

The Correlation of Domestic Violence and Animal Cruelty



By

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21 years-Animal Crime prosecutions

Animal Law Unit

First of its kind in the U.S.

2000 matters in 6 years
over 100 special prosecutions

Our Animal Law Unit is designed to help assist with the prosecution of violations of the Commonwealth's animal fighting, abuse, neglect and other animal-related criminal laws and advise on legal matters relating to animals.





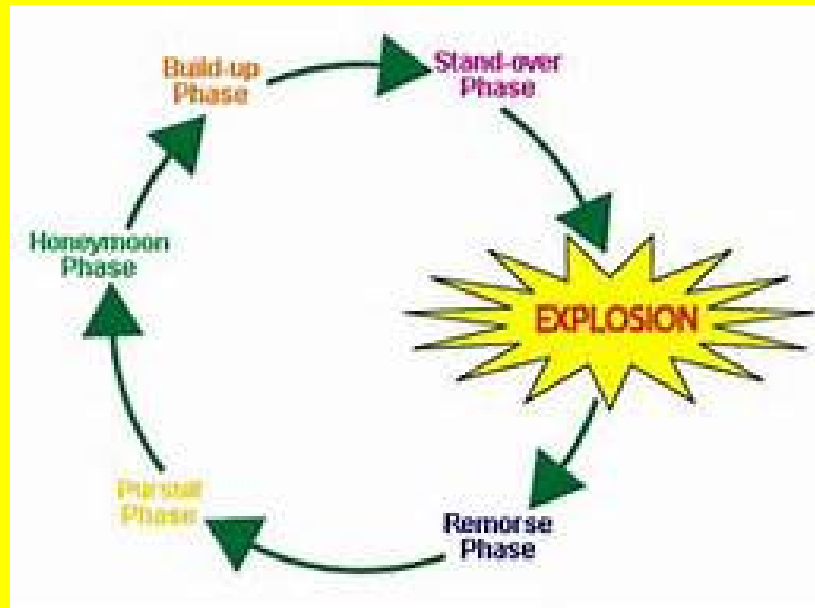
What is “The Link”?

- **Correlation between related abuses and violence:**
 - **Animal abuse**
 - **Child abuse**
 - **Domestic violence**
 - **Elder abuse**
 - **Other personal violence**

Animal Abuse Defined

- **FBI's National Incident Based Reporting System definition of animal cruelty has four types:**
 - **Simple/Gross Neglect**
 - **Intentional Abuse and Torture**
 - **Organized Abuse (Dog Fighting and Cock Fighting)**
 - **Animal Sexual Abuse**

Cycle of Violence



Stand Over during the escalation phase



Turning her body to protect the dog but she can't completely turn her back on him. The explosion is coming. She says "he was standing over me" have her demonstrate. Colleague felt she was losing an abuse and neglect case and she had one of the children demonstrate the strangling on her (the lawyer) and the judge commented on it in her ruling even though this was the lesser of the injuries between the two children.

CASE STUDY - Jessica

- Jessica biological parents are divorced and remarried
- Lives with bio mom and stepdad
- Begins sexualized play with dolls at 3 yoa
- Child Protective Services unfounds the case (nothing there)
- at age 13 she discloses that stepdad has been abusing her sexually for 10 years

Demonstration of Power



Child was playing with dolls in sexualized way at 3 years old. CPS unfounded the case. Bio mom kept custody with evil step dad. When the kid was 13 she told again. The evil step dad killed the dog with a cross bow in the back yard. Whole neighborhood heard it. Prosecutor and detective went back and got one of the neighbors to testify. He also kicked a kitten to death because he had not given permission for the little girl to accept the gift of a kitten from another adult. Showing the family his power, his invincibility. If someone had reported the animal abuse and it was investigated MAYBE this would have ended for this child sooner.

The Link: Domestic Violence

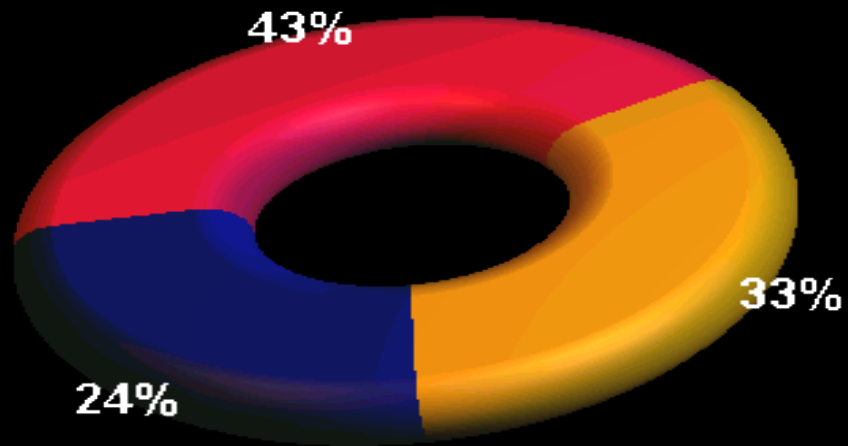
- 41% of intentional animal abuse cases involve domestic violence
- 25%-40% of battered women do not escape abusive situations because they worry about what will happen to their pets or livestock if they leave



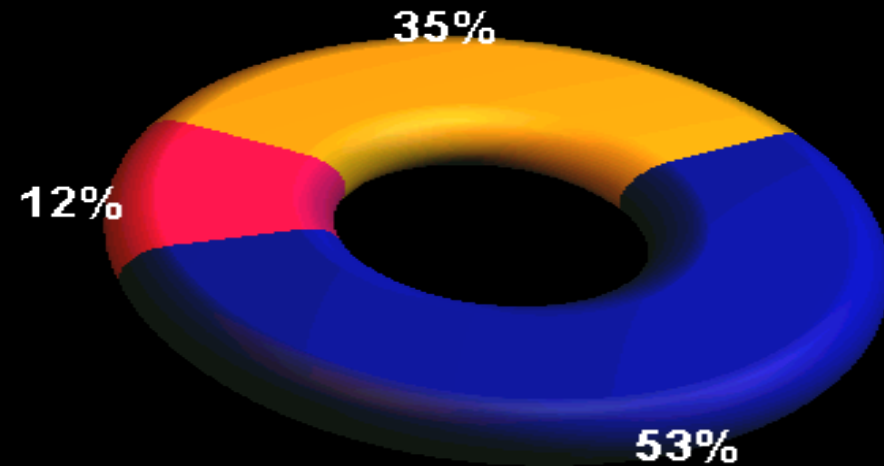
The Link: Family Violence and Pet Abuse

“Aubrey got angry with the family dog for straying outside their yard. He loaded one of his nine guns, then shot and killed it. The kids began to sob, devastated. He grabbed (one child's) hair . . . slapped another of the kids, then began crying himself. Joyce tried to comfort them all. But her feelings of anger were mixed with genuine terror: in a moment of rage, she knew, Aubrey could kill any one of them and cry about it afterward.”

Family Violence\Animal Cruelty



Male



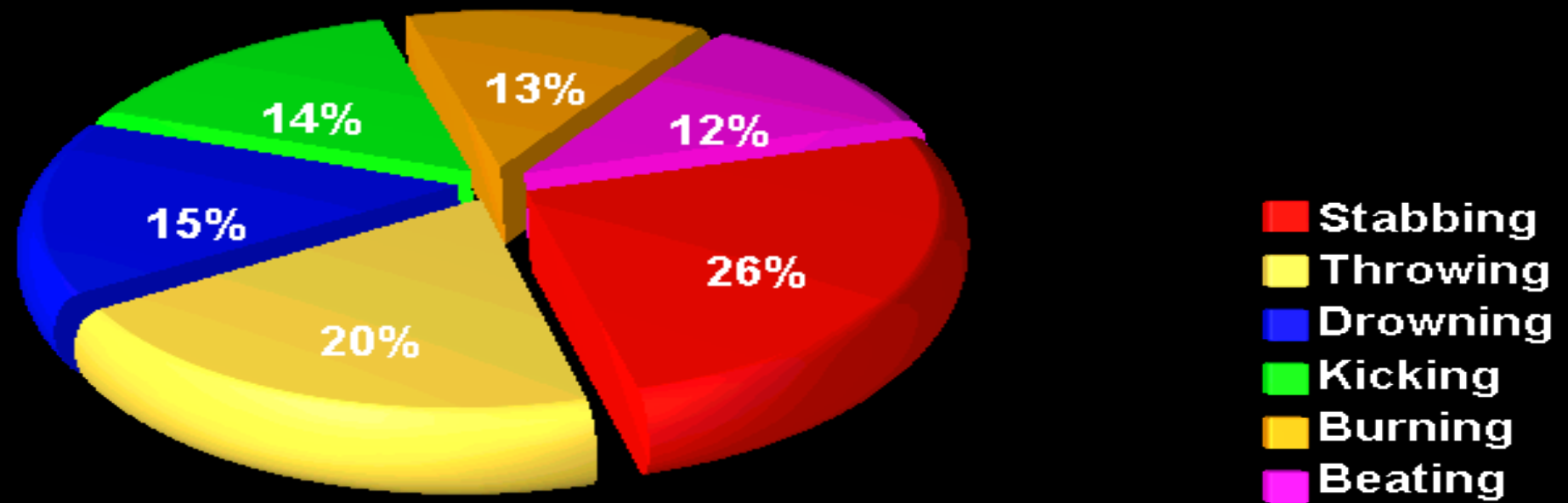
Female

■ Domestic Violence

■ Child Abuse

■ Elder Abuse

% Of Co-Occurance with Domestic Violence, Child Abuse or Spouse/Child Witness



The Link: Domestic Violence

- **62%-76%** of animal cruelty occurs in front of children
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that some children may put themselves in harm's way to save their pets from being injured or killed



In the United States, we have Child Advocacy Centers- they help investigate the case but they also help heal the child

12 Accredited CACs in Virginia (15 total)



Southern VA Child Advocacy Center- Rocky Mount , Virginia – Recent case/2016-2017

The child had come home from school. Her kitten would not stop meowing....

The father strangled the kitten in front of the child.

She mentioned how this was used as a way to exert power over the child.

She said that it was devastating to the child.

The CAC helps build the case through an investigator but also helps get the child psychological counseling.

KEY to the PUZZLE: Animal Cruelty-Obviously this is harmful for the child

OFTEN: witnessing animal cruelty is not a crime- the act itself is criminal-Animal Cruelty

The Link: Child Abuse

- Interviewer questioned 53 families being investigated for child abuse
- Animal abuse was reported by **60%** of the families



- Animal abuse was reported by **88%** of the families being investigated for physical child abuse

Connections Between Child Abuse and Animal Abuse

- Co-occurring child abuse or harsh parenting with domestic violence and animal abuse (Deviney, 1983, et al, Barnes, et al, 2006; Brennan, et al, 2010; Fielding, et al, 2011; Duncan, et al, 2005; Girardi & Pozzulo, 2012; McEwen, et al, 2014)
- Retrospective; those who reported harsh parenting or child maltreatment more likely to acknowledge animal abuse behavior (DeGue & DeLillo, 2009; Flynn, 1999)
- Prospective; marital violence and harsh parenting associated with animal cruelty (Becker, 2004; Knight, 2014)

Domestic Violence/Family Violence

- A national study found that **85.4%** of women and **63%** of children in domestic violence shelters reported incidents of pet abuse
- **41%** of intentional animal abuse cases involve domestic violence

The Link: Example

- Cat at SPCA
- Brought in for vet care by victim or other family member
- Had been thrown against the wall
- Abusive boyfriend
- Convicted of animal cruelty



Include Pets in Orders of Protection

Maryland

**Approximately ½ of the states and the
District of Columbia allow**



The Link: Example

- Woman tells partner to leave
- Comes back when she and her child are at work and school
- Beats beagle to within an inch of its life
- Dog has to be euthanized



The Link: Example

- Snake-exposure to elements
- Woman-girlfriend had bludgeoned it to death
- Necropsy-autopsy on animal
- Boyfriend was spending too much time with the snake



The Link: Examples

- Wife leaves husband
- Animal Control is called
- Dog is starved and left in basement



- He locks little terrier mix in basement and lets it die of starvation
- At first look, neglect to the point of cruelty
- But should be charged at Felony level cruelty
- Dangerous to leave but often victim won't leave because of fear of harm to pet.



Question:
Simple
Or
Gross
Neglect?



Water-
ADEQUATE
WATER

- Filthy conditions for animal
- May mean Child Neglect
- Example Hoarders
- Often have family member in the home as well.

Lack of care of animal

Lack of care for child





Simple or Gross neglect

Moldy bread
Skinny dog
No food in bowls.

Dog house probably not
adequate in winter

The picture shows a dog
that is suffering.



Shad- 1/9



Line between simple and gross neglect---- Gross neglect is animal cruelty

A deprivation so bad that it rises to animal cruelty

Woman would not feed horse.... To the point
It needed vet care

Vet had to euthanize horse
We charged felony cruelty for the gross neglect

Pet abuse - part of Child abuse

- The child woke up from a nightmare and the father comforted her and may have believed that the family dog was responsible for the child's nightmare.
- The father reportedly carried the dog downstairs telling the child that it's leg was hurt and to get dressed. The father reportedly hit the dog in the head with a shovel once in the backyard and then covered him with an accelerant.
- He then lit the animal on fire and told the child that it was ok because he was now in heaven. The alleged offender was charged with Animal Cruelty and was admitted to a psychiatric facility.
(Watching animal abuse is psychologically abusive to the child)

Threats against the beloved pet Warning “you will be next.”

- Often, children would disclose being afraid to talk about violence or abuse in the home because their beloved family pet was being threatened. One child in particular told me about witnessing his father crushing his cat’s head with a concrete block. The child’s father told him if he disclosed, his head would be next

Other crimes take priority

No one cares about the child being abused.. They care more about the animal being abused

Response: We need to care about it all. Cite the link.

Sexual Abuse and Animal Abuse

Children who committed acts of cruelty to animals significantly more likely to have been sexually abused (Ascione, 2001; Ascione, et al, 2003; Boat, et al, 2011; Duncan, et al, 2005; Fleming, et al, 2002)

The Link: Sexual Abuse

- 36.8% of boys and 29.4% of girls who were victims of physical and sexual abuse and domestic violence have been reported to abuse their family pet



The Link: Example

- Bestiality and sexual abuse of children and elders
- Abnormal sexual partners-to include animals, children and elderly
- Sexual deviance
- Sexually Violent Predators-bestiality in background-human victims (child molesters and rapists)
 - Child has to kill the dog b/c parent makes him

A Common Bond:

Maltreated Children and Animals in the Home
Guidelines for Practice and Policy



by **Mary Lou Randour**
The Humane Society of the United States
with **Howard Davidson**
American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law

Published by



In Cooperation With



Child Abuse and Animal Abuse Partnerships

- *A Common Bond, Maltreated Children and Animals in the Home, Mary Lou Randour*
- Encouraging cross reporting
- Questions to ask (Child Advocacy Centers)
- **NCANDS** - The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) is a federally sponsored effort that annually collects and analyzes data on child abuse and neglect known to child protective services (CPS) agencies in the United States

Animal Welfare Institute web-page

- <https://awionline.org/content/children-and-animals-risk>

Questions to ask-following slides

- **Asking Children about their Relationship with Animals:**

- Have you or your family ever had any pets? What happened to them?
- Do you have a pet or pets now?
- Have you ever lost a pet you really cared about? What happened?
- Has your pet ever been hurt?
- Have you ever felt afraid for your pet or worried about bad things happening to your pet?
- Has anybody ever tried to make you do something you didn't want to do by threatening to hurt your pet? What happened?
- Have you ever seen someone hurt an animal or pet? Tell me what happened.
- Have you ever hurt an animal or pet? Tell me what happened.
- Have you ever been frightened or hurt by an animal or pet? Describe what happened.
- What happens when your family pet misbehaves?
- Have you ever been punished for something your pet did, like getting into the trash?
- Or has your pet ever been punished for something you did, like not doing the dishes when you were told to?
-
- *Source: "Animal-Related Experiences" Inventory by Barbara Boat, Ph.D. and AniCare Child: An Approach for the Assessment and Treatment of Childhood Animal Abuse, by Mary Lou Randour, Ph.D., Susan Krinsk, LMHC, and Joanne Wolf, M.A.

- **If a Child Witnesses Animal Abuse in the Home:**
- Children who witness abuse are at greater risk for becoming either victims or perpetrators. One form of abuse that children too often witness is toward the pet in family violence situations. When there is knowledge that a child has witnessed animal abuse, the following information should be obtained from the child or his or her caretaker:
- The relationship of the child to the abuser; if it was a family member, do a thorough assessment of other abuse that may be occurring in the family and take appropriate action
- The relationship of the child to the animal
- The type and severity of the abuse and who was involved
- How many times it occurred
- The type of victim(s), and the victim(s)' response, as well as the response of the perpetrators and other witnesses
- The child's role in witnessing animal cruelty—active or passive, encouraging or discouraging, coerced (real or perceived)
- Ask the child, “What was the hardest thing for you about what happened; or what bothers you the most about what happened?”

- **Assess the child's immediate and long-term emotional response to being a witness.**
 - **Does the child exhibit any of the following?**
 - **Anxiety**
 - **Nightmare or frightening dreams**
 - **Difficulty sleeping or eating**
 - **Withdrawal**
 - **Problems concentrating**
 - **Repetitive play with themes or aspects of the trauma**
 - **Disorganized or agitated behavior**
 - **Does the child feel any of the following?**
 - **Shame**
 - **Guilt**
 - **Remorse**
 - **Does the child experience either of the following?**
 - **Numbing or feelings of detachment**
 - **A restricted range of affect**
- **Is the child fearful of reprisal?**
- **Did the child speak about the abuse to anyone?**
- **What was the response of the person to whom the child spoke about the abuse?**

Specific Recommendations for Family Violence Programs

- Address pets in intake questionnaires
- Include pets in safety planning procedures
- Partner with animal care and control agencies and veterinarians
- Establish lists of pet-friendly transitional housing
- Support legislation that includes pets in protection orders

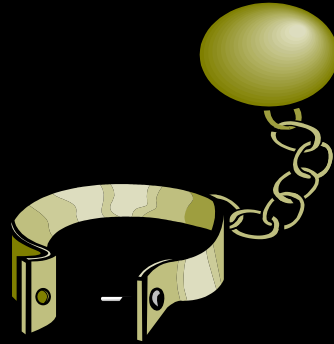


Specific Recommendations for Child Protective Services

- Ask about pets and include pets in assessments
- Engage and include families in the process
- Report animal abuse and neglect
- Partner with animal care and control agencies
- Make efforts to keep kids and pets together
- Consider animal-assisted interventions and treatment options for children



The Link: Other Acts of Violence



- Acts of animal cruelty are linked to a variety of other crimes:
 - crimes of violence against humans
 - property crimes
 - drug offenses
 - disorderly conduct offenses

The Link: At-Risk Youth

- Animal cruelty is a warning sign for at-risk youth*
- Chronic physical aggression during elementary school increases boys' risk for continued physical violence and delinquency during adolescence



The Link: At-Risk Youth

- Between 1997 and 2001, school shootings occurred in MS, KY, AK, OR, CO, GA and CA



- All of the boys involved in these school shootings had performed acts of animal cruelty such as: shooting dogs, setting cats on fire, blowing up cows and killing other small animals

The Link: Adult Violence

- A survey of 50 violent and 50 non-violent prison inmates found that a statistically significant greater proportion of the violent offenders had committed past acts of cruelty to animals



The Link: Adult Violence

- Almost all serial killers and school shooters have histories of abusing animals (DDAF)
- In a survey of 36 convicted multiple murderers, **46%** admitted committing acts of animal torture as adolescents (Congressional Register, 1996)



INTENTIONAL ABUSE OR TORTURE

Abuse- feeding puppies
firecrackers, setting cats on fire, 4
and 5 year old boys beating kittens
to death with drapery rod, drowning
a wallaby, beating a dog to death
(kids-intervention)



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2006 Canadian Study

(Currie, Animal Cruelty by Children Exposed to Domestic Violence, in *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Vol. 30, p. 425-35)

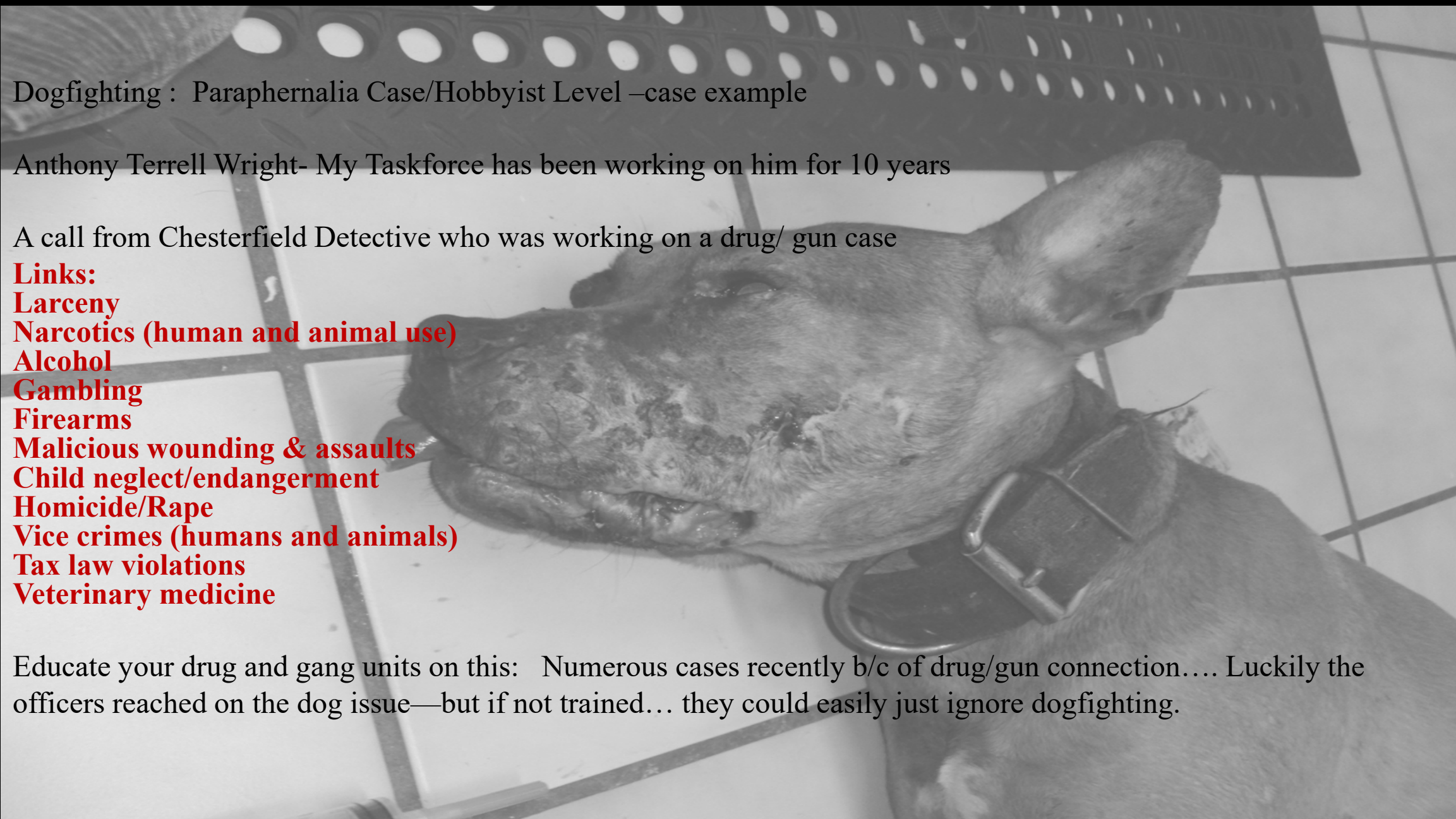
Mothers with 2 children (ages 5-17) from two groups
Comparing children's cruelty to animals according to domestic violence exposure

Children exposed to DV were 2.95 times more likely to engage in animal cruelty

Average age of children being cruel to animals was older (9.6 yrs) than the non-violent group

Gender was equal





Dogfighting : Paraphernalia Case/Hobbyist Level –case example

Anthony Terrell Wright- My Taskforce has been working on him for 10 years

A call from Chesterfield Detective who was working on a drug/ gun case

Links:

Larceny

Narcotics (human and animal use)

Alcohol

Gambling

Firearms

Malicious wounding & assaults

Child neglect/endangerment

Homicide/Rape

Vice crimes (humans and animals)

Tax law violations

Veterinary medicine

Educate your drug and gang units on this: Numerous cases recently b/c of drug/gun connection.... Luckily the officers reached on the dog issue—but if not trained... they could easily just ignore dogfighting.





Repetition is necessary-

Talk about scars on each dog

If no scars, talk about condition they were leaving in.

Talk about the training-pen on the property

Puppies no scarring but training to be in pit

Child Endangerment

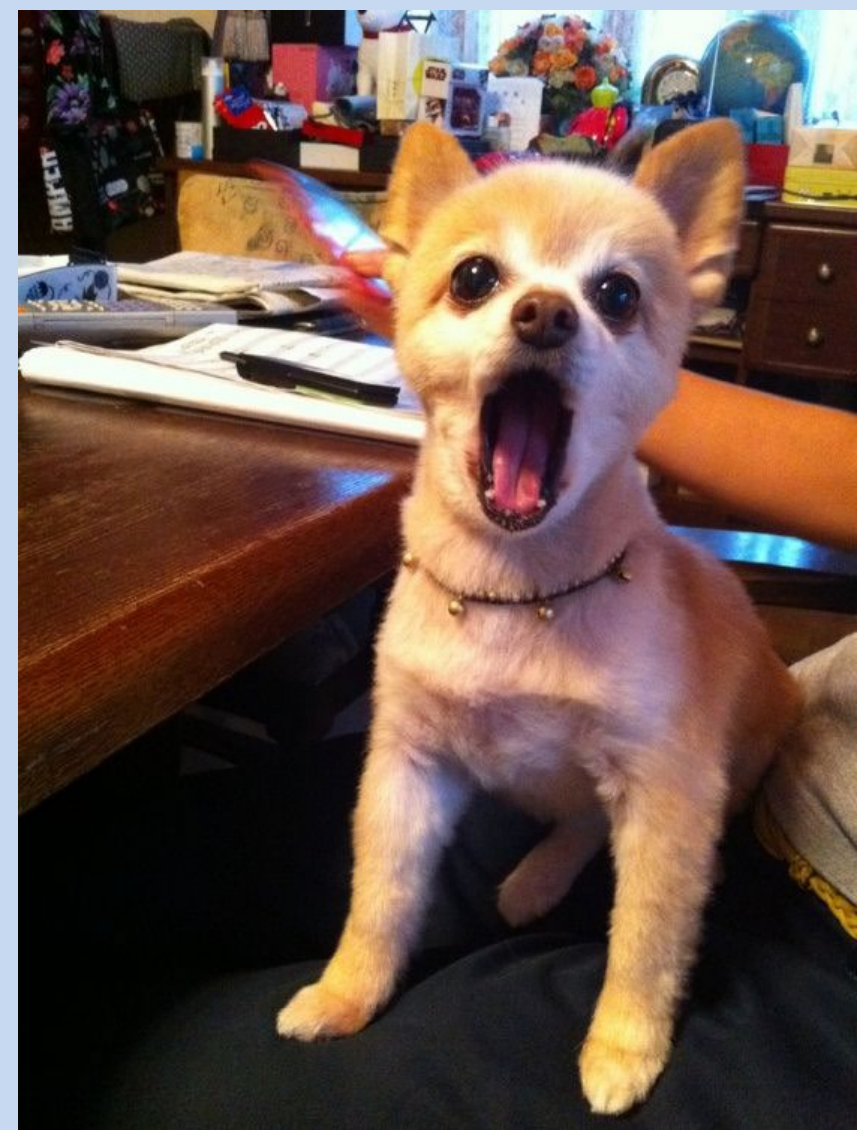


Keeps this blood sport alive by training kids to do it
13 year old was allowed to fight cocks and our federal court gave
more jail time to the father than to the manager of the
cockfighting pit

Sexual Abuse of an Animal

- Sex with an animal
- Sodomy with an animal
- Masturbation of an animal

- Important to prosecute even if you aren't successful
 - Sexual deviance with an animal/sexual predator
 - Person may need mental health resources-
 - Autistic boy who washed family dog
 - Officers who masturbated a dog as a hazing incident-disciplined



Crimes against Nature

- Bestiality is very hard to prosecute
- Not because we don't investigate it.
- Because everyone is grossed out by it.
 - Ex: Bestiality Farm in a rural county in Virginia
 - Could not get law enforcement to act
 - Often cannot get prosecutors to do the cases
 - » However, you must do them because of the sexual deviance involved
 - » Sex offender who had sex with 5 different animals moved onto to molesting children
 - » Sex offender who had sex with a pig then raped a 70 year old woman
 - »



Bestiality/Crimes against Nature

- As Investigator: Treat it like any other crime
- As Prosecutor: Treat it like any other crime
- As Judge: Treat it like any other crime

- Child Pornography
- Child Predation
- Subsets of Bestiality/Beast Forum
- DEMAND CONVICTIONS

Some clues to look for:

- Admissions made to probation officers, others.
- Forums on the internet
- Vet exam of an animal (Autistic boy who washed the dog's anus)
- Note: family violence (sexual violence) Male partners making wife perform sex with animals as dominion and control over her.
- Note: Women are becoming more involved in this type of crime of their own volition (multiple male partners and animals)
- Family will often inform law enforcement but b/c of stigma may not want to testify

Sentencing in animal abuse cases



You may not always get jail time

In fact, U.S.-nationwide

Very hard to get significant jail time

Animal Cruelty may net 30 days to 5 years.

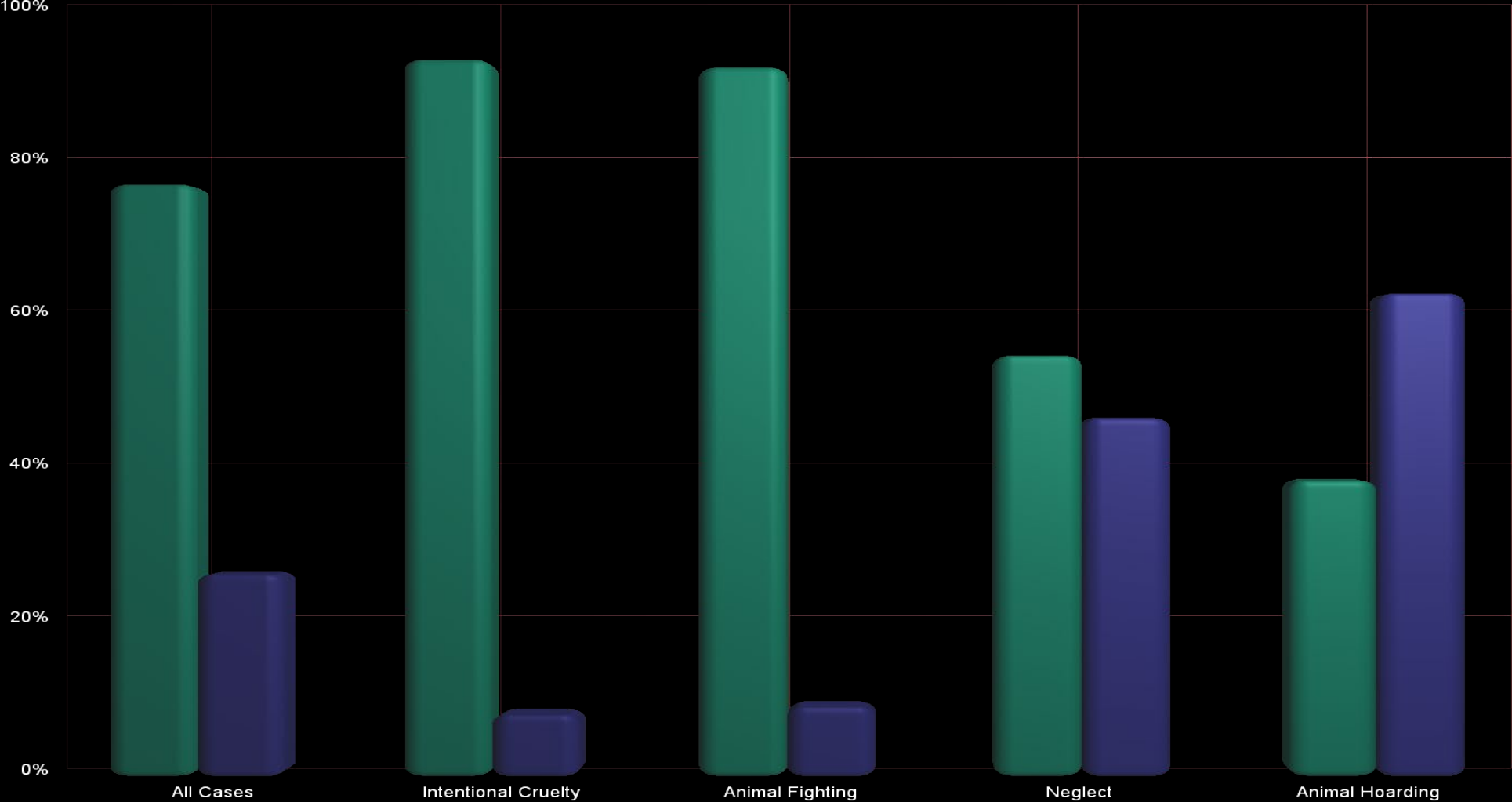
Animal Fighting average is 2 year jail time

Sometimes just suspended time over the defendant's head

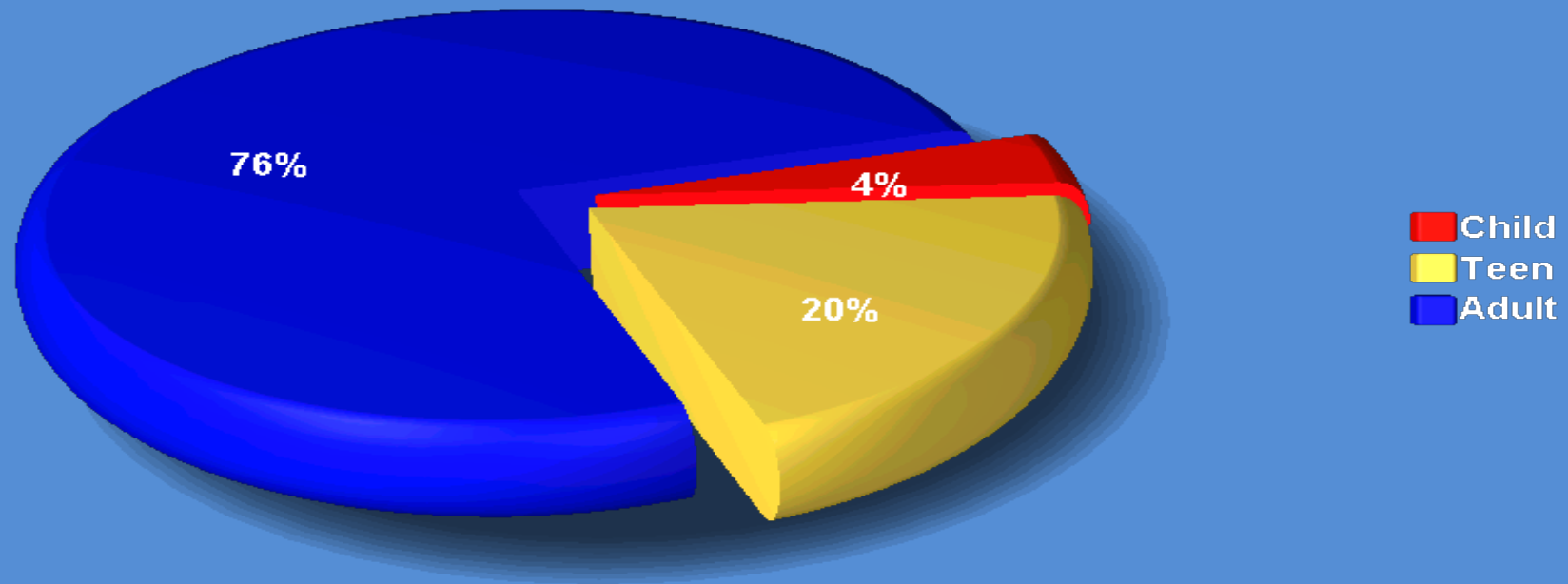
Conviction is a win

Ban on animals

Percentage of Animal Cruelty Cases By Gender



Intentional Cruelty By Offender Age





Be the
hero!



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