

The Ties That Bond

New booklet explores links between animal abuse and children's well-being

Pets play a key role in the health of families and communities. In homes where they're loved and respected, animals can help children develop such crucial traits as empathy and interpersonal skills. Conversely, an abused pet often indicates that a family is prone to other types of violence and neglect as well.

The connections between animal abuse and children's welfare are explored in "A Common Bond: Maltreated Children and Animals in the Home," a new booklet by Mary Lou Randour, who heads the Department of Human/Animal Relations: Education & Outreach for The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), and Howard Davidson, director of the American Bar Association (ABA) Center on Children and the Law. The guide is published by the American Humane Association in cooperation with The HSUS, the ABA, and Action for Child Protection.

The 45-page publication offers a framework for agencies associated with child protective services and animal welfare to identify issues and interact with each other. Citing numerous existing studies, the authors show service providers how to assess family situations and address problems. To acquire potentially useful information, Randour and Davidson write, "all personnel who work with children and their families must ask questions about animals."

Some states mandate that animal control officers report suspected or known cases of child abuse or neglect. "A Common Bond" advocates for such "cross-reporting" practices, as well as collaborative training between humane and child welfare personnel, to be specified in law.

To obtain copies of "A Common Bond," e-mail the American Humane Association at info@americanhumane.org. **AS**