

# The Violence Link

Presentation for HSJCC

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# Who we are

- Hannah Brown, Manager, Criminal Justice System Reform Program, Humane Canada
- Inspector Hadfield, Social Sciences Instructor, Atlantic Police Academy
- Dr Margaret Doyle, Forensic Veterinarian, VCA

# What we will cover today

- Intro to the Violence Link
- Why the Violence Link is relevant to your work
- Dive deeper into the Violence Link
- Signs of animal abuse
- Solutions
- Humane Canada's Violence Link work and the Canadian Violence Link Coalition
- Questions

# What is the Violence Link?

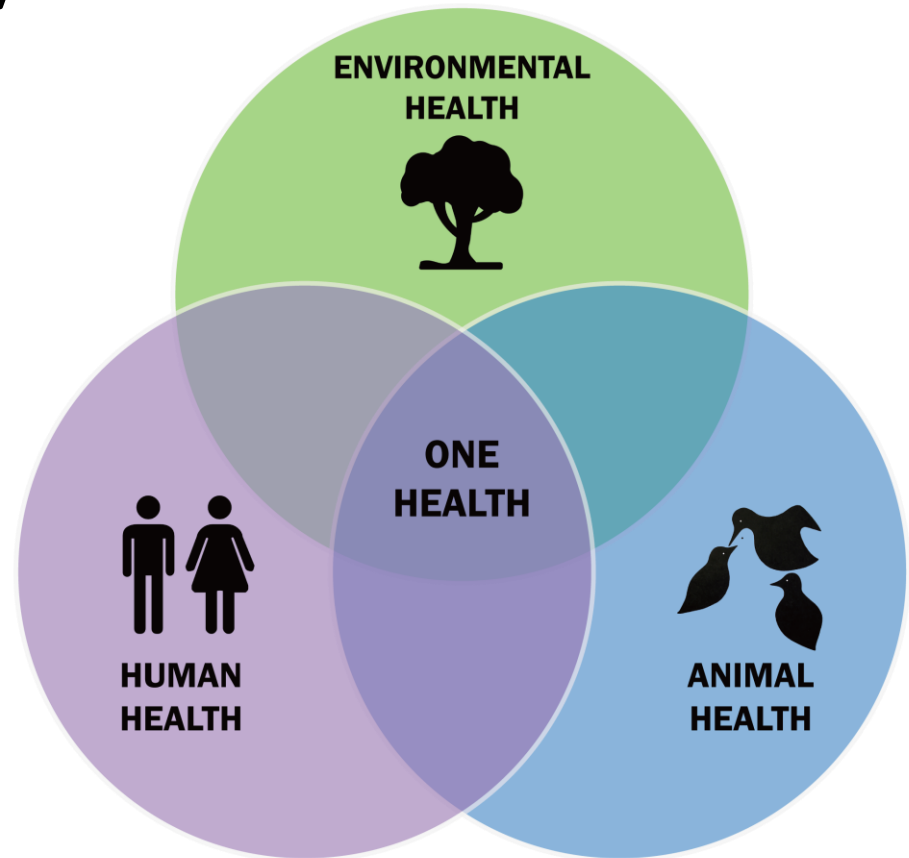
- Research shows that violence toward people and violence toward animals are part of a larger pattern of violent crimes that co-exist.
- Cases of inter partner violence, sexual abuse and child abuse (including child sexual abuse), gang violence, youth crime, organized crime, assault, homicide, weapons and illicit drugs also commonly involve animal abuse.
- This phenomenon is known as the “Violence Link”.



Diagram: Dr Rochelle Stevenson

# Why is the Violence Link relevant to you?

Understanding your client whole situation to prevent further criminality



# Why is the Violence Link relevant to you?

- The reason why your client may be in conflict with the justice system could be trauma caused by witnessing animal abuse or domestic violence
- The mistreatment and abuse of animals is a significant indicator of violence towards humans, up to and including intimate partner abuse, sexual assault, rape, murder

“abuse of animals is a significant indicator of violence towards humans”

If your client is in conflict with the justice system regards animal abuse, there are likely other forms of criminality involved.



# “Criminality caused by trauma”

Whether a child witnesses animal abuse and/or domestic violence in the home growing up, there is evidence that the psychological trauma has lasting effects which may lead to later criminality if proper early interventions are not implemented

# Criminality caused by the trauma of witnessing animal abuse

- a parent's history of animal abuse is predictive of a child's later involvement in IPV perpetration (Knight et al. (2014)
- The early introduction to animal cruelty through exposure to dogfighting, especially repeated acts, impacts development and has strong links to later interpersonal violence (Heger, 2011; Tallichet & Hensley, 2004).

# Animal abuse caused by trauma of witnessing animal abuse or domestic violence

- In one Canadian study, children exposed to domestic violence were 2.95 times more likely to have displayed animal cruelty than those in the non-exposure group (Currie, 2006).
- Children who witness their parents perpetrating violent IPV behaviours are more likely to commit animal abuse (Knight et al., 2014; Ascione, Friedrich, Heath & Hayashi, 2003)
- Witnessing physical fighting or physical abuse between parents has been associated with substantial levels of cruelty to animals (Ascione et al., 2003).

# Factors affecting childhood animal cruelty

- Environmental factors predict children's animal cruelty include exposure to childhood adversity, especially experiences of violence and witnessing animal cruelty
- Childhood animal cruelty is recurrent or has extreme links to later interpersonal violence
- Psychological risk factors linked to childhood animal cruelty include externalizing disorders, lower empathy, lower self-esteem, poorer family functioning, and attitudes accepting of cruelty
- Witnessing animal cruelty is a serious risk factor for a range of internalizing and externalizing behaviors

(Wauthier & Williams, 2021)

# Diving deeper into the Violence Link

**Inspector Hadfield- the link between animal abuse and interpersonal violence**



**Dr Doyle – signs of animal abuse and the Violence Link**



# Solutions

- Mental health: dealing with trauma
- Therapy dogs: human-animal bond
- Humane education: the teaching of compassion and empathy for all living beings – impacts behavior and shows success in violence prevention
- Cross sectoral collaboration : both human and animal services



# CVLC Background

- NCPAC formed in 2015
  - Crown attorneys/prosecutors
  - Allied professionals
- First ever National Violence Link conference in 2017
- CVLC formed in 2018

# CVLC Mission and Goals

- Bring together stakeholders
- Advance awareness, education and training
- Implement prevention and intervention strategies
- Establish policies and practices
- Advance research



# Educational Workshops and Conferences

- 2017 national Violence Link conference
- 2019 national Violence Link conference
- 2020 CVLC Regional workshops
  - British Columbia
  - Atlantic Canada
- 2021 national Violence Link Conference

# Other achievements

- ACT Project –WAGE grant
- Supporting mandatory training for judiciary, police and prosecutors
- Violence Link training for enforcement - Ottawa Police Services and CKPN
- Amendments to bestiality provisions of the Criminal Code

# Other achievements contd.

- Gathering violence link crime and enforcement statistics
- Supporting integration of violence link questions in risk assessment tools
- Supporting amendments to ViCLAS and MCM

# A growing coalition

- 10 members in 2018
- Now 39 members
- Broad representation of sectors

# 2021 and beyond

- Core values and mission remains the same
- Awareness campaign
- Resource centre:
  - Education materials on the Violence Link
  - Sector specific materials
  - Toolkit on building your own coalition

# Resources

- <https://humanecanada.ca/violence-link/>
- <https://humanecanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Review-of-the-Violence-Link-Literature-.pdf>
- Wauthier, L.M., & Williams, J.M. (2021, Oct. 21). Understanding and conceptualizing childhood animal harm: A meta-narrative systematic review. Anthrozoös: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2021.1986262>
- Katherine Compitus, The Human-Animal Bond in Clinical Social Work Practice (2021; Springer)

# Thank you and questions

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