

POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND YOUTH VIOLENCE

1. Introduction

It is a well known fact that violence brings about violence as seen in so many instances. During the last few decades a correlation or link between animal abuse and violent behaviour has been observed. (Joubert, Rostoll, Esterhuizen & Coetzee, 2012:13) This has been proven by various studies conducted and found that this link is so immense that profilers make use of reports on animal cruelty when assessing the threat a criminal poses for the society. (No Boundaries For Abusers)

2. Discussion

The cause of violent behaviour towards animals is ascribed to exposure to animal abuse by someone older such as a parent. Youths exposed to high instances of parental abuse is more likely to engage in animal abuse than those who is not exposed to parental violence. Thus we can say that due to animal abuse by significant other a toleration for violence is learned (Blazina, Boyraz, Shen-Miller, 2011:252), and this rarely stops ends at animal abuse (The Animal Abuse-Human Violence Connection).

The reason why it rarely stops at animal abuse is due to the fact there is common characteristics shared between animals and humans. These characteristics are that both animals and humans are living organisms that are both able to experience distress and feel pain, that both are able to physically show the signs of the distress and pain experienced as well as that both can die from the injuries inflicted to them. (Joubert, Rostoll, Esterhuizen & Coetzee, 2012:13)

Animal cruelty by youths is motivated by various factors, these factors include the abusing of animals as part of a youth gang initiation, for sexual gratification or being forced by an adult or other figure of authority to do so (Ascione & Arkow, 1999:55), another motivation is that animal cruelty is a rehearsal for interpersonal violence and provides a sort of practice scenario for the youth offender to practice and perfect his means of violence before attacking a human, animal cruelty may also be an attempt of a victim of abuse to regain a sense of power by abusing a helpless and vulnerable animal (Ascione, 2010:226)

There are various motives for youths to engage in animal cruelty, these motives are referred to as typology. Pathological animal abuse is symptomatic of psychological disturbances which may vary in degree and may also be due to various forms of abuse such as sexual and physical abuse. Delinquent animal abuse is said to be a type of antisocial behaviour and it states that animal abuse may form part of a gang or cult ritual or tradition such as initiations or sacrifices. (Ascione, 2005:144)

Due to the fact that a correlation has been seen with regard to animal cruelty and violence later in life various studies have been conducted in order to determine the extent to which animal abuse really affect the tendency a person has to engage in violent behaviour later in life. These studies has found that animal abuse as form of fun but not limited to fun is a predictor for later interpersonal violence. It was also founded that the covering up of childhood animal abuse resulted in repeated acts ad convictions of interpersonal behaviour by those who abused animals during their childhood. Even though these findings show a clear correlation between animal abuse and a tendency to engage in violent behaviour later in life it must also be kept in mind that animal abuse is not the sole cause but certainly a major cause of violent behaviour. (Levesque, 2011:135)

3. Conclusion

Thus it is clear that cruelty to animals does not only affect animals but it also affects humans and those who abuse these animals. This is due to the fact that animal cruelty sets the stage for violent behaviour and awakens an urge within the individual to become more and more violent. It is said that it is extremely harmful and detrimental for a young child, or any child for the fact of the matter, whom has killed, harmed or tortured an animal to be left unaddressed or unpunished (Merz-Perez & Heide, 2004:159), as ignoring this type of behaviour brings about the understanding that cruel and violent actions such as this is acceptable to engage in (Muscarì & Brown, 2010:266)

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