Investigating cruelty to animals in private and commercial settings

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BVSc, B App Sci (Hons 1)

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School of Veterinary Science
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Abstract

This thesis examines animal abuse occurring in the context of domestic violence, among animals encountered by veterinarians in practice and in media broadcasts of animal cruelty. Whilst the focus on the thesis is on animal abuse within a domestic violence context, I have also studied people’s response to animal abuse, following a media expose of animal cruelty.

The connection between human interpersonal violence and animal abuse has gained increasing interest in recent years; however, very little research has been undertaken from a veterinary perspective which focuses on animal welfare.

The first part of the thesis examines the impact of human interpersonal violence on companion animals by interviewing women survivors of domestic violence. Thirteen women were interviewed about the impact of domestic violence on their companion animals and whether veterinarians were a source of support. All women reported animals showing changed behaviour during the violent relationship and eight reported animals being abused or threatened by their partner. Private practice veterinarians were not generally seen as a source of support. A subsequent study of five of these women six months after leaving the violent relationship found that animals’ behaviour was reported to have reverted to normal. However, aggression/fear of men and proximity seeking to women continued in several cases. In a second study, 385 veterinarians from Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, UK and South Africa self-selected to participate in an on-line survey covering issues of human/animal abuse and
mandatory reporting. Most were supportive of mandatory reporting of suspected animal abuse many felt they were poorly educated in human/animal abuse issues and were distressed by cases of animal abuse encountered at work. The majority also reported they had been victims of abuse in the veterinary workplace. Dogs were reportedly the most frequently abused animals and males were more likely to be animal abusers than females.

A third study surveyed members of the public who encountered media broadcasts of animal cruelty of cattle exported for slaughter during a media exposé in May 2011. Whilst most people were emotionally affected by the media coverage (e.g. feeling pity for the cattle, sadness, helplessness, anger), this did not translate into significant behavioural change, as only a minority took actions such as writing to politicians or newspapers about their concerns. This research assists our understanding of how animal abuse impacts on a range of people and animals, with a primary aim being to improve veterinary awareness. Improving awareness should enhance outcomes for people and animals living with violence.
**Declaration by author**

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‘The long-term impact of domestic violence on animal welfare’
Conference proceedings


Book


**Publications included in this thesis**


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Contributions by others to the thesis
The conception and design of this research project, as well as, analysis and interpretation of data were achieved through discussions and consultations with the advisory team and collaborators, namely Professor Clive Phillips, Dr Deborah Walsh and statistical advisor Associate Professor Peter Newcombe.

Statement of parts of the thesis submitted to qualify for the award of another degree
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Introduction

This work examines animal cruelty in private and commercial settings with the view to explore the diversity of responses to animal abuse. Veterinarians work with animal welfare issues on a daily basis and there has been growing awareness in the profession of the connection between animal abuse and human interpersonal violence. This thesis has three key aims: (1) to gain a deeper understanding of the link between human interpersonal violence and animal abuse and how animal welfare may be impacted; (2) to learn of veterinary involvement in cases of human interpersonal violence and animal abuse and (3) to explore public reaction to media broadcasts of animal abuse contrasting it with responses to animal welfare issues associated with human interpersonal violence.

During my candidature I have co-authored several papers and authored a book (with contributors) on the topic of animal abuse (‘Animal Abuse – Helping Animals and People’ published by Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux International ‘CABI’, Wallingford, England 2013). Inclusion of these papers and any excerpts from the book are listed in the table of contents. Book excerpts are included with permission of the publishers. The three key focus areas within the thesis are outlined below.

(1) Human interpersonal violence and animal abuse:
Much of the research that links animal abuse and human interpersonal violence has been undertaken by psychologists, psychiatrists and sociologists rather than veterinarians. The significance of undertaking human/animal abuse research from the perspective of a veterinary scientist is that animal behavioural changes, the extent and
consequences of animal abuse (injury types and treatment) and veterinary involvement can be further elucidated and understood.

(2) Veterinary involvement in human/animal abuse:
To investigate the experiences of human/animal abuse among veterinarians, an online survey was created which incorporated the following questions:

- Types of animal abuse/neglect encountered in veterinary practice (species, type/frequency of abuse, perpetrator)
- Whether animal abuse was associated with domestic violence
- How well the respondents’ veterinary education prepared them to deal with cases of suspected human/animal abuse
- When education in human/animal abuse should be provided to veterinarians (as undergraduates, as postgraduates and/or during continuing professional education)
- How respondents felt when confronted with cases of suspected animal abuse in practice
- The respondents’ level of support/opposition to veterinarians being mandated to report suspected animal abuse/neglect
- The respondents’ own experiences of abuse – physical, verbal, psychological/emotional, sexual abuse, destruction of property (as a child/adult), abuse in the workplace (from a veterinary client/staff member) and experience of domestic violence and animal abuse
- Demographic data detailing age, gender, details of veterinary practice type

Resulting data from the International Veterinarian Survey were subsequently subdivided into three papers.
(3) How the public are affected by media coverage of animal abuse

During the candidature there was a unique opportunity to explore the public’s emotional responses and reactions to animal abuse. This was achieved by undertaking a survey of people who had been exposed to media broadcasts of Australian cattle exported for slaughter in Indonesia. This study has been included within the thesis as it provides a unique insight into how the general public can be impacted by animal abuse. Domestic violence and animal abuse tend to occur in private, where there are few witnesses to the suffering (Heise et al., 1999; Tiplady, 2013). In the case of the media coverage of cattle exported for slaughter in Indonesia, there were numerous graphic scenes and descriptions of animal abuse, including cattle being repeatedly beaten, their eyes gouged, tails broken and made to slip on wet floors and climb over fallen animals. Although many veterinarians and those in violent relationships may encounter animal abuse, much of society’s harm of animals is hidden from the general public. Media coverage of domestic violence tends to be limited to high profile cases (e.g. involving celebrities) or occasionally when the victimised partner is murdered or reported as a missing person. Public awareness of animal involvement and abuse within domestic violence tends to be overlooked or mentioned only as a minor part of discussion about relationship breakdown (Munro, 2013). For this reason, the study involving animal cruelty in live export is included as it was deemed an effective way in which the effects of large scale public exposure to animal abuse could be studied and comparisons made to the private experience of those who live with domestic violence and companion animals.
By examining animal abuse from these three viewpoints a better understanding of how animal abuse impacts on human lives will contribute to the existing knowledge base on these issues.

**Chapter One:**
**Review of the literature on human interpersonal violence and animal abuse**

Throughout this thesis the terms ‘animal abuse’ and ‘animal cruelty’ will be used interchangeably as some of the work has been published in journals and in book chapters that have been written for different types of consumers. A commonly accepted definition of animal abuse is ‘socially unacceptable behaviour that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering, or distress to and/or the death of an animal’ (Ascione 1993, p. 228) which encompasses physical, sexual, emotional/psychological abuse and neglect. Animal cruelty has been defined as ‘an emotional response of indifference or taking pleasure in the suffering and pain of others, or as actions that unnecessarily inflict such suffering and pain’ (Ascione 1993, p. 226). Other definitions of animal abuse include Gullone’s (2012, p. 12) in which animal cruelty is defined as ‘Behaviour performed repetitively and proactively by an individual with the deliberate intention of causing harm (i.e. pain, suffering, distress and/or death) to an animal with the understanding that the animal is motivated to avoid that harm’. The focus on intentionality by Ascione and Gullone make their definitions compatible with the link to domestic violence as it has been argued that domestic violence is intentional, purposeful and instrumental (Dekeseredy and Schwartz, 1998; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Kimmel, 2002). However, Gullone’s statement that cruelty involves behaviour which is ‘performed repetitively’ does not take into account singular acts of animal abuse (e.g. a woman’s only companion
animal strangled to punish a woman within the context of domestic violence, described by Roguski, 2012 or throwing an animal against a wall as a singular act and from that moment the woman is compliant to the demands of the perpetrator to protect the animal from further harm). Participation in a single known act of animal cruelty has also been found to be predictive of perpetrators committing other criminal acts (Arluke et al., 1999). Gullone however, emphasises that whilst one instance of animal cruelty is without question cruelty, it does not qualify as being predictive of the link between animal abuse and human interpersonal violence (E. Gullone, Report for the PhD Thesis of Catherine Tiplady, 17 March 2016).

For these reasons, Ascione’s (1993) definition of animal abuse will be the operational definition that underpins this research and is applicable in the contexts of a) domestic violence, b) animal abuse encountered by veterinarians and c) cruelty in live export media broadcasts. The types of abuse experienced by Australian cattle in the live export media coverage (e.g. eye gouging, tail breaking) was clearly intentional and unnecessary and thus fits the definition by Ascione (1993). The cruelty to the cattle was also socially unacceptable to the Australian public as evidenced by the “immediate and unprecedented expression of anger by thousands of viewers” (Munro, 2015 p. 214). The public’s outrage resulted in the Australian government imposing a temporary ban on the live export trade to Indonesia (Munro, 2014). Indonesia is a largely Muslim country and religious guidelines caution against animal cruelty in slaughter, stating “Verily Allah has prescribed proficiency in all things. Thus, if you kill, kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each of you sharpen his blade and let him spare sufferings to the animal he slaughter (sic)” (Halal Australia, 2004). Rather than killing cattle with a single cut to the throat as per Halal requirements
(Drum and Gunning-Trant, 2008), the slaughters documented in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Four Corners’ investigation included cattle having their throats cut up to 33 times (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 2015).

Opinions about what constitutes animal abuse and acceptance of certain behaviours vary greatly between nations, cultures and individuals. Some examples of animal cruelty are ‘culturally endorsed’ (Gullone, 2012, p. 2) and are therefore not considered examples of deviant behaviour at a national level, such as the use of animals in rodeos. Although there is evidence to suggest a long history of animal abuse there is also a long history of humans protecting them.

Historical examples of culturally accepted animal cruelty include the mass animal slaughter for entertainment in Ancient Rome (Lindstrom, 2010), blood sports such as bear baiting (Kiser, 2007), and early displays of vivisection (Rupke, 1987). Legal protection of animals against cruelty dates back to the 18th Century BCE and is mentioned in the Hindu Athara Veda and the Codex Hammurabi of ancient Babylon (Olsson, 2010). Care of animals is also mentioned in various religious teachings including the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islam and Jewish faiths. Since the 17th Century CE ethical guidelines on how humans should treat animals have been provided by philosophers such as Descartes who argued that animals had no souls or feelings (Brown, 1974), Kant who denounced animal cruelty as it would ‘harden our hearts’ against humans (Bernstein, 2009, p. 185), Schopenhauer who believed that anybody who abuses animals cannot be a good person (Schopenhauer, 1841) and Bentham who urged us to consider animals as sentient beings by asking ‘The question is not, Can they reason? Nor, Can they talk? but can they suffer?’ (Bentham, (1789)
Despite these historical guidelines on how we should treat animals, the scientific research of human’s abuse of animals is a more recent occurrence (Ascione and Shapiro, 2009).

Philosophical debate around the way humans treat animals continues in contemporary society with more recent debates focusing on speciesism. ‘Speciesism’, which is the prejudice of humans against animals was first described by British psychologist Richard D. Ryder in 1970 and discussed later that decade by Australian philosopher and bioethicist Peter Singer in ‘Animal Liberation’, a treatise on animal rights which inspired the worldwide animal liberation movement (1975). Singer compared speciesism to other forms of discrimination such as racism and sexism and questioned the ethics of animal experimentation and meat production (Singer, 1975).

Ethics are an integral part of veterinary work. Veterinarians are bound by professional codes of ethics and their own personal ethics which has challenging implications as most veterinarians practice in a fee-for-service environment. The Australian Veterinary Association Code of Professional Conduct states that: ‘Veterinarians have an obligation to maintain appropriate personal, moral and ethical standards in the practice of their profession, and in other aspects of their personal life. Failure to do so may reflect adversely upon the profession’ (AVA, 2014a). The importance of ethics is reflected in the fact that veterinary graduates in some countries take an oath on graduation such as: ‘I will practise my profession conscientiously, with dignity, and in keeping with the principles of veterinary medical ethics’ (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2004). Understanding ethical principles is essential as veterinarians are frequently confronted by ethical dilemmas in which there
is conflict between the interests of the animal and the wants of the client (Batchelor and McKeegan, 2012). Many veterinarians feel a strong ethical duty to deal with cases of suspected animal abuse (Williams et al., 2008), however only a minority actually report such cases (Patronek, 1997; Stolt et al., 1997). Reasons for this include fear of repercussions from owners (Stolt et al., 1997), being unsure it is animal abuse (Williams et al., 2008), concerns about report writing or testifying in court (van Vollenhoven et al., n.d) and fear of loss of business (Babcock and Neihsl, 2006).

In some jurisdictions (e.g. some states and provinces of the USA and Canada), veterinarians are legally mandated to report suspected cases of animal abuse (American Veterinary Medical Association, 2014; Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, n.d.), however definitions of animal abuse (Babcock and Neihsl, 2006) and reporting requirements (Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association, n.d.) vary between jurisdictions. The varying legal requirements and obligations for veterinarians reporting animal abuse have been described as ‘erratic, complex’ (Creevy et al., 2013) and ‘vague’ (Robertson, 2010). There is much debate about the advantages and disadvantages of introducing mandatory reporting for animal abuse and some organisations (such as the Australian Veterinary Association, 2014b) clearly state their position:

*Veterinarians should not be required by law to report instances of suspected animal abuse as this may discourage owners from seeking essential treatment for their injured animals.*
In some cases animal abuse co-occurs with human interpersonal violence. An example of this is domestic violence, in which animals may be harmed or threatened as a way of coercively controlling the abused partner. Domestic violence, or ‘intimate partner violence’ is behaviour that causes damage to another person (physical, sexual, emotional or financial), causes someone to live in fear, damages property or threatens to damage a person, pets or property (McDonald, 1998; Walsh, 2004).

Many veterinarians believe that there is a connection between animal abuse and human interpersonal violence however most feel poorly trained and ill-equipped to deal with such cases encountered in practice (Green and Gullone, 2005). In order to gain an understanding about the connection between animal abuse and human interpersonal violence we need to explore the theories relating to this for conceptual clarity as there are a number of areas which are contested.

**Theories Related to Animal Cruelty and Interpersonal Violence**

Two main theories related to animal cruelty and interpersonal violence are a) The Violence Graduation Hypothesis and b) the Deviance Generalisation Hypothesis.

The Violence Graduation Hypothesis proposes that cruelty to animals precedes violence towards humans (Arluke et al., 1999) and has been utilised by some animal welfare societies to inform people of several serial killers who were abusive to animals in their childhood (Gullone, 2014). As described by Thompson and Gullone (2003), there are often methodological limitations in these studies (e.g. use of institutionalised people and retrospective reports) and because of this there is inconsistent support in the literature for the Violence Graduation Hypothesis.
The Deviance Generalisation Hypothesis proposes that “animal abuse is simply one of many forms of antisocial behaviours that can be expected to arise from childhood” (Arluke et al., 1999 p. 965) and can precede or follow other offences. There is greater support for the Deviance Generalisation Hypothesis as it results from research which is not solely focused on aggressive subtypes of criminals or institutionalised people and demonstrates comorbidity between animal abuse and domestic or family violence (Gullone, 2014).

Domestic violence involves acts of violence between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and behaviours to control a partner through fear (Council of Australian Governments, 2011). Although domestic violence can affect both males and females in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, it more commonly involves men perpetrating violence against their female intimate partners (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996). Domestic violence is an international problem which has been described as the most pervasive yet under-recognised human rights violation in the world (Ellsberg and Heise, 2005). The World Health Organisation (2013) states approximately 30% of women have experienced domestic violence.

In domestic violence, perpetrators use a variety of tactics to coercively control women, and in some incidences perpetrators will expose or subject companion animals to abusive behaviour as part of these tactics to maintain power and control over the women and children in their lives (Adams, 1994; Faver and Strand, 2003; Quinlisk, 1999). Where there is domestic violence it has been found that there are higher levels of animal abuse when compared to non-violent households (Ascione et
al., 2007; Volant et al., 2008). This issue raises concern for the children who are exposed to violence in their families and how they might respond to witnessing violence.

It has been suggested that living with domestic violence is a risk factor for childhood animal cruelty (Duncan and Miller, 2002). A case-control study was conducted in Canada to determine whether children exposed to domestic violence were significantly more likely to abuse animals than those who hadn’t been exposed. The researchers interviewed 47 women with a history of domestic violence and 45 women with no history of domestic violence. Children who had been exposed to domestic violence were significantly more likely to have displayed animal abuse (17%) as reported by their mothers, than children who had not been exposed to domestic violence (7%) \( p = 0.03 \). Motivations for children to abuse animals include peer pressure, identification with the child’s abuser, imitation, curiosity, rehearsal for interpersonal violence (Asione et al., 1997) and for fun and to control the animal (Hensley and Tallichet, 2005). In this study the mothers of the children were reporting and it is possible some mothers were unaware of their child’s animal abuse or did not wish to report it.

Some children who live in violent homes are placed in a very distressing position when the animals which may represent their only source of safety and comfort are harmed or killed (Loar and Colman, 2004). High levels of distress have been reported to change the neurodevelopment of the child’s developing brain (Perry, 2002). Flynn (2011) argues that witnessing animal abuse is one of the leading predictive factors of children’s animal cruelty, along with being a victim of physical or sexual abuse and
witnessing violence between parents. Both animal welfare societies and veterinary associations realise the importance of humane education of children and conduct school visits to discuss safety around animals and animal welfare issues (AVA Pets and People Education Program, 2010; RSPCA World of Animal Welfare, 2012).

Humane education programmes aim to intervene in the cycle of abuse by promoting humane behaviour and empathy in children and may be more effective when interactions with animals are included in the programmes due to children’s natural curiosity for other species (Thompson and Gullone, 2003). Mudaly, Graham and Lewis (2014) report on an innovative animal assisted pilot therapeutic program for children who experienced abuse, violence and homelessness. Children exposed to violence frequently go on to develop social, emotional health and behavioural problems. The authors report that the pilot evaluation has shown that the children benefited in a range of areas from participating in the program and there is a need for a more rigorous empirical longitudinal study to confirm the findings (Mudaly, Graham and Lewis 2014). While not all perpetrators actually harm or kill animals there are many who threaten to do so. Threatening to harm animals is a reported method used by some abusers to frighten and control children and to prevent them from revealing their own abuse (Loar and Colman, 2004). This tactic is intended to enforce the family’s silence in order to protect the abuser. Given this issue occurs in the private domain of the family it can be challenging for researchers to get access to this population. The following section will address some of the issues associated with research in the area of animal abuse and human interpersonal violence.

Issues associated with researching of domestic violence/animal abuse
Researching sensitive topics with a vulnerable population (such as survivors of domestic violence) presents a range of challenges. It is recognised that when researching domestic violence, the safety and even the lives of women participants and researchers may be at risk (Ellsberg and Heise, 2005). Issues to be given due consideration by researchers include confidentiality, problems of disclosure, ensuring safety of the researcher and participants and the need to ensure adequate and informed consent is provided particularly as many of these women are in crisis at the time of separation (Ellsberg and Heise, 2005). Further challenges include access to and recruitment of women. These women are frequently itinerant immediately after separation until safe and sustainable accommodation is found. Some women may remain or return to abusive partners if they are unable to find suitable accommodation for themselves and their companion animals (Roguski, 2012). These issues pose challenges for researchers wanting to access this population group and rather than ignoring them because of the methodological difficulties posed it was important to pursue this population in this research to give them a much needed voice and to understand the long term consequences for the animals.

Victims/survivors of domestic violence are often denied the freedom to interact socially with others and once away from the violent relationship value the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their experiences (Abrahams, 2007). This is confirmed by previous research in which women participants spoke positively of being part of a survey on domestic violence and the effect on animal welfare (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012).
Whilst researching violence against women provides women victims/survivors the
opportunity to reflect on their experiences of abuse, repeatedly hearing about
traumatic events can have a psychological effect on researchers (Ellsberg et al., 2001)
resulting in vicarious traumatisation (Coles et al., 2014). Vicarious trauma is defined
as a transformation which occurs as a result of empathic engagement with survivors
and their graphic descriptions of horrific events (Pearlman and Saakvitne, 1995).
Vicarious traumatisation is described as an occupational hazard for those working
with trauma survivors (Munroe, 1995) and is particularly relevant to those who are
researching victimised populations. Coles et al. (2014 p. 96) argue that ‘The role of a
researcher is different from that of a clinician or counsellor and potentially more
traumatizing because of an inability to “help” the victim’. For this reason, debriefing
with a trained social worker (DBW) was undertaken regularly by CMT during the
interview phases of this research. While a number of challenges pose difficulties for
those researching this area this researcher was committed to meet the challenges in
order to explore the needs of the animals and of the key profession who care for them.

Animal behavioural changes
Apart from research by Flynn (2000), Hardesty, Khaw, Ridgway, Weber and Miles
(2013) and Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips (2012), most existing research on domestic
violence and animal abuse has not enquired as to whether the exposed animals has
displayed any behavioural changes as a result of the exposure. Whilst the behaviour
of stressed\(^1\) animals has been described in the veterinary behaviour literature (e.g.
Casey, 2002), earlier domestic violence research tended to focus on animal abuse

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\(^1\) Stress has been defined as an environmental effect which over-taxes an individual’s control systems
and reduces its fitness (Fraser and Broom 2002).
occurring within domestic violence rather than animal behavioural changes in response to the abuse.

McMillan (2005) argues that although physical abuse attracts more attention and outrage, the harm caused by emotional maltreatment is ‘frequently worse than that from physical neglect and abuse’ (p. 173). McMillan proposes a definition of emotional maltreatment as ‘Actions (or inactions) of the animal caregiver or other person(s) which, intentionally or unintentionally, cause, perpetuate, or intensify emotional distress’ (p. 173) and suggests that animal maltreatment be classified into four categories – physical abuse, physical neglect, emotional abuse, and emotional neglect. Such consideration of the role of animal emotions in the setting of domestic violence is essential when considering the behavioural changes displayed by animals from violent homes.

The range of animal behaviour observed and reported by women survivors of domestic violence (22 out of 26 women, 85%) includes fearfulness (e.g. avoidance of male partner; hiding; running away) and aggression (towards male partner/strangers) (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012). These results confirm that living with domestic violence is stressful for companion animals irrespective of whether the animals are directly abused or not (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012). The high levels of fear based behaviours have confirmed similar results reported by McMillan et al (2015).

Objective methods of assessing stress levels in animals include testing cortisol levels in samples of blood, saliva, hair, urine or faeces. Previous research has found that saliva (Horvath, Igyarto, Magyar and Miklosi, 2007) and shed hair (Accorsi et al.,
2008) are useful methods of assessing stress levels. Ideally, animals’ behaviour would be assessed by a researcher (e.g. via analysis of video footage) in addition to physiological stress levels examined in a non-invasive way, such as hair analysis.

Veterinarians and animal/human abuse

Animal abuse is encountered by many veterinarians at some stage of their careers (Sharpe and Witten, 1999; Munro and Thrusfield, 2001, Williams et al., 2008) and many believe that people who abuse animals are more likely to abuse their children or partner (Williams et al., 2008; Green and Gullone, 2005). Despite this, veterinary education is considered to be inadequate in preparing veterinarians on abuse issues they may encounter in practice (Landau, 1999; Sharpe and Witten, 1999; Green and Gullone, 2005). A survey of veterinarians in Indiana, USA, found that only 7% reported having received training in how to handle cases of animal abuse and none reported having received training in how to deal with cases of human interpersonal violence (Landau, 1999). Studies in Australia (Green and Gullone, 2005) and New Zealand (Williams et al., 2008) have similarly confirmed that most veterinarians feel ill-equipped to deal with such cases, despite the majority believing there is a connection between human interpersonal violence and animal abuse. A survey of 540 Australian veterinarians showed that of a list of stressor events at work (encountering suspected animal abuse; performing euthanasia; assisting veterinarians believed to be incompetent; balancing welfare of human client/animal patient; carrying out owner’s wishes that were not in the best interests of the animal; owner not paying for recommended treatment), encountering suspected cases of animal abuse was on average the most morally significant issue faced by veterinarians (Crane, Phillips and Karin, 2015).
It is likely that being confronted with animal abuse is distressing for veterinarians as many are drawn to the profession by their compassion for animals (Heath et al., 2006). The growing proportion of female veterinarians (Lofstedt, 2003) may affect the way in which animal abuse is dealt with as research suggests women have greater empathy towards animals than men do (Herzog et al., 1991, Phillips et al., 2011). Previous animal abuse research has mainly focussed on surveying small animal veterinarians (e.g. Munro and Thrusfield, 2001a,b,c,d) with little known about types of animal abuse encountered by those working in other areas such as mixed practice, farm animal or equine practice.

High levels of stress have been reported among veterinarians (Robinson and Hooker, 2006) and there is a tendency among them to rely on informal networks rather than professional support for work-related stress (Gardner and Hini, 2006). Similarly, some veterinary students cite the ‘stigma’ associated with poor mental wellbeing as a reason not to utilise on-campus counselling (Pickles et al., 2012). A survey of 995 USA veterinarians found that 77% had treated their own work related injuries by actions such as suturing their own wounds and self-medicating with antibiotics, rather than seeking medical assistance (Landercasper et al., 1988). This tendency to avoid professional support may be detrimental to the health of veterinarians, particularly if the veterinarian is also a victim of violence.

**Veterinarians as victims of violence**

According to statistical data on prevalence rates it is likely that many veterinarians have been victims of violence at some stage. Research undertaken for the current
thesis highlighted the role of veterinarians in identifying human/animal abuse and it was considered by the researcher to be vital to incorporate veterinary wellbeing and experiences of violence within the thesis. Human interpersonal violence is a global problem affecting people of all cultures and socioeconomic groups (WHO, 2002). Gender appears to be a risk factor for some forms of abuse - approximately 5-10% of men and 20% of women report suffering sexual abuse during childhood (WHO and International Society For Prevention of Child Abuse, 2006) and 30% of women report experiencing domestic violence (WHO, 2013). The increasing number of females within the veterinary profession (Lofstedt, 2003) raises the possibility that a growing number of veterinarians are abuse survivors.

The increasing presence of female veterinarians in practice and academia may be encouraging other women to enter the profession (Lincoln, 2010) however a masculine ethos exists (Paul and Podberscek, 2000) which has been described by a female veterinary student as a ‘macho bravado culture’ (Woon, 2011). Some female veterinarians interviewed by Irvine and Virmila (2010) have chosen to replicate the masculine ethic of the profession by adopting a ‘tom-boyish persona’ (p. 75) and acting like a ‘tough girl’ (p. 68) in order to appear professional and be accepted by clients. Such concerns are not unfounded - one respondent in Irvine and Virmila’s (2010) paper describes a client allowing his horse to die rather than have a woman veterinarian treat the animal (p. 69). It has thus been argued that the veterinary profession is not actually becoming feminised but instead is “female-dominated but remains masculinised” (Irvine and Virmila, 2010, p. 69).
This female domination of veterinary medicine may have positive outcomes in enhancing the caring and nurturing aspects of the profession (Lofstedt, 2003), a welcome change after the lack of empathy described as being prevalent in veterinary training in the 1950’s when the profession was almost all male (Lawrence, 1997). Research by Paul and Podberscek (2000) found that female veterinary students not only showed significantly more empathy than male students (P<0.001) they also maintained similar levels of empathy throughout years of training, unlike male students whose empathy declined in each successive year. Female veterinary students also place higher importance on communication skills, interpersonal skills, gentle patient care, utilising continuing education for lifelong learning and outreach and education to the public about veterinary medicine (P<0.05) (Kogan et al., 2004).

Compassionate veterinarians within practice and academia may encourage a climate of empathy and support towards human and animal victims of violence. However, women may have less opportunity to create empathic change at work as they are more likely to work part-time and remain as employees rather than veterinary practice owners (Heath, 2007). Women veterinarians have also been found to have higher levels of psychological distress, depression, anxiety, stress and burnout than male veterinarians (Hatch et al., 2011). Mental health and resilience of veterinarians of both genders should be a priority for veterinary educators and professional associations. Walsh (1998) emphasises self-care as being critical to survival of people working with domestic violence survivors and describes the analogy of staff needing to “fit their own oxygen mask” prior to assisting others. Women may be disadvantaged in the veterinary workforce in other areas as well, such as taking time off for parenting. Female veterinarians’ tendency to price their services lower than
their male colleagues (Brown and Silverman, 1999) and work for lower salaries has
been explained as being because women are more caring than men and less aggressive
in negotiating (Irvine and Virmilya, 2010). Whilst undercharging may be detrimental
to personal and practice income, discounted veterinary care would be welcomed by
those companion animal owners with limited finances who are fleeing domestic
violence. Providing veterinary clinics with some financial assistance from humane
societies, animal shelters, private donors, women’s groups or other charities would
assist in maintaining discounted veterinary care for those in genuine economic
hardship and increase the collaboration between human and animal support services.
Veterinary clinics are expensive to furnish with essential equipment, staff and the cost
of ongoing maintenance is substantial. Veterinarians are under constant pressure to
provide optimal care within the often restricted budgets of clients. So the
implementation of care for low or no cost for victims of violence may, in fact, create a
stratified profession divided by those who accept low fees for veterinary services and
those who do not.

**Personal and professional experiences of abuse among veterinarians**

Gender is a risk factor for certain types of violence – whilst males account for nearly
three-quarters of all victims of homicide (WHO, 2002), females are more likely than
males to have experienced childhood sexual abuse and violence perpetrated by an
intimate partner (WHO, 2015). Violence against women is considered the most
pervasive yet under-recognised human rights violation in the world (Ellsberg and
Heise, 2005), with domestic violence (also known as ‘intimate partner violence’)
affecting 30% of women worldwide (WHO, 2013). Examining whether there is a
connection between experiences of victimisation, mandatory reporting of suspected

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animal abuse and ways of managing suspected cases of animal has not been examined.

In addition to the risks of experiencing domestic violence in their private life, violence may also occur in the veterinary workplace. Occupational violence is defined as ‘any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work’ (WorkSafe Victoria, 2011 p. 1) and is among the top five workplace risks faced by veterinarians (Seibert, cited in Lewis 2007). Interpersonal violence is often hidden from the public gaze however graphic news stories of violence and abuse have the potential to both educate and shock the public.

The media’s role in reporting animal abuse stories and the public response

Previous research has found that repeated exposure to graphic media news items has been very stressful in contexts such as the September 11 terror attacks on the USA (Schuster et al., 2011), however, little is known about how media coverage of animal abuse affects viewers. Animal activists regularly use disturbing images of animal suffering in an attempt to drive change and Aaltola (2014) argues that these ‘shock tactics’ (p. 28) are needed because the suffering of animals is ‘a hidden taboo that society is very reluctant to notice, let alone address’ (p. 28).

According to Sontag (2004) looking at images of suffering is problematic when the viewer feels unable to help. Aaltola (2014) asks that ‘images need to be accompanied with clear incentives to action’ (p. 29) and Munro (2014) argues that ‘the public’s ire was aroused, not by persuasive intellectual arguments, but rather by the moral shock of seeing animal suffering on television’ (p. 10).
The surveying of the general public after media broadcasts of animal cruelty is included within the current thesis due to its relevance to how humans can be impacted by animal abuse and its applicability within the definition of animal abuse by Ascione (1993). Animal abuse affects the animal victims, those who see the abuse and those who care for the animals in a professional or personal capacity. The current thesis aims to examine animal abuse from several perspectives to compare how people are affected by animal abuse.

The live export coverage exposed the “unnecessary cruelty” to animals as demonstrated by such as acts as eye gouging and tail breaking. These were unnecessary acts in the process of slaughtering the animals for consumption and appeared to demonstrate the slaughterer’s intentionality to cause unnecessary suffering to these animals. Not only were they unnecessary, intentional and cruel acts of violence demonstrating an abuse of power over the animal but went against what Muslim religious guidelines teach on how animals should be humanely killed for consumption. When a comparison is made to the abuse of animals in domestic violence situations it appears that these acts are also unnecessary, intentional and cruel acts of violence but there is a divergence in the exercise of power. In the slaughterhouse the power and control is over the animal, in domestic violence situations the power and control is exercised over the usually female partner and the abuse to the animal is a means to achieving that. In both situations the animals suffer from the abuse of power from a human.

**Conclusion**
Ascione’s (1993) definition of animal abuse highlights intentionality and this emphasis makes this the preferred definition for this work. Therefore the cases of animal abuse being explored in this research are intentional violence. When reviewing the literature there is evidence that historic examples of intentional animal abuse can be traced back to Roman Times, as can attempts to protect animals. More recently we have seen the emergence of a movement promoting animal rights and the need for ethical and humane treatment of animals within animal welfare organisations emerging across the world. The transmission of images via the media is immediate and has been successful in raising public awareness and pressuring governments into examining ways to improve animal welfare. However, the media’s broadcasts of scenes of abuse can also cause distress to those viewing them.

The link between animal welfare and ethical conduct has been made explicit in veterinarians’ professional codes of conduct with some countries requiring the veterinary graduate to take an oath on graduation. While codes of conduct are widely accepted, there appears to be little consistency across jurisdictions on how animal abuse is defined, or on clear reporting requirements, so it is vital for researchers to clearly articulate the definitions they use which will provide some leadership in this area.

The veterinary profession has undergone a significant change over recent years with a greater proportion of women entering the profession. The literature review has established that veterinarians are vulnerable to stress and injury at work and it is reasonable to assume that with the high number of women in the profession a
proportion of these will also be victims of domestic violence. Strategies to support and assist the veterinary victims of abuse can be developed.

It has been established that domestic violence occurs at high rates in the population and that perpetrators use a range of coercive controlling behaviours, with some men including threats and actual harm of animals as part of their repertoire (Ellsberg and Heise, 2005; Faver and Strand, 2003). If children are exposed to domestic violence it increases health risks, causes development harm and has been linked problematic behaviours such as childhood animal cruelty (Duncan and Miller, 2002; Perry, 2002). It is therefore critical that we learn as much as we can about this phenomenon in order to address it.

The issues associated with domestic violence and animal abuse are complex and multifaceted so it is incumbent on researchers to respond with research that reflects this. A key profession that intersects with animals is veterinary science and while there has been some attention within the profession more is needed.

This work will explore a range of issues associated with how animal cruelty and domestic violence are responded to. Comparisons between how public displays of animal cruelty are dealt with and how domestic violence that includes animal abuse are managed will highlight the fact that the public/private divide keeps perpetuating the silence associated with violence in the private arena.

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World Health Organisation (2013) WHO report highlights violence against women as a ‘global health problem of epidemic proportions’. Available at:
In order to understand why some people abuse animals it is necessary to discuss the theories and hypotheses about human aggression. This chapter reviews international literature in antisocial behaviour and aggression to describe motivations for animal abuse.

Chapter Two: Literature Review Why some people are cruel to animals


Why Do Some People Start to Abuse Animals?

To end tyranny we must first understand it

Singer (1995, p. 185)
To understand why some people start to abuse animals it is first necessary to define human aggression and develop an understanding of the psychology involved in human behaviour and motivations. This chapter combines case studies and research from around the world to examine people’s motivations to abuse animals.

Human aggression has been defined as ‘behaviour performed by a person (the aggressor) with the deliberate intention of harming another person (the victim) who is believed by the aggressor to be motivated to avoid that harm’ (Gullone, 2009, p. 38). Harm in this context includes physical harm (such as punching someone), psychological harm (such as verbal abuse) and indirect harm, such as damaging someone’s property (Gullone, 2009). As an animal can be both victim as well as someone’s ‘property’ they are at increased risk of abuse.

**Attitudes People May Hold Toward Animals**

Before we examine more deeply why people may abuse animals it is worthwhile to consider the various attitudes people may hold towards animals. A typology of ten basic attitudes humans hold toward animals has been listed (Kellert, 1980):

1. **Naturalistic** – interest in and affection for wildlife and the outdoors.
2. **Ecologicist** – concern for the environment and the interrelationships between wildlife species and natural habitats.
3. **Moralistic** – concern for the right and wrong treatment of animals, with strong opposition to cruelty toward and exploitation of animals.
4. **Scientistic** – interest in the physical attributes and biological functioning of animals.
5. **Aesthetic** – interest in the symbolic and artistic characteristics of animals.
6. Humanistic – interest in and strong affection for individual animals, primarily pets.
7. Utilitarian – concern for the practical and material value of animals.
8. Dominionistic – satisfactions from mastery and control over animals, typically in sporting situations.
9. Negativistic – primary orientation an active avoidance of animals due to fear or dislike.
10. Neutralistic – primary orientation a passive avoidance of animals due to indifference and lack of interest.

Rather than attempt to neatly slot ourselves or others into one of these ten categories, it is more likely that people have a mixture of these attitudes, and these may change over time and depending on personal experiences with the type of animal involved. For example, many view ‘pest’ animals differently to companion animals. There is no single category that is pathognomonic for an abuser. Animal hoarders, for example may initially be motivated by moralistic and humanistic attitudes to rescue and house unwanted animals that would otherwise be euthanized. Soon, however, these people may be overwhelmed and neglect and suffering of animals is the result. Does this mean that the cat hoarder is actually negativistic? Or even dominionistic by forcing animals to live confined in filthy cages and rooms?

There are various theories and hypotheses to help us understand why some people perform abusive acts. A few of these which will be briefly discussed include:

- social learning theory;
- progression or graduation hypothesis; and
- deviance generalization theory.
\textbf{Social learning theory}

The theory of social learning is that every individual is socialized to seek approval and affection from those they love (Dollard and Millar, 1950). When this is successful, both parties feel satisfied; however, when this does not occur the resulting frustration and anger may be transferred toward ‘weaker creatures’ (such as animals) that cannot retaliate (Wright and Hensley, 2003). According to the theory of social learning, violent behaviours are learned from early childhood (Bandura, 1973; Reitzel-Jaffe and Wolfe, 2001). A study involving over 1000 children and adolescents in Italy found that those who had witnessed their friends and mothers abusing animals were more likely to abuse animals themselves (Baldry, 2003). Similarly, a study involving 281 adolescents in Australia found that animal abuse was more common among those who had observed animal abuse by a parent, sibling, relative or friend (Thompson and Gullone, 2006).

\textbf{Progression or graduation hypothesis}

This hypothesis proposes that those who abuse animals during childhood will ‘progress’ or ‘graduate’ to harming humans as adults. This theory forms part of what is commonly referred to as ‘the link/s’, which is widely promoted among animal advocacy groups around the world (e.g. The Links Group UK, The Linkage Project USA and First Strike campaigns by the Scotland SPCA and the Humane Society of the United States). Although many people believe there is a connection between animal and human abuse, among them veterinarians (Green and Gullone, 2005) and members of the public (Taylor and Signal, 2006), some researchers
criticize a perceived lack of rigorous research to provide evidence of such a link (Beirne, 2004; Patterson-Kane and Piper, 2009). Other researchers argue that the ‘graduation’ of abuse may not necessarily start with animals and progress to people, but move from ‘distant’ to ‘intimate’ victims (Arluke et al., 1999). Following this idea, people could start by abusing people and later harm animals. A (human) stranger for example, may be considered ‘distant’ yet the abuser’s own puppy be considered ‘intimate’.

**Deviance generalisation theory**

The deviance generalization theory rejects the hypothesis that there is an inevitable progression of animal abuse leading to human abuse. Animal abuse is instead viewed as a form of antisocial behaviour that may occur before, after or concurrently with other antisocial behaviour directed toward humans (Arluke et al., 1999).

A study of officially recorded offences by criminals and members of the public found that animal abusers were more likely to perform a range of other antisocial behaviours (e.g. drug, property, interpersonal violence and public disorder offences) and animal abuse preceded or followed violence toward humans (Arluke et al., 1999). It needs to be emphasised that the study by Arluke *et al.* (1999) utilised official reports of animal abuse and crimes to determine order of occurrence. The data therefore tell us order of apprehension for animal abuse offences and other crimes. The data however, do not tell us whether the acts (detected or undetected by others) of animal abuse precede, follow or co-occur with commission of criminal acts (detected or undetected by others). It would be necessary to undertake longitudinal research or retrospective reporting to explore this question. In another study, owners of so-called high-risk or
‘vicious’ dogs had significantly more criminal convictions than owners of low-risk dogs (Barnes et al., 2006).

**Motivations for Animal Abuse**

Researchers interviewed over 150 criminals and found that 25% of aggressive criminals reported five or more acts of animal cruelty, compared to 6% among moderate and non-aggressive criminals and none in the non-criminal group (Kellert and Felthous, 1985). From the stories of the respondents, Kellert and Felthous (1985) developed a classification scheme of nine animal cruelty motivations:

1. To control an animal (e.g. using abuse as discipline).
2. To retaliate against an animal.
3. To satisfy prejudice against a breed or species (e.g. hatred of cats).
4. To express aggression through an animal (e.g. organized dog fighting).
5. To enhance one’s own aggressiveness (e.g. using animals as target practice).
6. To shock people for amusement.
7. To retaliate against another person (e.g. hurting an animal to upset the owner).
8. To displace hostility from a person to an animal (e.g. a person physically abused as a child displacing the violence on to an animal).
9. To act out non-specific sadism.

A study of 112 prison inmates who had abused animals were asked about their motivations for animal cruelty (Hensley and Tallichet, 2005). Respondents could indicate more than one motivation (Table 3.1). Anger was the most common motivation, followed by fun, dislike for the animal and wishing to control the animal (Hensley and Tallichet, 2005).
Table 3.1. Frequencies and percentages of inmates who had committed childhood and/or adolescent animal cruelty and their motivations for engaging in these acts \( (n = 112) \) (From Hensley and Tallichet, 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Number ( (n) )</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For fun</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike for the animal</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To control the animal</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of the animal</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitation</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual purposes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenge against someone</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To impress someone</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To shock people</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The article below is a case study of animal abuse that highlights motivations. This report originally appeared in the *Daily Mercury* newspaper and is provided courtesy of the journalist, Bruce McKean (2009).

**Case study: Maximum term for torture of dog**

*By Bruce McKean, 4 September 2009*

Several people wept in the public gallery as details of the cruel and callous torture and death of seven-month-old puppy Peanut were read in the District Court in Mackay yesterday.

Peanut’s horrifying mutilation and death, which his killers videotaped on a mobile phone, beggars belief and the case has been described as the worst case of animal cruelty in Australian history.

After kidnapping Peanut in the middle of the night, Jonathon Blake and another man took him to a park behind the Moranbah rodeo grounds.
They mutilated and decapitated the small dog.

Parts of his body were found around the area by residents.

Prosecutor David Morters said that, by looking at the video: ‘It is quite clear that both Blake and his co-accused are enthusiastic about their actions. They are laughing and making comments. Their purpose in cutting off his legs was to severely disable the dog. It is also clear in the video that the dog is in excruciating pain. The torture of the dog obviously resulted in great suffering, Mr Morters said.

Blake, now aged 25, pleaded guilty to seven charges, including burglary and killing an animal.

Blake was jailed for sex offences in 2006 and served 21 months; when he was released he was given employment by the Neilsen family in Moranbah. He was allowed to sleep in their home when he had nowhere else to sleep. The Neilsen family even lent him a car. He had a falling out (with) Peanut’s owner, Danielle Neilsen, and kidnapped and killed the dog for revenge. After killing Peanut, Blake drove off and crashed his borrowed car through a council fence. He was arrested for drink-driving and it was then that police checked his mobile phone and found the horrific images of the killing of Peanut.

Judge Michael Shanahan said it was one of the worst cases he’d ever heard and said the details ‘beggar belief’.

He was invited to watch the three videos but refused to see them, saying the details read out were enough for him to impose the maximum sentence of three years in jail. However, Judge Shanahan followed usual legal practice and ordered parole release after one-third of the sentence (was served). He ordered the videotapes be destroyed.

Animal Abuse and the Internet
Animal abusers may use the Internet to search for scenes of animal abuse, to learn animal abuse techniques or to post footage and images of themselves abusing animals. This has led to arrests of the abusers in a number of cases. A 22-year-old Chicago man and a 13-year-old boy were arrested and charged with several counts of animal cruelty and torture after videos on YouTube allegedly showed them suspending a dog from a leash and violently spinning it around, throwing dogs into the air and letting them drop and hiding a mother dog’s young puppies from her as a form of psychological abuse (Mirabelli, 2012). The abusers identified themselves by name in the videos and had distinctive tattoos, which aided authorities in matching them to the posts (Mirabelli, 2012).

It is disturbing that people are filming animal cruelty as a form of entertainment, but particularly so when a child is involved in the animal abuse.

**Animal Abuse as Part of Other Crime**

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA, 2012), intentional animal abuse can be one of the most visible parts of a history of antisocial and aggressive behaviour and is often seen with other crime, such as weapons violations, drug offences, domestic violence, sexual assault and gang activity.

There are many incidents of animals being threatened and injured during burglary, particularly dogs being threatened, stabbed or shot by intruders and of rapists threatening or harming their victim’s animals. Sometimes, animals are abused as a
rehearsal for violent crimes against humans. The most extreme example of this is the case of mass and serial murderers.

**Animal Abuse, Mass Murderers and Serial Murderers**

*I will never forget the howl she made. It sounded almost human. We laughed and hit her more.*

This is an excerpt from the diary of Luke Woodham, a 16-year-old boy who is describing how he killed his dog, Sparkles. Later, Woodham stabbed his mother to death and shot nine schoolmates, two of them fatally (Hewitt *et al.*, 1997).

A serial murderer is somebody who murders four or more people over a period of days, weeks, months or years (Levin, 2008) and a mass murderer is someone who kills several people within moments or hours (Hickey, 2006). Although murder may be preceded by known or alleged abuse of animals and humans this is not always the case. In his manifesto published on the Internet, Anders Behring Breivik (quoted by McLaughlin, 2011) stated:

*As all my friends can attest to I wouldn’t be willing to hurt a fly and I have never used violence against others.*

Later, Breivik went on to shoot 69 people and kill eight others in a bomb attack, causing injuries to over 200 more people (BBC News Europe, 2012).

While some serial murderers have apparently enjoyed abusing living animals, more
appear to prefer the dissection and exploration of deceased animals – it is even proposed that this curiosity of cutting into dead animals may facilitate the development of deviant sexual fantasies (Hickey, 2006).

An examination of 354 cases of serial murderers found that 75 (over 21%) were known to have abused animals (Wright and Hensley, 2003). While not wishing to minimize the importance of animal cruelty as a possible predictor of violent crime, another way of expressing this could be ‘Over three-quarters of a sample of 354 serial murderers were not known to have committed cruelty toward animals’.

Should we be bothered? Yes, because any harm of animals or humans is something we need to be concerned about.

In a case study analysis of five adult male serial murderers in the USA (Wright and Hensley, 2003), common features in the history of each murderer were as follows:

• verbal/physical abuse in the home;
• feelings of humiliation, frustration and anger toward one or more parent; and
• release of this frustration, first by abusing and killing animals, then later, humans, often using the same style of killing.

Learning more about violent criminals and their experiences with animals is an important way to uncover possible predictors of violence but focuses on a small group of people, and gathering data can be particularly difficult in the case of murderers, some of whom are now deceased. Ideally, further research in human/animal abuse would involve longitudinal studies of a large sample of children from various backgrounds, following them at regular intervals as they progress through life,
working with their parents or guardians. Regular surveying of this group would provide valuable data to uncover the nature of any exposure to and perpetration of abuse against animals or humans.

Fortunately, there appear to be relatively few violent criminals living among us. So, what about animal abuse among the ‘nice’ people in the general community? Could our neighbours, our friends or even the local veterinarian be animal abusers? This will now be examined as we attempt to uncover the prevalence of animal abuse.

**Animal Abuse in the Community**

**What is the prevalence and incidence of animal abuse in the general community?**

*To the question, ‘how much animal abuse is there?’ one is tempted to answer, ‘as much as you are willing to find’.*

(Beirne, 2004, p. 43)

As there is a lack of large-scale self-report studies on animal abuse (Beirne, 2004) and a lack of a clear definition of animal abuse (Munro, 1999) that is widely accepted, it is currently difficult to know the true extent of animal abuse in the wider community.

Several researchers have, however, attempted to uncover the prevalence of animal abuse within certain subsections of the community, with ‘prevalence’ defined as the number of cases in a population at any one time (Munro, 1999). A survey of children aged 7–17 years in Italy found that over 50% admitted being involved with at least one form of animal cruelty (Baldry, 2003), while 20.5% of a sample of university
students in America reported that they had engaged in animal cruelty (Miller and Knutson, 1997).

Major problems when comparing studies of prevalence are that the definition of animal abuse or cruelty used by the researchers or participants may vary between studies, researchers are reliant on the accuracy of people’s memory and people may not tell the truth for reasons such as social desirability. Some previous studies, while very informative, have also focused on animal abuse among groups that cannot be generalized to the wider community, for example, jailed criminals (Tingle et al., 1986) or people in violent homes.

In homes where there is domestic violence, the prevalence of animal abuse has been found to be higher than in the general community. A case-control study in Victoria surveyed 104 women who had experienced domestic violence and 102 women who had not experienced violence (Gullone et al., 2004). Among violent households, 53% of women reported companion animals had been abused by their partner compared to no reported animal abuse by partners in the non-violent control households.

**Who Are the Abusers of Animals?**

It can be difficult to determine if somebody is an abuser of animals as just as in cases of human interpersonal abuse, animal abusers can be experts at presenting a caring public persona. Gullone (2009) reviewed the human aggression and animal abuse literature, including developmental pathways of aggression and demonstrated there is ‘substantial theoretical and empirical evidence supporting a link between human
violence and animal abuse’ (p. 55). Inflated and unstable levels of self-esteem, gender (male) and lower than average baseline levels of arousal were among the factors implicated with aggressive behaviour discussed by Gullone (2009).

Animal abuse may be performed privately or publicly, perpetrated by a lone abuser or with a group of others. In group abuse, the cruelty may be part of initiation or an activity encouraged by the peer group. Human violence research has found there are greater levels of violence and injury to a victim of gang rape (or ‘multiple perpetrator rape’) compared to rape by a lone perpetrator (Horvath, 2011). It is possible that abuse of animals by multiple perpetrators involves similarly increased levels of violence and injury.

**Gender and Animal Abuse**

Males outnumber females in aggressive tendencies by a ratio of approximately ten to one (Gullone, 2009), with most aggressive incidents occurring between the ages of 15 and 24 years (Anderson and Huesmann, 2003).

According to a US companion animal abuse monitoring website (pet-abuse.com, 2012), the following data of abusers were collated:

- Of 13,916 reported animal abuse cases in the USA, the most common age group for male animal abusers was the 31–40-year age range (2169 men) and for women the 41–50-year age range (831 women).
- Of over 8000 cases, 64% involved the owner or caregiver of the animal as the abuser.
- The neighbour was the reporter of the animal abuse in 37% of cases.
Despite this, men and boys should not automatically be viewed with suspicion as there are women and girls who also abuse animals. Although there are more males who physically abuse animals and more females who are hoarders (data from pet-abuse.com, 2012), for the sake of the animals we all need to be open minded about who an abuser could be.

Animal abuse may be perpetrated by people we would not expect to be cruel. Munro and Munro (2008) state that we should not assume owners with a disability will not abuse their support dogs or that companion animals with a disability (for example deaf dogs) will not be abused if the owner becomes frustrated with the animal.

A group of people who would never be expected to be animal abusers are veterinarians and, although the abusers are likely to form a small minority of the profession, this issue needs to be discussed.

**The animal abuser who is a veterinarian**

*The veterinarian was making the young farm hand continually use the electric goad on the faces of the cattle moving down the race. The boy didn’t want to do this but the vet was demanding he do this. The cattle became increasingly distressed.*

(Ancdotal report to the author by a visitor to a large cattle property).

Veterinarians and veterinary staff can be animal abusers just as can anybody else. Overly forceful methods of restraint, extreme use of force as discipline or punishment, shouting and swearing at animals may be seen by colleagues or (less likely) customers
of veterinarians. This is distressing to see, particularly when this violent approach is copied by other staff and used for all animals, even the quiet, frightened or affectionate. Patronek (2004) states that although there may be times when use of force in animal handling is unavoidable in order to protect the safety of animals, staff and the public, this should be limited to the extent needed and never used as a form of punishment. Managers of clinics and shelters must promote staff training in the correct use of equipment (such as bite-proof gloves, squeeze cages and nets), non-abusive handling techniques and use of tranquillizers and sedative drugs so staff can safely and humanely handle a variety of animals. Clinical veterinary staff who are cruel to animals have no place in animal welfare but unfortunately they are found, as seen in the following quote of a veterinarian talking about his first boss (anecdotal report to author):

*He wouldn’t use drugs to sedate the cats which came in for surgery. Instead, he would make his hand into a fist and then knock it down, hard, on top of each cat’s head. That would make the cat unconscious.*

Veterinarians and animal scientists undertaking research can also be cruel. One PhD student undertaking behavioural research in animal emotions wanted to research whether animals grieved (anecdotal report to author). She spoke with enthusiasm how she intended to undertake this research – by slowly killing one rat whilst its pair-bonded companion watched on, helplessly. With so many animals and people pining for deceased or absent animal companions, research of this nature could easily be undertaken without killing. It is unnecessary, unethical and callous to cause animals to suffer in order to obtain a PhD in ‘animal welfare’. Fortunately, other ways were found for that student to undertake her research.
The animal abuser who is a farmer

*I injected a sick old ewe with weed killer and left her out in the paddock to die. The next morning there were wild pigs laying dead around the paddock, they’d eaten her and got poisoned (laughs).*

(Anecdotal report to the author involving a farmer speaking to a veterinarian and veterinary student).

Cruelty and neglect perpetrated by some farmers can be extreme. Regardless of situations where farmers are themselves suffering due to economic or personal problems, they have responsibility to care for the animals on their farm. If they are unable or unwilling to provide this care then they need to consider another career.

Some farm workers appear to view animals as mere money-making objects rather than living, sentient beings. Some of this may be due, again, to the culture of violence prevalent within some workplaces. In other cases, lack of training, lack of access to veterinary care, no money (or unwillingness) to pay for treatment and no equipment to humanely euthanize animals may be involved.

In the example given above, the farmer involved did have access to a gun and could have chosen to shoot the sick ewe rather than take the bizarre and cruel decision to inject her with weed killer and leave her to die. I know this because while at the farm I treated the farmer’s dog for a bullet wound. The farmer told me he had shot his dog in the shoulder as punishment for not coming when he was called.
Accuracy Issues in Assessing the Extent of Animal Abuse

There is always going to be a potential risk of inaccuracy when trying to determine the extent of animal abuse within a population.

In the prison inmate community, potential issues of inaccuracy when using retrospective data of childhood animal abuse include difficulty recollecting what happened, exaggeration to appear more aggressive, withholding information to appear less aggressive and inaccurate information being given because the question was not understood (Kellert and Felthous, 1985). Another issue is that there is often a poor response rate in studies involving the inmate community – typically over 50% decline to participate (Arluke et al., 1999). Parental reporting of their child’s treatment of animals also carries the risk of inaccuracy – abuse may be performed secretly or parents may choose to minimize known incidents of animal cruelty to present their child in a positive light.

Self-reporting by members of the general community also carries risks of inaccuracy. People often want to present the best possible side of themselves and are less likely to disclose violent behaviour. This can vary however, depending on their mood or peer group at the time. For example, an adolescent may behave in totally different ways toward animals (and in general) when among peers compared to when with a parent or teacher. An area where this is particularly notable is ‘status’ dogs owned by young people in gangs.

Status Dogs, Youth and Crime

The term ‘status dogs’ is defined by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2010) as:

*the ownership of certain types of dogs which are used by individuals to intimidate and harass members of the public. These dogs are traditionally, but not exclusively, associated with young people on inner city estates and those involved in criminal activity. These dogs may be used as weapons in fighting or as ‘tough-looking’ status symbols, and even though the owners can form very strong bonds and attachments with their status dog, they may not provide the safe environment and care that dogs require* (Society for Companion Animal Studies, 2010).

Status dogs are at risk of abuse and neglect in the following ways (Metropolitan Police Service, n.d.):

- Their owners mistreat them.
- Sometimes the dogs will be kicked, beaten or even stabbed.
- Some status dogs end up being abandoned or left for dead.
- Sometimes the dogs are made to endure cruel training methods, such as hanging from branches by their teeth to strengthen their jaws.

In recent years, incidents, attacks and fighting of status dogs have increased with some incidents resulting in the deaths of children (DEFRA, 2010). It is believed that the increasing numbers of aggressive dogs owned by young people is linked to the rise in gang culture (SCAS, 2010).

Governments and animal welfare groups realize that status dogs pose a risk to human and animal well-being and in some areas have joined forces to try to manage this problem. The Metropolitan Police Authority in London has formed a Status Dog Unit
and is working alongside animal welfare groups such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), Dogs Trust and The Blue Cross. In the USA, the Humane Society’s ‘End Dogfighting’ programme offers owners of street-fighting dogs in Chicago the support, education and dog training skills to better care for their dogs and strengthen the human–animal bond. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS, 2012) explains why they decided to offer a range of services to help these dogs and their owners:

As we got to know people in these communities, we developed a keener understanding of how under-served they’ve been by animal care and welfare organizations. So we started offering a wider range of support: vaccinations, pet care information, veterinary wellness services (such as spay/neuter), health care and advice, etc.

Any attempt to help with the issue of status dogs needs to consider why young people feel the need to own these animals in the first place. A veterinarian who encounters status dogs and animal abuse in his work as director of the RSPCA Harmsworth Hospital in London is Dr David Grant. He describes owners of status dogs as ‘the finished product of a conveyor belt of social deprivation that begins at birth’ and advises that ‘Focus should be on the social deprivation conveyor belt at its beginning, not at its end’ (Grant, 2010).

Discussion needs to involve all relevant parties (such as the dog owners, police, veterinarians, social workers) to examine the social problems that are making gang life and status dogs so attractive to some.
Although owners of status dogs are typically young adults and adolescents, learning to abuse animals starts even earlier – during childhood.

**Children who Abuse Animals**

**What motivates children to be cruel to animals?**

*Ride your bike into (dog’s name) as hard as you can and make her fall over! Don’t worry, you won’t kill her…*

(Ancedotal report to the author: Four-year-old boy speaking to his younger brother).

Ascione *et al.* (1997) found that children’s motivations for animal cruelty included the following:

- peer pressure;
- mood enhancement;
- exploration or curiosity;
- forced abuse;
- sexual gratification;
- attachment to an animal;
- animal phobias;
- identification with the child’s abuser;
- post-traumatic play;
- imitation;
- as a vehicle for emotional abuse;
- self injury; and
- rehearsal for interpersonal violence.
Children may abuse animals because their parent or another person encourages or demands that they do so, for example as part of a domestic violence/child abuse situation.

Some parents threaten to harm, kill or give away companion animals to intimidate, punish and control the child, or to frighten the child from revealing their own abuse – repetition of this pattern can diminish the child’s compassion towards animals (Loar and Colman, 2004).

One family therapist believes some abused children mimic their own mistreatment by abusing companion animals and suggests this could indicate a preoccupation with death or even serve as a rehearsal for the child’s own suicide (Gil, 1994).

Children in violent homes are in a very stressful position as far as their relationship with animals is concerned. While animals are often the only source of comfort and safety these children have, they are regularly faced with the harm, death and disappearance of companion animals (Loar and Colman, 2004). The loss of this emotional support can have a profound effect on the children.

One child wrote of her companion animal loss (Raphael et al., 1999, p. 25):

_I had too many pets that died._

_I really don’t want to write about it._

_I can’t tell you about them either._

_I just don’t want to._

_It makes me too sad._
Don’t ask me any more.

I will cry into the ocean.

It is essential that children’s relationships with animals are taken seriously by their parents, teachers, medical staff and veterinarians. Children and animals can suffer physically and emotionally in violent homes and may constantly live with the fear of abuse. Not only are these children more likely to abuse animals, there are long-term detrimental effects on having healthy relationships as adults. It has been found that adults who abused animals as children were more likely to accept corporal punishment and hitting wives as part of family life (Flynn, 1999).

This chapter examined attitudes people hold towards animals, defined human aggression and discussed theoretical and motivational reasons for animal abuse. It has been shown that violence can occur as cycles. To stop this cycle of violence continuing, we need to consider where the abused and abusive children of today may be heading tomorrow without our intervention. A combined effort by veterinary and human health professionals will be most effective in identifying and helping humans and animals at risk.

References


Chapter Two explored theories and hypotheses about human aggression linking possible motivations as to why some people to abuse animals. Chapter Three discusses empathy for animals, the human-animal bond and the work of animal advocates. Animal advocacy can involve a range of actions, such as campaigning, protests and undercover filming of animal cruelty. This is particularly relevant to my research in public responses to media broadcasts of animal cruelty.

Chapter Three: Literature Review Human-Animal Relations

(adapted from Animal Abuse – Helping Animals and People by Catherine Tiplady, published by CABI 2013, pp. 30-40)

Fortunately, many people have compassion for animals. This chapter discusses people’s empathy for animals, the nature of the human–animal bond and ways in which animal advocates may act to protect animals from abuse.

This chapter is included in the thesis to provide an understanding of how animal abuse can cause a range of responses and reactions by the general public and how empathy and compassion drive animal advocates. The relevance of this chapter is further highlighted in Chapter six in which it is shown how public outrage after media broadcasts of cruelty to cattle resulted in the Australian government suspending the live export trade to Indonesia.

Human–Animal Bond

The emotional attachment between humans and animals is often referred to as the ‘human–animal bond’. Knowledge of the human–animal bond helps us to understand
the role animals play in people’s lives and how we can encourage a positive, healthy relationship. It can also help us identify a failure to bond, which, in some cases, could lead to animal neglect and abuse.

Both veterinary students and practising veterinarians believe understanding the human–animal bond is important yet most feel they are not adequately trained in this area (Williams et al., 1999; Martin and Taunton, 2005).

A number of researchers have studied emotional bonds and prominent among them is Bowlby, whose attachment theory describes the nature of emotional attachment in relationships (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). Applying Bowlby’s attachment theory to a veterinary clinic setting, Meehan (n.d.) describes behaviours that people may show (via verbal or non-verbal behaviours) toward their companion animal:

1. Proximity seeking – seen in a veterinary client who wishes to stay in close proximity to their companion animal and when the animal wants to climb on the owner’s lap and be close to them.
2. Separation distress – seen in a client who becomes distressed when away from their companion animal and shows grief when the animal is ill or euthanized.
3. Secure base – the companion animal is regarded as providing unconditional support, giving the client a feeling of security.
4. Safe haven – the companion animal is considered a source of support and safety when the client is experiencing personal stress such as divorce or a death in the family.
The interpretation by Meehan (n.d.) of secure base contrasts with Bowlby’s original work in which this described the child’s perception of the caregiver (e.g. mother) as a secure base from which to explore (Field, 2011). Bowlby’s focus was on human infants and their adult caregivers however, Melson (2002), proposes that animals (e.g. the presence of a friendly dog) could also function as an attachment figure which provides feelings of safety and security. In research by Beetz et al (2012), male children with insecure-avoidant or disorganised attachment benefited more during social stress from the presence of a therapy dog than a friendly human.

Some of the questions developed by Lago et al. (1988) that could be used to assess the strength of the human–animal bond in veterinary clients include the following:

• Do you buy your companion animal a birthday present?
• Do you think of him/her as a member of the family?
• Do you miss your companion animal when you are away?
• Is your companion animal up to date with his/her vaccinations?
• Do you enjoy playing with/exercising/grooming your companion animal?

Although a strong human–animal bond has benefits for animal welfare (by motivating owners to devote time and money to treat their animals), it is also a potential source of compromised welfare if highly bonded owners are reluctant to euthanize on humane grounds or if they allow behavioural problems and obesity to develop (Wensley, 2008).
**Therapeutic Applications of the Human–Animal Bond**

There are a range of programmes where the human–animal bond is used for therapeutic purposes, such as companion animals visiting hospitals and nursing homes, to warn owners of impending health problems such as seizures and as assistance animals for those with a disability. Prison programmes for young offenders to train shelter dogs benefit both humans and animals – they help the dogs find new homes and are successful in building people’s self-esteem and reducing re-offending rates (discussed by Jacobs, 2011). Clinical applications and techniques for conducting animal assisted therapy are discussed further by Arkow (2011).

**Empathy**

Empathy ‘shapes the landscape of our social and moral lives’ (Decety, 2014 p. 128) and is a term used synonymously with compassion, sympathy, kindness and sentimentality (Daly and Morton, 2003). Empathy is not unique to humans. Studies have demonstrated that empathic arousal drives animals to try and alleviate the suffering of another, such as rats freeing a restrained cage mate (Ben-Ami Bartal *et al.*, 2011) and consolation behaviour among distressed primates (Clay and de Waal, 2013). The role of mirror neurons (neurons with motor properties that fire both when executing a movement or observing the movement in another individual) in feeling empathy for another is attracting considerable interest among the scientific community (Iacoboni, 2009). Gullone (2012) discusses that low levels of empathy have been described in those with Callous-Unemotional traits and psychopathy. Dadds *et al* (2006) found that among children aged 6-13 years, Callous-Unemotional traits were strongly linked with cruelty.
Children and Empathy

Children have been described as having a ‘natural connection’ with animals (Randour and Davidson, 2008), and animals (both real animals and toys and story characters) play prominent roles in their lives. Part of animals’ appeal is the emotional support they provide to children. Melson (2000) describes the role that biophilia plays in emotionally attracting children to animals and their natural settings. It has also been suggested that children feel an affinity to animals due to the common feeling of vulnerability within the family and, as such, may be observers or victims of abuse and neglect (Loar and Colman, 2004).

Parents widely believe that companion animal ownership is beneficial for children and often encourage their child’s interest in animals. Perceived benefits include (Serpell, 1999):

- teaching a child responsibility;
- encouraging caring attitudes and behaviour;
- providing companionship, security and comfort;
- as a source of amusement; and
- as an outlet for affection.

These benefits of companion animal ownership may persist into adulthood. Paul (2000) has reported a positive relationship between human-oriented and animal-oriented empathy, finding that adults who owned companion animals in childhood, or currently owned companion animals, demonstrated greater empathy than non-owners.
Some people choose to act on their empathy for animals by becoming members of advocacy groups, becoming vegetarian or vegan, purchasing ‘cruelty-free’ products or performing actions such as signing petitions. It has been found that those in the animal protection community (e.g. members of animal welfare and rights organizations) are significantly more likely to be pro-welfare than people in the general community (Signal and Taylor, 2006). A survey of over 2000 people aged 15 and over in the UK found that: 7% had been a member of an animal welfare organisation; 8% of respondents had been a vegetarian or vegan; 20% had signed a petition on an animal welfare issue; and 32% had bought ‘cruelty-free’ cosmetics, not tested on animals (Ipsos/MORI, 1999).

Although many people who wish to help abused animals are conservative in their approach and will limit their involvement to legal activities such as volunteering, fundraising and signing petitions, others are willing to take ‘direct action’ in their desire to protect animals. In some cases this may involve threats and damage to property and people. The next section will cover animal rights activism.

**Animal Rights**

An animal rights activist is defined as ‘a person who engages in different actions to bring about changes to the treatment and/or status of animals’ (Olsson, 2010, p. 16). An example of an animal rights view is the argument that the keeping of companion animals is akin to slavery, depriving animals the ability to express their natural behaviour and reducing them to a commodity (Spencer, 2006). People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA, n.d.) is similarly opposed to ‘pet keeping’ (the breeding of animals to be kept as ‘pets’, many of whom are euthanased due to
overpopulation) and state that: “This selfish desire to possess animals and receive love from them causes immeasurable suffering”. Such views may alienate some people, including those animal activists who choose to live with companion animals (Greenebaum, 2009) and those who work to expose animal abuse and promote animal adoption (Dugnoille, 2014). Animal rights activism can include a wide range of positions and actions from opposition to criminal actions to perceiving violence as justified and necessary to liberate animals (Liddick, 2012). The illegal acts which some animal activists commit include arson, theft, burglary and breaking into laboratories to release or steal the animals (Bailey et al., 2010) and threats or harm of those employed in animal experimentation (Paton, 1993).

Such events are quite common – according to the Foundation for Biomedical Research (2011), most states in the USA have experienced ‘criminal activities in the name of “animal rights”’ in the years 1997–2011. The actions of these activists cause anxiety to those who have been confronted with them, particularly if the targeted person’s family members are also harmed or threatened (Kordower, 2007). A particularly upsetting example occurred during a 6-year campaign to close down a guinea pig breeding unit in the UK – the owners of the laboratory animal company reportedly were threatened and the body of their 82-year-old family member removed from her grave by activists (Cooper and Cooper, 2007). The activities of animal rights activists have been widely discussed in the media and scientific journals, with the latter warning that ‘Anyone involved with animal research faces some degree of risk and can become a target of extremists’ (Bailey et al., 2010, p. 139).
Several scientific organizations offer guidelines to assist those believed to be vulnerable to such crimes. According to the Applied Research Ethics National Association and the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (ARENA/OLAW 2002, p. 71), there are four key elements to an institution’s preparedness for ‘anti-animal research’ crises such as break-ins, vandalisms, threats and harassment:

• an animal care and use programme of impeccable integrity;
• a security programme, which is based on risk assessment;
• an integrated communication plan with descriptions of research projects in lay person’s terminology, spokespersons and a telephone tree; and
• an internal and external community outreach programme that includes legislators and funding agencies.

Many would regard activists who go to illegal lengths for animal rights as ‘extremists’ or even ‘terrorists’. Others, however, may wonder who the real extremists are. In one well-known case of animal ‘liberation’ or theft, the Animal Liberation Front raided the University of California and seized hundreds of animals, among them ‘Britches’, a stump-tailed macaque monkey (ALF, n.d.(a)). Britches had been part of a sensory deprivation experiment in which he was born in the dark, removed from his mother and placed alone in a cage with his eyelids stitched together to simulate blindness.

A journal article written by the scientists involved in this research described the preparation for these experiments (Strelow et al., 1987):

*Animals 2 and 3 had eyelids sutured, with additional bandages placed over the facial*

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2 A ‘telephone tree’ involves people taking a message and passing it on via telephone to a number of other people, who each pass on the message to a number of other people and so on. It enables a large group of people to be quickly contacted (Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2011).
region. A capsule weighing 35 g, containing sonar transducers, eartubes and some of the electronics, was fixed over the eyes and snout with elastic straps and bandages.

Britches was removed from the laboratory by the Animal Liberation Front and taken to a veterinarian for examination and treatment. According to Ingrid Newkirk of PETA (ALF, n.d.(a)), the report by veterinarian Dr Bettina Flavioli stated:

*Beneath the bandages are two cotton pads, one for each eye . . . Both pads are filthy and soaked with moisture. Bilaterally upper eyelids are sutured to lower eyelids. The sutures are grossly oversized for the purpose intended. Many of these sutures have torn through lid tissue resulting in multiple lacerations of the lids. There is an open space between upper and lower lids of both eyes of about one quarter inch, and sutures are contacting corneal tissue resulting in excessive tearing . . .*

Britches had his stitches removed and, when well enough, he was later transported to a monkey sanctuary for rehabilitation with other monkeys.

If the lives of blind children could be improved by the sonar navigational study of which Britches was a part, is the suffering of monkeys justified? The president of the American Council of the Blind, Dr Grant Mack, reportedly called the experiment ‘one of the most repugnant and ill-conceived boondoggles that I’ve heard about for a long time’ (Britches, n.d.).

**The Role of the Internet in Raising Public Awareness of Animal Abuse**

Public involvement and education in animal abuse issues is increasingly achieved via Internet sites, as well as by traditional methods of posters, brochures and exposés in
the mainstream media. Such confrontation with images and descriptions of animal cruelty can be distressing to members of the public, yet many report feeling pleased that the media inform them of these issues (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2015).

Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) is an international group that aims to close down Huntingdon Life Sciences, an organization that performs testing of a range of products and chemicals on animals (SHAC, n.d.(a)). SHAC, like many other activist groups, relies on the Internet to display powerful images, descriptions and video footage of animal abuse to inform the public, gain support for campaigns and drive change. Regardless of the country or setting (e.g. farm, abattoir, research laboratory, circus), the common feature of undercover videos by activists is animals being repeatedly physically and verbally abused by the people who are meant to protect their welfare.

Occasionally, co-workers are seen standing nearby ignoring or seemingly indifferent to the abuse. Are these isolated incidents? The frequency of animal cruelty exposés from around the world indicates that such abuse is a global problem, which would not reach the public eye if it were not for the work of activists. Undercover investigation is a feature of many animal advocacy campaigns, with supporters feeling this is the only way the public will learn about animal cruelty. The senior investigator of Compassion in World Farming has stated, ‘Going undercover, often in dangerous situations, is the only way that the truth about intensive farming can be exposed’ (CIWF, n.d.).

Activist groups emphasize that there is a range of activities that can be undertaken to
help in a campaign against animal cruelty, both in the ‘frontline’ (such as attending protests) and behind the scenes (e.g. letter-writing campaigns) (SHAC, n.d. (a); PETA, 2012). Books have also been published that detail the various ways people can get involved to stop animal cruelty (Singer et al., 1991; Stallwood, 2001; Hawthorne, 2008). Some activists train as animal attendants, veterinarians and scientists and work undercover within animal industries to document animal abuse. One such worker at Huntingdon Life Sciences reports being upset by seeing the dogs being abused (SHAC, n.d. (b)):

*Some dogs were not happy to be bled and they would struggle and not sit still. The licence holder would pull them around by the scruff, shout at them, and sometimes even used to pick the dog up off the chair by its scruff and have it dangling whilst they shouted at it. It could be a very disturbing time.*

*I saw co-workers grab them by the scruff, shout and swear at them, swing them by the scruff and slap them. I was told I was ‘too close’ to my dogs because when I carried them to and from procedures I would hold them tight to me and cuddle and kiss them.*

Common to many animal activist websites are guidelines to help people campaign against animal abuse, images and video footage of animal abuse, requests for donations, goods for sale (such as campaign T-shirts and stickers), options to sign up for email updates or become a member and links to research articles, publications and updates to recent news events in animal activism. Also on the SHAC website are contact details for those wishing to write to animal rights prisoners, a list of suppliers and customers of Huntingdon Life Sciences that are ‘current targets’ and a list of
recommended criminal and civil lawyers who are experienced in defending activists (SHAC, n.d.(a)). Despite encouraging people to take action to stop animal cruelty, the SHAC newsletter carries a disclaimer that it is ‘not intended to encourage illegal activity of any kind’ (SHAC, 2011, p. 11).

The website of global group Animal Defenders International (ADI, 2012) covers a range of issues, including animals in circuses, laboratories and farms. Information about animal rescues and rehabilitation, links to the National Anti-Vivisection Society and scientific information on alternatives to animal testing are also included (ADI, 2012). Some animal advocacy groups also have a section of their website specifically aimed at young people, such as Animals Australia’s ‘Unleashed’ (Animals Australia Unleashed, n.d.).

The successful use of the Internet and social media such as Facebook and Twitter to promote animal activism is particularly concerning to those supportive of animal testing, with some researchers stating (Bailey et al., 2010, pp. 142–143):

*The AR [animal rights] movement no longer must depend on traditional media for publicity – propaganda and misinformation about animal research can be spread rapidly without interference from responsible, fact-checking journalists. On the web, AR organizations are free to create their own spin and use their own ‘experts’ to assert that animal research is cruel, ‘bad,’ or ‘outdated’ science and unnecessary because valid alternatives are available for every type of research.*
Actually, animal rights groups often include reference to peer-reviewed scientific research on their websites and links to scientific organizations. Humane Research Australia (2012a) asks people to complain to the ethics committee and university that approved research in which pigs were given ‘breast implants’ (mammoplasty), some of which were deliberately infected with *Staphylococcus epidermidis*. A summary of this study, by Tamboto *et al.* (2010), is included on the website. Another study mentioned on the Humane Research Australia (2012b) website is that by Finnie *et al.* (2012), which involved anaesthetized lambs being shaken to death by researchers to replicate the effects of the child abuse ‘shaken baby syndrome’. The National Anti-Vivisection Society (2004) has a ‘Science Corner’ and links to sites such as the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments (FRAME), John Hopkins Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing and the UC Davis Center for Animal Alternatives as well as the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare and US government animal welfare sites.

Similary, the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (n.d.) includes links to websites promoting alternatives to animal testing, as well as animal adoption forms for those wishing to adopt healthy animals that were used for non-invasive research at several universities in the USA.

Veterinarian and animal advocate Dr Andrew Knight, on the topic of animal activism, argues that intelligent, strategic activism is needed, stating (Knight, n.d.):

*Truly ending animal experimentation requires awareness by governments, ethics committee members, scientists and the public of the poor human clinical and toxicological predictivity and utility of animal experiments, and of their burdensome*
cost:benefit ratio when compared to other means of protecting and advancing human health.

Public Attitudes to Animal Rights Groups and Animal Experimentation

Most people oppose animal cruelty. A US study of over 1000 households found that 85% of respondents thought it was either ‘very important’ or ‘important’ to protect animals from cruelty (Lockwood, 2006).

Those who feel strongly about animal protection may take action by contacting politicians to outline their concerns and request change.

In the European Parliament, ‘intergroups’ have been formed to unite different political groups on specific issues, with one of the largest intergroups being dedicated to animal welfare. Neil Parish, the Chair of this intergroup, has said that ‘animal welfare is the issue raised most frequently in my mailbag . . . the intergroup is a powerful tool with which to fight the corner for animals’ (European Parliament, 2007). Despite the strong feelings from the public about animal welfare, public demand for change may not be successful. UK politician Zac Goldsmith said although he had received ‘a huge number of letters’ supporting a ban on lions, tigers and elephants performing in circuses, the Government rejected introduction of a ban (Hickman, 2011). In the USA, elephants will not be performing in the Ringling Bros and Barnum and Bailey Circuses from 2018 (DiMeo, 2015) due to growing public concern about how the animals are treated (BBC news, 2015).

One Australian politician with an interest in animal welfare believes the level of
interest and concern for animal welfare issues amongst some politicians has declined (Bartlett, 2009). UK Member of Parliament Frank Field questions the government’s lack of time devoted to the licensing of animal experiments. This is described in the following excerpt of his speech at the House of Commons (Field, 2011):

_Last year, 3.6 million experiments were licensed in this country to be performed on animals. Only three of those licences were referred to the Animal Procedures Committee for consideration. The others were decided by Home Office civil servants. If we tally up the number of experiments on animals that the House has agreed to since the establishment of the current system in 1986, we get a total of 65 million. I want to contrast the care that the House took over possible cruelty in hunting with dogs with the care we have taken in our supervisory role for those 65 million experiments. The House spent 700 hours considering changing the law on hunting with dogs. We spent only 7 hours committing our country to the war in Iraq. We did not spend 1 second on those 65 million experiments._

A UK political party ‘Animals Count’ was formed in 2006 with the mission (Animals Count, n.d.):

_To establish a voice for the animals through a dedicated political party that focuses on respect and compassion for all living beings._

Among their key policies were to (Animals Count, 2010):

• phase out farming practices with poor welfare consequences for animals;
• educate children about the importance of compassion and respect towards all living beings; and
• eliminate the failed practice of animal experimentation.
A survey of adults in Britain conducted by Ipsos/MORI (2011) found that one in three people do not support the use of animals in any experimentation because of the importance they place on animals, and one in six (17%) agree that the government should ban all experiments on animals for any form of research.

Most people surveyed supported activities by animal rights groups such as:

- handing out leaflets (81%);
- writing letters (76%);
- asking people to put a sticker or poster in their window (71%); and
- organizing petitions (70%).

Most feel it is not acceptable to use terrorist methods (85%), use physical violence (82%) or destroy or damage property (82%), and less than half feel that demonstrating outside research laboratories is acceptable (48%) (Ipsos/MORI, 2011).

It is worthwhile learning more about the beliefs of activists who are willing to take direct action in their desire to protect animals.

**Animal Activists**

Animal activists come from all professions and age groups, although the majority are female (Groves, 1997; Galvin and Herzog, 1998; Munro, 2001) and only a small minority report being involved with groups that take direct action (Herzog, 1993). Not surprisingly, activists prefer to describe themselves as ‘compassionate’ and ‘determined’ rather than ‘misguided’ or ‘extremists’ (SHAC, n.d.(c)). Some activists
may harm their own health in their desire to help the animals and highlight their suffering. Barry Horne, a UK animal activist, undertook several lengthy hunger strikes and died while serving a sentence for crimes against companies involved in vivisection (Barry Horne Animal Liberationist, n.d.).

Typically, those who use animals in their work (e.g. farmers and those using animals for experiments) are viewed with suspicion by animal activists. The feeling of distrust appears to be mutual and is not helped by the apparent secrecy in the way many animals are housed and used in laboratories and farms. Members of the scientific community may be fearful of activists. When one researcher told scientist colleagues he would be interviewing activists for a research paper, he received negative responses such as ‘those people are just crazy’ and ‘aren’t you afraid of talking to them?’ (Herzog, 1993, p. 118). Herzog reports that he actually found the activists to be ‘intelligent, articulate, and sincere’ and that most were surprised and pleased that a scientist was interested in hearing their views (Herzog, 1993, p. 118).

Other researchers have surveyed activists for their views on the effectiveness of their campaign tactics. They found that ‘disruptive’ tactics (harassment of researchers and liberation of laboratory animals) were considered by activists to have been the least effective methods of activism and company boycotts, setting personal examples, attending marches and demonstrations as having been the most effective (Galvin and Herzog, 1998). Education of school students to the importance of ethical issues was deemed as the most important future tactic, and none of the respondents surveyed advocated physically harming their opponents (Galvin and Herzog, 1998).
Although numerous activist organizations exist around the world, the Animal Liberation Front is one of the best known due to their direct action – the letters ‘ALF’ are often written on walls to indicate that they were responsible. To understand more about how they operate, their credo is included here (Animal Liberation Front, n.d. (b)):

*The Animal Liberation Front (ALF) carries out direct action against animal abuse in the form of rescuing animals and causing financial loss to animal exploiters, usually through the damage and destruction of property.*

*The ALF’s short-term aim is to save as many animals as possible and directly disrupt the practice of animal abuse. Their long term aim is to end all animal suffering by forcing animal abuse companies out of business.*

*It is a nonviolent campaign, activists taking all precautions not to harm any animal (human or otherwise).*

*Because ALF actions may be against the law, activists work anonymously, either in small groups or individually, and do not have any centralized organization or coordination.*

*The Animal Liberation Front consists of small autonomous groups of people all over the world who carry out direct action according to the ALF guidelines. Any group of people who are vegetarians or vegans and who carry out actions according to ALF guidelines have the right to regard themselves as part of the ALF.*
Conclusion

Although most people oppose animal abuse, the ways in which they choose to act to express this opposition are diverse. To better understand the basis of empathy, this chapter has discussed the human-animal bond, attachment theory and its application to the veterinary clinic setting, people’s empathy for animals, the role of animal welfare/rights organisations and ways in which animal advocates may act to protect animals from abuse. People may choose to express their compassion for animals in a range of ways, from lawful activities to criminal activities. (A series of interviews with people who work to prevent and raise awareness of animal abuse is included in Tiplady, 2013).

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Chapter three has described motivations for people to care for animals and shows that people may express their compassion for animals in a range of ways. The next chapter begins to explore the experiences of living with violence.

Chapter Four – Study number one

Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse

Chapter Four is divided into two parts and describes a research project of women’s experiences of living with and caring for companion animals during a domestic violence relationship. Women were recruited by the staff of DVConnect, a Queensland, Australia domestic violence 24 hours crisis and accommodation helpline service. Women who met the criteria of having experienced domestic violence whilst living with companion animals were invited to provide their contact details to undertake a telephone survey at a convenient time. Part A describes 13 women’s experiences soon after leaving a violent relationship and Part B is a follow-up study of five of these women. This chapter shows how domestic violence has long term impacts on animal behaviour and welfare. The role of veterinarians as a source of support to these women and animals is also described.

Part A:

‘The animals are all I have’: Experiences of domestic violence, companion animals and veterinary access.

Society and Animals (in press)

By CM Tiplady*, DB Walsh* and CJC Phillips*

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Abstract
This article describes a study that recruited thirteen women who had lived with companion animals during a domestic violence relationship. The women were interviewed in order to investigate how animals were affected by the violence, as well as how veterinarians were involved. Women who had accessed domestic violence agency support were invited to participate in a semi-structured, qualitative study conducted by telephone interview. Most women reported that companion animals had been abused or neglected by their partner and had delayed leaving due to concerns that the partner would abuse or neglect animals left in the home. Affected animals most commonly demonstrated protection of the woman, and avoidance or aggression towards the partner. Only one woman had confided to a veterinarian that she and her animals were living with domestic violence, and in four cases women had been prevented by their partner from accessing veterinary care for their animals. It is recommended veterinarians are educated on issues surrounding animal guardianship during domestic violence to enhance their ability to provide knowledgeable and compassionate support when confronted with these cases in practice.

Keywords: Animal Abuse; Animal Behaviour; Companion animals; Domestic Violence; Veterinarians.
**Introduction:**

Domestic violence has been defined as acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and behaviours to coercively control a partner through fear (Council of Australian Governments, 2011). Although domestic violence can affect both males and females in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, it is most commonly reported in heterosexual relationships where men perpetrate coercive control over female partners (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996 and 2006; Heise et al., 1999).

Perpetrators of domestic violence are more likely to view women, children and animals as property rather than members of the family (Cohen, 2002; Carlisle-Frank, Frank and Nielsen, 2004; Stark, 2007). Male perpetrators who hold this view have been found to show limited empathy and increased risk of harm toward those they feel entitled to control (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Animals can become the focus of the male perpetrators’ violence as a tactic to coercively control the victimised women (Flynn, 2000; Roguski, 2012).

Understanding and acceptance of the ‘link’ between human interpersonal violence and animal abuse has grown over the last two decades (Taylor, 2013), with animal abuse gaining recognition as a serious risk factor for women’s safety (Walton-Moss, Manganello, Frye, and Campbell, 2005). Ascione, Weber, Thompson, Heath, Maruyama and Hayashi (2007) found women residing in shelters were nearly 11 times more likely to report their partner had hurt or killed companion animals, when compared to a sample of women who did not report domestic violence. Men who
abuse animals within the context of domestic violence show more controlling behaviours than abusive men who do not harm animals (Simmons and Lehmann, 2007). Threats to harm and actual harm of animals have been found to play a major role in coercing some women into committing illegal acts (Loring and Bolden-Hines, 2004).

For the animal survivors, emotional and physical damage is often long-term, with animals showing behavioural changes (such as fearfulness) many years after leaving the violent situation (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012). Most existing research linking domestic violence and animal abuse has not enquired about any observed behavioural changes or veterinary involvement, with the exceptions of Hardesty, Khaw, Ridgway, Weber, and Miles (2013) and Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips (2012). Although the behaviour of stressed animals has been described fully in the veterinary behaviour literature (e.g. Casey, 2002), earlier domestic violence research tends to focus on animal abuse rather than associated animal behavioural changes (e.g. Ascione, 1998).

The current study adds to the knowledge base in animal abuse and domestic violence research by exploring women’s reports of animal abuse, behavioural changes and related veterinary involvement. Existing research has found that while most veterinarians believe that people who abuse animals are also more likely to abuse their partners or children (Green and Gullone, 2005), many feel they were inadequately trained in animal abuse prevention or how to deal with such situations in practice (Landau, 1999; Green and Gullone, 2005).
Precise prevalence rates of domestic violence in any community are difficult to estimate because victims underreport it, however the results of the Australian component of the *International Violence Against Women Survey*, found over a third of women (34%) with a current or former intimate partner reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence (Mouzos and Makkai, 2004). This data is consistent with the global prevalence findings at 30% among ever-partnered women as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2013). In addition, 63% of Australian households live with companion animals (Australian Companion Animal Council, 2006), indicating that a large number of animals are potentially being exposed to domestic violence.

Abuse of animals within domestic violence is purposive and not random. Flynn (2000, p109) recounted reports of abuse, such as ‘Laura’s’ husband who would throw her cat across the room because “he knew it would hurt me to see my cat fall.” Abuse of animals in domestic violence inflicts psychological trauma on women (Adams, 1995; Faver and Strand, 2007) and can result in the death of animals through abuse such as decapitation or via euthanasia due to injuries (e.g. spinal injuries after being repeatedly kicked or jumped on) (Ascione, 1998; Flynn, 2000; Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012).

The scientific literature describes the following types of abuse experienced by animals living with domestic violence:

**Physical abuse** such as punching, hitting, choking, drowning, shooting, stabbing (Carlisle-Frank and Flanagan, 2006); kicking, beating, throwing, hanging, poisoning,
decapitation (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012); shaking, igniting (Ascione, 1998); deliberately driving over an animal and burying it alive (Flynn, 2000).

**Deliberate neglect**, such as starving a dog to death (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012).

**Sexual abuse** e.g. partners forcing women to engage in sexual abuse activities with animals (Roguski, 2012).

**Verbal abuse and threats**, including deliberately shouting at animals to cause distress or fear (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012).

**Other psychological/mental abuse** (Flynn, 2000; Green and Gullone, 2005; McMillan *et al.*, 2015).

A common feature of some domestic violence situations is the intermittency and unpredictability of abusive behaviours by perpetrators (Dutton, 1995). When aversive stimuli are unpredictable, animals may experience chronic fear and anxiety (Griffin and Hume, 2006). Physiological effects of prolonged stress include increased blood pressure, loss of libido, infertility, growth inhibition, changes to immune function, inhibition of inflammatory responses and cognitive changes such as diminished attention span and ability to concentrate (Casey, 2002). Chronically-stressed animals exhibit a range of anxious (immobility, pacing, circling, restlessness) and fearful behaviours (escape, avoidance, defensiveness, phobia, panic attack) (Sherman and Mills, 2008). It has been found that dogs with a known or suspected history of abuse showed elevated levels of hyperactivity, excitability, attachment and attention seeking behaviours and aggression toward unfamiliar people and other dogs compared to a comparison group of dogs (McMillan *et al.*, 2015).
In multi-animal homes there is often an individual, ‘target’ companion animal which receives the most severe abuse, and this target animal (usually a dog) is more likely to be one that the woman is caretaker of or is most emotionally attached to (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012). This suggests that companion animal abuse within domestic violence is a deliberate tactic aimed to establish or maintain power and control over the female partner.

Sociologists describe the process where women are socialised to fulfil nurturing and caring roles in their social and interpersonal relationships and while this process begins at birth it is emphasised during early childhood and adolescence (Wearing, 1996). York (2011, p. 15) details how girls are socialised to ‘place a high value on emotions and relationships’ in preparation for their future roles of wife and mother who have traditionally been the ‘nurturer/carers’ within the family (Wearing, 1996, p. 219). Dobash and Dobash (1979) assert that the central carer/nurturer role women play within family relationships is used by some partners to de-value and victimize them. Furthering this proposition Shepard and Pence (1999) emphasise that in some domestic violence situations power and control is exerted over how much caring and nurturing women are allowed to extend over and above what they are expected to provide to their partners.

Research has established that women generally demonstrate greater empathy toward animals than men do (Herzog, Betchart and Pittman, 1991; Phillips, Izmirli, Aldavood, Alonso, Choe, Hanlon, Handziska, Illmann, Keeling, Kennedy, Lee, Lund, Mejdell, Pelagic and Rehn, 2011). Within the context of domestic violence, the emotional bond between a woman and her companion animal may be particularly
strong (Flynn, 2009). Furthermore, childless women in domestic violence relationships are reported to grieve more deeply when separated from the animals than women with children (Strand and Faver, 2005). In some domestic violence situations the close emotional bond between women and their companion animals is exploited by perpetrators in order to psychologically hurt and control the women (DeViney et al., 1983; Adams, 1995; Flynn, 2000, Anyskiw, 2007; Tiplady et al., 2012).

Living with violence can cause emotional as well as physical injuries – just witnessing domestic violence has serious adverse effects on the well-being of both animals (Flynn, 2000) and children (Fantuzzo, DePaola and Lambert, 1991; Zuckerman, Augustyn, Groves and Parker, 1995). It has been argued that this alone could constitute animal cruelty (Loring and Bolden-Hines, 2004), as is the case for children. In some jurisdictions when children witness domestic violence this constitutes cause for a notification to child protection authorities, and if the allegations are substantiated then these services are required to intervene and have the offender removed from the household in order to protect the children and the mother from the ongoing abuse (Humphreys, 2006). Interventions for companion animals that witness or experience abuse are difficult as animals legally have an “owner” and advocating their forceful removal generally requires involvement of animal welfare organizations. In the absence of on-site housing for companion animals in domestic violence shelters, the recommended response is to encourage women to leave the household, taking their animals with them or placing them in the care of a foster carer or animal welfare organization whilst women relocate to safety with their children.
Animal abuse within domestic violence may continue after the couple separates, as established by Roguski (2012). Roguski found that during the relationship the perpetrator used animal abuse as a tactic to achieve power and control over the woman and children, and post separation animal abuse was used as a punishment for leaving; anyone perceived as helping the woman leave was also at risk of having their companion animals hurt or killed (Roguski, 2012).

To explore issues of animal and veterinary involvement in domestic violence situations a semi-structured qualitative interview method was used as it has been shown to empower women participants by speaking openly to a non-judgmental interviewer and is preferred when exploring sensitive topics with a traumatised population (Ellsberg and Heise, 2005). It has been found that a qualitative approach provides time for participants to describe their experiences in detail and for the researcher to explore the meaning that people ascribe to these experiences (Alston and Bowles, 2003).

**Methods**

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Queensland Behavioural and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee (approval number: 2011001096).

Participants were recruited over a six-month period from December, 2011 – May, 2012, applying the following eligibility criteria:

- aged 18 years or over;
had lived with companion animals during domestic violence in which the participant was the victimised partner

had accessed the Queensland 24 hour domestic violence crisis service ‘DVConnect’ (www.dvconnect.org) or stayed at a Queensland domestic violence refuge.

People who met these criteria were identified by DVConnect and refuge staff and provided with information about the project: the name and e-mail address of the principle researcher (CMT), the purpose of the study and the research team and ethics officer contact telephone numbers. People who self-selected to participate were required to provide their contact telephone number and a convenient date to be contacted by the researcher. These details were then forwarded to the researcher via her password-protected email account.

Prior to commencing the interview, participants were informed that their involvement in the study would be voluntary and unpaid, that they could stop the interview at any time without penalty and that their data would be stored securely and not shared.

The interview comprised 34 questions which covered types of abuse experienced during domestic violence, whether children were present, types of companion animals, details of animal abuse/neglect, veterinary care of the companion animals, behavioural changes observed, whether concern for companion animals was a barrier to leaving and demographic information. Participants were asked about their use of companion animal fostering services. Survey questions were developed in

3 In Queensland, this service is organised by the State Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and provides up to 28 days of foster care
consultation with domestic violence crisis support staff and provided women with the opportunity to provide both demographic data and also to elaborate on any of their experiences surrounding animal welfare in domestic violence situations.

Types of animal abuse were classified as verbal abuse (shouting or screaming at an animal to cause it distress), physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Frequencies of animal abuse were classified using the following scale (Green and Gullone, 2005):

- Never
- Infrequently (less than once per year)
- Occasionally (1-3 times per year)
- Regularly (4-11 times per year)
- Frequently (12 or more times per year)

Abuse of clients was classified using categories drawn from the intake forms used by DVConnect (Table 2), since women were familiar with these categories and definitions of behaviour.

Initial interviews were conducted by telephone and transcribed verbatim. Follow-up interviews were conducted with consenting women six months later and will be the subject of a future paper. Animal abuse data from one participant (Kelly-Anne) were derived from the follow-up interview, whereas the data on all the other participants were derived solely from the initial telephone interviews. We included Kelly-Anne’s for a nominal fee. Veterinary examinations are conducted prior to fostering and additional services, such as desexing (speying and neutering) are available at a low price.
data because we believe that the repeat interviewing facilitated the development of trust and rapport (La Rooy, Katz, Malloy and Lamb, 2010), which may hitherto prevented her from disclosing the animal abuse. Providing women multiple avenues to disclose abuse experiences is advantageous as some women survivors may initially avoid talking about violent experiences and prefer to disclose these experiences during subsequent interview sessions (e.g. Hlavka, Kruttschnitt and Carbone-López, 2007).

In order to safeguard information obtained during the course of the research (Wallace, 2010), names of women and animals were changed using pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. In addition, to the usual research protocols for de-identification, specific safety precautions were not needed as women were recruited through a women’s domestic violence emergency accommodation service and had separated from their abusive partner. Therefore, participation in the research did not put them at risk of violence from the abusive partner.

Results

Participants

Thirteen women participated, 12 Australians (including two Indigenous Australians) and one English (Table 1), all of whom identified as having experienced domestic violence from male partners.
Median age of the participants was 43 years (range 20 to 55 years). Most reported on a recent violent relationship, except for Angela who was reporting on a violent relationship experienced prior to a recent period of homelessness. All except two (Sandy and Maddie) reported that children had been present at some stage during the domestic violence. Women’s educational attainment ranged from partially completed high school to diplomas, trade certificates and university postgraduate study. Apart from three women who were employed, including one on sick leave, all were unemployed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of participant</th>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Age (years) of abusive ex-partner</th>
<th>Length of relationship (years)</th>
<th>Highest education attained</th>
<th>Workforce participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deanna</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>High school (partially completed)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16, sporadic</td>
<td>High school (partially completed) and trade qualification</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trish</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>High school (partially completed) and trade qualification</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly-Anne</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Diploma in nursing</td>
<td>Employed but on medical leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Currently studying Diploma</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Postgraduate university degree</td>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rianne</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15-17</td>
<td>High school (partially completed)</td>
<td>No – disability pension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Certificate III in Aged Care</td>
<td>Employed, three jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherrie</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>High school (partially completed)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>High school (partially completed); certificates</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddie</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>High school (partially completed)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamela</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Highschool</td>
<td>No-disability pension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Pseudonyms
**Domestic violence**

All participants reported they had experienced physical, verbal and psychological abuse from their violent partners and some women disclosed a range of other abuse types (Table 2). Four women indicated ‘other’ types of domestic violence, which we understood to be primarily types of psychological abuse:

- ‘Abuse to pets’ (Maddie)
- ‘Manipulation’ (Cara)
- ‘(partner) locked me in my house’ (Kathy)
- ‘Being totally controlled – regarding my friends, my clothes, where and when I go out, stalking’ (Kelly-Anne)

Table 2: Types of abuse experienced (participants could indicate more than one type of abuse)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Abuse</th>
<th>No. of women</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilful damage of property</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious assault</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child abuse</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse using weapons</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Animals and domestic violence**

A total of 36 animals lived with women during their domestic violence relationship (Table 3), the most common species being dogs, followed by cats. Two women reported living with birds.
Types of animal abuse

Eight women reported that their companion animals had been abused and/or neglected by their partner (Table 3). The most commonly reported type of animal abuse was verbal (shouting or screaming at an animal), with seven women reporting frequent verbal animal abuse. Of the seven, all reported concurrent physical animal abuse (six frequent and one occasional), and five of them also reported animal neglect. Issues of neglect included the partner’s failure to groom the animal’s matted hair, to provide food/water, tick/flea/worming treatment or vaccinations, allowing them to wander on roads and failing to seek veterinary care for a broken leg after being hit by a car. Although the male was the perpetrator of animal abuse/neglect in all eight animal abusing households, one woman, Cara, reported that both her partner and her partner’s 12-year old son would physically abuse the dog. In this case the child copied his father by throwing the small dog into the swimming pool in midwinter. Types of physical abuse perpetrated by partners included kicking (of Angela’s cat; Trish’s male dog; Kathy’s female cat; and the dog belonging to Kelly-Anne’s partner), hitting (Sandy’s male dog), and treating roughly/pushing/throwing (Cara’s female dog; Maddie’s dogs; Kelly-Anne’s or her partner’s cats).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of participant</th>
<th>Animals living with participant</th>
<th>Verbal abuse of animals</th>
<th>Physical abuse of animals</th>
<th>Neglect of animals</th>
<th>Abuser of animals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Deanna              | Dog #1 – female Maltese 5 years  
Dog #2 – female Kelpie x cattle dog 3 years | NR                     | NR                       | NR                 | NR               |
| Linda               | Dog #1 – female Maltese 2 years  
Dog #2 – female Maltese x Shih Tzu  
(elderly)  
Dog #3 – female Dachshund 10 years  
Dog #4 – female Dachshund 5 years  
Cat – Female shorthair 3 years | NR                     | NR                       | NR                 | NR               |
| Angela              | Cat – male 2 years               | Frequent               | Frequent                 | Frequent           | Male partner     |
| Trish               | Dog^ – male 10 months Cairn Terrier  
Cat – female 3 years Birman | Frequent (both animals) | Frequent (dog)           | Frequent (both animals) | Male partner     |
| Kelly-Anne^         | Belonging to Kelly-Anne:  
Cat #1 – female 12 years  
Cat #2 – female 13 years  
Birds – males, Quarrions, 8 and 13 years  
Belonging to male partner:  
German Shepherd dog female 7.5 years;  
2 cats female 8 and 10 years; one bird male,  
Quarrion, 3.5 years. | Frequent (dog)         | Frequent (dog and cats)  | Frequent (dog and cats) | Male partner     |
| Kathy               | Cat #1 – male 12 months  
Cat #2^ – female 2 years | Frequent (both cats) | Occasionally (female cat) | NR                 | Male partner     |
| Cara                | Dog^ – female Bichon 5 years  
Bird – male (now deceased) | Frequent (dog)        | Frequent (dog)           | Frequent (dog)     | Both the partner  
and his 12 year  
old son physically  
abused the dog |
| Rianne              | Dog #1 – female Rottweiler (deceased)  
Dog #2 – male Rottweiler (given away)  
Dog #3 – female German Shepherd X Dingo  
(hit by car and surrendered to RSPCA)  
Dog #4 – female Staffordshire bull terrier | NR                     | NR                       | NR                 | NR               |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dog #1 – male, Bull Arab X 2 years Dog #2^ – female, Staffordshire bull terrier, 8 months</th>
<th>Frequent (both dogs)</th>
<th>Frequent (both dogs)</th>
<th>Frequent (both dogs)</th>
<th>Male partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td>Dog #1 – male, Great Dane X wolfhound 3.5 years Dog #2 – female, Blue Australian Cattle Dog 3.5 years</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>Dog – male, American bulldog X Staffordshire bull terrier 3 years</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddie</td>
<td>Dog #1 – female, Fox terrier X 7 years (deceased) Dog #2^ – female, poodle X 8 years (deceased) Dog #3 – Female, poodle X 9.5 years (deceased)</td>
<td>Frequent (all dogs)</td>
<td>Frequent (all dogs)</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Male partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamela</td>
<td>Cat – female, 1.5 years</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>Male partner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^No participants indicated sexual abuse of animals.
† Kelly-Anne did not disclose companion animal abuse in the current interview, only in the follow-up interview.
^ denotes that out of all animals this animal was targeted for more frequent/severe abuse than the other animals in the household
NR = Not Reported
Analysis of the women’s responses revealed that animal abuse was generally perpetrated for three main reasons: in an attempt for the male to control/punish the animal; to increase the animal’s perceived ‘toughness’; and to deliberately upset the women (see below). The first two reasons were inferred from responses concerning the nature of the abuse and the latter was a direct question. Regarding control/punishment issues, Angela’s cat and Kelly-Anne’s partner’s dog were kicked for walking in front of the partner, and Trish’s dog would be kicked because the partner ‘couldn’t control him’. Kelly-Anne’s partner would ‘flip the cat off the desk’ if he was angry and ‘not coping’. Trish’s partner would forcibly control the cat by ‘laying down and holding her (the cat) until she gave up’. Maddie reported that her partner would ‘take the (three female) dogs into his bed and squeeze them like teddy bears and they didn’t like that’ and ‘annoying them whilst they were trying to sleep’. To increase an animal’s ‘toughness’, Kathy’s cat was kicked because she was timid and shy, Sandy’s dog was hit to ‘make him tough’ and Cara’s dog was treated roughly, teased and excited until barking and then thrown in a pool because she was a ‘stupid dog’.

When we asked if they thought animals were ever abused in order to deliberately upset the woman, three replied affirmatively (Kathy, Cara and Angela) and Trish said she thought it was ‘possibly’ true. In some cases, women reported that partners appeared to control their abusive tendencies towards animals in order to avoid conflict with the women (Sandy; Rianne; Kathy). Sandy explained that ‘he stopped doing it [abusing the animals] around me because it caused so many arguments’. Rianne stated that her partner ‘wouldn’t dare’ abuse or neglect the animals, saying ‘there’d be
a punch up’ if animals were harmed. Kathy explained: ‘I said to him ‘If you want to kick my cat, I’ll kick you’, so he stopped.’ Kathy’s experiences show that her partner was able to find boundaries for his aggression: ‘Once he worked out I was protective of my animals and my children he stopped (the abusive behaviour). I’m like a tiger, he knows if he hurts the animals or kids I won’t go anywhere near him.’ Linda reported that her partner was an ‘animal lover’, explaining ‘He calls the animals his babies and wouldn’t harm them’.

**Target animals**

Of the ten households where multiple animals had lived, six women (60%) reported the occurrence of animal abuse. Of these six, Kelly-Anne did not answer this question; however, the five other women reported that most of the abuse was directed at a particular companion animal. The target animals were four dogs (three females and one male) and one cat (female).

Reasons given for an individual companion animal being targeted for abuse were mainly a desire to control the animal (as reported by Trish, Sandy and Kathy) and/or the women’s emotional bond with that animal (as reported by Kathy, Maddie and Cara. Trish explained which animal experienced the most abuse:

‘Definitely the dog! Because he couldn’t control the dog. He could pick up the cat and lay down with her and hold her until she gave up and stayed. It didn’t matter how many times I tried to tell him she was free to make her own choices, he just didn’t care’. For Sandy, her 8 month old female Staffordshire bull terrier puppy was abused more ‘because she was a puppy and chewing everything, she was more annoying to [my partner]’. Kathy stated that the female cat experienced more abuse than the male
kitten because ‘she was predominantly my cat and I looked after her. The male kitten (Digger) came along later… he loved the boy kitten. The male was more mouldable to what he wanted a cat to be, i.e. like (a) dog. He tried to make Digger more of a dog’. In Maddie’s case, the 8 year old female Poodle Crossbreed experienced most abuse ‘because she was my favourite’ and for Cara her female Bichon Frise dog experienced more abuse ‘because she was always with me, she followed me everywhere, she slept with me; she’s like a child.’

*Behavioural changes in animals*

Although not all animals had experienced direct abuse, all had witnessed domestic violence. All except one woman reported noticing behaviour changes whilst the animals lived with domestic violence. Trish stated that during domestic violence she didn’t notice any changed behaviour in the animals, saying ‘my focus is my daughter’s safety’.

Behavioural changes in their companion animals during domestic violence reported by the other women are outlined in Table 4. Becoming more protective of the woman was seen as a good thing by Deanna who stated ‘I believe they (the animals) were affected by raising of voices and are more protective (now) than they’ve ever been. It sounds bad but they are probably protective in a good way. Koda (the Kelpie X Cattle Dog) has become very protective due to the circumstances she was put in… I felt really safe, it was like she was saying ‘I’ll be mum’s partner’.”
Table 4: Animal behaviour changes reported by women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of behaviour</th>
<th>Women reporting</th>
<th>Animals which displayed this behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proximity seeking to woman/protectiveness toward woman</td>
<td>Pamela, Sandy, Linda, Rianne, Kathy, Deanna</td>
<td>Dogs, cats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance of partner/men/strangers or withdrawn</td>
<td>Maddie, Kathy, Cara, Angela, Cherrie,</td>
<td>Dogs, cats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression towards partner/men/strangers</td>
<td>Deanna, Anita Rianne, Kathy, Cara,</td>
<td>Dogs, cats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distressed/nervous/fearful</td>
<td>Deanna, Angela Cara, Kelly-Anne,</td>
<td>Dogs, cats, birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocalising</td>
<td>Deanna, Anita Cherrie, Linda, Kathy,</td>
<td>Dogs, cats, birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased food consumption</td>
<td>Kelly-Anne,</td>
<td>Cats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Animal foster care programs
Eight women (Cara, Cherrie, Rianne, Sandy, Kelly-Anne, Deanna, Linda and Trish) indicated they were using the companion animal fostering service for at least one of their companion animals. Of the five women who didn’t use the animal fostering service, two provided reasons: Anita returned home safely to care for her dog after her partner was jailed and Kathy’s partner would not allow her to use the companion animal fostering service.

*Animal-friendly accommodation*

Despite the support offered by the fostering program, several women stated that the duration of fostering was insufficient and expressed anxiety about the need to find safe, animal-friendly accommodation within 28 days. Cara explained: ‘It’s hard finding somewhere to live with her (the Bichon Frise dog). It’s not as if I can just sneak her in because she barks so much. I have to make a decision by the 28th day (of fostering) whether I can have her…’

Cherrie said that ‘I’ve got to pick them up (the dogs, from foster care) next week but I don’t have a house.’

Trish had a dog in foster care but had been told: ‘They can’t keep him anymore, he’s been there 28 days, but they (RSPCA) said it was 52 days. They (RSPCA) asked if I can take him to (RSPCA refuge in another city) but I can’t do that at the moment from where I am right now. So, I don’t know what they’re going to do with him.’

Sandy had been working three jobs to successfully save the bond money for a rental house with a big yard for the dogs.
Kelly-Anne reported her distress about the separation from her cats whilst they were in foster care, stating: ‘My greatest fear of leaving (my partner) was being separated from the cats and what that will do to them. I’m worried about my cats not being with me and my birds are used to coming out and being handled by me. What makes it hard is that I can’t go and see my animals; they (the shelter staff) won’t let me. They say it will upset the animals. The animals are all I have since the kids grew up and left.’

Rianne however, had been allowed by shelter staff to visit her dog and take her on outings with her children. Despite this, Rianne was particularly distressed when she was sent a message from the shelter staff that the 28 days of foster care had finished for her dog Mishka:

‘The 28 days has run out (for the dog). I’m screwed, I’m in deep shit, I’m still in a refuge and can’t have the dog here either. (Women’s) refuge let me have her with me overnight last night. I need help here. I took Mishka out a couple of times a week with the kids on outings to spend some time with me. Mishka’s been real quiet lately. I bawl every time I have to put her back at RSPCA…”

Deanna said ‘We [Deanna and her children] can’t get a home because of our dogs. We’re good people and we’ve got beautiful pets we’ve cared for their whole lives. I’m a single mum (with) only one wage. I don’t know how other mums do it on their own. I don’t want to rely on a male to keep me and I never have. We’ve got nowhere to go, there’s no (options) in-between crisis or emergency housing and paying $300-$350 (rent per week)… I think we’ve got to sort this out.’
Delays in leaving

Eight women reported they had delayed leaving their abusive partner due to concern 
their partner might hurt or neglect any animals left behind. Of those who delayed 
leaving, the shortest time was four months (Kathy), followed by six months (Kelly-
Anne, Deanna and Trish), 12 months (Sandy, Pamela and Angela). Maddie delayed 
leaving for approximately 9.5 years, at which stage she elected to euthanase all three 
dogs to prevent them from suffering further abuse.

A desire to remain with their companion animals was evident. Rianne said she had 
been unaware of the animal fostering service for some time. She had previously slept 
in her car for a week at a truck stop ‘so I could stay with my dog’.

Veterinary involvement

No women in the current study felt that their animals had required veterinary care due 
to stress reactions or injuries inflicted by the abusive partner. Four women reported 
partners had actively prevented them obtaining veterinary treatment for injuries or 
illnesses not related to domestic violence. Kathy’s partner did not allow her to seek 
treatment for the cat (for a cat bite abscess), Kelly-Anne reported that her partner 
would not take the cat (with a growth on its eye) for veterinary treatment because ‘I 
don’t like the cat, it’s her (his ex-wife’s) cat’. Trish’s partner prevented her taking the 
animals for veterinary care; however she took the animals for veterinary treatment 
whilst her partner was at work. Sandy’s Staffordshire bull terrier puppy had been hit 
by a car and her partner refused to return money she had given him for the puppy to 
receive veterinary care. Sandy borrowed the money and returned with police to 
collect the puppy and take her to a veterinarian.

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Twelve of the thirteen women had not confided in a veterinarian about living with domestic violence. Rianne had confided in a veterinarian after one of her dogs (‘Goldie’, a German Shepherd X Dingo) was hit by a car, however the veterinarian she initially approached refused to treat the animal because Rianne couldn’t pay.

Rianne described this stressful time and her repeated attempts to seek help: ‘When Goldie was hit by a car I tried 15 vets to help me but they wouldn’t help me. I offered my car as a deposit but they wouldn’t help. Nobody would help me. To get help to pay (for veterinary treatment) I asked everyone for help, even legal services. RSPCA would only help if I handed her over. I had to sign her (the dog) over to the RSPCA. Nobody would tell me what happened to her. It was the most traumatic experience. My daughter still cries for Goldie’.

**Gender of veterinarian**

Women were asked whether they had a preference to confide in a male or female veterinarian about living with domestic violence. Nine reported they had no gender preference and four stated a preference for a female veterinarian, Deanna explaining ‘I would feel I’d get more response from a female (veterinarian) just because of the damage which has been inflicted on me from males’. Trish (who had no gender preference for veterinarian) explained her difficulty in confiding in anybody about living with domestic violence, stating ‘But I wouldn’t tell a vet… It’s not something you talk about with anyone. Full stop.’

**Discussion**
This paper highlights participants’ experiences of how companion animals were affected when living with domestic violence and how that impacted on their decision making. It is apparent that the recruitment site chosen had an impact on the number of participants. Women were recruited as they accessed a domestic violence crisis service, and it was likely that attempting to access women during such a life-changing crisis reduced the response rate. Although this limits our ability to generalise our findings the current study provides a valuable addition to the scientific literature of human-animal abuse studies. This study fits into the broader literature in human/animal abuse by examining the experiences of a sample of women living in Australia and examining how their companion animals are impacted and cared for. Veterinarians are a key group of professionals who work at the interface between human and animal welfare and as such, will greatly benefit by increasing their knowledge of animal welfare in domestic violence. More research in this area, involving larger numbers of women, is needed to further our understanding of how women and animals are impacted by domestic violence.

Although no sexual abuse of animals was reported, physical and verbal animal abuse was common. Physical animal abuse was diverse, not only including the more commonly reported types of animal abuse such as kicking, hitting and throwing (Flynn, 2000; Roguski, 2012; Volant, Johnson, Gullone and Coleman, 2008), but also ‘forced intimacy’ by coercing a cat to lay with the abusive male ‘until she gave up’ (Trish) and taking small dogs to bed to squeeze (Maddie). ‘Restriction of movement’ is a type of physical animal abuse that has been reported previously (Green and Gullone, 2005). Abusing animals to ‘make them tough’ was seen as a motivation for
some abuse in the current study which is consistent with other studies (e.g. Flynn, 2000).

All perpetrators of the animal abuse/neglect reported here were male, including one 12-year old reportedly copying his father’s behaviour. Recruiting children to participate in violent acts has been described as a tactic used by some violent men (Harne, 2011; Jaffe, Wolfe, and Wilson, 1990; McGee, 2000; Mullender, Hague, Imam, Kelly, Malos, and Regan, 2002). In addition animal abuse has been found to occur more often among children from violent homes than those from non-violent homes (Currie, 2006). Social learning theory proposes that aggressive behaviour in parents can be repeated by children as part of intergenerational transmission of violence (Muller, Hunter and Stollak, 1995). Other authors, however, argue that this intergenerational transmission of aggression involves the interaction of a range of factors (Kaufman and Zigler, 1993; Langeland and Dijkstra, 1995), with Fauchier (2008) emphasising that it is not inevitable, as the majority of people exposed to violence during childhood will eventually live violence-free lives.

**Behavioural changes**

Even where companion animals were not directly abused, the types of behavioural changes reported here indicate many animals became fearful and stressed by living with domestic violence.

Stress and fear responses reported in the current study such as perpetrator avoidance, defensive aggression, hiding, vocalisation and seeking out human contact may assist an animal to ‘deal with variety and change in its environment’ (Casey, 2002, pp.150-
151), however, ongoing and unavoidable stress is unnecessary and has adverse effects on an animal’s physical and emotional wellbeing.

Animal behavioural responses commonly reported by five women were aggression (towards the male partner, men in general and strangers) and avoidance (hiding/running away/avoiding male partner/men in general and strangers).

Considering that behavioural ‘problems’, and in particular aggression to humans, are the most common reason for dogs and cats to be euthanised at RSPCA shelters in Australia (RSPCA, 2012), it is possible that animals from violent homes may face euthanasia due to exhibiting behaviours learnt whilst attempting to cope with their situation.

**Barriers to women’s safety**

Consideration of animals in any safety planning for women experiencing domestic violence is vital, as concern for animal welfare is a key factor determining whether women decide to leave or stay in a violent relationship (Faver and Strand, 2003). Most women in the current study reported they had delayed leaving their abusive partner due to concerns for the animals’ welfare. This is consistent with findings elsewhere that highlight women’s concerns for animal welfare as a barrier to seeking help and leaving an abusive partner (Ascione, 1998; Flynn, 2000; Carlisle-Frank, Frank and Nielsen, 2004; Roguski, 2012; Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012).

Separation of companion animals from women for fostering, although distressing to some women, was beneficial in allowing women the opportunity to safely relocate and for animals to receive necessary veterinary care. However, the length of fostering (28 days) was seen as insufficient by several women.
The Sheltering Animals and Families Together™ program in the USA (www.animalsandfamilies.org) allows women, children and companion animals to be safely housed together in one location after escaping domestic violence. We believe this holistic housing approach should be more widely adopted as it may assist women to leave the abusive situation with the confidence that they will be accommodated safely with their companion animals. At the time of writing, only one domestic violence shelter in Australia (Jessie Street Domestic Violence Services, Inc. in New South Wales) has become part of the SAF-T™ program (SAF-T, n.d.).

**Veterinary issues**

In this study, women were the main decision makers for veterinary care within their households and while some women reported their access was at times blocked, they were, in the main, pro-actively protective toward their companion animals. In the only case where a woman disclosed to a veterinarian she had found the experience to be unhelpful.

Most women indicated no preference for confiding in either a male or female veterinarian, if they chose to confide in one, however when a preference was provided it was for a female veterinarian. Providing an opportunity to discuss issues of animal abuse and domestic violence may represent the only chance for women to obtain information and support. It is important that veterinary education includes recognition of the possibility of animal abuse co-occurring with human interpersonal violence. Training veterinarians to be more pro-active in opening a conversation
about domestic violence and animal abuse in a non-threatening way would help clients feel safe to disclose.

The importance of a non-threatening approach by veterinarians wishing to ask about domestic violence has been emphasised by women in previous research (Hardesty, Khaw, Ridgway, Weber and Miles, 2013). The women in Hardesty et al’s research (2013) also highlighted the importance of only asking women about domestic violence when the abusive partner is not present and suggested that veterinarians could offer emergency boarding of animals to assist clients needing to escape violence.

The Australian Veterinary Association (2012) code of professional conduct advises veterinarians to ‘Strive to provide the best possible veterinary services and improve the quality of animal health and welfare at every opportunity’ and ‘Foster and maintain good communications and relationships with your clients, earning their trust, and respecting client confidentiality’. Both of these are pertinent to veterinarians’ work with clients and animals from violent homes.

An opportunity to collaborate with the client to protect the welfare of their animals may also provide a pathway to access other services. Knowledge about local domestic violence organisations, animal shelters and available services for any potential clients and companion animals will enable veterinarians to be better prepared for these cases when they are encountered in practice. Offering clients support numbers for local domestic violence services and companion animal fostering (available from local RSPCA shelters and other welfare and domestic violence organisations) is
recommended. In addition, listening without judgment, maintaining client confidentiality and safety (e.g. by only discussing abuse issues with the abused client alone and never when her/his partner is present) and offering clients in financial difficulty the option to pay veterinary treatment by instalment over time will help to secure a good outcome for those involved in domestic violence situations. Displaying domestic violence informational posters and brochures within veterinary clinics may help people to feel more inclined to disclose their abuse.

There are a number of possible reasons why women may not seek veterinary care for animals, such as not wishing to disclose to a veterinarian, feeling that the animal’s injuries were not sufficiently serious for veterinary care and could be managed at home, financial constraints, fear of discovery and being prevented by partners from accessing veterinary care.

Limitations
This study explored issues faced by a small group of women caretakers of companion animals who had lived through a violent relationship and sought support from a domestic violence referral service. We acknowledge there are limitations in this study preventing widespread generalisation to other domestic violence situations. It is possible that not all eligible women were recruited by staff or offered the opportunity to participate. Others may have been too distressed due to their current situation to participate. As there were varying responses to the level of animal abuse (such as some reported little or no companion animal abuse and some reporting severe animal abuse), we do not think that only those women with more extreme experiences chose to participate. Additionally, there were no incentives offered for participation.
Regarding reasons for perpetration of animal abuse, one of the three reasons, to upset the women, was asked as a direct question, whereas the other two, to control the animal and increase the animal’s toughness, were inferred from responses concerning the nature of the abuse. In future research open questions could be used to allow women to describe what they consider to be the possible motivations for their partner to have abused animals within domestic violence.

**Conclusion**

Whilst women and companion animals were exposed to a range of abusive behaviour in the current study, not all companion animals had been directly abused. Despite this, reports of behavioural changes by nearly all women suggested that animals were affected by living with violence, regardless of whether they were directly victimised. In most multi-animal households where companion animal abuse was occurring, there was one animal which was targeted for the most severe abuse. Animals responded by demonstrating distress and vocalising, attempting to protect the woman, and avoiding the partner or being aggressive to them. The desire of perpetrators to make animals ‘tough’ and use animal abuse as a method of controlling women was evident in many of the women’s narratives. Most participants had not confided in veterinarians and, while most expressed no gender preference for veterinarians, a small number preferred female veterinarians. By increasing awareness among veterinarians of the issues faced by women living with domestic violence and their companion animals,
the veterinary profession will be better equipped to assist human and animal survivors in a way that is proactive, informed and compassionate.

References


This paper discussed the experiences of 13 women and their companion animals in the immediate period after leaving domestic violence and showed that domestic violence has a detrimental affect on animal welfare and behaviour. The next paper describes the experiences of five of these women six months after safely relocating away from domestic violence to uncover the longer term impacts of domestic violence on animal welfare and behaviour.

Part B:

The long-term impact of domestic violence on animal welfare

Accepted by University of Woollongong Animal Studies Journal

Catherine M. Tiplady, Deborah B. Walsh, and Clive J.C. Phillips

Abstract

A study of five women who had left violent relationships six months previously was undertaken to elicit information on the importance of companion animals during the violence and subsequent period. The questions focused on the women’s experiences of companion animal ownership during domestic violence, incidents of animal abuse/neglect, animals’ behavioural changes, experiences of veterinarians as a source of support and perpetrators’ use of human/animal directed violence. We found that (1) companion animal behavioural changes persisted after the violent relationship, (2) perpetrators selectively controlled their violent behaviour and (3) veterinarians were not considered useful sources of support by all women interviewed. To address these issues we recommend that veterinarians are educated in the best ways to offer support in cases of domestic violence co-occurring to companion animals.

Key words: domestic violence; animal abuse; animal behaviour; veterinarians
Introduction

‘When we’re at our downest and we’re sitting on the stairs crying, who happens to be sitting beside us? The dog. I do believe that pets are therapy in themselves.’ (Deanna)

Since the 1990s, research has shown that animals are vulnerable to abuse in domestic violence situations as part of the perpetrator’s power and control tactics (e.g. Adams, 1994; Faver and Strand, 2003; Quinlisk, 1999). Frank Ascione defines animal abuse or cruelty as “socially unacceptable behaviour that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering or distress to and/or death of an animal” (1993, p. 228). This has serious animal welfare implications as high levels of animal abuse have been reported where there is known domestic violence (Ascione, Weber, Thompson, Heath, Maruyama and Hayashi, 2007; Volant, Johnson, Gullone and Coleman, 2008).

However, little attention has been focused on the long term health and welfare effects on the animals. While the prevalence of animal abuse in domestic violence situations is largely unknown, animal exposure to violence in the home is likely to be high because 63% of Australian households live with companion animals (Animal Health Alliance, 2013) and one in three women experience domestic violence (World Health Organisation, 2013).

The purpose of this paper is to report on the long term impact of animal welfare and behaviour after being in a domestic violence situation, using data from a study of women in Australia who were originally interviewed in the immediate period after leaving the violent relationship and who had had animals in their care during their
relationship. During the study the women were interviewed a second time after six months and were asked to reflect on the health and welfare of their companion animals during the six months after separation from a domestic violence relationship. In addition, the women’s views of support services for their companion animals (fostering and veterinary care) were explored.

Long before the subject gained academic attention anecdotal reports emerged from domestic violence workers that animals were also being victimised within the context of domestic violence. In response, in the 1970s feminist animal advocate Carol J. Adams founded a helpline for abused women in the USA and documented examples of how animal abuse was used by domestic violence perpetrators to establish control over women. Adams’s research (1994, p. 65) revealed that:

‘Battering is one form of human male sexual violence that victimizes women, children and animals. Threats and abuse (often fatal) of pets by a woman’s sexual partner occur in his attempts to establish control.’

People often regard their companion animals as members of the family (Albert and Bulcroft, 1988), but in domestic violence situations women and animals share a particularly strong emotional bond (Flynn, 2000). In such circumstances, abuse of the animals has a similar psychological impact on a woman as if she were being abused herself (Ganley, 1981). Such animal abuse is not a random event; animals targeted for abuse within domestic violence are more likely to be either owned by the victimised woman or of particular emotional significance to her (Roguski, 2012; Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012). In addition, Roguski has identified that animal cruelty is often prevalent both during the relationship and after separation, for the purposes of
maintenance of power and control, and punishment for leaving, respectively. Thus, the violence to animals is both purposive and instrumental (Warshaw, Ganley and Salber, 1996; Langlands, Ward and Gilchrist, 2009).

**Impact on animals living with domestic violence**

Several studies have documented the types of abuse inflicted on animals living in a domestic violence situation (Carlisle-Frank, Frank and Nielsen, 2004; Roguski, 2012; Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012). These may cause serious injuries, suffering and death and include: punching, hitting, choking, drowning, shooting, stabbing (Carlisle-Frank and Flanagan, 2006); kicking, beating, throwing, hanging, poisoning, decapitation, deliberate neglect, verbal abuse (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012); shaking, igniting (Ascione, 1998); sexual abuse (Roguski, 2012); and deliberately driving over an animal and burying it alive (Flynn, 2000). Living with domestic violence is traumatic to animals, as indicated by the stress and anxiety-related behaviour reported to occur during domestic violent events (e.g. running away, aggression toward the perpetrator, proximity seeking to the victimised partner) (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012). However, we are not aware of any published research reporting on long term behavioural changes in animals after exposure to violence or after directly experiencing it.

Concern for the wellbeing of companion animals is a key reason why some women delay leaving their violent partner (Ascione, Weber and Wood, 1997; Ascione, 1998, Flynn, 2000; Carlisle-Frank, Frank and Nielsen, 2004; Ascione, Weber, Thompson, Heath, Maruyama and Hayashi, 2007). Although not all perpetrators of domestic violence abuse animals, it has been observed that those who do so tend to use more
dangerous forms of violence and controlling behaviours towards their partners (Simmons and Lehmann, 2007). As a result animal abuse is considered a “red flag” for potentially high levels of human interpersonal violence in a household (Ascione, Weber and Wood, 1997; Flynn, 2000).

**Veterinarians and Domestic Violence**

Many women remain silent about animal abuse in domestic violence and are reluctant to confide in veterinarians (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012). Despite veterinarians being trained in animal health and welfare and well situated to act as sentinels (Arkow and Munro, 2010), in particular through identifying cases of animal abuse, they receive little training in this issue in preparation for practice (Landau, 1999). Because of the connections between animal and human domestic violence, veterinarians may also be in a good position to suspect human abuse, when they are confronted with animal abuse cases. However, a survey of veterinarians in Indiana, USA, found that only 7% reported that they had received training in the management of animal abuse and none reported having received training in how to deal with cases of human interpersonal violence (Landau, 1999). Studies in New Zealand (Williams, Dale, Clarke and Garrett, 2008) and Australia (Green and Gullone, 2005) have confirmed that only 13% of veterinarians feel they have the necessary resources to offer help (e.g. referral advice) in cases of human interpersonal violence and only a small minority (estimated at 7%, Green and Gullone, 2005, and 15%, Williams, Dale, Clarke and Garrett, 2008) believe veterinary schools provide adequate training in animal abuse prevention.
The objective of this study was to identify the long-term impact on behaviour and welfare of companion animals which had been exposed to a domestic violence relationship.

**Research Method**

Women were initially recruited through a 24 hour crisis telephone service (DVConnect) which provided the intake to women’s shelters in Queensland, Australia. At the conclusion of an initial survey (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, in press), women were offered the opportunity to provide consent to be contacted by the researcher for a further interview in six months’ time. A semi-structured telephone survey interview was used as this is consistent with research with other vulnerable populations (Ellsberg and Heise, 2005).

The initial telephone interview had found that eight of the 13 women recruited reported that companion animals had also been abused/neglected (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, in press). Common behavioural changes observed in those animals included aggression toward the partner and protectiveness of the victimised woman. The follow up study also used qualitative telephone interviews. The study was designed to explore how the affected animal’s behaviour had changed over time since the first interview and to hear women’s experiences and reflections of domestic violence and the perpetrator’s use of violence. Further, women were asked to comment on their bond with their animal(s) and support available for their animals. We considered that interviewing women at approximately six months after leaving their abusive partner would be the most appropriate time to test whether short term behavioural changes
had dissipated and long term entrenched behaviour change had become established in the animal.

A thematic analysis was used to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within data by following the six phases described by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a report. The survey interviews were conducted at times convenient to women, were tape-recorded with the women’s consent and transcribed verbatim. Anonymity was protected by changing all names during transcription. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Queensland Ethical Review Committee prior to commencing this follow up study (approval number: 2011001096).

The following screening questions were asked: whether any animals were still owned by or living with the women and whether the woman had left her ex-partner. Questions were also asked about use of the ‘Pets in Crisis’ companion animal fostering service provided by the domestic violence service (DVConnect) in conjunction with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). [In Queensland, this service provides up to 28 days of foster care of companion animals for a nominal fee. Veterinary examinations are conducted prior to fostering and additional services, such as desexing (speying and neutering), are available at a low price.]

Although 11 of the 13 women from the initial survey consented to be contacted for the follow-up survey, only five of these were able to be contacted six months after the
initial interview. Reasons for women not participating after initially expressing interest were impossible to determine; however, we speculate that it is most likely that some women had changed their telephone number for security reasons or had returned to their partner.

A limitation of the study was that women self-selected to participate and were recruited through a crisis service, therefore they may not have been representative of all women with companion animals who experience domestic violence. Generalisation of the results from this study to all animals in domestic violence situations would be unwise until further confirmatory studies are published, due to both our recruitment strategy and small sample size.

*The survey*

The survey (a copy of which is available from the first author) comprised several topics – behavioural changes in animals which had lived with domestic violence; support from veterinarians and animal foster care services; perpetrators’ behaviour towards other people and animals and the impact of domestic violence on the bond with their animals. Demographic details had been gathered in the initial survey. Time was allowed for women to elaborate on any issues important to them regarding domestic violence and companion animals at the conclusion of the interview. Direct quotations from the interviews with the women are reported with our additions in italics.

**Participants and Animals**
Five women participated in the current study (pseudonyms: Deanna, Linda, Angela, Trish and Kelly-Anne). All were born in Australia, with one, Linda, identifying as an Indigenous Australian. Their age range at interview was 43-50 years. All women had reported domestic violence perpetrated by male partners, with children being present at some stage during the domestic violence. The demographic and contextual details of the five women are as follows:

**Deanna**

Deanna, a 44-year old woman, had been in a relationship with her partner (a 49-year old man) for 10 years. She had partially completed high school and at the time of the interview was not in the paid workforce. Deanna owned and lived with two dogs during the relationship – a female, five-year old Maltese Terrier and a female, three-year old Kelpie x Australian Cattle Dog. Deanna reported that while neither animal experienced physical abuse nor neglect, the Kelpie x Australian Cattle Dog was verbally abused. The ‘Pets in Crisis’ foster care program was accessed for her Maltese Terrier (for three months) and her Kelpie x Australian Cattle Dog was fostered by a family member while she was in refuge.

**Linda**

Linda, a 43-year old woman, had been in a sporadic relationship with her partner, a 40-year old man, for 16 years. She had partially completed high school and was not in paid employment. Linda lived with four female dogs (a two-year old Maltese terrier; an elderly Maltese Terrier x Shih Tzu; a 10-year old Dachshund and a five-year old Dachshund) and a three-year old female shorthaired cat during this
relationship. Linda used ‘Pets in Crisis’ fostering for her Maltese Terrier for one month; the other animals were left with her ex-partner.

_Angela_

Angela, a 46 year old woman, was reporting on a previous violent relationship experienced prior to a recent period of homelessness. The relationship she described lasted for two years with a 45 year old man. Angela had completed high school but was not in paid employment. During the relationship Angela owned a mixed breed male cat, which was 2 years old when the relationship ended. Angela took the cat with her when she left the relationship.

_Trish_

Trish, a 43-year old woman, had been with a 42-year old man for 14 years. Trish was not in paid employment; had partially completed high school and had a trade qualification. Trish had two companion animals, a male 10-month old Cairn Terrier and a three-year old female Birman cat. Trish had placed her dog in ‘Pets in Crisis’ foster care for 28 days before deciding to allow the RSPCA to rehome him. The cat remained with her partner until Trish returned home six months later to regain possession of the house and resume care of the cat.

_Kelly-Anne_

Kelly-Anne, a 50-year old woman had been in a relationship with a 50-year old man for 10 months. Kelly-Anne had a Nursing qualification but at the time of the interview was on leave from paid employment. During the relationship she lived with her own companion animals (two female cats aged 12 and 13 years and two male
Quarrion birds aged 8 and 13 years). Her partner also owned companion animals in the household, an 8-year old female German Shepherd, two female cats aged eight and 10 years and a male Quarrion bird aged four years. Kelly-Anne placed her two cats and two birds in ‘Pets in Crisis’ foster care for a month; however the birds were initially housed with her in a women’s shelter.

**Results**

The major themes to emerge from the interviews included the impact of the abuse, selective targeting of a particular animal for abuse, the emotional bond between women and animals and use of support (e.g. veterinary care, fostering) for animals.

*Impact of the abuse*

Three of the five women (Angela, Trish and Kelly-Anne) reported that animals had been directly physically abused, and one woman, Deanna, reported verbal animal abuse. Linda’s partner did not directly abuse the animals however she reported that when her partner verbally abused her the female Maltese Terrier would demonstrate distress by barking continuously at the partner.

Angela explained how her cat would be abused for walking near her partner or for vocalising at him “You know, like if he was walking and the cat was, you know, walking near him or walked in front of him he’d kick him out of the way. That sort of thing. Sometimes when we were arguing the cat wouldn’t disappear, he’d sort of be there and be sort of very upset and he’d be growling, you know, because he was obviously stressed out and everything else and if the cat did that he’d go to kick him or do something to him then as well.”
In Trish’s case, both her cat and dog were verbally abused and neglected by her partner during the relationship. After leaving the relationship her ex-partner found where she was living and threw her dog over the fence causing abrasions on the dog. After leaving the relationship, Trish was very concerned about the welfare of her cat which her ex-partner had refused to relinquish to her. (The week after the survey was completed Trish was due to return home and resume care of the cat): “The neighbours tell me the cat’s being a bit neglected, well, um, you know, he feeds her and stuff but … he just lets her wander all around and she like lies in the middle of the road and you know (sighs) stuff like that and I doubt that she’s been to the vet and had her vaccinations or anything.”

Kelly-Anne described how her ex-partner’s abusive behaviour could also affect her and her children: “If he was angry and wasn’t coping and the cat just happened to, say, jump up on the desk, it got flipped off. So, dependant on his levels of stresses and anger at the time was how he would, you know, like if it was the kids in his way they’d cop it (= be abused), if it was me in the way, I would, but if it just happened to be an animal, they would, you know, like the dog would get kicked at or screamed at for no reason.”

Deanna’s partner used unpredictable, intermittent verbal abuse to confuse her Kelpie x Australian Cattle Dog. He would call the dog inside the house (where she wasn’t allowed to be), patting and cuddling her and then shout at the dog in an abusive tone to get out of the house.
Behavioural changes in animals whilst living with domestic violence were reported by all five women. In most cases, the behaviours had become less severe and/or less frequent since leaving the violent partner. However, some animals continued to show behavioural changes when confronted with certain stimuli six months after the relationship had ended and women felt that this behaviour was now entrenched (Table 1).
Table 1: Behaviour of animals during and six months after leaving the domestic violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woman’s name</th>
<th>Behaviour of companion animals reported during Domestic Violence relationship (survey #1)</th>
<th>Behaviour of companion animals 6 months after leaving Domestic Violence relationship (survey #2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deanna</td>
<td>Maltese: Protective behaviour; hid from strangers; panicked when hearing loud voices</td>
<td>Maltese: No longer was shy or hid from people; increased proximity seeking to Deanna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kelpie X: Protective behaviour; phobia of noises/storms worsened during Domestic Violence; distrustful; territorial; fearful.</td>
<td>Kelpie X: Continued to be distrustful of males (barking at them); protective behaviour had increased; increased proximity seeking to Deanna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Female Maltese: Barked at the male partner during Domestic Violence/shouting; proximity seeking (staying close to Linda) during Domestic Violence Other companion animals: No behavioural changes reported</td>
<td>Female Maltese: The behavioural issues were no longer been seen since leaving the Domestic Violence Other companion animals: No behavioural issues reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>The cat hid when the male partner came home and become vicious whenever the male partner was at home; the cat would not eat when Angela and partner would argue</td>
<td>After separation, Angela had an argument with a boyfriend and the cat became skittish, nervous and jumpy for a few days afterwards; other than that occasion, the hiding/vicious behaviours were not seen again but cat constantly sought to be in close proximity with Angela.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trish</td>
<td>Dog – would snap and bite Cat – no behaviours reported</td>
<td>Due to aggressive behaviour, the dog was rehabilitated during ’Pets in Crisis’ foster care at the RSPCA and successfully rehomed (with Trish’s consent) to single, mature aged, female owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly-Anne</td>
<td>During Domestic Violence, cats would become tense, try to get away; reduced food consumption and avoided contact with Kelly-Anne during the relationship; one cat hid during Domestic Violence. Cats fought with each other during relationship. During Domestic Violence, birds became distressed, flapped around cage knocking feathers out and causing bleeding; birds didn’t sing during the relationship.</td>
<td>At the time of the interview Kelly-Anne lived and worked in a youth hostel and cats ran away and hid if the youths become loud; cats had become less skittish, more settled and were eating well. Cats were no longer fighting with each other. After leaving the violent relationship, Kelly-Anne went to a women’s shelter and took the birds with her – they sang for the first time in 7-10 months whilst at the women’s shelter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The animals belonging to Deanna and Angela maintained a fear of men beyond the end of the violent relationship. Deanna states: “Let’s put it this way, I trust her (the Kelpie X Australian Cattle Dog), like I can walk her down the street and everything, you know and she’s a lovely obedient dog but I don’t have 100% faith in her if a male was walking the opposite way (compared) to if a female was (walking by).”

Angela’s experiences involved a similar situation, in which her cat continued to dislike men even after Angela had left the violent partner: “He (the cat) seemed a lot more relaxed when I moved (out of the violent home). He didn’t like males from then on though. If he heard a male voice, even if my father or you know, brothers or whatever came, if he heard a male voice he would go and hide, any male friends that visited, he would hide. He ended up being a female only cat.”

The distrust of men appears to have become generalised as Angela explains:

“When I did have one boyfriend, we had an argument and there was, you know, raised voices during the argument, it wasn’t a domestic violence situation, I mean, everyone argues. But yeah, he (the cat) was very, um… skittish and just, I don’t know, he wasn’t vicious but just very nervy (anxious) for a few days afterwards… You’d just walk up to him and put your hand on him and he’d jump, even though he knew you were coming.”

When Kelly-Anne left her violent partner she took her birds with her to a women’s refuge until companion animal fostering could be arranged. She describes the birds’ reactions to being away from the violent household: “I took them with me to a women’s shelter and they would sing so much! They hadn’t sung for 7-10 months,
they were so happy! I had to move them into another room because they were so noisy.”

Kelly-Anne’s cats are “back to normal, more or less”, eating well and no longer fighting since they left the violent partner and relocated to a youth accommodation service where she is manager but when certain conditions are present the cats still react. Kelly-Ann notes: “The only thing I notice with the cats is when we have the youth in here and they bring their mates home, and remember they’re street kids and they’re loud and they’re obnoxious, they (the cats) hide, they run away from them and hide.”

Trish’s dog, Jack, (a male Cairn Terrier X) had become aggressive whilst living with Trish’s violent partner and received behavioural rehabilitation by RSPCA staff during his time in foster care with them. Trish hesitantly explains: “Unfortunately I couldn’t keep Jack where I’ve been staying and he had to be rehomed and the RSPCA looked after him and rehabilitated him a bit because he became a bit snappy and bitey (= aggressive) from being with (ex-partner’s name).”

The decision to relinquish Jack was difficult for Trish but she kept in regular contact with the RSPCA to check how he was settling into his new home. Trish was pleased with his new owner: “The lady who took him is, you know, a mature lady so he’ll be her companion and she doesn’t work so they’re together all the time and apparently she’s quite comfortable financially so I don’t think he’ll want for anything… (laughs) So, I think he’s done better than us!”
In all of the situations reported here the behaviour changes were observed by the women to persist well beyond the exposure to the abuse and violence had ended.

Selective targeting

Women reported that the abusive partner selectively used violent behaviour and much of the violence was hidden from public view. The ability of perpetrators of domestic violence to selectively use abusive behaviour is illustrated by Kelly-Anne’s experiences: “They’re very clever at hiding it to their friends and outside people. It’s only when they’re in a close relationship that you happen to see it... they’re like chameleons, they hide it, so that’s why when you separate, people are so shocked and astounded and then they (the ex-partners) play the victim...”

This next example demonstrates that violence can be used or controlled when the situation warrants it. Kelly-Anne describes the build-up of tension exhibited by her partner prior to a domestic violence event: “He didn’t cope with every-day, normal stresses. So, what would happen is you would watch the pressure build up and then like a volcano the valve was ready to go off. ... And you’d think ‘Any minute’. And you’d try and stay out of his way and tell your kids ‘Stay out of his way’ and you were waiting for the explosion and it could be anything, anything, once that valve was ready to go, it was Bang! Whoever was there – animals, kids, me would cop it (= be abused). But he could control it, because you know, if somebody turned up he’d switch back.”

Trish’s ex-partner was a police officer, and she stated that in his work he would “quite often flog people, like, hit them”. Trish explains how he would also be cruel to his
mother’s dog: “It was a little dog, so he’d pick it up and throw it in the pond. Or he’d chase it, you know, frighten it and chase it and it just hated him, it absolutely hated him and he knew it so he would then do his best to intimidate the dog.”

Linda reported her partner had perpetrated abuse toward her and other people outside the family but had not abused any animals directly. However, witnessing the abusive behaviour towards Linda had a profound effect on one of her dogs.

**Emotional bond**

All women in this survey reported that the shared experience of domestic violence had made them closer to their animals and talked about how much their animals meant to them. Three women referred to their animals as their children and the other two women highlighted the importance of the unconditional love the animals generate. Angela captures the sentiment: “The… oh… Unconditional love! Unconditional love both ways – you know, me for him, him for me, it was just, there was no conditions. You didn’t have to bow and scrape (= be submissive), you didn’t have to follow rules or anything else like that, it’s just unconditional love.”

The emotional bond between the women and their animals generated a range of protective behaviours that had a number of potential consequences for their own safety. Four of the women delayed leaving their abusive partner due to concerns that the animals were at risk of abuse or neglect. Kelly-Anne, Deanna and Trish each delayed leaving by six months and Angela delayed leaving by 12 months. Linda did not have concerns for her animals left in the care of her ex-partner.
Kelly-Anne explained how concern for her animals prevented her from leaving the violent relationship earlier: “I think you were always on guard … and thinking ‘Keep them out of his way’ and so you were over-vigilant to try and protect them, sort of thing. And you felt trapped, like ‘How am I gonna (going to) get out of here, I’ve got two animals, I’ve got nowhere to go, what am I gonna do?’ and that was one of the reasons as well why I stayed because I thought ‘I don’t want to lose my animals’. That’s why a lot of people stay in that relationship because if they leave they sometimes can’t take their animals with them.”

The emotional bond between women and their animals was important on several counts, including as a source of comfort and as valued companions. In some cases, due to this bond, women made protective decisions that prioritised the animal’s wellbeing over their own.

*Support services for animals*

Women were asked about the support services available to their animals and what sort of service women found most helpful. Four of the five women had used the ‘Pets in Crisis’ animal fostering service and all of these reported positive experiences of this service, Trish stating, “They (the RSPCA) were just so helpful and it made it not as traumatic for me’.

Both Deanna and Linda were impressed that their animals received such a high level of veterinary care when being placed through the RSPCA animal fostering service with Linda commenting: “She got thoroughly checked out and you know, looked at
and (de)fled and wormed and whatever they needed to do when she went into the RSPCA.”

The domestic violence workers who referred Trish to the RSPCA animal fostering service were invaluable because she didn’t know what to do with her dog Jack as she was trying to flee domestic violence. She recounts:

“I was crying because I didn’t know what to do with Jack, you know and I couldn’t tend him where I was and you know, she (the domestic violence worker) was the one who just straight up (immediately) had all the information, she had the lady’s name, the lady’s phone number, she said ‘Give this lady at the RSPCA a call, they have a program’… She knew all about it and that was just fabulous and then I rang them (RSPCA) and they were just straight on the ball and … didn’t just leave me hanging.”

Finding suitable housing for themselves and the animals after leaving the violent relationship was a problem raised by Deanna who felt that her dogs were all she and her children had left: “When we first moved into the house here we were under the understanding that we were allowed the dogs but then the real estate (agent) said, after me having them back for three weeks, that we weren’t allowed to have the dogs, so that … just ripped the blanket out from under (= demoralised) us.”

In all of the situations reported here women felt the support from the fostering service was critical but once women sought independent accommodation the support for animals was limited. Women reported that it was difficult to find rental accommodation which would allow companion animals.
Women’s responses were diverse when asked how veterinarians could assist the animals and people who live in domestic violence situations but all overwhelmingly agreed that veterinarians should know about and recognise domestic violence in their practice. Kelly-Anne suggested that veterinarians could prescribe medications to decrease animals’ stress however she also had ethical concerns regarding animals remaining in violent homes: “That’s not the answer, they’re your pets, you need to get out (*leave the home*) for yourself and for your animals because, you know, it not only affects you, it does affect your animals. The only answer is to get out.”

Angela similarly mentioned products to decrease anxiety in companion animals, however she added: “I don’t like even saying this because the best solution is to get out of that situation.”

Trish saw limitations to how veterinarians can assist as she felt it was outside their professional role. In contrast, Linda thought that veterinarians could be helpful by offering checkups for animals living with domestic violence, explaining that “Sometimes they (the animals) get neglected because of what’s going on in the house…”

Deanna was unsure whether veterinarians could help, stating “I’m not too sure, I mean, I don’t think psychologically, no, I don’t think a vet could” but also mentioned that offering discounted neutering for companion animals in domestic violence homes would be of assistance.
In summary, women were generally positive about the immediate practical support from the RSPCA/DV Connect ‘Pets in Crisis’ which provided care of animals whilst they accessed emergency accommodation. Finding private rental housing which allowed animals was apparently not easy. Some women felt that private practice veterinarians were limited in their ability to provide support and assistance in situations of domestic violence. Overwhelmingly, women indicated that knowledge of domestic violence and the implications for animals and women were critical for effective veterinary support but they would not confide in veterinarians as part of help seeking.

**Discussion**

The major themes to emerge from the interviews included the impact of the abuse, selective targeting of a particular animal for abuse, the emotional bond between women and animals and use of veterinary care and fostering as support for animals.

There was a long-term impact on the behaviour of animals which persisted after the exposure to the violence and abuse had ceased. Some of the observed behaviour changes included proximity seeking to the woman owner, indicating that the animal remained anxious, and, in some cases, animals demonstrating a fear of men which appeared to be generalised to other males. Behavioural rehabilitation was provided to one animal (a dog), resulting in him being successfully rehomed. A fear of men may have implications for the animal’s ability to settle into a foster home that includes men, to cope with male veterinary staff and animal attendants, or to feel comfortable with any male relatives, friends or future male intimate partners of the abused women or her children.
Overall, the current study showed that exposure to domestic violence can have long term impact on animals’ emotions, especially an enhanced level of fear and anxiety. The ongoing difficulties that animals exhibited were either the result of being abused directly or being exposed to domestic violence. Animal abuse is a traumatic event causing fear and helplessness in animals and in many cases long-term (longer than one month) behavioural changes (Day and Day, 2013).

Selective use of violence and abuse by the male perpetrators in our study was consistent with other studies that report that domestic violence is used both to maintain power and control over women while in the relationship and as revenge for leaving following separation (Roguski, 2012; Shepard and Pence, 1999). The majority of these abusive behaviours were inside the confines of the intimate relationship when there were no witnesses present, confirming that perpetrators are in control of their behaviour.

Domestic violence may be perpetrated at varying frequencies. Whilst some women experience it daily, others experience it infrequently, interspersed with kind, caring behaviours (Mahoney, Williams and West, 2001). Intermittency and unpredictability of abusive behaviours is a common feature in some domestic violence situations, increasing the fear response in victims (Dutton, 2011); an unpredictability which, as described in the current study, can be extended toward companion animals. Unpredictability of stressors can cause animals to experience chronic fear and anxiety (Griffin and Hume, 2006), which in turn causes poor physical and mental wellbeing (Casey, 2002).
Consistent with other research (Flynn, 2000; Simmons and Lehmann, 2007; Ascione, 1998), women in this study were clearly closely bonded to their companion animals and all but one had delayed leaving a violent relationship due to fears for the animals’ wellbeing. Women also commented on how difficult it was to find rental accommodation that allowed tenants to live with companion animals and so support for animals was limited to the services surrounding crisis accommodation. Hence women with companion animals may be exposed to continuing violence if they remain in the relationship or risk homelessness if they leave. Being separated from animals during the fostering period was also seen as stressful. Unlike women’s shelters in the USA (Phillips, 2014), very few shelters in Australia allow animals to be housed on-site.

The emotional bond between these women and their animals appears to be strengthened due to the shared experience of abuse. Women’s attachment to their animals can make them vulnerable to continuing violence if they delay leaving, or potentially homeless if they are unable to obtain suitable animal friendly accommodation.

Support for animals, such as the ‘Pets in Crisis’ companion animal fostering, was viewed positively by all the women, indicating that this is a valuable service for those escaping from domestic violence. The opportunity to have animals checked for their health, neutered, microchipped and vaccinated at low cost by the RSPCA veterinarians was also valued and appeared to reduce the concerns women had about the health and wellbeing of their animals.
Women’s opinions about veterinarians as a source of support for human and animal victims of violence were varied. Ways in which veterinarians could assist included providing discounted veterinary care for companion animals from violent homes (e.g. neutering and check-ups). Independent private practice veterinarians were seen as a less valuable source of support than the domestic violence workers and RSPCA staff involved in the foster program. RSPCA shelter veterinarians performed health checks and any necessary veterinary procedures for all animals received for fostering.

This study contributes to the broader literature on human/animal abuse research by undertaking a follow up study to examine the longer term impacts on domestic violence on women and their companion animals. It is critical that veterinarians (as professionals who work at the interface of animal and human welfare) are aware of animal welfare issues associated with human interpersonal violence.

One limitation to highlight in the current study is acknowledged as the small sample size. Further research which involves a larger number of participants is recommended to increase our understanding of how women and animals cope in the period after leaving domestic violence.

**Recommendations for action**

As a result of the findings, we have three recommendations for further research that will compliment this current research and increase our knowledge in this area.

1. That there be a more widespread longitudinal study to measure and monitor the long term impact of exposure to domestic violence on animals to see if the
behaviours observed at six months are widely observed and persist past six
months.

2. That research is undertaken to explore the most appropriate rehabilitation
processes for animals exposed to domestic violence so that the long term
impact of abuse is reduced.

3. That research is undertaken to explore if the safe housing of animals on site in
women’s refuges improves outcomes for women, children and their
companion animals.

Conclusions
This study is the first to determine the long term impact of domestic violence on
companion animal welfare and behaviour, the selective targeting of abuse; how the
emotional bond between women and their animals renders them vulnerable and
women’s perceptions of support services for their animals. The impact of domestic
violence on the lives of animals was profound and long lasting in the current study.

Women and companion animals appeared to share a close emotional bond that was a
mutual source of support during and after the end of the violent relationship. For this
reason, housing women and animals together post-separation and offering behavioural
and veterinary rehabilitation and care are important to improve animal and human
wellbeing outcomes. Private practice veterinarians were not considered useful sources
of support by all the women interviewed however work undertaken by shelter
veterinarians on animals entering foster care was deemed to be valuable.
Domestic violence is a complex issue in which companion animals are an integral part – as victims of direct abuse; used as a means for gaining power and control and as a source of emotional support to women. For women escaping from domestic violence restricted access to rental accommodation which accepts companion animals is an additional source of stress.

This paper confirms Carol J. Adams’s argument that “women’s oppression is interwoven with that of animals” (1994, p. 70). Acknowledging the importance of animals in the lives of women recovering from abuse is essential for the development of strategies to educate veterinary and domestic violence workers in how to best collaborate to support the animal and human survivors of abuse.

Acknowledgments:
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“The animals are all I have”: Experiences of domestic violence, companion animals and veterinary access.”

*Society and Animals.*


[http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/]().
Chapter four comprised two articles describing the short and longer term impact of domestic violence on animal welfare and behaviour. In the months after safe relocation from domestic violence, some animals continued to show fearful or aggressive behaviour whenever they were confronted by a stressor (e.g. raised voices). Perpetrators’ selective use of violence towards particular animals and people was clearly demonstrated in these two papers. Women did not regard private practice veterinarians as a useful source of support for themselves and their companion animals during domestic violence however veterinary staff who provided care at RSPCA animal shelters were perceived as helpful. The next chapter examines the role of veterinarians in cases of domestic violence and animal abuse.
Chapter Five Study number two  
International Survey of Veterinarians

This chapter uses data from an online survey of 385 veterinarians in Australia, UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa to uncover the personal and professional experiences of human interpersonal violence and animal abuse. The resulting data from these 385 respondents was used to write three papers 1) Veterinarians’ reports of animal abuse and domestic violence encountered in veterinary practice; 2) Vets as victims – personal experiences of abuse among veterinarians and 3) Vets, education and violence – how veterinarians perceive their education in human/animal abuse issues.

Part A:

Veterinarians’ reports of animal abuse and domestic violence encountered in veterinary practice

Submitted to Violence and Victims


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Abstract
Veterinarians work at the interface of human and animal welfare and may encounter both animal abuse and human interpersonal violence. An online international survey of veterinarians (from USA, Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) was undertaken to investigate types of animal abuse/neglect encountered in veterinary practice, the demographics of suspected abusers, the emotional impact of working with abused animals and whether animal abuse was linked to domestic violence. Most of the 385 responding veterinarians had encountered animal abuse/neglect. Dogs were the species most commonly abused, and verbal abuse was more common than physical abuse, hoarding, or deliberate neglect, which in turn were more common than sexual abuse. The perpetrators of both animal abuse and domestic violence were usually male. Veterinarians reported being distressed when confronted with abused animals. The inclusion of strategies for coping with human/animal abuse issues in the veterinary curricula and during professional development is recommended.

**Keywords:** veterinarians; animal abuse; interpersonal violence; domestic violence

**Introduction**

Animal abuse is encountered by many veterinarians, however in their preparation for practice it appears that their training may not adequately prepare them to manage the issues associated with these presentations (Landau 1999; Sharpe and Wittum 1999, Green and Gullone 2005). It has been found that animal abuse occurs at higher levels in homes where there is domestic violence (Ascione et al., 2007) and being confronted with animal abuse is likely to be emotionally challenging for veterinarians as many are drawn to the profession by their compassion for animals (Heath, Hyams, Baguley, and Abbott, 2006). Previous animal abuse research has mainly focussed on small
animal veterinarians (e.g. Munro and Thrusfield, 2001a,b,c,d), with little known about
types of animal abuse encountered by those working in other areas, such as mixed
practice, farm animal or equine practice so it is important to broaden our
understanding to include all areas of practice to better target professional education
and support.

Poor psychological health is common among members of the veterinary profession
(Fritschi, Morrison, Shirangi and Day, 2009), with higher levels of anxiety,
depression and stress reported by veterinarians than the general population (Hatch,
Winefield, Christie and Lievaart, 2011). Veterinarians rank first when considering the
profession with the highest number of completed suicides (Fritschi et al., 2009;
Roberts, Jaremin and Lloyd, 2013). Workplace stressors and euthanasia of animals
are implicated as factors contributing to the high prevalence rate of suicide risk and
psychological distress among veterinarians. In addition easy access to the means of
completing a successful suicide is another risk factor (Bartram and Baldwin, 2008,

Veterinarians work with both animals and their caregivers and as such they are likely
to encounter situations where the welfare of both humans and animals is compromised
(Arkow, 2013). Arkow (2013) explored this issue and found veterinary reports of
animal abuse and its co-occurrence with domestic violence are increasing in some
jurisdictions but practitioners are frequently faced with confounding dilemmas. These
include the need to balance economic, safety, confidentiality, legal and practice
management concerns with ethical principles and professional standards (Arkow,
2013, p. 87).
To explore a broad range of veterinarian experiences of animal abuse presenting with co-occurring domestic violence an international study was designed with the aims to:

1. Enquire about the types of animal abuse and species commonly identified in practice
2. Determine who were the reported abusers, their age; gender and relationship to the abused animal/s
3. Enquire about the frequency of presentations of animal abuse co-occurring with domestic violence in practice
4. Enquire about the emotional effects when working with animal abuse.

Materials and Methods

To investigate the aims of the study a quantitative method was chosen as the most appropriate way to explore the relationship among variables and differences between groups (Pallant, 2007). This method was determined as the most efficient way to reach a wide range of international veterinarian professionals. A questionnaire was devised and approved by the University of Queensland Behavioural and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee (project number 2011000457) prior to commencement of the study.

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was written in English and recruitment conducted in the following English-speaking countries, Australia, New Zealand, UK, USA, Canada and South Africa, which were perceived to have similar veterinary education systems and responsibilities in veterinary practice. A questionnaire was created and administered
using ‘Survey Monkey’ online survey package (www.surveymonkey.com), this being an effective way to gather information from participants across a number of countries (Sue and Ritter 2007). Given the difficulty in recruiting participants in any way other than self-nomination, we adopted this method but sought widespread promotion to attract a large sample and reduce bias. Methods of promotion were: advertising the survey link in the Australian Veterinary Association eLine newsletter and Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC) e-newsletter, a letter to the editor published in the Veterinary Record (UK), an article in an online and print journal (Veterinary Medicine – USA), a veterinary newsletter (New Zealand) and via direct e-mail to all veterinary association members (Canada and South Africa). Criteria for participation was a screening question ‘Are you a qualified veterinarian?’; those who selected ‘no’ were automatically excluded. Response rates of eligible veterinarians are not able to be determined.

The questionnaire included six sections relevant to the current study. These concerned (a) types of animal abuse encountered during work as a veterinarian (physical, verbal, sexual, neglect and hoarding) and frequency of encounters, (b) species/type of abused animals (dog, cat, bird, small mammal, e.g. guinea pig/rat, horse/other equid, cattle, sheep/goat, pig, poultry, reptile/amphibian, fish, insect/arachnid/invertebrate, wild/native animal, zoo animal, laboratory animal, other) and frequency of encounters, (c) gender/age group of suspected animal abusers (child to age 12 years, adolescent 13-18 years, adult) and frequency encountered, (d) relationship of suspected animal abuser to animal (owner/main carer, partner of owner/main carer, relative of owner/main carer, staff of owner/main carer, friend of owner/main carer, veterinarian, veterinary nurse/animal attendant, stranger, unsure)
and frequency encountered, (e) frequency of animal abuse cases suspected to co-occur with domestic violence and (f) emotional impact of working with/euthanizing abused animals (5 point Likert scale: 1= very distressed; 2= somewhat distressed; 3= neutral; 4= comfortable; 5= very comfortable). Frequencies of encounters were provided on a five point scale: 1= Never; 2= Infrequently (less than 1 case per year); 3= Occasionally (1-3 cases per year); 4= Regularly (4-11 cases per year) and 5= Frequently (12 or more cases per year). Response options were presented in two different orders for alternate respondents to prevent bias.

**Statistical analysis**

All data were downloaded into the IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0 package for analysis of inferential and descriptive statistics with a two tailed significance of $P < 0.05$.

Inferential statistics (e.g. ANOVA, Chi-square) were used to investigate effects of veterinarian’s gender and age (as a bimodal variate, Young aged $\leq 39$ years, and Old, aged $40+$) in survey responses.

Violations of the statistical assumptions related to each analysis were identified through a combination of visual inspection of histograms and box-and-whiskers plots and relevant statistical tests (e.g., Levene’s test for homogeneity of variance). Further, skewness of the data was evaluated by visual inspection of the distribution in a histogram and by evaluating the data against $z$ skewness $>\pm 3$. For any skewed data, equivalent non-parametric statistical tests to the parametric analyses were performed. Results from non-parametric analyses are reported only where substantive differences to interpretations to the parametric findings were identified.
Independent sample t-tests were used to examine effects of veterinarian’s gender, age (Young aged ≤ 39 years vs. Old, aged 40 +) and (a) types of animal abuse encountered in practice, (b) species/type of animals which were abused, and (c) animal abusers’ relationship to the animals. The relationship of animal abusers to the animals was grouped into four categories for analysis: 1) owner/main carer; 2) friend/partner/relative/staff of owner/main carer; 3) veterinarian/nurse/animal attendant; 4) stranger/unsure. A repeated measures ANOVA was performed to examine whether there was a significant difference in the types of animal abuse seen or suspected by participants. Follow-up analyses to significant main effects involved pair-wise comparisons with a Least Squares Difference test and Bonferroni correction. Frequency of reported animal abuse was analysed in a 5 (Abuse: Physical; Verbal; Sexual; Neglect; Hoarding) x 2 (Age of Veterinarian up to 39 years vs. 40 years and over) x 2 (Gender of Veterinarian: Male vs. Female) ANOVA. Follow-up pairwise comparisons (with Bonferroni correction) were then performed.

To investigate the frequency which the age and gender of the animal abuser occurred, a 2 (Gender: Male vs Female) X 3 (Age: Adult vs Adolescent vs Child) ANOVA was conducted. Significant interaction effects were followed up by simple effects analyses. Where percentages are reported, these reflect the percentage of participants who have responded to that question.

**Results**

*Respondent demographics*

Responses were received from 385 qualified veterinarians. As respondents were self-nominated, it was not possible to determine a response rate.
The majority of respondents were female (n=208, 73%). The largest proportion of respondents living in Australia (n=165, 43%) and of the 284 respondents who provided their age, 163 (57%) were aged 40 years and over. There were more female respondents in all age groups except for the oldest age group, with the ratio of female to male declining with age (see Table 1), $\chi^2$ (4, N=283) = 40.48, P < 0.001.

Table 1: Number of male and female veterinarian participants within each age category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Ratio male:female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1: 9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1: 4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1: 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1: 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1: 0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>1: 2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Note: Gender was not provided by 102 respondents.

Most respondents reported working full-time (n=249, 88%) in an inner-city or suburban practice setting (n=175, 62%), and most (n=213, 55%) had worked in small animal practice (Table 2).
Table 2: Practice characteristics of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period working as veterinarian (n = 284)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-9 years</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15 years</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Practice type²

- Small animal 213
- Mixed 110
- Animal shelter/pound 50
- Government 33
- Teaching at university 29
- Equine 26
- Production animal 24
- Research 20

Practice setting (n = 283)

- Inner city 26 9
- Suburban 149 53
- Semi-rural 67 24
- Rural 41 15

Employment status (n = 282)

- Mostly part-time 29 10
- Mostly casual 4 1
- Mostly full-time 249 88

¹Percentages are rounded
²Respondents were asked to tick all practice types in which they had worked as a veterinarian

Gender and country of residence

The ratio of male:female veterinarians in the current survey was compared to the reported gender ratios of veterinarians in each of the surveyed countries (Table 3).

Although the majority of veterinarians in the UK (RCVS 2011) and USA (AVMA 2012) are female, there was a bias in the current study towards more females than males responding than represented in the reported demographic data, $\chi^2(1, N=283) = 51.15$, $p<0.001$.  

199
Table 3: Gender of veterinarians in the current survey vs veterinary demographic data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Male Veterinarians</th>
<th>Female Veterinarians</th>
<th>Male Veterinarians</th>
<th>Female Veterinarians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia¹</td>
<td>40 (37)</td>
<td>69 (63)</td>
<td>4220 (54)</td>
<td>3629 (46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada²</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>7 (100)</td>
<td>6039 (50)</td>
<td>5996 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand³</td>
<td>2 (20)</td>
<td>8 (80)</td>
<td>1382 (57)</td>
<td>1043 (43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa⁴</td>
<td>24 (38)</td>
<td>40 (63)</td>
<td>1499 (59)</td>
<td>1041 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom⁵</td>
<td>5 (46)</td>
<td>6 (55)</td>
<td>8 211 (46)</td>
<td>9 604 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America⁶</td>
<td>4 (5)</td>
<td>78 (95)</td>
<td>43 194 (47)</td>
<td>49 353 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>64,545</td>
<td>70,666</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Gender breakdown in various country categories. Note: Gender was not provided by 102 respondents.
1. National Australia Bank (2009)
2. Canadian Veterinary Medicine Association (2012)
3. Veterinary Council of New Zealand (2011)
4. T. Coetzee, Senior Registry Official, South African Veterinary Council pers. comm. 26 October 2012
5. Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (2011)
6. American Veterinary Medicine Association (2012)

**Animal abuse encountered by veterinarians**

Abuse frequencies, measured on a scale from 1=Never seen to 5=Frequently (>12 per year) are reported in Table 4. Verbal animal abuse (Scale Mean = 3.36, SD = 1.13) was reported to be encountered more often, and sexual animal abuse (Scale Mean = 1.28, SD = 0.53) less often, p<0.001, than physical abuse, deliberate neglect and hoarding which did not differ (Table 4). Differences in reporting were not influenced by the gender or age of the veterinarian (p values ≥ 0.103).
Table 4: Types of animal abuse and frequency with which they were encountered by veterinarians on a scale from 1=Never seen to 5=Frequently (>12 per year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Abuse</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>2.80b (1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
<td>3.36a (1.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>1.28c (0.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberate neglect</td>
<td>2.94d (1.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoarding</td>
<td>2.85e (0.98)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means with common superscripts do not differ significantly from each other.

**Types of abused animals**

Abuse was encountered occasionally in dogs and cats and infrequently in horses and cattle (Table 5). Abuse was seen to a lesser extent in wild or native animals and was even rarer in other animal groups. Male veterinarians more frequently reported that they had seen abuse in wild/native animals, cattle, sheep/goats, poultry, pigs and 'other' animals during their veterinary work than was reported by female veterinarians (Table 5). There was also a tendency for more males to report more abuse of zoo animals and fish than did women. There were no significant differences between males and females in reporting laboratory animals, dogs, insects/arachnids/invertebrates, birds, cats, small mammals (e.g. guinea pigs, rats), horses/other equids, or reptiles.
Table 5: Frequency of veterinarians encountering abuse in different types of animals in declining order of importance, on a scale of 1= Never to 5= Frequently, with probability of significant differences between male and female veterinarians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Gender of reporting veterinarian</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog</td>
<td>3.26 (1.01)</td>
<td>3.43 (0.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cat</td>
<td>2.83 (0.98)</td>
<td>2.94 (0.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse/other equid</td>
<td>2.22 (1.16)</td>
<td>2.02 (1.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>2.28 (1.29)</td>
<td>1.85 (1.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep/goats</td>
<td>2.16 (1.12)</td>
<td>1.60 (0.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild/native animal</td>
<td>2.04 (1.04)</td>
<td>1.62 (0.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird</td>
<td>1.87 (1.09)</td>
<td>1.64 (0.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>1.82 (1.10)</td>
<td>1.43 (0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reptile/amphibian</td>
<td>1.66 (1.02)</td>
<td>1.40 (0.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>1.60 (0.82)</td>
<td>1.23 (0.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insect/arachnid/invertebrate</td>
<td>1.50 (0.95)</td>
<td>1.30 (0.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>1.40 (0.84)</td>
<td>1.15 (0.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory animal</td>
<td>1.20 (0.64)</td>
<td>1.18 (0.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>1.44 (0.86)</td>
<td>1.11 (0.36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses from veterinarians aged up to 39 years versus 40 years and over showed there were significant age differences in frequency of reporting abuse of dogs and poultry. Younger veterinarians reported greater frequency of encountering dogs being abused (Mean = 3.55, SD = 0.88) than did older veterinarians (Mean = 3.26, SD = 1.03), (t (277) = 2.417, p = 0.016). Younger veterinarians also reported a lower frequency of encountering poultry being abused (Mean 1.36, SD = 0.82) than did older veterinarians (Mean = 1.64, SD = 0.94), (t (203.15) = 2.27, p = 0.024).

**Suspected animal abusers**

Males were more frequently reported as being the suspected animal abusers than females were (Means male = 2.61, SD = 0.83, female = 2.09, SD = 0.75, F (1, 178) = 72.15, p < 0.001) (Table 6). Both male and female veterinarians encountered adult
animal abusers more frequently than adolescent or child animal abusers \( p \) values < 0.001.

Table 6: Frequency of suspected abuse in males/females of different age groups, on a scale of 1= Never to 5= Frequently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Veterinarian</th>
<th>Age Group of Animal Abuser</th>
<th>Child ( Mean \ (SD) )</th>
<th>Adolescent ( Mean \ (SD) )</th>
<th>Adult ( Mean \ (SD) )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.03 (0.81)</td>
<td>2.24 (0.95)</td>
<td>2.87 (0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.79 (0.81)</td>
<td>2.04 (0.88)</td>
<td>2.98 (0.79)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four separate ANOVAs investigating gender and age of veterinarian on the relationship of abuser to animal revealed only a significant main effect for Gender on Stranger/Unsure relationship, \( F(1,221) = 3.97, \ p = 0.048 \). Male vets (M=2.38, SD=0.93) reported Stranger/Unsure significantly more often than did female vets (M=2.03, SD=0.92) (Table 7).

Table 7: Animal abuser’s relationship to the animal and frequency of encounters, on a scale of 1= Never to 5= Frequently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship of Abuser to Animal</th>
<th>Gender of reporting veterinarian</th>
<th>Male ( Mean \ (SD) )</th>
<th>Female ( Mean \ (SD) )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( \leq 39 ) years ( 40+ ) years</td>
<td>( \leq 39 ) years ( 40+ ) years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner(^1)</td>
<td>3.38 (0.89)</td>
<td>3.22 (1.17)</td>
<td>3.36 (0.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate of owner(^2)</td>
<td>2.52 (0.99)</td>
<td>2.22 (0.72)</td>
<td>2.11 (0.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinarian/nurse/Animal attendant</td>
<td>1.46 (0.89)</td>
<td>1.45 (0.60)</td>
<td>1.51 (0.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger/unsure</td>
<td>2.31 (0.78)</td>
<td>2.40 (0.98)</td>
<td>1.95 (0.92)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\)Owner was defined as owner/main carer in survey  
\(^2\)Associate of owner included: friend/partner/relative/staff of owner

**Emotional impact of working with cases of animal abuse**

Most respondents (\( n = 251/294; 85.4\% \)) felt distressed when working with animal abuse cases (116 very distressed; 135 somewhat distressed). Female respondents (Mean = 1.72, \( SD = 0.88 \)) reported greater levels of distress than males (Mean = 2.12,
SD = 0.77), p < 0.001, on a scale of 1=very distressed to 5=very comfortable. Age of
the veterinarian did not affect the level of distress (p = 0.11).

**Emotional impact of euthanizing abused animals**

The most common response to performing euthanasia of abused animals was
‘somewhat distressed’ (n = 97/278, 35%), followed by ‘very distressed (n = 70/278, 25%). The least common response was ‘very comfortable’ (n = 25, 9%). There were
no significant effects of veterinarian’s gender (p = 0.18) or age (p = 0.34) on this
response.

**Domestic violence**

Most veterinarians had at some stage encountered animal abuse cases which they
believe had co-occurred with domestic violence (218/287, 76%). The most common
response was ‘infrequently’ (less than one animal abuse case per year suspected to be
linked with domestic violence) (n = 106/287, 37%), followed by ‘occasionally’ (1-3
cases per year) (n = 87/287, 30%), ‘regularly’ (4-11 cases per year) (n = 21/287, 7%) and ‘frequently’ (12 or more cases per year) (n = 4/287, 1%). Sixty-nine respondents
(24%) had never suspected that the animal abuse cases they had encountered were
linked to domestic violence.

Most respondents reported that the domestic violence perpetrators were either all
males (n = 59/211; 28% of respondents to this question) or mostly males (n =
120/211; 57%). Few respondents reported that the domestic violence perpetrators
were equally males and females 25/211 (12%), mostly females (n = 5/211; 2%) or all
females (n = 2/211; 1%).
Females (Mean = 2.34, $SD = 0.95$) reported greater frequencies of animal abuse cases linked to domestic violence than males did (Mean = 2.01, $SD = 0.86$), $t$ (277) = 2.624, $p = 0.009$. There were no significant differences between veterinarians aged up to 39 years and those aged 40 years and over ($p = 0.450$). Neither the veterinarian’s gender ($p = 0.917$) nor age (up to 39 years and 40 years and over) ($p = 0.184$) were significantly related to the gender of the perpetrators of domestic violence.

**Discussion**

Most respondents to the current study had encountered cases of animal abuse during their veterinary work. Verbal abuse was the most common type of animal abuse and dogs were the most frequently abused species. These results are similar to research conducted in New Zealand by Williams, Dale, Clarke and Garrett (2008), who found that of a range of large and small animals, dogs were the species most commonly abused. Similar to the current study, Munro and Thrusfield’s (2001b,c) research found that the sexual abuse of animals was only reported by a minority of veterinarians with physical abuse more commonly encountered. In the current study, the greater proportion of male veterinarians reporting abuse of farmed animals could be due to the fact that males comprise the majority of farm animal veterinarians (Serpell, 2005).

Many veterinarians (particularly females) reported being emotionally distressed when working with or euthanizing abused animals. Several studies have shown that women tend to have greater empathy for animals than men do (Knight, Vrij, Cherryman and Nunkoosing, 2004; Taylor and Signal, 2005; Phillips et al. 2011), and experience anxiety and depression more commonly than men (e.g. Gorman, 2006; McLean and
Anderson 2009). This may explain why in the current study, women were more distressed than men.

The connection between human interpersonal violence and animal abuse has attracted increasing interest from researchers over the last few decades, in particular the area of domestic violence and animal abuse (Ascione, 1998; Flynn, 2000; Roguski, 2012). It has been reported that around one-third of all women worldwide will experience abuse perpetrated by an intimate male at some point in their lives (Coulter and VandeWeerd, 2009), hence it is likely that domestic violence survivors will be visiting veterinary clinics with their animals at some stage and may choose to confide in veterinary staff. The majority of respondents in the current study had seen cases of animal abuse which they suspected were linked to domestic violence. Similar to other data, males were more commonly reported to be the perpetrators of domestic violence (Romans, Poore and Martin, 2000). It is not known in the current study whether the suspected cases of domestic violence occurred in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, however it is recognised that domestic violence and concurrent animal abuse can occur in same-sex relationships (Renzetti, 1992).

The inclusion of human/animal abuse issues in the veterinary curricula and professional veterinary development is recommended. This supports human-animal bond advocates who call for the inclusion of veterinary medicine into violence prevention programs (Arkow, 2013). Programs such as the domestic violence shelter partnerships within some USA veterinary schools (Creevy, Shaver and Cornell, 2013) provide fostering opportunities for companion animals whose guardians have experienced domestic violence. This program raises awareness among veterinary
students of how animal welfare can be impacted by domestic violence. Similar programs could be incorporated within veterinary schools internationally. Awareness of the complexities of the connection between animal abuse and domestic violence is vital when encountering abused clients as it enables veterinarians to provide empathic and non-judgmental support. In addition, informing clients of companion animal fostering services (e.g. via brochures/posters in the clinic waiting room) may help to encourage disclosure by clients experiencing violence. Training of veterinarians in issues of domestic violence and professional education in the management of occupational stress could be achieved in collaboration with mental health professionals (e.g. psychologists, social workers) during veterinary conferences and meetings and in the veterinary curricula.

We encourage veterinarians to engage with the available literature about human/animal abuse and to liaise with local domestic violence services and animal welfare organizations to establish pathways to foster care of animals from abusive homes. This is best undertaken prior to being confronted with such cases in practice, allowing veterinarians to feel confident that they are equipped to respond appropriately. An easily accessible online source of information about human/animal abuse is available via nationallinkcoalition.org.

To minimise any detrimental mental health impact of working with animal abuse it is recommended that veterinary staff take time for self-care following an incident to avoid compassion fatigue and burnout. A critical incident stress management (CISM) plan should be in place (Harms, 2007) prior to staff experiencing a traumatic event at work, which can be developed in consultation with veterinary staff and psychologists.
(Walsh, 2013). The CISM should be a simple, step-by-step process of what to do and who to contact in the event of a critical incident (Figley, 2002), as well as a plan to ensure staff are not rostered to distressing duties (such as euthanizing animals) for prolonged periods of time (Walsh, 2013).

**Limitations**

A limitation of the present study is that the surveyed population was recruited via self-selection rather than a randomly selected sample of veterinarians. Recruitment advertising will not have been seen by all veterinarians within each surveyed country, and it is also possible that those who felt strongly about human/animal abuse issues were more likely to participate. Despite this there is no reason to believe that the interactions explored in this research were affected by selection bias. For example, it is possible that males and females were both subjected to similar selection bias, therefore the gender differences may still be representative of the broader population of veterinarians. The range of responses (e.g. some had encountered animal abuse frequently, some infrequently) and the diversity of demographic data from both male and female veterinarians in a range of practice settings provides valuable data and adds to our understanding of human/animal abuse, perpetrators and distress faced by veterinarians who work with animal abuse cases.

**Conclusions**

This study found that the majority of surveyed veterinarians had encountered at least one type of animal abuse, most commonly verbal abuse. The animal’s owner/main carer was most often reported to be the animal’s abuser. Males across all age classifications (Children up to 12 years, Adolescents 13-18 years and Adults) were
more frequently reported than females as being the suspected animal abuser. Dogs were more likely to have been abused than other animals. Most respondents felt distressed when working with animal abuse with females reporting greater levels of distress than males. The majority of respondents had seen cases of animal abuse they suspected were linked to domestic violence and most of the respondents reported being distressed when faced with these issues in practice.

The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of some of the stressors encountered by veterinarians. This highlights the need for veterinarians to receive human/animal abuse awareness training and education in the management of stress associated with cases of animal abuse.

**Conflict of interest statement**

None of the authors has any financial or personal relationships that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of the paper.

**Acknowledgments**

The authors would like to thank the veterinarians who participated in this study and the staff of veterinary associations and publications who assisted by promoting this study to veterinarians in their countries.

**References:**


Part A of this chapter described the types of animal abuse most commonly encountered by veterinarians. It was found that dogs are more commonly the victims of abuse, with verbal abuse most frequently reported. Males were the perpetrators of animal abuse and domestic violence in most cases. Veterinarians can also be the victims of abuse in their personal and professional lives and Part B of this chapter addresses this issue.

Part B:

Vets as victims – personal experiences of abuse among veterinarians.
Abstract
A self-selected online survey of veterinarians in English speaking countries (Australia, New Zealand, UK, USA, Canada, South Africa) was conducted to explore veterinarians’ experiences of interpersonal violence occurring in the veterinary workplace and in personal relationships. A total of 385 veterinarians participated. The majority of veterinarians reported experiencing human interpersonal violence, most commonly verbal abuse from clients (n=225). Female veterinarians were significantly more likely than male veterinarians to have experienced sexual abuse as a child, domestic violence, emotional/psychological abuse as an adult and abuse from other veterinary staff members (Ps<0.05). It was found that veterinarians are at risk of abuse in the workplace. Females reported greater levels of abuse compared to males overall, which is consistent with international data on interpersonal violence. The inclusion of personal safety and abuse in practice issues in the veterinary curricula and professional development is recommended.

Keywords interpersonal violence; veterinarians; workplace violence; domestic violence; victims

Introduction
Whilst veterinarians have traditionally focussed on animal health (RCVS 2013) they are likely to be placed in situations where the welfare of both humans and animals is compromised (Arkow 2013). Domestic violence is one situation where both humans and companion animals may be threatened, neglected or abused.
Abuse of companion animals within domestic violence can be used to exert psychological control over the abused partner and/or prevent them from leaving the relationship (Flynn, 2000). Acceptance of the link between human- and animal-directed violence has grown over the last two decades (Taylor, 2013), with various organisations (e.g. The Links Group UK; The Humane Society of The United States First Strike campaign; National Link Coalition) combining the expertise of human welfare and veterinary professionals to promote the welfare and safety of vulnerable children, adults and animals. The importance of such organisations cannot be underestimated as many veterinarians have encountered cases of animal abuse and believe that people who abuse animals are more likely to abuse their children or partner (Williams et al., 2008, Green and Gullone, 2005). Education of veterinary students in human/animal abuse issues has previously been criticised as inadequate (Green and Gullone, 2005) and guidelines outlining the veterinarian’s role in identifying and supporting these cases have now been published in countries including the USA (Arkow et al., 2011), Britain (The Links Group, 2013) and New Zealand (Veterinary Council of New Zealand, 2013). Additionally, partnerships between several USA veterinary schools and domestic violence shelters provides care for animals from violent homes and raises student awareness of how animal welfare can be impacted by domestic violence (Creevy, 2013).

Human interpersonal violence is a global problem affecting people of all cultures and socioeconomic groups with long-term impacts including physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health problems (WHO, 2002). Female gender is a risk factor for some forms of abuse, with approximately 5-10% of men but 20% of women reporting that they experienced sexual abuse during childhood (WHO and ISPCAN,
2006) and a higher proportion of women (30%) reporting that they have experienced domestic violence (WHO, 2013). The increasing number of females within the veterinary profession (Irvine and Vermilya, 2010) raises the possibility that a growing number of veterinarians are abuse survivors.

Occupational violence (defined as ‘any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work’) (WorkSafe Victoria, 2011 p. 1) is known to occur within the veterinary workplace (Lewis, 2007) and may contribute to poor physical and mental well-being among some veterinarians. It has been found that although veterinarians, particularly females, suffer from higher levels of anxiety and depression than the general population (Hatch et al., 2011) many veterinarians prefer to use informal sources of support (e.g. friends) rather than seek professional help for mental health issues (Gardner and Hini, 2006).

The current research sought to explore veterinarians’ personal experiences of interpersonal violence in order to raise awareness of how veterinary educators and employers can support the profession on this issue.

**Methodology**

**Research design and sample**

To explore veterinarians’ experiences of human interpersonal violence, an online survey (created using Survey Monkey software package; www.surveymonkey.com) was offered to veterinarians, who self-selected to participate. This was considered the most effective way to gather information from participants across a number of countries (Sue and Ritter, 2007). Following guidelines for researchers working with
victims of violence (Ellsberg and Heise, 2005), emphasis was placed on obtaining informed consent and protecting respondents’ privacy. A screening question asking whether the respondent was a qualified veterinarian was used as the inclusion criteria at the commencement of the survey. Those without this qualification were automatically taken to the final page of the survey.

Respondents were asked seven questions about experiences of abuse (response options were verbal, physical, sexual, emotional/psychological abuse and destruction of property) during childhood, adulthood and in the workplace (from veterinary staff and/or clients), and whether they had experienced domestic violence (yes/no). For those who responded affirmatively to the latter, eight additional questions were included to establish whether animals were abused in the household. Options (e.g. types of abuse experienced) were displayed in a randomised order to each respondent to minimise response order bias.

Domestic violence was defined for respondents as: ‘Acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and behaviours to control a partner through fear’ (Council of Australian Governments, 2011). Threats, actual harm and killing of animals have been linked to some domestic violence situations (Ascione, 1998; Mitchell, 2011) and given the population for this study were veterinarians it was important to include this issue in the questions. In addition, victimisation was defined as ‘the outcome of deliberate action taken by a person or institution to exploit, oppress or harm another, or to destroy or illegally obtain another's property or possessions’ (Fisher and Reyns, 2009 p. 162). The terms ‘abuse’ and ‘violence’ are
used interchangeably in this paper and are used when referring to both acts of physical 
and non-physical violence.

The survey was written in English and recruitment conducted in English-speaking 
countries (Australia, New Zealand, UK, USA, Canada and South Africa) with similar 
vetary education systems and responsibilities in veterinary practice. Ethical 
approval for the study was obtained from the University of Queensland Human Ethics 
Committee (project number 2011000457) prior to commencement of the surveys.

A unique web address for each country was developed and provided in all advertising. 
Promotional methods depended on the recommendations and opportunities provided by 
the relevant veterinary associations and publications:

- Australia – the survey was promoted in the May and July 2011 editions of the 
  monthly Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) e-newsletter ‘eLine’
  emailed to AVA members, and in the Animal Management in Rural and 
  Remote Indigenous Communities newsletter (AMRRIC, 2011)
- New Zealand – inclusion in one issue of a monthly veterinary newsletter 
  published by the New Zealand Veterinary Association (VetScript, 2011)
- UK – a letter was published in the Veterinary Record journal (Tiplady, 2011a) 
  inviting members to participate
- USA – an article promoting the study was published in the Veterinary 
  Medicine Journal (Tiplady, 2011b), and in the dvm360.com veterinary web 
  site (Tiplady, 2011c)
- Canada and South Africa – the Canadian and South African Veterinary Associations provided the web link via email to members of their veterinary associations.

The survey was described as exploring animal abuse and human interpersonal violence that might be seen and experienced by veterinarians. It was predicted to take less than 10 minutes, and participants were informed that responses would remain confidential, with the right to withdraw without explanation. No reimbursement was offered and participants could decline to respond to any question.

Demographic questions were positioned at the end of the survey, a deliberate strategy designed to move the respondent from potentially distressing recollections to less challenging questions before ending the survey (Walsh, 2004). These questions inquired about gender, age, length of time working as a veterinarian, type/s of current and previous veterinary employment (small animal practice; equine practice; mixed practice; production animal practice; animal shelter/pound; government; research; teaching at university), location of workplace (inner-city, suburban, semi-rural or rural) and whether employment is/was mainly full-time, part-time or casual. A copy of the survey is available from the corresponding author upon request.

**Statistical analysis**

Results were downloaded from the online survey package into the IBM SPSS statistical package (version 21) for analysis. Inferential statistics (e.g. Chi-square, ANOVA) were used to investigate differences between age and gender on experiences of interpersonal violence. For the Likert scale questions, ANOVA analyses were
performed. Violations of the statistical assumptions related to each analysis were identified through a combination of visual inspection of histograms and box-and-whiskers plots and relevant statistical tests (e.g. Levene’s test for homogeneity of variance). Further, skewness of the data was evaluated by visual inspection of the distribution in a histogram and by evaluating the data against z skewness > ±3. For any skewed data, equivalent non-parametric statistical testing to the parametric analyses was performed. The results of the non-parametric analyses will only be reported where substantive differences to interpretations of the parametric findings were identified. Similar to a survey of veterinarians by Green and Gullone (2005), to investigate age differences in responses, participants’ ages were grouped as Younger (up to age 39 years) or Older (aged 40 and over) for analysis. Where percentages are reported, these reflect the percentage of participants who have responded to that question.

**Results**

*Respondent demographics*

Responses were received from 385 qualified veterinarians. As respondents were self-nominated, it was not possible to determine a response rate.

The majority of respondents were female (n=208, 73%). The largest proportion of respondents lived in Australia (n=165, 43%) and of the 284 respondents who provided their age, 163 (57%) were aged 40 years and over. There were more female
respondents in all age groups except for the oldest age group, with the ratio of female to male declining with age (see Table 1), $\chi^2 (4, N=283) = 40.48, P < 0.001$.

Table 1: Number of male and female veterinarian participants within each age category\textsuperscript{1}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Ratio male:female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1: 9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1: 4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1: 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1: 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1: 0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>1: 2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Note: Gender was not provided by 102 respondents.

Most respondents reported working full-time (n=249, 88\%) in an inner-city or suburban practice setting (n=175, 62\%), and most (n=213, 55\%) had worked in small animal practice (Table 2).

Table 2: Practice characteristics of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period working as veterinarian (n = 284)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-9 years</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15 years</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice type\textsuperscript{2}</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small animal</td>
<td>213</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal shelter/pound</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Government 33
### Teaching at university 29
### Equine 26
### Production animal 24
### Research 20

#### Practice setting (n = 283)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner city</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-rural</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Employment status (n = 282)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mostly part-time</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly casual</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly full-time</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Percentages are rounded
2. Respondents were asked to tick all practice types in which they had worked as a veterinarian

#### Gender and country of residence

The ratio of male:female veterinarians in the current survey was compared to the reported gender ratios of veterinarians in each of the surveyed countries (Table 3).

Although the majority of veterinarians in the UK (RCVS 2011) and USA (AVMA 2012) are female, there was a bias in the current study towards more females than males responding than represented in the reported demographic data, $\chi^2(1, N=283) = 51.15$, $p<0.001$.

Table 3: Gender of veterinarians in the current survey vs veterinary demographic data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Respondents to current study</th>
<th>Demographic data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Veterinarians</td>
<td>Female Veterinarians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia¹</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40 (37)</td>
<td>69 (63)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Gender breakdown in various country categories. Note: Gender was not provided by 102 respondents.
1. National Australia Bank (2009)
2. Canadian Veterinary Medicine Association (2012)
3. Veterinary Council of New Zealand (2011)
4. T. Coetze, Senior Registry Official, South African Veterinary Council pers. comm. 26 October 2012
5. Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (2011)
6. American Veterinary Medicine Association (2012)

Abuse experienced in personal life

When asked of the types of abuse experienced in their personal lives, the majority of total participants (n=195/385, 51%) had experienced at least one type of abuse and 159 (41%) had provided multiple responses of two or more types of abuse, indicating polyvictimisation (Table 4).

Table 4: Types of abuse experience in personal life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Abuse Experienced</th>
<th>Male (n=75)</th>
<th>Female (n=208)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
<td>28 (37)</td>
<td>76 (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>15 (20)</td>
<td>36 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/psychological abuse</td>
<td>18 (24)</td>
<td>64 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>32 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of property</td>
<td>13 (17)</td>
<td>22 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As an adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
<td>28 (37)</td>
<td>90 (43)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Verbal abuse was the most commonly reported type of abuse during childhood and adulthood and sexual abuse was the least commonly reported type of abuse. Female respondents were more likely to report emotional/psychological abuse as an adult compared to male respondents $\chi^2 (1, N=283) = 4.2, p = 0.04$. Similarly, female respondents were significantly more likely to indicate experiences of sexual abuse as a child than male respondents $\chi^2 (1, N=283) = 10.6, p = 0.001$.

### Domestic violence

Fourteen percent (38 of 281) reported they had been the victim of domestic violence, including four males and 34 females. Of these, 82% (31 of 38) had lived with animals during the domestic violence (four male respondents and 27 female respondents) and two males and 16 females reported their partner had threatened to abuse the animals. Abuse of animals by the respondent’s partner during the domestic violence relationship was reported by 13% (4 of 31). All these abused animals were owned by female respondents.

Females (16%, 34 of 207) were significantly more likely to report they were a victim of domestic violence compared to males (5%, 4 of 74), $\chi^2 (1, N = 281) = 5.66, p =$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Abuse</th>
<th>Males (N=74)</th>
<th>Females (N=207)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>5 (7)</td>
<td>25 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/psychological abuse</td>
<td>16 (21)</td>
<td>71 (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>2 (3)</td>
<td>16 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of property</td>
<td>16 (21)</td>
<td>41 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domestic violence (DV)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced DV from a partner</td>
<td>4 (5)</td>
<td>34 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived with animals during DV</td>
<td>4 (5)</td>
<td>27 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV and Threats of harm to animals</td>
<td>2 (3)</td>
<td>16 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV and Actual harm to animals</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>9 (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
0.02. Age of respondent (≤39 years vs ≥40 years) was not significantly associated with whether they had been the victim of domestic violence from a partner, p = 0.13.

**Abuse in the veterinary workplace**

Verbal abuse from veterinary clients was the most commonly reported type of abuse in the workplace (Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Abuse Experienced in the Workplace</th>
<th>Male (n=75) n (%)</th>
<th>Female (n=208) n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Abuse from veterinary client/customer</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
<td>62 (83)</td>
<td>163 (78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>10 (13)</td>
<td>7 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/psychological abuse</td>
<td>28 (37)</td>
<td>70 (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>4 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of property</td>
<td>11 (15)</td>
<td>16 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Abuse from another veterinarian / veterinary practice staff member</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
<td>20 (27)</td>
<td>55 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>5 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/psychological abuse</td>
<td>13 (17)</td>
<td>57 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of property</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>10 (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers (and percentages) relate only to those respondents who elected to respond to these questions and provided their gender. Note: Gender was not provided by two respondents to these questions.

A total score on types of abuse from clients was computed by summing responses across each of the five abuse types. Scores for each respondent could range from 1 (one abuse type indicated) to 5 (abuse reported for each of the five types). There was a trend for male veterinarians (mean = 1.79 types of abuse, SD = 0.83) to report more types of abuse from veterinary clients than did female veterinarians (mean = 1.59 types of abuse, SD = 0.67), t (224) = 1.91, p = 0.06.
A total score on types of abuse from veterinary practice staff members was computed by summing respondents’ responses across each of the five abuse types. Female veterinarians (mean = 1.89 types of abuse, SD = 0.75) reported significantly more types of abuse from other veterinarians/veterinary practice staff than did male veterinarians (mean = 1.52 types of abuse, SD = 0.59), t (91) = 2.11 p = 0.04).

**Discussion**

The majority of respondents reported experiencing at least one type of abuse. Female veterinarians were significantly more likely than males to have experienced more types of abuse. These included abuse from other veterinary staff members, domestic violence, sexual abuse as a child and emotional/psychological abuse as an adult.

The higher levels of domestic violence and polyvictimisation reported among female veterinarians in the current study reflect international data on violence against women (WHO 2013). Several men reported they had experienced domestic violence. While it is widely acknowledged that men do experience domestic violence by female partners, prevalence data on this is contested (Taft, Hegarty and Flood, 2001). Researchers using the Conflict Tactics Scale (where domestic violence is defined as a conflict tactic) report that men and women are equally violent in domestic violence relationships (Saunders, 1990; Flood, 1999), however other researchers define violence not as a conflict tactic but as a tactic of coercive control and conclude very different rates of domestic violence (Taft et al., 2001). In addition, hospital data on injury rates due to domestic violence overwhelmingly report that most victims are women (Tovell, Mc Kenna, Bradley and Pointer, 2012). Although we acknowledge
that our study has a self-selection bias, the results appear to support the evidence that there is a greater prevalence of violence towards women than men. It is not known in the current study whether victims of domestic violence were in heterosexual or same-sex relationships however it is recognised that domestic violence and concurrent animal abuse can occur in same-sex relationships (Eaton et al., 2008). The current study also confirmed that companion animals may be threatened or abused in domestic violence situations (Ascione, 1998; Flynn, 2000; Roguski, 2012; Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012).

The number of respondents reporting sexual abuse during childhood was similar to the reported global prevalence (18% of females in the current study vs 20% global data; 3% of males in the current study vs 5-10% global data) (WHO and ISPCAN, 2006). Disclosure of experiencing abuse is influenced by whether the victim perceives a social stigma associated with disclosing or is fearful of repercussions (WHO 2013). Confiding in someone about abuse can be distressing (Acierno, Resnick and Kilpatrick, 1997) and survivors may experience shame (Kessler and Bieschke, 1999), embarrassment (Nancarrow et al., 2011) and low self-esteem (Fleming, Mullen, Sibthorpe and Bammer, 1999). For these reasons, an online survey method was chosen to help protect respondents’ confidentiality and provide a way of them being able to disclose anonymously. Whilst some veterinarians may have declined participation in the current survey due to the subject matter, others may have welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences.

Data on veterinary workplace violence is limited. A study in Canada of 806 veterinarians found 2% reported physical abuse and 60% reported verbal abuse from
clients in the past five years (Epp and Waldner, 2012). In the current study, verbal abuse from veterinary clients was similarly reported at higher rates compared to physical abuse. Reasons for abuse of veterinarians by clients were not requested, however other authors have reported in addition to strangers attempting robbery (Phillips et al., 2000), some perpetrators are known to the veterinarian, such as abusive current and former partners (Lewis, 2007), or aggressive intoxicated clients encountered on farm call-outs (Verdon, 2001).

Safety in the veterinary workplace has been discussed by several authors (e.g. Jeyaretnam and Jones, 2000; Lewis, 2007; Hatch et al., 2011) with late night hours, access to potentially self-injurious drugs and an increase in women entering the profession apparently adding to workplace risks (Dwyer cited in Verdon, 2001). The need for each practice to develop a safety plan and seek professional help to train veterinary staff in managing potentially violent situations is evident.

The inclusion of personal safety and abuse in practice issues in the veterinary curricula and professional development is recommended. Programs such as the domestic violence shelter partnerships within some USA veterinary schools (discussed by Creevy et al., 2013) enhances student understanding of how animal welfare can be impacted by domestic violence and would be beneficial within veterinary schools internationally. Awareness of the connection between human interpersonal violence and animal abuse is vital when encountering abused clients or colleagues as it enables an empathic and non-judgmental response on the part of the veterinarian. In addition, informing clients of companion animal fostering services (e.g. via brochures/posters in the clinic waiting room) may help encourage disclosure
by clients experiencing violence. Training of veterinarians in issues of human interpersonal violence could be achieved in collaboration with mental health professions (e.g. social workers) during veterinary conferences and meetings. Veterinarians are encouraged to read the available literature on human/animal abuse and to liaise with local domestic violence services and animal welfare organisations to discuss options for foster care of animals from abusive situations. This is best undertaken prior to being confronted by such cases in practice so veterinarians can feel confident that they are equipped to respond appropriately.

One limitation of the present study is that the surveyed population was not based on a random selection of veterinarians, but relied on self-selection. This approach may have introduced bias into the results as those who felt strongly about human/animal abuse issues may have been more likely to participate. Not all respondents chose to answer all questions. Additionally, only a proportion of veterinarians may have been aware of the study, as the recruitment advertising may not been seen by all veterinarians within a country.

The relatively low response rate from veterinarians in some countries (Canada, New Zealand and UK) raises the possibility that some recruitment strategies were not successful or that veterinarians chose not to take part. For these reasons, no attempt has been made to suggest the results are representative of the entire veterinary cohort within surveyed countries. Despite this, the current study’s exploration of issues surrounding human interpersonal violence and animal abuse adds to an understanding of abuse faced by some veterinarians both in their personal and professional lives.
Conclusion

This study surveyed a self-selecting sample of veterinarians in various English speaking countries and found that the majority of veterinarians were victims of abuse in personal lives and/or whilst working as veterinarians. Females reported greater levels of abuse compared to males overall, which is consistent with international data on interpersonal violence. Abuse from veterinary staff and clients highlights the need for personal and occupational safety issues to be included within the veterinary curricula and during professional development.

Conflict of interest statement

None of the authors has any financial or personal relationships that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of the paper.

References


Part B of this chapter showed that veterinarians are at risk of abuse in the workplace as the majority of surveyed veterinarians reported experiences of violence at work, most commonly verbal abuse from clients. Females reported greater levels of abuse compared to males overall, which is consistent with international data on interpersonal violence. The inclusion of personal safety and abuse in practice issues in the veterinary curricula and professional development is recommended.

In order for veterinarians to provide empathetic and knowledgable support to the
human and animal victims of domestic violence it is vital that they are educated in how to respond effectively when these issues present in practice. Part C of this chapter discusses how veterinarians perceived their education on animal abuse and interpersonal violence and when they feel this should be provided.

Part C:

Vets, education and violence – how veterinarians perceive their education on animal abuse and human interpersonal violence
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Abstract:

Animal abuse occurs at higher rates when there is domestic violence in the home. A survey of veterinarians was undertaken to discover 1) the importance veterinarians placed on learning about animal abuse and domestic violence, 2) how well their veterinary training had prepared them for these cases and 3) when veterinarians should be educated in these issues.

Most respondents felt their veterinary education did not adequately prepare them for cases of animal abuse and domestic violence in practice and were supportive of being trained in these areas. We recommend veterinary schools and associations collaborate with social work professionals to educate veterinarians in recognition and support of animal abuse and domestic violence encountered in practice.

Key words: Veterinary education; animal abuse; human interpersonal violence; domestic violence

Introduction:
Animal abuse and neglect are encountered by many veterinarians at some stage of their career, most of whom believe that those who abuse animals are more likely to harm their children or partner (Williams *et al.*, 2008; Green and Gullone, 2005). Despite this, many in the profession feel their veterinary education ill prepared them to effectively recognise and respond to these cases in practice (Landau, 1999; Sharpe and Wittum, 1999; Green and Gullone, 2005). It has been found that animal abuse occurs at higher levels in homes where there is domestic violence (Ascione *et al.*, 2007) with estimates indicating that one-third of adult women are likely to experience domestic violence at some point during their life span (Coulter and VandeWeerd, 2009). In addition, 63% of Australian households have at least one companion animal (Animal Health Alliance, 2013). As a result it is vital that veterinarians be trained in issues surrounding the link between human and animal abuse and its management.

To further investigate veterinarians’ views on education in animal abuse and human interpersonal violence, a study was undertaken in which veterinarians could volunteer to answer an online survey about animal abuse and domestic violence encountered in practice.

**Methodology:**

A survey was developed using Survey Monkey online software ( surveymonkey.com) and was promoted (via veterinary publications and email) to veterinarians in United Kingdom, United States of America, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. These countries were chosen as there was a common language spoken (English) and similar roles and responsibilities in veterinary practice.
This paper focusses on comparing the age (up to age 39 years; 40 years and over) and gender of reporting veterinarians on their responses to the following:

1) importance they placed on learning about animal abuse and domestic violence issues (answered by a Likert scale of 1 = ‘extremely unimportant’ to 5 = ‘extremely important’);

2) how well their veterinary undergraduate training equipped them to effectively recognise and support cases of animal abuse/domestic violence encountered in veterinary practice (answered by a Likert scale of 1 = ‘extremely badly’ to 5 = ‘extremely well’);

3) when they feel education in animal abuse and domestic violence issues should be provided (answered by selecting any number of the following options: during undergraduate veterinary education and/or postgraduate veterinary education and/or continuing professional development).

Where percentages are reported, these reflect the percentage of participants who have responded to that question.

Undergraduate veterinary training refers to the education of veterinary students prior to graduating as qualified veterinarians. Postgraduate veterinary training refers to the higher education of qualified veterinarians who have graduated and may involve Masters or Doctoral level study. Continuing professional education refers to opportunities for qualified veterinarians to receive additional training and can occur during attendance at conferences, seminars and workshops.

Statistical analysis
Independent samples t-tests, Chi-square and ANOVA analyses were performed using SPSS statistical software package (SPSS version 21).

**Results:**

*Demographic results*

A total of 385 valid responses were received. The majority of respondents were female (n=208, 73%), worked full-time (n=249, 88%) in an inner-city or suburban practice setting (n=175, 62%). Most (n=213, 55%) worked in a small animal practice. The largest proportion of respondents lived in Australia (n=165, 43%).

*Importance of education in animal abuse issues*

The participants were asked to rate the importance of education on animal abuse and domestic violence issues using a Likert scale. The results showed that more females than males thought it was important that veterinarians were taught how to recognise and treat cases of animal abuse t (279) = 2.076, p = 0.04, females (Mean = 4.42, SD = 1.34) vs males (Mean = 4.03, SD = 1.49). There was no significant difference between Age groups (up to 39 years and 40 years and over), p = 0.78.

*Views on veterinary undergraduate training in animal abuse issues*

Most respondents (n = 159, 54.1%) thought that their undergraduate veterinary training did not equip them to effectively recognise and treat suspected cases of animal abuse. There was a significant gender difference t (281) = 2.01, p = 0.046, with females (M = 2.35, SD = 0.97) more likely than males (M = 2.61, SD = 0.98) to consider that their education was inadequate in regards to animal abuse training.
There was no significant difference between Age groups (up to 39 years and 40 years and over), p = 0.08.

When training should be provided in animal abuse issues
Most veterinarians (n = 257, 67%) believed training in animal abuse recognition and treatment should be provided during undergraduate veterinary training, 232 (60%) at continuing professional education workshops and 138 (36%) chose during postgraduate veterinary training. Chi-square analyses revealed that there were neither Gender nor Age differences in when veterinarians believed training should be provided, all ps ≥ 0.089.

Importance of education in domestic violence issues
Females were more likely to feel it is important that veterinarians were taught to recognise and support suspected cases of domestic violence in their clients (n = 68; 32.7% of females compared n = 8; 10.7% of males), p < 0.001. There was no statistically significant difference between respondents aged up to 39 years and aged 40 and over, p=0.23.

Views on veterinary undergraduate training in domestic violence issues
The majority of respondents reported that their undergraduate veterinary training did not equip them to effectively recognise and support clients who were victims of domestic violence (n = 249, 65% responded with ‘not at all’). There were no Gender, p=0.95, or Age, p=0.68, differences in these views.

When training should be provided in domestic violence issues
Most respondents believed that veterinarians should be trained in domestic violence issues at continuing professional education workshops (n = 198, 51%), followed by during undergraduate veterinary training (n = 165, 43%) and postgraduate training (n = 105, 27%). Thirty-eight respondents did not believe there should be any training provided in this issue. With respect to training being provided in postgraduate programs, 41.8% of females believed this to be appropriate compared to 22.7% of males. This difference was statistically significant, $X^2 (1, N = 283) = 8.71$, $p = 0.003$. There were no other Gender differences across the training in domestic violence options (i.e., undergraduate, continuing professional workshops). However, 21.3% of males believed that training was not necessary compared to 10.1% of females, $X^2 (1, N = 283) = 6.17$, $p = 0.013$. There were no significant Age differences across each of the training stage options, all $p s \geq 0.119$.

**Discussion:**

Most veterinarians who participated in the current study felt their veterinary education did not adequately prepare them for cases of animal abuse and domestic violence which they may encounter in practice. Being confronted with animal abuse is likely to be emotionally challenging for veterinarians as many are drawn to the profession by their compassion for animals (Heath *et al.*, 2006). Domestic violence is present among all socio-economic groups however, may not be as visible to veterinarians as many women survivors will remain silent about their experiences rather than seek help (Eisikovits and Buchbinder, 2000).
Females were more likely than males to place greater importance on veterinarians being educated in issues of animal abuse and domestic violence. Other research has found that females tend to have higher levels of empathy for animals than males do (Phillips et al., 2011) and are more likely than men to have experienced domestic violence as the victimised partner (Glass et al., 2010). Women’s greater empathy towards animals and increased likelihood of having experienced a violent intimate relationship may be the reason for women reported being more supportive of learning about human/animal abuse issues in the current study.

Within this sample of veterinarians there was interest in learning about animal abuse and domestic violence issues. Self-selection may introduce the risk of bias as it is possible those with a particular interest in human/animal welfare issues would be more likely to participate in this research. However, the range of responses suggests that a diverse range of veterinarians chose to take part (e.g. some were very supportive of learning about domestic violence issues, some responding that this should not be taught at all).

**Conclusion:**

The current study has broadened our understanding of human/animal abuse and veterinary education issues by surveying veterinarians from a range of countries. Women were more likely than men to support education in human and animal abuse issues. With the growing cohort of females within the veterinary profession, it is timely that training be provided in how best to recognise and support cases of domestic violence and animal abuse encountered in practice.
Acknowledgments: We are grateful to the veterinarians who gave up their time to participate in this study.

References:
Animal Health Alliance (2013) ‘Pet Ownership in Australia’ Available at: 


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This chapter revealed that veterinarians encounter violence in their professional and personal lives, feel distressed by cases of animal abuse and do not feel their veterinary education adequately prepared them for dealing with cases of human/animal abuse seen in practice. It is recommended that veterinary schools and associations collaborate with social work professionals to educate veterinarians in recognition and support of animal abuse and domestic violence encountered in practice.

Coping with the distress of witnessing abuse of animals is not only an issue for
veterinarians and women living with companion animals during domestic violence but also for the wider community. A media broadcast of an undercover investigation into the cruelty of Australian cattle exported for slaughter in Indonesia caused widespread outrage among the Australian public in 2011. The next chapter highlights the detrimental impact that the exposure to the sights, sounds and descriptions of animal abuse had on some members of the public.
Chapter Six Study number three

Effects of animal cruelty on the public

This chapter describes how members of the public were emotionally affected by a live export animal cruelty story which was broadcast in the Australian media in 2011. Animal abuse is usually hidden from view and it often takes an undercover investigation for many of us to see such horror. This study is included in the PhD as it provides a unique insight into how animal abuse impacts us all.

Part A is based on face-to-face interviews of 157 people conducted within two weeks of the initial live export media broadcast. Part B describes the long term impact by resurveying 15 of these a year later.

Public Response to Media Coverage of Animal Cruelty

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Abstract Activists’ investigations of animal cruelty expose the public to suffering that they may otherwise be unaware of, via an increasingly broad-ranging media. This may result in ethical dilemmas and a wide range of emotions and reactions. Our hypothesis was that media broadcasts of cruelty to cattle in Indonesian abattoirs would result in an emotional response by the public that would drive their actions towards live animal export. A survey of the public in Australia was undertaken to investigate their reactions and responses to. The most common immediate reaction was feeling pity for the cattle. Women were more likely than men to feel sad or angry. Most people discussed the media coverage with others afterwards but fewer than 10 % contacted politicians or wrote to newspapers. We conclude that the public were emotionally affected by the media coverage of cruelty to cattle but that this did not translate into significant behavioural change. We recommend that future broadcasts of animal cruelty should advise the public of contact details for counseling and that mental health support contacts, and information should be included on the websites of animal advocacy groups to acknowledge the disturbing effect animal cruelty exposes can have on the public.

Keywords: Animal cruelty; Cattle; Live export; Media; Public attitudes

A television news program has the capacity to deliver more images of violence, suffering, and death in a half hour than most people would normally view in a lifetime (Newhagen, 1998, p. 267).

Introduction
The Australian live animal export trade is one of the largest in the world, exporting
over four million head of livestock each year (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry, 2012). The industry contributes an average of A$1 billion a year in export earnings (LiveCorp, 2011) and employs 9,000 people across rural and regional Australia (DAFF, 2012).

Indonesia is the main destination for exported cattle and in 2010 over 500,000 were exported from Australia (LiveCorp, 2011). The main sources of cattle are the large grazing stations in the north of Australia from where the animals, generally of Bos indicus (Brahman type) heritage, are taken by trucks to feedlots and wharves to await export. The journey by sea from Australia to Indonesia takes up to 17 days (DAFF, 2011) and upon arrival, cattle are quarantined for 14 days and may be fattened in feedlots for up to 150 days (The Beef Site, 2011). There are over 700 abattoirs in Indonesia and Australian cattle have been slaughtered in ~100 of these to provide fresh meat for the local markets (Meat and Livestock Australia, 2011).

Indonesia has a population of over 240 million people, 86 % of whom identify as Muslims (US Department of State, 2011). Muslims are required to consume “Halal” meat, obtained from animals killed by cutting their throats whilst conscious, with the slaughterer blessing the animal as a single cut is made across the neck with a sharp knife (Drum and Gunning-Trant, 2008). Western methods of slaughter, as typically practiced in Australia, involve cattle being stunned first, using a captive bolt stunner to render each animal unconscious before it is hung up and blood vessels severed to bleed the animal out. Halal slaughter is currently performed in Australian abattoirs, but in most cases these animals are stunned first. However, several Australian abattoirs have been licensed to perform Halal slaughter of fully
conscious animals (Edwards, 2009; Puddy, 2011), a practice criticized by the Australian royal society for the prevention of cruelty to animals (RSPCA) as ‘‘cruel and inhumane’’ (Tensen, 2009).

Defenders of Halal slaughter claim that a single incision to the throat is not painful, however, it has been argued that the intensity of suffering for an animal choking on its own blood is likely to be extreme (Webster, 1994). Religious guidelines for Muslims caution against any form of animal cruelty, including in relation to slaughter practices: ‘‘Verily Allah has prescribed proficiency in all things. Thus, if you kill, kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each of you sharpen his blade and let him spare sufferings to the animal he slaughter (sic)’’ (Halal Australia 2004).

Lack of refrigeration in Indonesia and cultural preferences for freshly killed meat are among the reasons cited for a continuation of the live cattle trade (Drum and Gunning-Trant, 2008; DAFF, 2007). Those critical of the trade have focused on animal welfare concerns (e.g., RSPCA and Animals Australia) and/or job losses in the Australian meat industry—an estimated 40,000 meat packing jobs have been lost in the past 30 years primarily due to the live export trade (Meat Trade News Daily 2010).

At 8:30 pm on the 30th of May, 2011, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC television) broadcast an investigation into the treatment of Australian cattle exported to Indonesia. The footage was initially screened on the investigative journalism program Four Corners via television and then internet (ABC Four
Corners, 2011). The 45 minute episode entitled “A Bloody Business” included graphic scenes of animal cruelty filmed in Indonesian abattoirs by animal advocacy group Animals Australia in collaboration with the Australian RSPCA. Evidence for cruelty in the footage included the following:

- cattle repeatedly kicked and beaten by abattoir workers
- breaking tails
- gouging fingers into the animals’ nostrils and eye sockets
- cattle made to slip and fall on wet concrete
- forcing cattle to climb over fallen animals in the raceway leading to the casting box.

Cattle were filmed watching other cattle being abused and slaughtered in front of them; one animal was visibly trembling while waiting in line. Fully conscious cattle had their throats cut reportedly up to 33 times and were obviously distressed as they lay dying, with frequent vocalizations. A steer was abused until he fell and broke a hind leg but rather than being humanely and immediately euthanized he was continually physically abused in a futile attempt to make him stand.

Following the screening of this program, segments of the footage, images and descriptions of the animal cruelty were widely circulated among other commercial Australian television channels, on radio, in newspapers, via the internet and on the websites of ABC television, Animals Australia and the RSPCA. The latter two animal advocacy groups urged Australians to contact the Prime Minister, Ms Julia Gillard, and local members of parliament to demand a ban on live animal export. Links were provided on the websites for people to sign and send pre-written letters
or to write their own. Information was provided for those wishing to campaign against live export, offering a free action pack with petitions, stickers and a DVD (Animals Australia, 2011).

Intense media coverage of the live export cruelty continued in newspapers, television, on radio and internet news for approximately one week. At the end of this period, the Australian Government announced a suspension of the live export trade of cattle to Indonesia (ABC Radio Australia News, 2011). Within three days of the initial broadcast, a petition to ban live animal export was handed to Australian Federal Parliament with over 160,000 signatures (L White, Animals Australia, www.animalsaustralia.org, pers. comm. 2 June 2011).

In this study we undertook a survey to ascertain the responses of members of the public who had encountered the media coverage of cruelty to Australian cattle. The aim was to discover the public’s immediate reactions and responses after being exposed to the media portrayal of cattle being slaughtered in Indonesian abattoirs. The hypothesis was that media coverage of animal cruelty in Indonesian abattoirs would result in an emotional response by the public that would drive their actions towards live animal export.

Materials and Methods

Prior to commencement of this survey, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Queensland’s School of Veterinary Science Human Ethics Committee. A draft questionnaire to investigate attitudes and responses to recent media coverage of cruelty to cattle was developed by the authors and piloted to six individuals. Minor
changes were made on the basis of their comments. The final survey instrument comprised a three page questionnaire. Surveying took place within a two week period of the “Four Corners” footage first being broadcast. One of us (CMT) and two trained volunteers approached members of the public to offer them the opportunity to take part in the survey. Surveying was conducted between 0900 and 1700 h. The participants were approached in public spaces in Brisbane’s inner city and suburbs, as well as regional areas of southeast Queensland: Gatton, Ipswich, and the Gold Coast. Participants within groups and individuals were approached and all eligible people were asked if they would like to take part in the study.

Two screening questions were asked of people wishing to participate in the survey: whether they were at least 18 years of age and whether they had encountered any recent media coverage of the live export of cattle to Indonesia. Participants responding positively to the screening questions were included in the survey. They were initially asked where they had encountered the media coverage (options were “Four Corners” program; television news; newspapers; radio; internet). Then the questionnaire investigated, in the following order, first, their immediate reactions; second, any changes in their attitudes to relevant bodies and stakeholders in the industry as a result of the media coverage; third, whether they watched the footage alone and, fourth, what their actions were after encountering the broadcast and demographic data. For the first question about immediate reactions whilst seeing or hearing about the scenes of cattle being slaughtered in the Indonesian abattoirs participants were read the following list and from this, asked to answer in the affirmative or negative for each:

• I had to look away;
• I cried;
• I felt angry;
• I felt sad;
• I felt hatred toward people involved in live animal export to Indonesia;
• I was concerned about damage to relationship between Indonesia and Australia;
• I felt admiration for the investigators (Animals Australia/RSPCA);
• I changed my attitude toward Indonesian people (if yes, positively or negatively changed);
• I was pleased the footage was being shown to the public;
• I felt pity for the cattle;
• I felt concerned about a lack of cultural sensitivity toward Indonesians;
• I felt dislike toward Australian cattle farmers;
• I felt it was too graphic to be shown;
• I felt powerless to help the cattle;
• I felt it was manipulating the public;
• I was determined to take action to stop live animal export;
• Other (respondent could give another option not mentioned).

Secondly, respondents were asked how their attitudes changed (more negative, no change or more positive) towards the following groups after encountering the media coverage of cattle slaughter in Indonesia:

• Australian government;
• Indonesians;
• Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA)/Live Corp;

54 Meat and Livestock Australia is the cattle and sheep industry representative body. Livecorp is the company responsible for live export industry service delivery.
• Australian cattle farmers;
• RSPCA/Animals Australia.

As both MLA and LiveCorp were both involved in live export of Australian cattle to Indonesia they were grouped together for this question. Similarly, RSPCA and Animals Australia were grouped together for this question as they were both involved as animal advocacy groups in the joint investigation into cattle cruelty. Respondents were also asked whether they encountered the media broadcast/s alone or with company.

The third question, whether they watched the footage alone could be answered with a “yes” or “no” and the final question asked what their actions were after encountering the broadcast and demographic data. Respondents were read the following list:
• told others
• sought counseling
• wrote a letter to a politician
• wrote a letter to a newspaper
• wrote a letter to Meat and Livestock Australia or Livecorp
• contributed to a blog or online discussion
• signed a petition against live animal export
• visited the Animals Australia website
• visited the RSPCA website
• gave a donation to Animals Australia or RSPCA
• stopped eating meat/beef
• other (participants could state any other action they performed).

The order of presentation of individual options for questions requesting immediate reactions, change in attitudes and actions was randomized to minimize response order bias. The contact details of supervisors of the study and a telephone number for a Lifeline permanently staffed telephone counselling service were also provided.

Demographic questions were positioned at the end, a deliberate strategy designed to move the respondent from potentially traumatic recollections to more mundane questions before ending the interview (Walsh, 2004). Demographic questions were age group, place of residence (urban, suburban, semi-rural or rural), education level and marital status (partnered or single). Gender was also recorded. Respondents were offered the telephone number of the supervisors of the study, the telephone number of an ethics officer at the University not associated with the study and a telephone number for a 24 h telephone counselling service. At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were offered the opportunity to consent to be contacted at a later date for a follow up study on the same topic, which will be reported separately.

**Statistical Analysis**

Results were entered into the statistical package Minitab. The relationship between demographic variables and responses was explored using logistic regression, binary for binary outcomes, otherwise ordinal, with the Logit link function. Significant correlation was assumed at $P < 0.05$. De facto partnered and married people were collapsed into one category ‘partnered’ because of small sample sizes. Differences in attitude towards stakeholders were tested by Chi-square analysis.
Results
A total of 259 people were approached to participate in the survey. Of these, 74 (28 %) declined to take part and 28 (11 %) were excluded as they did not encounter any coverage of the live export issue. The overall response rate was 60.6% (157/259) with an actual response rate of 68% (157/231) once the numbers of people who hadn’t encountered media coverage on the issue were deducted (n = 28).

Demographic Results
The demographic data of the participants covered both genders, partnered and single people and a wide range of ages, education levels, and places of residence (Table 1). Fifty-six percent of respondents had a tertiary qualification (technical college, university Bachelor or post-graduate degree), equal to the wider Australian population in 2010 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a) and slightly higher than the 48 % of the Queensland population aged 15–64 years who have a university/tertiary/vocational degree or certificate (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010b).

Table 1: Demographic data of the respondents to the survey and comparison to the Queensland population.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>(100%)</td>
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<td>30 – 39</td>
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<td>90 – 99</td>
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<td>( 1%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>157</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
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<th>Marital status</th>
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<td>Single</td>
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<td>(43%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>(54%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Declined to answer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>( 3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>157</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
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<tbody>
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<td>Primary</td>
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<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>(36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical college/vocational/certificate</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>(18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Uni</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>(24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate Uni</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>(14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>( 3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined to answer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>( 3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>157</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of residence</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>(19.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>(56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-rural</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>(14.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>(8.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined to answer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>( 1.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>157</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note for ‘1’: ABS (2007) statistics refer only those partnered people who are ‘married’.


Notes for ‘2’: Data percentages includes Qld residents aged 0-14 years.
There were more females than males, whereas national (100 females to 99.2 males) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011) and state demographics indicate only slightly more females than males (ABS, 2007). The majority of respondents (54 %) were partnered (de facto or married), compared to the national figures of 49.6 % of people aged 15 years and over being married and 49.1 % of people in Queensland (ABS, 2007). The median age of respondents in the current survey was 48 years, older than the national median age of 37 years and the Queensland median age of 36 years (ABS, 2007).

One hundred and five people indicated that they had encountered media coverage about the live export and slaughter of cattle in Indonesia on the television news (67 %), 35 in newspapers (22.3 %), 30 on the ‘‘Four Corners’’ program (19.1 %), 28 on the radio (17.8 %) and 23 on the internet (14.6 %). Respondents could indicate more than one media source. Partnered people were more likely to have encountered multiple (two or more) media sources of the broadcast (n = 31; 37 % of partnered people) compared to single people (n = 14; 19 % of single people) (P = 0.05). One hundred and two people (65 %) encountered the media coverage alone, 50 (32 %) in the company of at least one other person and five (3 %) declined to answer this question.

**Immediate Reactions**
One hundred and fifty-four people experienced at least one of the possible immediate reactions after encountering the media coverage (98% of the entire group of respondents). The most common reaction was feeling pity for the cattle (n = 134, 85%), followed by sadness (n = 113, 72%), anger (n = 107, 68%) and admiration for the investigators (n = 103, 66%). Most people (n = 117, 75%) were pleased that the footage had been broadcast and 30 (19%) felt that it was too graphic. Of those who expressed a change in attitude toward Indonesians as an immediate reaction (n = 21, 13.4%), all experienced a negative change. Forty respondents (26%) said that they were determined to take action to stop live export. Thirty-eight respondents (24%) felt that the coverage was manipulating the public. Among the 42 people (27%) indicating ‘other’ responses, 14 (33% of this group) felt disgust and five (12% of this group) said that they felt sick. When asked if they had an immediate reaction of dislike toward Australian cattle farmers, there was a tendency for those who encountered the media coverage alone to be more likely to say yes (alone: 15 (15%) yes; 92 (90%) no; in company 2 (4%) yes; 48 (96%) no; P = 0.08).

**Gender Influences**

Sixty-six women and 88 men provided responses to the question about their immediate reaction. Women were more likely than men to feel sad and angry, and tended to be more concerned about a lack of cultural sensitivity to Indonesians. Women were also much more likely than men to look away or stop listening to the media coverage (Ps < 0.05) (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate reaction</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
<th>CI Upper</th>
<th>CI Lower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt pity for the cattle</td>
<td>55 (41)</td>
<td>79 (59)</td>
<td>12 (52)</td>
<td>11 (48)</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleased coverage was broadcast</td>
<td>47 (40)</td>
<td>70 (60)</td>
<td>20 (50)</td>
<td>20 (50)</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt sad</td>
<td>39 (35)</td>
<td>74 (65)</td>
<td>28 (64)</td>
<td>16 (36)</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt angry</td>
<td>39 (36)</td>
<td>68 (64)</td>
<td>28 (56)</td>
<td>22 (44)</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admired the investigators</td>
<td>42 (41)</td>
<td>61 (59)</td>
<td>25 (46)</td>
<td>29 (54)</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt powerless to help the cattle</td>
<td>37 (38)</td>
<td>60 (62)</td>
<td>30 (50)</td>
<td>30 (50)</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for relations with Indonesia</td>
<td>18 (38)</td>
<td>30 (63)</td>
<td>49 (45)</td>
<td>60 (55)</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined to stop live export</td>
<td>16 (40)</td>
<td>24 (60)</td>
<td>51 (44)</td>
<td>66 (56)</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt the coverage was ‘manipulative’</td>
<td>16 (42)</td>
<td>22 (58)</td>
<td>51 (43)</td>
<td>68 (57)</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for cultural sensitivities</td>
<td>10 (30)</td>
<td>23 (70)</td>
<td>57 (46)</td>
<td>67 (54)</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt hatred for those in live export</td>
<td>11 (37)</td>
<td>19 (63)</td>
<td>56 (44)</td>
<td>71 (56)</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt it was too graphic to be shown</td>
<td>10 (33)</td>
<td>20 (67)</td>
<td>57 (45)</td>
<td>70 (55)</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt dislike for Australian cattle farmers</td>
<td>5 (29)</td>
<td>12 (71)</td>
<td>62 (44)</td>
<td>78 (56)</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviours</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had to look away/stop listening</td>
<td>19 (26)</td>
<td>54 (74)</td>
<td>48 (57)</td>
<td>36 (43)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cried</td>
<td>4 (29)</td>
<td>10 (71)</td>
<td>63 (44)</td>
<td>80 (56)</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative toward Indonesians</td>
<td>12 (57)</td>
<td>9 (43)</td>
<td>55 (40)</td>
<td>81 (60)</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16 (38)</td>
<td>26 (62)</td>
<td>51 (44)</td>
<td>64 (56)</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Influences</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
When asked if they were pleased the story had been broadcast, those aged 60 and over were more likely to respond positively (60 year olds and over responding yes, n = 43; no, n = 8), compared to 18–59 year olds (yes, n = 74; no, n = 31) (P = 0.05). One respondent who was not pleased the story was broadcast declined to give her age.

When asked if they felt powerless to help the cattle in the media coverage, those aged 60 and over more likely to respond positively to this (yes, n = 38; no, n = 13) than those aged 18–59 years (yes, n = 59; no, n = 46) (P = 0.04). One respondent declined to give her age. Those aged in their 30’s were more likely to agree that the media coverage was ‘manipulative’ (yes, n = 13; no, n = 17) than other ages (yes, n = 25, no, n = 102; P = 0.01).

**Marital Status Influences**

Of the 17 people who said that they had experienced an immediate reaction of dislike toward Australian cattle farmers, there were proportionately more single people (n = 14; 21 %) than partnered people (n = 3; 4 %) (P = 0.005). Similarly, of the 97 people that said that they had felt powerless to help the cattle, there were proportionately more single people (n = 53; 82 %) than partnered people (n = 44; 65 %) (P = 0.01).

**Place of Residence Influences**

Of the 14 respondents who lived in rural areas, ten (71 %) said that they had to look away/stop listening to the media coverage, compared to ten (48 %) from semi-rural areas, 42 (48 %) from suburban areas and 11 (32 %) from urban areas (P = 0.02).

**Education Level Influences**
Respondents who reported achieving a technical college level of education were more likely to feel powerless to help the cattle than those attaining other levels of education (yes: technical college: n = 27, 93 %, primary school n = 2, 66 %; secondary school n = 36, 64 %; university undergraduate level n = 19, 50 %; university postgraduate level n = 9, 41 %, P = 0.02).

Change of Attitude

There were 155 respondents to the question regarding how attitudes changed after encountering the media coverage, which indicated differences between responses and the stakeholder groups (P<0.001) (Table 3).

Table 3: Changes in attitude toward various stakeholders after encountering the media coverage (Chi-square value 346.1, degrees of freedom = 8, P < 0.001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>More negative</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>More positive</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian government</td>
<td>34% (52)</td>
<td>65% (100)</td>
<td>2% (3)</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesians</td>
<td>29.7% (46)</td>
<td>70.3% (109)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA/LiveCorp</td>
<td>49.0% (76)</td>
<td>50.3% (78)</td>
<td>0.6% (1)</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian cattle farmers</td>
<td>14.2% (22)</td>
<td>80.6% (125)</td>
<td>5.2% (8)</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSPCA/Animals Australia</td>
<td>5.8% (9)</td>
<td>43.2% (67)</td>
<td>51% (79)</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attitude towards MLA/LiveCorp had become more negative in 49 % of respondents and feelings towards RSPCA/Animals Australia had become more positive in 51 % of respondents. More negative attitudes toward Australian cattle farmers were observed in the following groups (Table 4): single people were more likely than those partnered to have a more negative attitude towards Australian cattle farmers after encountering the broadcast; those living in urban or suburban areas more likely to have a more negative view or no change toward Australian cattle farmers than those living in rural or semi-rural areas; women were more likely to feel more negative toward Australian cattle farmers and men more positive.
Table 4: Attitudes toward Australian Cattle Farmers – Significant Results  
(figures in brackets indicate % of that demographic group who responded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>More negative</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>More positive</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>16 (22%)</td>
<td>54 (75%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>6 (7%)</td>
<td>71 (86%)</td>
<td>6 (7%)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where living</th>
<th>More negative</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>More positive</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>6 (18%)</td>
<td>27 (82%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>12 (14%)</td>
<td>73 (83%)</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-rural</td>
<td>3 (14%)</td>
<td>16 (76%)</td>
<td>2 (0.1%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>More negative</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>More positive</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
<td>54 (82%)</td>
<td>7 (11%)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17 (19%)</td>
<td>71 (80%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.
**Actions After Encountering the Media Coverage**

One hundred respondents (64%) indicated they had discussed the media coverage with others, but <15% had acted in any of the other possible ways listed.

**Gender Influences**

Women were more likely than men to perform any action and to discuss the media coverage with others (P ≤ 0.05) (Table 5).

Table 5: Significant (P ≤ 0.05) differences between women (n = 66) and men (n = 40) in influences on actions after encountering media coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perform any action</td>
<td>40 (60)</td>
<td>24 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss with others</td>
<td>37 (55)</td>
<td>27 (30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cell contents indicate numbers of respondents, with percentage of each gender in parentheses.*

**Age Influences**

Those aged 18–29 years were more likely than other age groups to perform the following actions as a result of encountering the media coverage—contribute to a blog/online discussion; stop eating meat and/or give a donation to RSPCA or Animals Australia (P ≤ 0.05) (Table 6).
Table 6:
Significant ($P \leq 0.05$) differences between respondents aged 18–29 years ($n = 37$) and older respondents ($n = 119$) on actions after encountering media coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P Value</th>
<th>18–29 years</th>
<th>&gt;30 years</th>
<th>18–29 years</th>
<th>&gt;30 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contribute to blog/online discussion</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>8 (22 %)</td>
<td>5 (4 %)</td>
<td>29 (78 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopped eating meat</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>6 (16 %)</td>
<td>2 (2 %)</td>
<td>31 (84 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donated to Animals Australia/ RSPCA</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>4 (11 %)</td>
<td>4 (3 %)</td>
<td>33 (89 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Place of Residence Influences**

Those living in rural areas were more likely to give a donation to RSPCA or Animals Australia than those living in suburban areas (suburban residents: yes $n = 5$, 6 %, no $n = 83$, 94 %; rural residents: yes $n = 3$, 21 %, no, $n = 11$, 79 % $P = 0.04$).

**Education Level Influences**

There was a trend for those with a university bachelor or postgraduate level of education to be more likely to sign a petition to ban live export than those with other education levels (University level of education yes, $n = 8$ 13 %, no, $n = 52$ 87 %) more likely to sign petition than those with other education levels (yes, $n = 3$ 3 %, no, $n = 89$ 97 % $P = 0.07$).

**Discussion**

This study was the first to survey Australians for their reactions and responses to media coverage of animal cruelty. The median age of those responding was older than the national and Queensland median age. There are several possible reasons for this:
older people may have had more time to answer the survey; they may follow news events more closely than younger people; they may have felt more strongly about the live export issue than some younger people; older people may also place more value on the opportunity to interact socially with the interviewers to state their views and finally our interviewers may have selected people who were clearly aged at least 18 years.

We acknowledge there are limitations in this study preventing widespread generalisation to the broader Australian public. The study was conducted in a limited geographical region and contained a disproportionate number of female, partnered and well educated respondents. It is possible that some people may have declined participation in the survey due to being too distressed. However, as there were varying responses and reactions to the live export coverage, we do not think that only those with less extreme experiences chose to participate. Additionally, there were no incentives offered for participation.

A separate survey of residents in Australian cities found that less than half had ever visited a working farm (Landline, 2006). Distancing of consumers from their food source is widely criticized among animal advocates who describe a “veil of silence” surrounding animal production (Gellatley and Wardle, 1996). It is possible that media coverage of cattle slaughtered humanely for meat production would also be upsetting for those unfamiliar with abattoirs, although it is expected that this would be to a lesser degree than the negative reactions in the current study. Those living in suburban areas were more likely to have a negative change of attitude or no change of attitude toward Australian cattle farmers than those from rural areas. Conversely, those in
rural areas were more likely to donate to RSPCA/Animals Australia or have to look away or stop listening to the broadcasts of live export cattle cruelty. This indicates that those in rural areas were not immune to the emotional impact of exposure to animal cruelty.

In the current study, women were more likely than men to respond to the media coverage of animal cruelty by feeling sad, angry or by having to turn away or stop listening. Other studies suggest that women have greater empathy towards animals than men have (Herzog et al., 1991; Phillips et al., 2011). Research into the effects of traumatic images during jury duty has found that women as a group appeared to be more vulnerable than men, particularly when the trial dealt with a past traumatic event similar to that personally experienced (Robertson et al., 2009). It is possible that women victims of assault may feel empathy for animals that have also suffered abuse. The most common immediate reaction was pity for the cattle, indicating that compassion and concern for animal suffering was important among the sample surveyed. Compassion has been described as an endemic impulse among humans, as is the impulse toward violence and cruelty (Fox, 2006). In the current study, 19% of respondents reported feeling hatred for those involved in the live export trade. Longitudinal surveying would establish if these extreme negative responses were temporary or long term. Over a quarter of respondents stated they were determined to take action to stop live export, yet relatively few had chosen to act in a way that would be likely to be heard by the government. Animal welfare is an issue frequently raised in correspondence to politicians (European Parliament, 2007), and politicians are well aware of community concerns and expectations about this ‘emotionally charged’ issue (Bartlett, 2004). Pressure on government from the public has
previously been successful in raising awareness of animal cruelty via public protests and calling for an end to cruel practices. An investigation of a similar nature in the USA resulted in the US Department of Agriculture acting to investigate cruelty to cattle after the Humane Society showed video evidence of animal abuse (USDA US Department of Agriculture, 2008). Animal abuse described in USA abattoirs includes cattle having their eyes shot out before being killed and a pig stabbed in the shoulder with a meat hook and dragged (Grandin, 1988). These cruel acts are similar to those reported occurring in Indonesian abattoirs.

The results of the current study indicated that a relatively small group of people had taken action to lobby the government for change after media exposés of animal cruelty. Whilst others stated their intention to take similar action, at the time of the current survey they had failed to do so. Although we did not ask respondents if they were members of animal welfare/rights organizations, it is probable that these people would have taken immediate action in response to the animal cruelty and have had the support and encouragement (via emails, websites, letters, etc.) to do so.

Of the comments which participants volunteered as an immediate reaction, most were ‘disgust.’ The reaction of disgust has been described as a response to passive or latent danger, such as rotting flesh and is considered less compelling than either anger or fear (Newhagen, 1998). In the current context the response of disgust may have arisen from a range of issues, such as disgust that such cruelty had occurred rather than a visceral aversion to the sight of blood.
Many people felt powerless to help the cattle. This is not surprising as the end result (the death of the animals in Indonesia) was certain long before the story was broadcast, meaning that helping of the individual animals featured in the broadcasts was impossible. In the current study, only 3.8 and 3.2 % accessed the websites of the RSPCA and Animals Australia, respectively, after encountering the media coverage. Those accessing these websites may have gained some comfort by sharing a connection with peers and/or by accessing information about signing petitions, writing letters to politicians and becoming actively involved with anti-live export campaigning.

For others (many of them alone) who were exposed to repetitive coverage of cruelty there may have been no such peer group support. In such cases, the public may become additional victims, powerless and denied of any psychological benefit that can be derived from helping another individual (Mayes, 2009). Three people (2 %) sought counselling as a result of the media coverage. For the vast majority however, respondents did not seek any professional ‘‘debriefing’’ to discuss their experiences and feelings (Robertson et al., 2009) but relied on discussing with their family, friends and peers. Sudden awareness of animal suffering can prompt feelings of loneliness, sadness, and pain that can be difficult to communicate to others (Hawthorne, 2008). The fact that the most common response was to speak about the media coverage with others may indicate a need to engage in discussion within a supportive environment.

Whilst repeated exposure to graphic media coverage of disturbing news items has been found to be very stressful in contexts such as the September 11 terror attacks on the USA (Schuster et al., 2011), our group of respondents mostly did not feel the
media coverage was too graphic or manipulative, demonstrating perhaps a greater
tolerance to animal than human suffering or a belief that the coverage was necessary
to show the public what was happening to Australian cattle.

Investigations and media exposure of animal cruelty are a powerful but contentious
method of educating the public and soliciting changes to animal welfare. The head
investigator of Compassion in World Farming has stated “Going undercover, often in
dangerous situations, is the only way that the truth about intensive farming can be
exposed” (Compassion in World Farming, 2011). The fact that most respondents felt
admiration for the investigators suggests they were aware of the potential dangers
faced by the investigators.

Traditionally politicians, philosophers, religious leaders, and writers have influenced
public sentiment as they encourage them to treat animals with respect and dignity.
However, modern media trends and societal changes mean that activists exposing
animal suffering to the public through their videos are more likely to be influential.
Lyn White, the investigator who exposed the Indonesian slaughter in Australia in
2011 was subsequently voted ABC Newsradio’s “newsmaker of the year,”
Crikey.com’s “person of the year” and listed in the top 100 Victorians by the state
newspaper, The Age.

The subjectivity of the public emotional response means that direct human
mistreatment of animals gets a greater response than other equally harmful events for
animals. For example, there was no public outcry about cattle drowning in Australia
because of floods or dying during droughts, which occurred at the same time as the
exposure of live export cruelty. There is scope for activists to evince human emotions, such as by inducing horror at the sight of animals being abused, but this may not be a bad thing, because these emotions have evolved to help us survive and avoid harmful events. However, we also need reasoned thought, debate, and argument to organise the complex systems used to produce and manage animals.

**Conclusions**

Although the public had a strong reaction to the expose of cruelty to cattle during slaughter in Indonesia, many considered it important that they were informed of these issues, and less than a quarter found the coverage manipulative or too graphic. Due to the obvious distress caused to some respondents as a result of the media coverage, we recommend that future broadcasts of animal cruelty should advise the public of contact details for telephone or face-to-face counseling where people can speak to and be debriefed by trained counselors. We also recommend that mental health support contacts and information should also be included on the websites of animal advocacy groups to acknowledge the disturbing effect animal cruelty exposés can have on the general public.

Acknowledging that people are exposed to a wide array of images (both visual and auditory) depicting violence in its many forms, this research has demonstrated that respondents were sensitive to the animal cruelty perpetrated during the slaughter of Australian cattle overseas. Our research also shows that the subsequent emotional distress of the public can be considerable. Over a quarter of respondents had been determined to take action to ban live export, indicating that they were not prepared to be bystanders to animal cruelty. There was therefore partial support for the hypothesis
that media coverage of animal cruelty in Indonesian abattoirs would result in an emotional response by the public that would drive their actions towards live animal export.

**Acknowledgments**

The authors would like to thank respondents to the survey and acknowledge the assistance of Glen Mactaggart and Eduardo Santurtun Oliveros for assistance with the surveying. We would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

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Part A of this chapter highlighted how the public experienced distress after exposure to an animal abuse news story. Despite this distress, many participants felt it was important that the media informed the public about such matters. Part B of this chapter resurveyed a group of participants one year after the news broadcast to discover whether the media coverage of animal abuse continued to have any impact on their lives.
Chapter 6 Part B: Live Export Paper #2

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**Ethical issues concerning the public viewing of media broadcasts of animal cruelty**

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**Abstract**

Undercover filming is a method commonly used by animal activist groups to expose animal cruelty and it is important to consider the effects of publically releasing video footage of cruel practices on the viewers’ mental health. Previously, we reported that members of the Australian public were emotionally distressed soon after viewing media broadcasts of cruelty to Australian cattle exported for slaughter in Indonesia in 2011. To explore if there were any long term impacts from exposure to media on this issue, a self-selecting group of 15 people who were exposed to a documentary exposé of the cruelty were re-interviewed 12 months later. Nearly all recalled their strong initial reaction to the footage. Approximately one half of the respondents who initially had had a strong emotional reaction to the footage reported negative reactions
that were still strong even after this period of time. They reported potential triggers for
these feelings. Of the rest, some managed to internalise their feelings. Approximately
one half of respondents were unaware of continued live export exposés, suggesting
less prominent media coverage. Despite the aversion and repulsion reported after
viewing the initial coverage, most respondents said they would choose to watch
another broadcast of animal cruelty and nearly all supported undercover investigations
as a means of revealing cruelty to animals. We conclude that many people viewing
footage of cruelty to animals will have long term memory of this, but that they would
prefer to be informed about the issues and not be protected from them.

Keywords
Animal cruelty; abuse; live export; media; public attitudes

‘Television news does not lie quietly on the coffee table, passively under our control,
as are newspapers; rather, it is a medium that provokes reaction and emotion’
(Shook, 1989 p. 271).

Introduction
Many animal activist groups use undercover filming to expose animal cruelty
occurring in a range of settings such as farms, abattoirs, laboratories, zoos and
circuses. This footage often depicts animals in extreme states of suffering, such as
raccoon dogs skinned alive in fur farms or downed cattle being kicked until their
bones break (Aaltola, 2014). Despite the graphic and distressing nature of footage
resulting from undercover investigations, it has been defended by activist groups as
“the only way” that the truth can be exposed (Compassion in World Farming, 2011).
Public outrage after undercover footage of animal cruelty is screened has been reported in a range of countries, such as USA (Schecter, 2013), Canada (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2014), and the UK (Ellicott, 2010). We previously described public reactions to television footage of Australian cattle being cruelly slaughtered in Indonesia (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012), concluding that there may be some ethical issues associated with exposure to graphic and potentially shocking footage of animal cruelty. While this type of media is an important vehicle for animal advocacy, a discussion about the impact on members of the public is timely.

The fact that the viewing public may experience long term psychological trauma after exposure to distressing images highlights the need to balance exposure with an ethical responsibility to present the images in a way that provides enough information to inform without unnecessarily traumatising viewers. In this paper we examine the long term impact of an animal cruelty news story on members of the public.

Background to current study

On 30\textsuperscript{th} May, 2011, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC television) broadcast an investigation into the treatment of Australian cattle exported for slaughter in Indonesia. The footage was initially screened on the investigative journalism program Four Corners via television and then via the internet (ABC Four Corners, 2011). The 45 minute episode entitled “A Bloody Business” included graphic scenes of animal cruelty filmed in Indonesian abattoirs by an undercover ABC journalist in assistance with animal advocacy group Animals Australia. Scientific comment was provided by the Chief Scientist of the Australian Royal
Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). The footage provided evidence of animal cruelty, including cattle being repeatedly kicked and beaten by abattoir workers; tails being broken; workers placing fingers in animals’ nostrils and eye sockets; cattle made to slip and fall on wet concrete; cattle being forced to climb over fallen animals. Cattle were filmed watching other cattle being abused, with one steer visibly trembling as he waited in line. Graphic scenes of slaughter were repeatedly shown in which cattle were distressed and vocalising as they lay dying from multiple cuts to the throat.

Following the screening of this program, segments of the footage, images and descriptions of the animal cruelty were widely circulated among other commercial Australian television channels, on radio, in newspapers, via the internet and on the websites of ABC television, Animals Australia and the RSPCA. The latter two animal advocacy groups urged the public to contact the Australian Prime Minister, and local members of parliament to demand a ban on live animal export. Links were provided on the websites for people to sign and send pre-written letters or to write their own. Information was provided for those wishing to campaign against live export, offering a free action pack with petitions, stickers and a DVD (Animals Australia, 2011).

Intense media coverage of the live export cruelty continued in newspapers, television, on radio and internet news for approximately one week. At the end of this period, the Australian Government announced a suspension of the live export trade of cattle to Indonesia (ABC Radio Australia News, 2011). Within three days of the initial broadcast, a petition to ban live animal export was handed to Australian Federal

An initial study was undertaken within two weeks of the initial broadcast to ascertain the responses of members of the public who had encountered the media coverage of cruelty to Australian cattle (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012). One hundred and fifty-seven people participated in the study. The most common immediate reaction was pity for the cattle. Women were more likely than men to feel sad or angry. Most people discussed the media coverage with others afterwards but fewer than 10% contacted politicians or wrote to newspapers. We concluded that the public were emotionally affected by the media coverage of cruelty to cattle but that this did not translate into significant behavioural change (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012).

The aim of the current study was to explore the impact of exposure to this specific animal cruelty story one year later in participants who had provided consent for permission to be contacted in the future. We hypothesized that by using qualitative research, which captures ‘the richness and complexity of the lived experience’ (Alston and Bowles, 2003 p. 207), we could determine if there were any residual effects from exposure to the original documentary and if so what was their nature and persistency.

Methods:

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of Queensland’s Human Ethics Committee. In the first part of this study, 157 (68% of those approached that were eligible to take part) respondents from SE Queensland, and in particular Brisbane, answered a paper-based survey aiming to determine whether
media broadcasts of cruelty to cattle in Indonesian abattoirs would result in an emotional response by the public that would drive their actions towards live animal export. Participants for the second part of the study were recruited from the first survey by being offered the opportunity to provide their telephone and/or e-mail contact details and consent to be contacted at the end of the questionnaire (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012). Apart from those with undeliverable e-mail addresses and disconnected telephones, two attempts were made to contact each person within a one week period.

The following questions were asked of participants at the time of being contacted by telephone:

- their recollection of their reactions after the live export media coverage in May 2011;
- how long these feelings persisted;
- how the participants felt about current media coverage of live export;
- the likelihood of the participants choosing to watch/listen/read about another media broadcast of animal cruelty;
- reasons for this choice;
- whether the participants had made any changes to their life or taken any action as a result of the live export coverage in 2011;
- the participants’ opinion about the fact that those who filmed the original investigation were undercover investigators.

All were open questions except for the question about the likelihood of the participant choosing to watch/listen/read about other animal cruelty broadcasts. This was
answered on a 1 to 5 Likert scale from ‘1’, extremely unlikely, ‘3’ neither likely nor unlikely to ‘5’, extremely likely. Finally, respondents were asked if there was anything else they would like to add, thus enabling participants to express any issues which had not been covered in the survey. Participants could also request a copy of our report once completed. A copy of the survey instrument is available from the corresponding author on request.

**Data analysis**

Responses were transcribed verbatim and thematic analysis undertaken once all data had been gathered. Thematic analysis is widely used within qualitative research to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes), for which purpose we used six steps as follows: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The goal of this was to ‘seek to arrive at an understanding of a particular phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it’ (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013, p. 398). Due to the need to explore people’s responses in detail, qualitative analysis of data was deemed most appropriate.

**Results:**

At the conclusion of the initial study (Tiplady, Walsh and Phillips, 2012) 39/157 people (25%) expressed interest in being contacted to participate in a follow up interview. Of these, 15 were able to be contacted by telephone within a one week period and all of these agreed to take part. Of the 24 people who were unable to be contacted, four had provided e-mail addresses which were ‘undeliverable’, 14 did not
respond to e-mailed invitations, three had disconnected telephone numbers and three did not respond to a voice message left on their telephone.

**Demographic data**

The demographic data of the participants indicated that there was approximately equal representation of both genders, and a similar proportion of the different age groups, marital status, education and place of residence to the Queensland population (Table 1). Seventy-three percent of respondents had a tertiary qualification (technical college, university Bachelor or post-graduate degree), which was higher than the 48% of the Queensland population aged 15–64 years who have a university/tertiary/vocational degree or certificate (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Demographic data of the respondents to the survey and comparison to the Queensland population</th>
<th>Sample population (%)</th>
<th>Queensland population %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8 (53)</td>
<td>49.6*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7 (47)</td>
<td>50.4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–29</td>
<td>3 (20)</td>
<td>15–24 years 14.3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>2 (13)</td>
<td>25–34 years 14.0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>35–44 years 14.4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>2 (13)</td>
<td>45–54 years 13.6*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60–69</td>
<td>6 (40)</td>
<td>55–64 years 11.3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70–79</td>
<td>1 (7)</td>
<td>65–74 years 6.8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80–89</td>
<td>1 (7)</td>
<td>75–84 years 4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritalstatus</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Single</td>
<td>6 (40)</td>
<td>50.9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>9 (60)</td>
<td>49.1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>4 (27)</td>
<td>Year 12 22.9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 10 or below 23.1*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical college/vocational/certificate</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Uni</td>
<td>6 (40)</td>
<td>13.8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post graduate Uni</td>
<td>3 (20)</td>
<td>4.8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>10 (67)</td>
<td>Major/other urban 85.4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-rural</td>
<td>4 (26)</td>
<td>12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1 (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Persistency of initial reactions

Thirteen participants recalled initial reactions of aversion and repulsion (i.e. ‘horror’ and ‘disgust’) after encountering media broadcasts of live export animal cruelty. These feelings were reported to persist for up to one week for six people (short term), one week to three months for two people (medium term) and were still present at the time of the current study (12 months after the initial study) for seven people (long term). The seven people with long term responses described how emotions were triggered whenever the media covered stories on the live export cattle cruelty. One explained: ‘It still does (persist) if they flick back to it, it’s that strong’ and another respondent said ‘I still feel it (horror) – that was appalling’.

Other long term responses

Nine people reported they had not experienced any long term reactions. Five people reported an internalised response (‘hoping for change’, ‘anger’, ‘the memory still stayed with me’, ‘I feel it is a matter between governments’, ‘distrust of governments’). One person reported an externalised response ‘Spoke to a vego (vegetarian) friend in UK about it’. One respondent perceived problems with live export, stating ‘There’s something wrong with live export’ and another criticised the
Australian government’s temporary suspension of the live export industry by saying
the live exporters ‘shouldn’t have been stopped’.

Response to current live export coverage in media
At the time the current study was being undertaken, media coverage was re-examining
the issue of ongoing animal welfare problems in the Australian live export industry.
Seven respondents reported that they were unaware of current live export coverage
being broadcast in the media at the time of the follow up survey. Themes of concern
about media reporting were reported by three respondents (‘I mistrust some of the
media but I trust the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation]’. ‘I don’t trust
Rupert Murdoch.’; ‘Not being covered properly’; ‘I think the media can beat these
stories up to needless ends’).

Three respondents expressed concern and disbelief that animals in the live export
trade were still being abused (‘abhorrent, inhumane treatment’; ‘devastated’; ‘hard to
believe’). One respondent believed animal welfare standards had improved, stating
‘It’s improved drastically from what was on the ABC last year. Animal welfare
standards have improved’.

Likelihood of choosing to watch/read/listen to another media animal cruelty story
Ten respondents indicated they were ‘very likely’ or ‘extremely likely’ to
watch/read/listen to another media broadcast of animal cruelty. This choice was
explained with comments such as: ‘Because you wonder how the animals are treated
and what the hell goes on. Your mind wonders how people can treat animals like
that’; ‘Interested to see an update and be informed’. Two respondents reported that
viewing graphic images of animal cruelty was disturbing to them and they would prefer to listen to the radio news or read the media story rather than view it on television. This preference to avoid visual images was explained as ‘I personally can’t watch that sort of horrible stuff – I have nightmares. I had nightmares after seeing live export coverage’ and ‘I find visual images too disturbing’. Three respondents were neither likely nor unlikely to choose to watch/read about/listen to another media animal cruelty story (‘It would have to be coincidental. I wouldn’t seek it out.’; ‘wouldn’t chase the story down but if it came on I’d watch it’; ‘there is (sic) too much distressing images and we can’t do anything which leads to feelings of powerlessness but this doesn’t preclude staying informed’). Two respondents were extremely unlikely to watch/read about/listen to media coverage of animal cruelty (‘Because it is kind of disturbing’; ‘I feel helpless’).

Life changes/action taken as a result of live export coverage

One person reported taking action after the live export coverage in 2011 (‘Signed a petition in a shopping centre and did something with PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals], signed cards to send to politicians’). The other 14 respondents had not made any changes or taken any action – two describing themselves as ‘lazy’ and ‘slack’ and one explaining that ‘most people are quite powerless in these matters’. Three explained that they had already made changes (‘I already don’t eat red meat’; ‘Similar material previous to this, e.g. Earthlings the video, had already transformed me in the past’; ‘I don’t hurt animals, but I’ve always been like that’).

Support for undercover investigations
Nearly all (14) respondents supported the investigators of the live export animal cruelty story working undercover. Responses included: ‘I admire their courage. If they didn’t have a clandestine approach they wouldn’t have got the information’; ‘That’s what journalists do, that’s how the stories get out’; ‘I think they wouldn’t have been able to show the true picture if they hadn’t gone undercover’. One respondent questioned whether there were legal implications in undercover investigation and another stated ‘That’s for the journalists to sort out with their ethics. One hopes they have ethical standards.’ One person did not agree with the use of undercover investigators, stating ‘I don’t like the way it was done, it’s not quite honest, I don’t like undercover. (I’m) not sure if they’d edited it in a biased way.’

*Other comments*

Ten people elected to add additional comments at the conclusion of the interview. Criticism of the government’s handling of the live export situation was expressed by three respondents and three were concerned for the impact on farmers and rural communities (e.g. ‘I feel sorry for the poor farmers left with all the cattle’). Other comments included one expressing admiration for the undercover investigators, two stating they still eat red meat and one stating that not all abattoirs are like those pictured in the media broadcasts.

*Discussion*

The current study utilised thematic analysis to explore the long term reactions of fifteen members of the public who had been exposed to animal cruelty broadcasts in the media. A long term impact was evident in the responses of most respondents,
however despite the aversive responses to the initial broadcast the majority would choose to watch, listen or read about another animal cruelty media broadcast.

Ethics of exposing the public to animal cruelty

Animal-related news stories ‘sell papers’ (Rollin, 2008, p. xvi) and are often light hearted and serve as an antidote to the serious coverage of politics, war and crime (Molloy, 2011). However a news story involving violence against animals creates an ethical dilemma for the viewers as they watch animals suffer from repeated abuse by humans. This can result in feelings of helplessness among the public, as described by several respondents to the current survey. Coverage of distressing news items tend to be placed first in a television news bulletin, followed by less sensational stories (Mundorf et al., 1990). In the case of the initial broadcast, the 45 minute program dealt exclusively with live export cattle cruelty and thus presented viewers with repeated sights and sounds of animal abuse. Those who only saw short news segments were exposed to some of the most graphic images taken from the initial program. Media coverage of the cruelty included in newspapers, radio and internet were similarly graphic in their descriptions of animal suffering.

Despite the distress that we identified in the first part of this study, coverage of animal suffering in certain contexts is voluntarily viewed by many people, as seen by the popularity of wildlife documentaries in which zebras, gazelles, etc are seen to be mauled by predators, e.g. lions in slow motion footage. The ‘Whale Wars’ reality television series is watched by nearly 1.4 million viewers (Discovery UK, 2014) and depicts the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society fighting against whaling fleets. Images of whales being harpooned and gutted are interspersed with scenes of whales
swimming freely in their natural environment (Anon, 2014). The viewer can feel admiration for the Sea Shepherd members who are attempting to save whales whilst endangering their own lives. These scenes show that there is hope that animals may be saved when advocates do something to intervene. In the broadcast of live export cruelty to cattle, however, there was nobody attempting to actively intervene to stop animal cruelty as it was occurring. Instead, scenes were shown in which the camera person was seen standing filming in the midst of carnage. When asked if she was ever tempted to intervene whilst reporting on animal cruelty in the abattoirs, the investigative journalist replied “it didn’t have that effect on me that I wanted to lean over and stop it” (interview in Tiplady, 2013 p. 215). Thus it is likely that if someone is attempting to prevent animal suffering it may assist viewers to cope with the trauma potentially experienced by distressing footage.

**Media and ethics**

The Australian Journalists’ Code of Ethics (Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, 2013) states that “Respect for truth and the public's right to information are fundamental principles of journalism”. This need to expose the truth and inform the public was echoed by the majority of participants in the current study, however, exposure to distressing news items, whilst ‘truthful’, may have a long term negative impact on viewers. The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ, 2014) provide a statement of abiding principles for journalists, among them the need to give ‘voice to the voiceless’. Providing coverage of animal suffering is a way in which this could be achieved. It is likely that animal-related news broadcasts will continue to be popular. Analysis of stories in the USA media from 2000-2003 found that ‘animal welfare’
was the third most popular topic, following farmed animal disease (e.g., foot and mouth) and environmental issues (Packwood Freeman, 2009).

Despite admiration for the undercover investigators, several participants in the current study chose to distance themselves from ‘activists’ (e.g., “I haven’t started waving a placard or anything”, “I still eat red meat, haven’t joined an activist group”). It seems apparent that the participants in the current study preferred to take a more passive role, even though they were distressed by the animal suffering. This may have been as a result of an ethical dilemma posed by their personal preference for meat eating whilst feeling uncomfortable with methods used to slaughter animals in this instance. Viewers may also have been sympathetic to the rural community and Australian cattle farmers who depended on the live export industry for their livelihood.

*Preference for certain types of media*

Several respondents in the current study indicated that they preferred to avoid televised stories of animal cruelty as they found the images upsetting. Peer reviewed research which examines how viewers are affected by media broadcasts of animal abuse is scant. A news article in the New York Times (Hodge, 2001) described how the British public increasingly turned to vegetarianism in response to graphic news images of mass animal slaughter during the foot-and-mouth disease crisis. This suggests that ‘putting a face onto meat’ (Packwood Freeman, 2009, p. 97) may make it less appetizing to the public.

In order to address the possible mental health impacts of stories such as this, shocking footage needs to be interspersed with images of animal rescue and of hope. It is our
view that images of animal cruelty will have less of a long term detrimental impact on
viewers if footage is interspersed with animals being humanely treated and discussion
of ways in which viewers can participate to achieve this aim, empowering the
audience rather than leaving them with overwhelming feelings of hopelessness.

Conclusions:
The distressing nature of exposure to media coverage of animal cruelty was
remembered one year later by nearly all respondents. About one half of the viewers
who had initially had a strong emotional reaction continued to have strong negative
feelings about the topic. Most wished to remain informed by watching such television
exposés and supported such undercover investigations, despite the distress caused.

Acknowledgments:
We would like to thank the members of the public who participated in the current
study.

Conflict of interest statement:
None of the authors has any financial or personal relationships that could
inappropriately influence or bias the content of this paper.

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Accessed 26 October 2011.


Accessed 22 June 2011.


CBC News (2014). Chilliwack Cattle Sales to fire 8 workers caught on tape abusing cows.  


*This chapter showed that exposure to animal cruelty news stories can cause both*
short term and long distress that can persist for up to a year after exposure to the news item. For some people the feelings of horror resurfaced after reminders of the live export cattle cruelty news story.

The next chapter provides a general discussion that brings together the exploration of animal abuse and human interpersonal violence that has been the topic of this thesis.
Chapter Seven: General discussion

The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated...

Gandhi

The human-animal connection has had a chequered history. Animals have been worshipped as gods; reviled as evil spirits; killed for food; tortured and killed for sport; as well as being included as family members (Manning and Serpell, 2002). This diverse and sometimes contradictory treatment of animals by humans has been the focus of sociological and psychological research for some time with more recent focus on the link between animal cruelty, delinquency and human antisocial behaviour (Henry, 2004; Gullone 2012, 2014). Increasing interest in the human-animal bond has seen more focused research attention in this area and this research will contribute to this growth.

There have been a number of attempts to define animal abuse/cruelty. Ascione (1993, p. 228) defines cruelty to animals as ‘socially unacceptable behaviour that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering, or distress to and/or the death of an animal’ encompassing physical, sexual, emotional/psychological abuse and neglect. Throughout the current thesis the terms ‘abuse’ and ‘cruelty’ were used interchangeably.

This thesis is concerned with animal abuse and the divergent ways this issue is responded to in the public and private arena. Three specific areas were covered:
Animal abuse linked to domestic violence; Animal abuse and domestic violence encountered by veterinarians; Public responses to animal abuse in media broadcasts.

Animal welfare in domestic violence situations has attracted increasing interest from researchers since Ascione (1998) highlighted the fact that women from domestic violence situations may delay leaving their partner due to concerns for the welfare of companion animals. Most research investigating domestic violence and animal abuse since that time has been undertaken by psychologists and sociologists and brings valuable insights into how people are affected by domestic violence. The current thesis adds to a broader understanding of animal abuse issues and is one of the first pieces of research undertaken from a veterinary perspective with a focus on animal behaviour, abuse types, animal species involved, ‘ownership’ of animals, perpetrators’ selective use of violence and veterinary involvement.

Chapters One to Three discussed animal abuse, people’s motivations towards violence or compassion and provided an introduction and framework for the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter Four describes the results of surveys of women survivors of domestic violence in the immediate post separation period and six months later. All women in the initial study had approached a domestic violence crisis accommodation helpline and were in the immediate post separation stage (2-4 weeks post separation). Given that this is an extremely stressful time in the lives of these women, recruiting through a third party was an essential part of the methodological approach. Studying any form of violence poses substantial methodological and ethical issues for researchers and as
such the researcher and advisory team had much to consider prior to commencing this study. The challenges faced by this research team were similar to other researchers (Ellsberg and Heise, 2005) and included difficulty in recruiting participants, gaining access to a vulnerable population and the emotional impact on researchers. Combining research in human interpersonal violence with animal abuse presents even more challenges as two criteria, companion animal guardianship and the experience of domestic violence, were prerequisites for participation in the current research. The fact these women were recruited through a crisis accommodation service highlights not only the transience of the population but also their vulnerability.

Issues relating to working with transient and vulnerable populations are important ones for researchers to consider and rather than abandoning research because of the poor response rate we need to highlight the voices of those who do take the time to participate as we have a lot to learn from their experiences. Avoiding research because access to vulnerable populations is challenging and time consuming only serves to keep these populations invisible and in the case of domestic violence victims and their experiences, it helps keep them silent. Invisibility and silence contribute to the perpetuation of this issue, so meeting the challenges that face research in this area will contribute to uncovering the extent of the animal/cruelty in both the public and private arena so we can address it openly and transparently.

Veterinarians are uniquely situated at the intersection of human and animal welfare (as professionals who treat injured animals suffering from abuse/neglect; as victims of abuse in their personal/professional lives; and as identifiers of human/animal abuse) and are the subject of three publications arising from one international survey within
Chapter Five. Surveying veterinarians as to their experiences of violence both personally and professionally provided a unique opportunity to learn more about how violence affects some members of this profession. This research was undertaken as an online survey which was promoted to veterinarians via various methods (e.g. via veterinary association newsletters, direct email of members of veterinary associations). Veterinarians self-selected to participate and 385 responses were received. Three separate papers emerged from this data and are included in Chapter Five.

Although veterinarians are likely to encounter animal abuse at some stage of their careers (Green and Gullone, 2005) and survivors of domestic violence frequently report their animals being harmed or threatened (Ascione, 1998; Roguski, 2012), the general public are often shielded from direct exposure to animal abuse/cruelty associated with this social issue. An opportunity to assess the public’s response to animal abuse arose during the first year of my PhD when a news story was broadcast about abuse/cruelty to Australian cattle exported for slaughter in Indonesia. Surveying the public about their responses and reactions to this newscast provided a rare insight into the human distress caused when exposed to animal abuse/cruelty and comprises Parts A and B of Chapter Five. It also raises questions about how to define such behaviour towards animals.

Referring back to the opening paragraph of this chapter, cruelty to animals was defined by Ascione as ‘socially unacceptable behaviour…’ (1993, p. 228). Considering a behaviour being unacceptable socially is problematic in this instance. The Australian public condemned the abuse of Australian cattle in Indonesian
abattoirs, however the documentary indicated that such animal abuse was commonplace and may not have been viewed as cruelty by the abattoir staff. Animal welfare standards vary greatly between countries and unlike the case for human rights, there is currently no Universal Declaration of Animal Welfare, despite years of campaigning by various welfare groups to achieve this goal (World Animal Protection, 2014).

In response to the public outcry after the media exposé of cruelty to Australian cattle slaughtered in Indonesia, the Australian Government introduced the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance Scheme (ESCAS) to comply with World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) welfare standards and protect the welfare of animals from Australia to the destination of slaughter. However, ESCAS does not protect all animals (e.g. breeding cattle are exempt) (Voiceless, 2014) and does not have legal effect in foreign jurisdictions (RSPCA, 2014). OIE standards allow for animals to be slaughtered whilst fully conscious (OIE, 2011). This would cause extreme suffering for the animal choking on his or her own blood (Webster, 1994) and falls below Australian slaughter standards which require pre-slaughter stunning (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007). A recent investigation found that cruelty to Australian cattle has continued to occur in Indonesian abattoirs with 46 breaches of ESCAS reported (Cannane, 2014). The failure of both ESCAS and OIE to ensure the welfare of Australian cattle exported for slaughter in Indonesia shows that cruelty will often continue behind closed doors unless it is exposed to the public by the media and animal advocates and governments act in response. Until there are enforceable international standards animal cruelty will persist.
The resultant impact of the documentary was public outcry and intervention by the
Australian government to suspend the live export trade pending investigations. The
initial survey of 157 people was undertaken within two weeks of the initial broadcast
in May 2011 and the follow up study, of 15 of these people showed that exposure to
broadcasts of animal abuse results in short and long-term impacts for some people
who are exposed to it. Some of the participants reported having severe and persistent
reactions such as nightmares and feelings of horror whenever live export was
discussed in the media during the year after the initial broadcast. This and the ethical
dilemma of using animal abuse broadcasts to drive legislative change was outlined in
Chapter 5, Part B.

The strong emotions described by the public and swift intervention by the Australian
government to suspend the live export trade pending investigations are a useful
example of how animal abuse exposés in the media can drive humane change.
Animal abuse in domestic violence however, is generally hidden from the public view
and attracts virtually no media attention and therefore there is no public outrage such
as was seen after the live export exposé. This may reflect how cautiously society
views intrusion into the family when violence is present. There is a large amount of
literature from the social and behavioural sciences and law that highlights the difficulty
women have faced trying to have issues of domestic and family violence addressed
and the subsequent reluctance of authorities to respond swiftly and immediately to it.
A range of these authors cite the clear divisions between the
private and public sphere as the major hurdle (Davidson, 1977; Dobash and Dobash,
1979; Pleck, 1987). Davidson (1977) argues that English law influenced the
development of law and society in both America and Australia and provides a range
of commentary on how negatively domestic violence victims were historically treated. When referring to the emergence of a clear public/private split when viewing issues of family violence Davidson cites a USA domestic violence case in 1874 where a Judge ruled that,

*If no permanent injury has been inflicted, nor malice, nor dangerous intent was shown by the husband, it is better to draw the curtain, shut out the public gaze, and leave the parties to forget and forgive* (State vs Oliver, 1874, in Davidson, 1977:2).

We can trace the emergence of animal protection societies in the United States back to 1868 where Henry Bergh set up the American Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Pleck, 1987). The ASPCA was set up six years before there were any shelters for the protection of children and one hundred years before there were any shelters for women in domestic violence (Pleck, 1987). This highlights the view that society should not intervene in the relationship between a man and his wife.

This was challenged in the 1960s when the feminist movement emerged and challenged society’s view on sexual and domestic violence against women (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Services for women in domestic violence began and changes to domestic violence policy saw interventions into the family as necessary for the protection of vulnerable members (Humphreys and Stanley, 2007). However, in the development of services for women escaping violence gaps have emerged in the service system as the majority of women’s shelters in Australia do not allow companion animals to be housed on site (National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family
Violence Counselling Service 1800Respect, personal communication 1 August 2015; Phillips, 2012).

Clearly, a collaboration between veterinarians, domestic violence workers and legislators is needed to ensure a cross disciplinary approach to human/animal abuse issues. Gullone (2012 p. 134) argues that the best way to address animal cruelty is for legislators, researchers and health care professionals to perceive it as a worthwhile target for intervention. Animal victims should be considered equally as worthy of assistance as human victims. Any less is discriminatory and a failure on the part of society to protect its most vulnerable members.

This thesis examined animal abuse from a veterinary perspective within three contexts – in domestic violence, in animals treated by veterinarians and in undercover footage of animal abuse. It is evident that animal abuse is a social issue which has both short and long term emotional consequences for the people who encounter it and for the animal victims/survivors. Animal abuse not only harms animals, but also their human carers, those who witness it and those who work to help the animals. Exposing this issue via research, publication and the media may drive humane change for animals and highlight the need to protect those who are the vulnerable to the effects of violence in our community.

The combination of domestic violence and animal abuse/cruelty has proven to be a very challenging area to study. This thesis adds to the existing knowledge base by showcasing research from the perspective of a veterinarian which enabled animal behaviour, welfare and abuse issues to be a focal point. The thesis also provided me
with opportunities to raise awareness among my veterinary colleagues via conferences, lectures to veterinary students, publications and informal discussions in the veterinary workplace. Engagement and education of the veterinary profession is vital to ensure those trained to assist animals in need are also aware of the interconnection of animal abuse and domestic violence. It is hoped that the publications arising from this thesis will inspire others, particularly other veterinarians to undertake further research and action in the areas of animal abuse and interpersonal violence. After submission of the thesis I will work to disseminate results in the public domain to raise community awareness of animal abuse and domestic violence. If the public are aware of the animal victims of domestic violence greater efforts may be dedicated to providing resources for the animal and human victim survivors of violence, such as being housed together in animal friendly women’s refuges.

In order to stop animal abuse we first need to understand it. There is still much to learn about the abuse of animals in violent relationships however it is clear from the animal cruelty expose of live export in the media that much of society is appalled by animal abuse. Time will tell if raising public awareness of animal abuse/cruelty in domestic violence will also drive humane change for the animal and human victims.
Chapter Eight: Recommendations

Animal abuse and human interpersonal violence are interconnected issues which have a broad and long-lasting impact on society. During the course of writing this thesis, several key recommendations have emerged.

Recommendation 1: That news agencies which broadcast stories of animal cruelty be aware that unrelenting footage is likely to traumatisé viewers. It is recommended that there is a balance provided that includes calls to action and success stories about examples where activism and community involvement has had a favourable outcome. Inclusion of mental health support telephone numbers at the conclusion of media coverage on animal cruelty would be beneficial for those deeply affected by such broadcasts.

Recommendation 2: That more multidisciplinary research be undertaken to inform best practice standards when working with human/animal abuse cases. There is scope for much greater involvement in the scientific literature by legislators, law enforcement, veterinarians, animal behaviourists, criminologists, medical practitioners, teachers and human social welfare professionals. This would enable us to examine various perspectives of how human/animal abuse cases are best recognised and supported by a range of professionals.

Recommendation 3: That governments consider the emotional bond between women and their companion animals and provide funding to domestic violence refuges to allow companion animals to be housed on site.
Recommendation 4: That researchers be encouraged to work through the methodological challenges of recruiting vulnerable populations, and in particular, women escaping domestic violence. Including women who are victims of domestic violence in research is challenging due to the crisis nature of the situation but unless they are included and ways of overcoming the methodological challenges are found these women’s voices will not be heard.

References


Appendix

Appendix 1
Ethics approval forms
THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
Institutional Approval Form For Experiments On Humans
Including Behavioural Research

Chief Investigator: Dr Catherine Tiplady
Project Title: Investigating How Animals Are Involved When Living With Domestic Violence
Supervisor: Prof Clive Phillips, Dr Deborah Walsh
Co-Investigator(s): None
Department(s): School of Veterinary Science - Centre of Animal Welfare & Ethics; Social Work and Human Services
Project Number: 2011001096
Granting Agency/Degree: APA Scholarship
Duration: 31st December 2012

Comments:

Name of responsible Committee:-
Behavioural & Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee
This project complies with the provisions contained in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and complies with the regulations governing experimentation on humans.

Name of Ethics Committee representative:-
Associate Professor John Mclean
Chairperson
Behavioural & Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee

Date &1/m/cotr Signature [Signature]
Dear Clive and Catherine,

This email is to notify you that on behalf of the School of Veterinary Science Human Ethics Committee for Low Risk Student Research Projects, I have approved your application for human ethics for the project “Public attitudes and emotions after viewing scenes of animal cruelty on ABC television’s ‘4 corners’ programme on 30th May 2011”

Best regards,
Jo

Dr Joanne Meers
Associate Professor of Veterinary Virology, Postgraduate Coordinator
School of Veterinary Science, The University of Queensland, Gatton, QLD, 4343, Australia
Tel: +61 7 5460 1839 | Fax: +61 7 5460 1922 | Email j.meers@uq.edu.au
THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
Institutional Approval Form For Experiments On Humans Including Behavioural Research

Chief Investigator: Ms Catherine Tiplady

Project Title: Attitudes And Experiences Of Veterinarians When Confronted With Animal Abuse And Human Interpersonal Violence - 24/05/2011 - AMENDMENT

Supervisor: Prof Clive Phillips, Dr Deborah Walsh

Co-Investigator(s) None

Department(s): School of Veterinary Science - Centre of Animal Welfare & Ethics; Social Work and Human Services

Project Number: 2011000457

Granting Agency/Degree: Australian Postgraduate Award

Duration: 31st June 2012

Comments:

Name of responsible Committee:-
Behavioural & Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee
This project complies with the provisions contained in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and complies with the regulations governing experimentation on humans.

Name of Ethics Committee representative:-
Associate Professor John Mclean
Chairperson
Behavioural & Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee

Date 27/5/2011 Signature
Appendix 2

Domestic Violence Study #1

Participant information sheet

Project title: “Investigating how animals are involved when living with Domestic Violence”
Dear Participant
The researcher’s name is Catherine and she is a vet who is doing research to understand more about how animals are affected by living with domestic violence and how we can help. She has asked us to approach people like yourself who are 18 years and over to respond to a survey about your experience of domestic violence and living with animals.

This survey should take about 10 minutes.

Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The researchers are not able to pay you for taking part in the survey. All questions are optional and you can pass on any that you don’t want to answer. The survey results will be published but all your information will remain anonymous. Information collected for the study will stored securely and only accessed by the research team.

This study has been approved by the University of Queensland Human Ethics Committee (project number 2011001096). You are free to discuss your participation in this study with researcher Catherine Tiplady via email on catherine.tiplady@uqconnect.edu.au or by phoning 0401 465 006 or the project supervisors (Professor Clive Phillips contactable on 07 5460 1158 or Dr Deborah Walsh on 07 3365 3342). If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, you may contact the Ethics Officer on 07 3365 3924.

You are welcome to contact the researcher for a summary of the results in approximately 12 months time.

Researcher: Catherine Tiplady PhD candidate and veterinarian
Supervisors: Professor Clive Phillips and Dr Deborah Walsh

If you would like to do this survey please tell the staff member who is helping you and they will go through the survey with you. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your DVConnect or refuge support in any way.

*Please detach and keep this page for future reference.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME
CONSENTFORM
Name of researcher: Catherine Tiplady
Project name: “Investigating how animals are involved when living with Domestic Violence”
As outlined in the participant sheet you are being invited to participate in a survey for us to better understand how animals are affected by living with domestic violence. If you are willing to participate please inform your case worker or DVConnect staff.

VERBALCONSENTFORM
Please tick here if the person gives verbal consent to participate, is aged 18 or over, understands this is a voluntary survey and are free to withdraw at any time:…. □

Survey Form
Date:………………………………………………………
Survey
No………..
What was your postcode when you lived with your partner? Post code: .................
If you do not want to provide postcode, are you happy to indicate the following:
- Urban location
- Rural location, or
- Does not wish to disclose.

1. Please indicate the types of abuse you experienced during the relationship you are now leaving. Tick all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of violence</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious assault abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilful damage abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Please indicate in the table (below) you and your partner's age and gender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yourself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Relationship length..............................

4. Were children present during the domestic violence? (please circle)
   Yes  No

5. Which animals did you live with during the domestic violence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of animal (eg dog)</th>
<th>Male or female? (if known)</th>
<th>Current Age (approximate is fine)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal #1:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal #2:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal #3:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal #4:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Are any animals going into foster care through DVConnect? (please circle) 
Yes  No
If yes, which animal/s are going into foster care?
Please write type and number of animal/s here (eg one male dog):

.......................................................... ..........................................................
.......................................................... ..........................................................
..........................................................

7. Did you delay leaving the relationship due to concern your partner might 
hurt or neglect the animal/s?  Yes  No

8. If yes, please indicate approximately how long you delayed leaving:
.........weeks
.........months
.........years

Questions about animal abuse:
Definitions
Animal abuse is the harm, deliberate neglect or misuse of animals, causing 
them physical harm and/or emotional distress.

Physical abuse: Deliberately hurting an animal (such as kicking it), or using an 
object or substance to cause it harm.

Verbal abuse: Shouting or screaming at an animal, causing it distress.

Sexual abuse: Physical abuse of an animal for human sexual gratification.

Neglect: Deliberately not providing an animal with health care or adequate 
food or water.

9. Were any of the animals ever abused or neglected?
Yes  No (if no go to question 14)

10. If yes, please indicate (by ticking) the type of abuse and who abused the animal…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Verbal abuse</th>
<th>Physical abuse</th>
<th>Sexual abuse</th>
<th>Neglect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. How often was the animal/s abused (please tick):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Infrequently (less than 1 time per year)</th>
<th>Occasionally (1-3 times per year)</th>
<th>Regularly (4-11 times per year)</th>
<th>Frequently (12 or more times per year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. If the client lived with more than one animal ask: What type of abuse did each animal receive (please tick any that apply):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of animal</th>
<th>Verbal abuse</th>
<th>Physical abuse</th>
<th>Sexual abuse</th>
<th>Neglect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal #1:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal #2:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Animal #3:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal #4:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Do you think any animal was ever deliberately abused just to upset you?  
Yes  No

14. Were any of the animals ever taken to a veterinarian because of injuries from abuse?  
Yes  No  (if ‘No’, go to Q 18)

If yes:
15. What sort of injury/injuries was it?  
(please briefly describe)

16. Who took your animal to the veterinarian for treatment needed because of abuse?  

17. Who paid for the treatment?  

18. Did your partner ever prevent you from taking an animal to the veterinarian for any reason?  
Yes  No  If yes, how often?
19. Did any of the animals living with you ever witness the domestic violence?  
Yes  No  Unsure

20. did any of the animals show unusual or changed behaviour? (for example hiding)  
Yes  No

21. What sort of behaviour did you notice?  

22. When did this behaviour happen?  

23. Are there any animals that you have had to leave behind (with your partner)? Yes  No  
If yes, who owns these animals? You  Partner  Children  Other

24. Are you concerned for the safety of the animal/s left behind  Yes  No  Not applicable

25. Did the children witness the animals being abused? Yes  No  Unsure  Not applicable  

We will now ask you about veterinarians

26. Have you ever told a veterinarian that you and the animals were living with domestic violence?’ Yes  No

27. If you were to confide in a vet about animal abuse or domestic violence, 
would you prefer a male or female vet? (please tick)  

Prefer male vet  
Prefer female vet  
Don’t mind either male or female vet

28. If there were several animals living with you and your partner, was there one animal that experienced abuse more than others? Yes  No  Not applicable

Which animal was this?.................................................................

Who owned/was the main carer of this animal? (please tick)  

Yourslef  
Partner  
Children  
Jointly owned  
Other, please specify

29. Why do you think one animal experienced more abuse than the others?  
............................................................................................................................................

.....
Some information about you: (confidential and optional)

30. Are you an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?
   Yes
   No
   Do not wish to answer

31. Country of birth........................................
   If born overseas, number of years in Australia

32. Highest education level you have achieved

   Primary school
   High school
   Part of high school
   University
   Part of University
   Other (eg Technical and Further Education, certificates)

   Are you in the paid workforce at the moment?
   Yes   No

   If yes, please circle
   Casual
   Part-time
   Full-time

This is the end of the survey.

Thankyou for taking the time to participate during this difficult time. The results of this study will help us train veterinarians and other professionals about what families with animals need when they experience domestic violence.

We wish you well for your future.

Consent to contact.

Ten people will be invited to participate in a telephone interview in about 6 months time. The interview will be conducted by Catherine Tiplady, the female researcher who is a veterinarian. Your contact details will be stored securely, destroyed after the study is completed and not be passed to any third parties.

If you would like to be considered for this interview and consent to being contacted by the researcher please provide your name and contact telephone number below:
DomesticViolenceStudy#2
FollowupquestionsforDVConnectsurveys

Date: ......................
Timesurvey started: ........................ Time
survey finished: ........................ Woman’s
name: ......................................

Introduce researcher and ask if this is a convenient time to talk, mention the topic
again.

If they wish to do the follow up questions then go ahead. They are free to skip any
questions they don’t want to ask. Ask permission to record the interview, assure
confidentiality.

**Introduction:**
Last time we spoke, you were in the process of leaving your partner and you told me
about how your pet/s was/were affected by living with domestic violence. This
survey is to see how you and your pets are getting on now.

Are all your pets still with you? (screening question and if they haven’t you can say
thank you for your time and I wish you all the best).

For those continuing - The questions should take around ten to fifteen minutes
depending on the detail you provide. All details about you and your contact details
will be kept confidential and when I write up the results I will describe your situation
using another name to protect your identity.

**Start of questions:**

1a. Do you mind me asking what contact you’ve had (if any) with your ex-partner
since separation? If none – go to Q 2a.

1b. If not with partner but is in contact sometimes ask: Are your animals ever present
during this contact?

1c. Do you think this contact has any affect (positive or negative) on the animal’s
behaviour?

1d. If still with partner ask: ‘Are you still keen to answer this survey? And is this a
good time for you to answer the survey?’

If so, proceed…

2a. Since your separation, have you had to move house?

2b. Has moving house appeared to have had any effect on your pet?

2c. If yes, what have you noticed? I’ll now ask

afewquestionsaboutyourpet…

3a. Did your pet go into foster care? Yes / no
3b. Is your pet back living with you now? Yes / no
3c. How long has he/she been back with you?
3d. How long was he/she in foster care for roughly (if applicable)?

I’ll ask a few questions now about how your pet is settling in since coming back to you:

4a. Last time you mentioned behavioural issues in your pet, (such as digging, hiding etc) *name the behaviour/s the woman previously mentioned in survey #1)*

…………………………………………………………………………………………

4b. Are you seeing these behaviours more or less often now or about the same?
4c. When do you see these behaviours happen?
4d. Have they become more extreme, like really intense digging, or less intense than they were or about the same?
4e. Are there any other behaviours you are seeing in your pets now that you want to discuss?
4f. Does your pet have any ongoing physical issues which you feel directly result from being abused or neglected during your Domestic Violence relationship?

We are interested to hear about what might be able to help other people like you who have lived with an abusive partner and pets so then next couple of questions relate to that.

5a. Do you think vets could help people like yourself who have lived with Domestic Violence and pets?
5b. If yes, then how do you think they could help?
5c. Is there anyone else who you think could help people like yourself who have lived with Domestic Violence and pets?
5d. If yes, then how do you think they could help?

If applicable:
We are interested to try and understand violence that involves pets so then next couple of questions relate to that.
(if applicable to the woman’s experiences – (not all had partners who abused the animals)):

6a. Do you know if your ex-partner was ever abusive to any animals other than the family pets?

6b. If yes, can you tell me about that?

6c. Was your ex-partner ever abusive to any people outside the family?

6d. If yes, can you tell me about that?

6e. Looking back, was there anything you noticed which triggered your partner to be abusive to you, your pet or your children? (ask one at a time)

6f. If yes, what were the triggers?

6g. Is there anything else you would like to add before we begin to wind up the interview?

We are very interested in what people say about their relationship with their petsso mylast questionrelatestothis:

7a. Did the domestic violence have any impact on your relationship with your pet? (eg made you closer or made you less close)

7b. Could you describe this?

7c. In a few short words can you tell me what your pet means to you?

Thankyou for your time with this research. You won’t be contacted by me again and your name and contact details won’t be passed on to anybody. If you would like to see a copy of the results or the research paper I write about these surveys I can email or post you a copy in about 12 months time. If yes, where would be the best place for me to send this to you………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………

---------------------End of Survey---------------------
Help uncover veterinary experiences of abuse in animals and people

- **1. Veterinary experiences of abuse in animals and people**

Cases or suspected cases of animal abuse and human interpersonal violence may be seen by veterinarians in practice. Surveying veterinarians about their experiences will help us learn more about how they support human and animal victims of violence and will identify gaps in training.

- This survey should take less than 10 minutes.
- Your participation is voluntary, anonymous and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. No reimbursement is offered.
- You may choose not to answer any individual question by clicking 'next'. The results of the study will form part of a PhD thesis and will be published.
- All information collected for the study will stored securely and only accessed by the research team.
- Please only answer one survey per person. Any duplicate entries will be disqualified.
- This study has been approved by the University of Queensland Human Ethics Committee (project number 2011000457). Whilst you are free to discuss your participation in this study with project staff (Clive Phillips contactable on 07 5460 1158 or Deborah Walsh on 07 3365 3342), if you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, you may contact the Ethics Officer on 07 3365 3924.

Researcher: Catherine Tiplady PhD student
Supervisors: Professor Clive Phillips and Dr Deborah Walsh

Q1

1. Are you a qualified veterinarian?
   - Yes
   - No
- **Animal abuse**

These questions deal with animal abuse you may have personally encountered during your work as a veterinarian.

We define animal abuse as the harm, deliberate neglect or misuse of animals, causing them physical and/or emotional harm.

Physical abuse: Bodily harm inflicted on the animal (such as kicking, hitting and throwing the animal), or using an object or substance to cause harm.

Verbal abuse: shouting or screaming at an animal, causing it distress.

Sexual abuse: Physical abuse of an animal for human sexual gratification.

Neglect: Intentional failure to provide for an animal's needs (such as failure to treat disease or provide adequate food or water).

Hoarding: Accumulation of more animals than the owner can care for, resulting in inadequate care.

**Q2**

How often have you seen or suspected the types of animal abuse (seen below) whilst working as a veterinarian?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Infrequently (&lt;1 per yr)</th>
<th>Occasionally (1-3 per yr)</th>
<th>Regularly (4-11 per yr)</th>
<th>Frequently (&gt;12 per yr)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberate neglect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoarding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q3**

Who abused the animal/s?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Infrequently (&lt;1 per yr)</th>
<th>Occasionally (1-3 per yr)</th>
<th>Regularly (4-11 per yr)</th>
<th>Frequently (&gt;12 per yr)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male child &lt;12 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female child &lt;12 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male adolescent 13-18 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female adolescent 13-18 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Q4**

For the animal abuse cases you have seen in practice, what was the abuser's relationship to the animal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Infrequently (&lt;1 per yr)</th>
<th>Occasionally (1-3 per yr)</th>
<th>Regularly (4-11 per yr)</th>
<th>Frequently (&gt;12 per yr)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relative of owner/main carer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Q5
Which species of animal/s have you seen abused during your work as a veterinarian?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Infrequently (&lt;1 per yr)</th>
<th>Occasionally (1-3 per yr)</th>
<th>Regularly (4-11 per yr)</th>
<th>Frequently (&gt;12 per yr)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bird</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reptile/amphibian</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep/goat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory animal Poultry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insect/arachnid/invertebrate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse/other equid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small mammal (eg guinea pig, rat)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild/native animal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoo animal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q6
How do you feel when working with cases of animal abuse?
- Very distressed
- Somewhat distressed
- Neutral
- Comfortable
- Very comfortable

Q7
How important do you think it is that veterinarians are taught how to recognise and treat cases of animal abuse?
- Extremely unimportant
- Slightly unimportant
- Neutral
- Slightly important
- Very important
- Extremely important
Q8

How well do you think your undergraduate veterinary training equipped you to effectively recognise and treat suspected cases of animal abuse?
- Extremely badly
- Quite badly
- Neutral
- Quite well
- Extremely well

Q9

When do you think vets should be trained in animal abuse recognition and treatment? (tick all that apply)
- During undergraduate veterinary training
- During postgraduate veterinary training
- At continuing professional education workshops
- Not at all

Q10

What is your view of mandatory reporting of suspected animal abuse to authorities (e.g. RSPCA) by veterinarians?
- Strongly supportive
- Supportive
- Neutral
- Opposed
- Strongly opposed

Q11

For what reason/s would you potentially not report animal abuse cases? (please tick any/all that apply)
- I find it too upsetting to deal with
- I'm unsure if reporting would make any difference
- Distrust/dislike of organisations such as the RSPCA
- Unsure if it is actual abuse
- Don't want to spend the extra time on paperwork, possibly attending court
- Fear of loss of clients and income to the veterinary practice
- Fear of retaliation by the client if they suspected I reported them

Q12

How do you feel when performing euthanasia of animals which have been abused, when compared to euthanasia for other reasons (such as cancer, kidney failure, colic)?
- Very comfortable
- Somewhat comfortable
- Neutral
- Somewhat distressed
- Very distressed
Questions about domestic violence

Domestic violence is defined by the Australian government as acts of violence that occur between people who have or have had an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and behaviour to control a partner through fear. Threats and actual harm and killing of animals may be seen in domestic violence situations.

Q13

How often have you suspected that the animal abuse cases you described above were linked to domestic violence?
- Never
- Infrequently (<1 cases per yr)
- Occasionally (1-3 cases per yr)
- Regularly (4-11 cases per yr)
- Frequently (>12 cases per yr)

Q14

Were the suspected perpetrators of the domestic violence male or female?
- All female
- Mostly female
- Equally male and female
- Mostly male
- All male

Q15

How well do you think your undergraduate veterinary training equipped you to effectively recognise and support clients who are victims of domestic violence?
- Not at all
- Neutral
- Slightly
- Quite well
- Extremely well

Q16

How important do you think it is that veterinarians are taught how to recognise and support suspected victims of domestic violence in your clients?
- Extremely important
- Slightly important
- Neutral
- Slightly unimportant
- Extremely unimportant

Q17

When do you think vets should be trained in domestic violence recognition and support in clients? (Tick all that apply)
- During undergraduate training
- During postgraduate training
- At continuing professional education workshops
- Not at all
- **Your experiences of abuse**

**Q18**

This section covers your personal experiences of abuse. You are free to choose not to answer any question by clicking 'next'.

Have you ever experienced any of these forms of abuse?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>As a child under 18 years</th>
<th>As an adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/psychological abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of property</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q19**

Have you ever been the victim of domestic violence from a partner?
- Yes
- No

**Q20**

Have you and a partner ever lived together with animals?
- Yes
- No

**Q21**

Did you live with animals during the violent relationship?
- Yes
- No

**Q22**

Did your partner ever threaten to abuse any of the animals?
- Yes
- No

**Q23**

Were you the owner or primary carer of this/these animal/s?
- Yes
- No

**Q24**

Did your partner ever actually abuse any of the animals?
- Yes
Q25
Were you the owner/primary carer of this/these animals?
Yes
No

Q26
If you lived with multiple animals, was there one animal in particular which was the target of abuse/neglect/threats by your partner?
Yes
No
Not applicable

Q27
Were you the owner or primary carer of this animal?
Yes
No
Not applicable

- **Domestic violence in others**

Q28
Has someone close to you ever experienced domestic violence from a partner?
Yes
No

Q29
Were they were living with animals at the time?
Yes
No
Not known

Q30
Were any of their animals ever abused by their partner?
Yes
No
Not known
- **Your experiences of abuse at work**

Q31

Has a veterinary customer/client ever been abusive to you during your work as a vet?
- Yes
- No

Q32

Was this... (please tick all that apply)
- Physical abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual/physical abuse
- Psychological/emotional abuse
- Destruction of property

Q33

Has another veterinarian or other veterinary practice staff member ever been abusive to you during your work as a vet?
- Yes
- No

Q34

Was this... (please tick all that apply)
- Verbal abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional/psychological abuse
- Physical abuse
- Destruction of property
**Information about you**

Information about you: this information will not be used to identify you as an individual but to describe the sample of participants in this survey. All responses are anonymous.

Q35

Are you:
- Male
- Female

Q36

What is your age group?
- 18-21
- 22-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60+

Q37

How many years in total have you been working as a veterinarian?
- 0-2 years
- 3-9 years
- 10-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-30 years
- 31-40 years
- 41-50 years

Q38

Where do/did you undertake your veterinary work? (please tick all that apply)
- Government
- Research
- Production animal practice
- Teaching at university
- Small animal practice
- Equine practice
- Animal shelter/pound
- Mixed practice

Q39

Is/was your main place of work:
- Inner city
- Suburban
- Semi-rural
- Rural
Q40

Is/was your veterinary work:
  Mainly part-time
  Mainly casual
  Mainly full-time
○ Support services for those experiencing abuse

Should you be concerned about domestic violence or animal abuse, please find a list of telephone numbers of services where you can obtain support and assistance.

SUPPORT NUMBERS:
LifeLine: 13 11 14
Australian Veterinary Association helpline: 1800 337 068
RSPCA cruelty complaints:
Qld 07 3426 9999
NSW 1300 278 3589
WA (08) 9209 9300
Northern Territory (08) 8984 3795
South Australia 1300 477 722
Tasmania 1300 139 947
Victoria (03) 9224 2222
National domestic violence/family violence/sexual assault helpline: 1800 737 732

END OF SURVEY
THANKYOU FOR YOUR TIME
Appendix 5: Promotion of veterinary survey in USA

Editors' Guest: Help uncover veterinary experiences of abuse in animals and people

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. 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 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,¹² many report feeling ill-equipped to assist in these cases.¹³

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 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.

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

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.
REFERENCES
Example of promotion of veterinary survey in UK.

*Veterinary Record* 2011;169:188 doi:10.1136/vr.d5106

Letters

Research into the abuse of animals and people

Catherine Tiplady
Centre for Animal Welfare and Ethics, University of Queensland, Gatton, Queensland 4343, Australia

It has been reported that over 50 per cent of vets see suspected cases of animal abuse annually (Green and Gullone 2005). While most vets surveyed agreed that there is a link between abuse of humans and abuse of animals (Green and Gullone 2005, Williams and others 2008) many report feeling ill-equipped to assist in these cases (Sharpe 1999, Green and Gullone 2005).

I am a veterinarian in Australia undertaking a PhD in animal cruelty and human interpersonal violence. As part of my research I am seeking UK-based vets who are willing to complete a short, anonymous survey about their attitudes to and experiences of animal cruelty and human violence.

The survey is available at [www.surveymonkey.com/s/PQMWSCQ](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PQMWSCQ)

**References**


Appendix 6: Approval to use published papers in thesis

Permission to use published paper in thesis – for Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics articles on media coverage of animal cruelty in live export

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