: To take part in this survey, please go to this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/V6Z2P2S>.

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