

# Intersections of Domestic Violence and Animal Cruelty

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## Signs of Abuse in the Home: Intersections Between Signs of Animal and Domestic Abuse



**DELAWARE & PENNSYLVANIA-** Signs of animal abuse could indicate domestic violence, and vice versa. But do you know what those signs are?

This week, the Domestic Violence Center of Chester County and the Brandywine Valley SPCA held a joint webinar to discuss both issues and what to look out for. According to the experts, animal abuse is one of the earliest predictors of domestic violence, and attackers sometimes use animals to get their victims to stay.

National statistics indicate that 40 percent of victims will not leave an abusive situation because of their pet, and experts say asking a victim about their pet may help them feel more comfortable into getting their own help.

"A conversation about pet safety in the home can be an easy way to transition the conversation into a discussion about their own personal safety in the home as well," says Amelia Rayburn-Pizzica with the DVCCC.

The organizations say an overprotective pet, an accumulation of trash, bugs, or pet waste are signs that could indicate domestic violence, animal abuse, or both. The Brandywine Valley SPCA recommends all victims have their pet registered in their name, and have the pet's information easily available in case they need to leave quickly.

While only three to 12 percent of domestic violence shelters take animals, the BVSPCA has partnerships with two organizations to help take care of pets for victims as they get back on their feet, and can get community support as well.

"We can look into our foster base when there is a need from the community or the victim to see if we can help," explains Walter Fenstermacher. "We do have that standing program with Child Inc. and People's Place."

The webinar coincided with Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Fenstermacher says animal abuse cases can sometimes help uncover domestic violence, as an animal abuse investigation is often the first social services intervention a household in need has.

To watch the webinar in full, [click here](#).

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