



## **Quick Facts about the Link between Human Violence and Animal Abuse**

- Animal cruelty rarely occurs in isolation. It's usually "the tip of the iceberg" and frequently the first opportunity for social services or law enforcement intervention. The old attitude of "It's just an animal" is being replaced with a new awareness: "If someone's hurting animals, another vulnerable person in the home or neighborhood is next."
- Batterers often kill and abuse pets to orchestrate fear, violence and retribution in homes marked by domestic violence.
- A history of pet abuse is one of the four most significant risk factors for becoming a batterer.
- In a dozen studies, 15% to 48% of battered women delay leaving abusive situations – or return to them – out of fear for the safety of their animals.
- 71% of battered women report that abusers hurt, killed or threatened their pets to control them and their children.
- Severe animal neglect in the form of hoarding often indicates elders needing social services or mental health assistance.

### **What You Can Do**

- Domestic violence agencies can include pets in safety planning, help women prove pet ownership through veterinary, licensing and pet food receipts in her name, and establish shelter housing or off-site foster care for the animal members of the families.
- The National Link Coalition recommends that agencies:
  - Routinely include three questions about the presence and welfare of animals in their crisis lines, intake interviews, risk assessments, and lethality reviews:
    - Are there pets in the home?
    - How does each family member treat them?
    - Do you worry about something bad happening to them?
- Communication, cooperation, cross-training and cross-reporting between animal and human services agencies are critical.
- Establish memoranda of agreement between animal care and control/humane law enforcement agencies and child/adult protective services. These can coordinate: interagency referrals and assessments of suspected abuse; rapid response to threats to humans' or animals' welfare; and removal of abandoned or abused animals or those that threaten the safety of family members or caseworkers.

**More on the Tribal Link at  
[NativeAmericaHumane.org/triballink](http://NativeAmericaHumane.org/triballink)**