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FBI

Criminal Histories of a Subsample of Animal Cruelty Offenders

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Abstract

Existing research suggests that various forms of family violence such as domestic violence and child abuse tend to coexist or cluster. Although the link between animal cruelty and domestic violence is well publicized, little research has examined various forms of animal abuse and possible links between corresponding forms of interpersonal offenses. The present study examined a subsample obtained from the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit¹ (BAU) III – Crimes Against Children, which included the criminal histories of 150 adult males arrested for animal cruelty, neglect or sexual abuse in the U.S. between 2004 and 2009. The sample was described in terms of demographic and criminal characteristics. Results indicated that 41% of the offenders in the sample were arrested for interpersonal violence at least once, 18% were arrested for a sex offense such as rape or child molestation, and 28% were arrested for another interpersonal crime such as violating a restraining order or harassment. Significant relationships were discovered between Active animal cruelty (e.g., beating, stabbing) and both interpersonal violence and substance abuse as well as between sexually abusing animals and sexual offending against humans. These results point to the need for increased collaboration between animal welfare agencies and the social service and legal entities responsible for protecting domestic violence victims, children, elders, and other at risk groups.

Keywords: Animal Cruelty; Animal Abuse; Bestiality; Animal Neglect; Domestic Violence; Sexual Abuse; Interpersonal Violence

¹ The FBI's BAU III is a component of the FBI's Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG) National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC). BAU III provides specialized behaviorally-based operational support to federal, state, local and international law enforcement agencies involved in crimes against children investigations. BAU III services are provided at no cost to the requesting agency. Law enforcement and prosecutors can request BAU III services directly or by contacting the NCAVC Coordinator in their local FBI field office.

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