



**WOMEN'S REFUGE**

**Pets as Pawns:  
The Co-existence of Animal Cruelty  
and Family Violence**

prepared for

Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of  
Cruelty to Animals

and

The National Collective of Independent Women's  
Refuges

By

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

In early 2011 the RNZSPCA, in conjunction with New Zealand Women's Refuge, commissioned Kaitiaki Research and Evaluation to undertake research to increase their understanding of the co-existence of family violence and cruelty to animals within New Zealand with a particular focus on whether the actual or threatened pet/animal abuse acts as a barrier to women and children extricating themselves from violent situations. The objectives of this research were to:

- understand the role of pets and incidence of animal cruelty in New Zealand family violence situations
- understand the way in which perpetrators may use pets to prevent victim(s) being able to leave a violent home
- identify barriers (e.g. the need to accommodate pets) and facilitators to victims of family violence being able to extricate themselves from family violence situations while safeguarding animals
- explore the scope of the co-existence of pet/animal abuse and family among women housed in refuge shelters
- understand the impact of pet/animal abuse on children and women who have been extricated from situations of family violence
- provide an evidence base from which interventions can be developed to allow victims to be extricated from violent situations in a timely manner and in a way that prevents actual or potential cruelty to animals.

The stages of research included:

- a review of the literature to increase understanding of the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence
- key informant semi-structured interviews with Women's Refuge Staff, adult victims of family violence and representatives of key government agencies
- a survey of Women's Refuge clients to provide a better understanding of the role of pet/animal abuse within violent situations and estimate the scale of the issue.

### APPROACH

A mixed methods approach was utilised. The qualitative component comprised of 30 semi-structured interviews with female Women's Refuge clients who had experienced animal cruelty as a feature of family violence. An additional 30 interviews were carried out with community stakeholders who were identified as having some involvement/knowledge of the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence. The quantitative component of the study comprised of a survey of 203 Women's Refuge clients. A second survey of 17 local SPCA managers was administered to test the extent to which perspectives shared during fieldwork interviews could be generalised across local SPCA centres.

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

A common feature arising out of pets as pawns literature is perpetrators' use of overt threats and actual harm to animals as a mechanism to attain and maintain control of their family. The current study's interviews with Women's Refuge clients and staff confirmed similar manifestations of animal-based control and have revealed a number of situations in which cruelty to animals manifests in family violence situations. As such, there is a need to view the co-existence of animal cruelty as complex, multifaceted and we should not restrict our understanding of abuse to threats or actual harm.

### ***a) Manifestations of animal cruelty***

The study identified a number of ways in which animal cruelty was employed by perpetrators. Animal cruelty fell into two chronological categories: a) cruelty to animals within and during the relationship and, b) cruelty to animals after leaving the relationship.

Cruelty to Animals Within and During the Relationship
<p><b>Normalised violence/ psychological/emotional abuse</b></p> <p>Animal cruelty commonly occurred as a normalised demonstration of anger. Gradual exposure to their partner's violence towards animals resulted in women learning to fear their partner's capacity for harm and the development of a fear that their partner's violence towards animals might escalate to a physical attack on them and/or their children. Because of this fear, participants often described guilt at not intervening because they either knew from previous experience, or suspected, that any attempt to rescue the animal would result in them or their children being hurt</p>
<p><b>Perverse satisfaction gained from hurting animals</b></p> <p>Perverse satisfaction gained from hurting animals was identified as a separate classification because the animals that were hurt or killed were generally not the families' domestic pet(s). Further, the cruelty was orchestrated (actively seeking out animals in order to injure them) and generally occurred without any anger. While this form of violence generally excluded the families' pets or animals the fact that the perpetrator inflicted pain on animals in the presence of family members established a context of fear. Further, the random nature of the acts of violence alongside the sense that the perpetrator was not mentally stable reinforced the risk that household members had of direct physical family violence</p>
<p><b>Cruelty to animals as a punishment for unsatisfactory behaviour</b></p> <p>Family violence-related animal cruelty was most commonly reported as a form of punishment. Cruelty involved injury or death of an animal in retribution for a family member's unsatisfactory behaviour. As such, animal cruelty was orchestrated to directly hurt the woman and child(ren). The outcome of the abuse was a level of intimidation that secured the families' compliance and obedience for fear that a cherished animal would be beaten or killed. Common across participants' account of animal-related punishment was how animals were treated as an extension of the women and, in some cases, children. In this sense, the animal had the unenviable role of acting in a proxy capacity</p>
<p><b>Jealousy</b></p> <p>A perpetrator's jealousy of his partner's or a child's animal was identified as another motivation for engaging in aspects of animal cruelty. In these situations, the perpetrator would harm animals with which his partner and/or children had a close connection. In these situations, non-verbal messages were given that family members could not have affections for anything or anyone other than the perpetrator. As a consequence, women and children were placed in a position of needing to seemingly make a choice between the perpetrator and the animal. This form of abuse was identified as one of</p>

the first indications of family violence. The nature of violence would often escalate and broaden to include physical violence towards family members. This form of animal cruelty differs from normalised violence because no apparent anger underpinned the cruelty

#### **Animal cruelty as a threat to maintain “good behaviour”**

Two types of specific threats were identified. The first type of threat involved the use of animal cruelty to demonstrate the perpetrator’s intolerance for rules being broken. As such, animal abuse provided the family with sufficient evidence that similar violence would fall upon family members should they dissatisfy the perpetrator. A second type of threat centred on threats made to animals in the event that the woman left the relationship. Approximately one third (n = 11) of interview participants reported this form of threat. Approximately one half of interview participants (n = 16) reported that their partner had actually harmed or killed an animal as a warning of what they would do to the woman and/or child(ren) if the woman left the relationship. In this sense threats and actually cruelty to animals were used as a way of maintaining the status quo as a history of cruelty to animals demonstrated the perpetrator’s aptitude for cruelty and the possibility that this could be inflicted on family members. This propensity created a fear within the relationship that any threats made to the woman leaving would be carried out

#### **Apparent collateral damage**

Rather than a direct or obvious link between the perpetrator and animal cruelty *collateral damage* was identified as a dimension of family violence because animals were injured as a secondary consequence of the perpetrator’s behaviour and not as an outcome of the animal being explicitly targeted. In these situations a seemingly innocuous act, giving a kitten to a child and taking a dog hunting resulted in the death of both animals. It is noteworthy that these events occur despite the pleading of family members. *Collateral damage* is an important dimension of family violence because seemingly innocuous events contribute towards the family’s continued silencing: a reinforcement that the perpetrator is the head of the household and that family members feelings and connections with their animals are incidental to the perpetrator’s decision-making

#### **Hurting animals to avoid police attention**

Situations involving cruelty to animals were described that involved perpetrators purposefully harming animals, rather than their female partner and/or child(ren), to avoid a family violence conviction. Common across reports, perpetrators were known to the police for past family violence violations. As such, hurting animals as a way of controlling partners provided a level of protection from police attention as the Police were not perceived as taking sufficient action against animal cruelty situations

#### **Pets used as sexual objects**

Bestiality was raised by the participating Refuges and SPCAs as a form of animal cruelty that remains an under reported phenomenon in New Zealand. Participating Refuges related that at least one client disclosed some form of abuse involving sex with animals every four to six months.

Family violence survivors described how their partners had forced them to watch animal-related pornography and, in two cases, engage in sexual activities with animals. While participants realised that bestiality was another power and control tactic they found it insidious as it forced the woman to go against her own values. As such, participants described it as the worse type of abuse that they had experienced as the perpetrator had robbed them of their own value system. With other forms of abuse they knew that the perpetrator was in the wrong. With bestiality they felt they had been forced or manipulated into being complicit in hurting a cherished animal.

Perpetrators were also described at relishing the distress that bestiality caused the women. Further, as Aroha indicates below, perpetrators’ use of bestiality occurred within a series of complex motivations that reinforced women’s secondary role and his misogyny

Many participants described having left their relationships in a crisis situation, when violence had escalated to an extremely dangerous level, and they had not had time or opportunity to secure alternative accommodation for themselves and their animals. Because the animals were left in the perpetrator's care the perpetrator was provided with the opportunity to manipulate the woman.

Cruelty to Animals After Leaving the Relationship
<p><b>Issuing threat to the woman and/or her children</b></p> <p>It was common for perpetrators to communicate (e.g. via telephone, text or third parties) their intention to harm the animals left in their care. This created anxiety for the woman and children and was commonly cited as a reason for the woman returning to the relationship</p>
<p><b>Actual harm to animals</b></p> <p>Numerous reports were offered where perpetrators had harmed or killed animals left in their care. Harm and/or death were interpreted as a malicious punishment for the woman leaving the relationship</p>
<p><b>Isolating the women and children from third party support systems</b></p> <p>While not commonly discussed, three interview participants related how friends' and extended families' pets and animals had been harmed by perpetrators in retribution for helping his partner and children leave the relationship</p>

### ***b) Delay in leaving the relationship***

Each of the 30 survivors of family violence were asked whether their partner's cruelty to animals, or threats of cruelty, had dissuaded them from leaving the relationship. The majority of participants (n = 18, 60%) said that they had not stayed exclusively because of the animals but that, through a process of abuse that involved animal cruelty, they had gradually lost confidence and developed an overwhelming fear of leaving. Participants attributed the fear of leaving, at least in part, to the perpetrator's abuse of animals.

A further six interview participants (20%) stated that, by the time they were about to leave the relationship, they had ceased caring about the welfare of the animal and were solely focused on their own and their children's wellbeing. Specifically, participants explained that over time, and especially in response to the escalation of family violence, what was once a heightened concern for animals was eroded as the women were forced to focus on their own survival.

One fifth of family violence survivors interviewed (n = 6, 20%) stated that they had remained in the relationship because of their animals. As with the existing family violence literature, women without children reported a greater propensity to remain in the relationship because of the animal.

### ***c) Barriers to leaving an abusive relationship***

A number of structural barriers to women leaving their violent relationships were identified. Barriers included:

- a lack of rental accommodation available to people with animals
- prohibitive cost and an insufficient amount of kennel or animal boarding facilities

- a number of logistical difficulties and a series of structural impediments
- a series of misconceptions that precluded women from utilising SPCA's services
- a number of legal considerations and Police responsiveness.

## QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

A survey of Women's Refuge clients was carried out to better understand the role of pet/animal abuse within violent situations and estimate the scale of the issue. While previous studies have often restricted their samples to women in actual shelters the current study extended participant eligibility to include any new or existing client of Women's Refuge. As such, participants included a spectrum of experiences that ranged from crisis to those who were no longer in a family violence situation.

### ***a) Threats and actual injury or death***

Women's Refuge survey participants were asked whether a family member or partner had ever threatened to injure or kill one of their pets and whether or not a family member or partner had actually injured or killed one of their pets, animals or farm animals. Of the 203 survey respondents, 54.7% (n = 111) stated that, at some point, either a family member or their partner had threatened to kill one of their pets, animals and/or farm animals. Of these 111 respondents, 79.1% (n = 87) stated that at least one threat had occurred within the last two years. Those who reported abuse occurring within the last two years equates to 42.9% of all 203 respondents.

Approximately one third of respondents (36.5%, n = 74) reported a pet or animal had actually been injured or killed some time in their relationship. Of these, 50 respondents (68.5%) said that the injury or death had occurred within the last two years; a figure that represents one quarter (24.6% ) all 203 survey respondents.

### ***b) Perpetrators***

The majority of respondents reported that it was their partners who had either threatened to harm or actually injured and/or killed their pet, animal or other type of animal. Approximately 90% of threats and actual harm to a pet, animal or other animal were made by partners. Just under 10% of threats and actual injuries or death had been perpetrated by a family member (other than the individual's partner<sup>1</sup>). Threats or abuse by "someone else" was least common.

### ***c) Children***

Of the 159 participants with children, 32.7% (n = 52) stated that one or more of their children had witnessed their partner or a family member that lives in the home threaten to injure or kill a pet or animal. A further 24.5% (n = 38) had witnessed someone in the family actually injure or kill a pet or animal. The majority of threats of abuse, witnessed by children, were made by the women's partner. For instance, 94.2% (n = 49) of threats witnessed by children were made by respondents' partners and 94.7% (n = 36) of actual abuse witnessed by children was carried out by the women's partner. The remaining threats and actual abuse were made by other family members (n = 3 and n = 2 respectively).

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<sup>1</sup> Other family members include children, siblings, parents and grandparents.

#### ***d) Pets, farm animals and other types of animals***

Building upon the qualitative component of the study, Women's Refuge survey respondents were asked what type of animal, defined by their relationship with the animal, had been either threatened or actually injured or killed. The majority of respondents stated that threats were most commonly directed towards pets (n = 102, 85.7%) as was actual incidence of injury and/or death (n = 65, 81.3%).<sup>2</sup> Next, approximately 10% (n = 12) of threats had been directed towards farm animals<sup>3</sup> and just under 14% (n = 11) of actual injuries and/or deaths had been carried out on farm animals.<sup>4</sup> Least common were threats or actual injury or death towards 'other types of animal' (4.2% and 5% respectively).

Dogs were most commonly reported as being threatened or killed (n = 80, 45%). This was followed by cats (n = 59, 33%), birds (n = 10, 6%) and cows (n = 8, 4%).

#### ***e) Leaving an abusive relationship***

Approximately one third of survey respondents (n = 67, 33%) reported having stayed in the relationship (either 'completely' or 'somewhat') for fear that their partner would injure their animal.

#### ***f) Lack of alternative accommodation***

Approximately 40% of respondents (n = 81; 39.9%) reported that they had remained in the relationship, either completely or somewhat, because of difficulties securing alternative accommodation that would permit animals.

#### ***g) Prohibitive cost of care and a lack of care options***

A survey of each of the 17 local SPCA offices was carried out in an effort to triangulate findings from the qualitative semi-structured interviews with SPCA staff and Women's Refuge clients and staff. Of the 17 SPCAs, six provided some form of temporary boarding or housing for select animals. Cats were most commonly catered for, while only one SPCA provided some form of boarding for horses. The mean weekly costs reflect the cost prohibitive nature of the experiences reported by Refuge clients that were interviewed. For example, a weeks accommodation for one cat ranged between \$31.50 and \$63.00.

#### ***h) Time taken to leave***

Fifty-six Refuge survey respondents (27.6% ) reported that they would have left their abusive relationship earlier if they had not had a pet or animal. Respondents were then asked how many weeks, months or years they stayed in the relationship because of the pet or animal. Length of time ranged from one week to 22 years.<sup>5</sup> The median amount of time that respondents had remained in the relationship was two years.

<sup>2</sup> This represents 43.3% (n = 150) of participants who had pet in the last two years.

<sup>3</sup> This represent 38.7% (n = 31) and of participants who had farm animals in the last two years.

<sup>4</sup> This represent 35.5% (n = 31) and of participants who had farm animals in the last two years.

<sup>5</sup> Of interest, of the 56 people who answered this question, three respondents were not able to quantify the amount of time they had stayed and attributed this to a multidimensional nature of violence (including psychological, emotional, sexual, physical and financial forms of violence) as well as the often intermittent manifestation of violence.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

### **a) Public awareness**

The current study's findings highlight that possible responses to the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence need to be cognisant of early intervention and awareness raising. Family violence survivor interview participants (n = 18, 60%) related that they had not stayed exclusively because of the animals but that, through an abusive process that incorporated animal cruelty, they had gradually lost confidence and were too intimidated to leave the relationship. Further, as the family violence moved into crisis situations, other participants described that the welfare of their animals became secondary to their own and their children's wellbeing. In both situations, participants stated that if they had recognised the significance of animal cruelty when it first began they would have left the relationship earlier which would have avoided the eventual injury to themselves, their children and their animals.

### **b) Increased awareness amongst SPCA and NZ Police**

The need to increase awareness of the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence was also discussed in relation to SPCA staff and the NZ Police. Specifically, while the SPCA were continually reported as having extensive knowledge of animal cruelty, they were generally regarded as having little knowledge of family violence. It was perhaps because of a lack of family violence knowledge that some SPCA staff described having minimised or mistrusted women's explanations that they were surrendering their animals because of needing to leave a family violence situation. Similarly, opportunities were identified for the NZ Police to increase their knowledge of the interplay between animal cruelty and family violence as a number of survivor participants and Women's Refuge staff reported feeling as though the Police often minimised or did not sufficiently respond to animal cruelty.

It is recommended that SPCA staff and Police undergo extensive training, with Women's Refuge involvement, on the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence. The training should provide the Police and the SPCA staff with the ability to:

- understand that animal cruelty is a form of family violence
- understand that animals can be used as pawns to keep the women and children in the relationship
- understand difficulties experienced by women choosing to disclose this information
- treat the disclosure of animal cruelty as a component of family violence as confidential
- investigate or refer the case to an appropriate agency in the event that animal cruelty indicates possible family violence.
- minimise a host of barriers associated with animals that prevent the woman leaving the relationship (e.g. cost of kennelling, surrender fees and difficulties finding alternative accommodation)
- identify and develop a network of provider agencies that can result in appropriate and timely responses to family violence-related animal cruelty

### **c) Accommodating animals**

Similar to international findings, participants unanimously agreed that there is a need for some form of temporary accommodation for animals to enable women to leave abusive situations (Faver & Strand, 2003; Ascione et al., 2007; Volant et al., 2007).<sup>6</sup> Further, rather than accommodation per se a number of women reported needing financial and logistical assistance to transport their animals to a safe area (e.g. friends and family).

Participants strongly suggested that any programmatic response should:

- provide free temporary accommodation
- provide confidential accommodation so that a perpetrator is not able to locate the animal
- enable women and children to have regular updates and visit the animal while it is in care. Similar findings have been reported internationally as women and children suffer great emotional distress when separated from a beloved companion animal
- include provision for veterinary expenses and assume the need for animal immunisation and restricted access to other animals because of the animals vulnerable state (as a victim of abuse) and the risk that the animal may injure a third party.

No consensus was reached about how the programme might best be accessed. While a number of participants suggested that the programme might ideally sit with Women's Refuge there was some concern that not all women in an abusive relationship might want to access Women's Refuge services. As such, there is a need to be cognisant that the programme aim to provide broad accessibility and be mindful that stigma associated with accessing the service may act as a deterrent.

Two accommodation and programme issues remain unaddressed. First, larger animals and farm animals were generally excluded from the above programme discussion as animal accommodation was geared towards domestic pets such as cats, birds and dogs. As such there is an outstanding need to discuss possible strategies that could assist women with farm and larger animals leave abusive relationships. Finally, there is also a need to clarify an individual's right to restrict a perpetrator's access to their animals. While placing the animal in publically restricted (confidential) accommodation may alleviate the risk of a perpetrator demanding access to their animal it would be prudent seeking legal clarity.

It is recommended that:

- a funding programme be developed for women to place their animals in temporary accommodation and associated veterinary costs

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<sup>6</sup> Notably, accommodating the animal removes one barrier that might prevent the women from leaving the relationship but it also prevents women and children returning to the relationship because of concerns regarding the safety of their pet they left behind (Carlisle-Frank et al., 2004).

- key agencies (e.g. RNZSPCA, the National Collective of Women's Refuges and the Ministry of Social Development) discuss how the funding programme might be best administered
- a means of securing accommodation for women with animals is developing with key government agencies. Possible partners might include Housing New Zealand and the Ministry of Social Development.

**d) SPCA-related barriers**

A number of public misconceptions and beliefs about SPCA were identified as acting as a barrier to women engaging with the Society. These barriers include:

- a belief that SPCA will euthanise the women's animal if the animal was not rehomed after the woman had surrendered the animal to SPCA's care
- not wanting to engage with SPCA because they did not want to surrender the animal (i.e. needing temporary accommodation only)
- not being able to afford a surrender fee (or donation) in situations where the owner was surrendering the permanent care of their animal to the SPCA.

Further, as previously discussed, transporting animals to alternative safe accommodation is difficult for many women in a family violence relationship because they may not have access to a car or the finances to pay for petrol. In addition, considerable distances were reported between the women's residence and the closest SPCA.

It is recommended that:

- RNZSPCA euthanasia practices be widely circulated to remove public misconceptions
- establish a supplementary funding source to remove the burden of surrender fees/donations
- develop mechanisms to assist women without transport or funds to surrender or place their animals in the SPCA's care.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Next, thanks to the National Collective of Women's Refuge. At the National Office special thanks goes to Heather Henare, Hannah Cranston, Sue Lytollis and Leanne O'Neil. You were each instrumental in providing much needed advice and driving communications between local refuges. Special thanks goes to Hannah for all your logistical support and critical eye in reviewing the survey instrument. At a local level a huge debt of thanks goes to participating local refuges. It is truly appreciated that you set time aside to administer the survey and you took the time to identify possible participants who might be willing to share their stories. Also, I need to acknowledge the support you gave women during and after the interviews were completed.

Thanks also goes to Dr Elaine Mossman for her review of the survey instrument and the ensuing quantitative analysis.

Penultimate thanks goes to Natalie Gregory in her role as research assistant.

Finally, and above all, my gratitude goes to the women who took the time to complete the survey and/or participate in an interview. I trust their stories will help inform policy decisions and operational practice that will make it easier for women to identify and leave abusive relationships earlier.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence has been the focus of much international research in recent years. Studies in the USA and Australia have identified that:

- animals are commonly harmed or killed as a form of family violence
- a significant number of women and their children remain in abusive relationships due to concerns for the safety of their pets/animals

While no such research has been conducted in New Zealand, anecdotal reports suggest that similar issues exist in this country. However, we know nothing of the incidence of animal cruelty, the way in which family violence-related animal cruelty manifests or New Zealand-specific barriers to women leaving abusive relationships. Further, we have no evidence-base to inform the design of appropriate service delivery models, training for frontline staff and possible collaborations across a variety of agencies.

This substantial gap in knowledge greatly hinders the response of such agencies as the Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RNZSPCA). Further, while concern surrounding the link between animal abuse and family violence led to the establishment of the New Zealand First Strike Network<sup>7</sup> in 2002 a better understanding of the way in which family violence-related animal cruelty manifests would inform improved interagency responses.

In early 2011 the RNZSPCA, in conjunction with New Zealand Women's Refuge, commissioned Kaitiaki Research and Evaluation to undertake research to increase their understanding of the co-existence of family violence and cruelty to animals within New Zealand with a particular focus on whether the actual or threatened pet/animal abuse acts as a barrier to women and children extricating themselves from violent situations. The objectives of this research are to:

- understand the role of pets and incidence of animal cruelty in New Zealand family violence situations
- understand the way in which perpetrators may use pets to prevent victim(s) being able to leave a violent home
- identify barriers (e.g. the need to accommodate pets) and facilitators to victims of family violence being able to extricate themselves from family violence situations while safeguarding animals

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<sup>7</sup> The aim of the Network is to work as collaborative partners in developing policies and practices to ensure an early response to cruelty and/or family violence. The Network comprises of RNZSPCA, New Zealand Police, The Department of Child, Youth and Family, New Zealand Veterinary Association, Companion Animal Council, Plunket, Women's Refuge and Unitec.

- explore the scope of the co-existence of pet/animal abuse and family among women housed in refuge shelters
- understand the impact of pet/animal abuse on children and women who have been extricated from situations of family violence
- provide an evidence base from which interventions can be developed to allow victims to be extricated from violent situations in a timely manner and in a way that prevents actual or potential cruelty to animals.

The stages of research will include:

- a review of the literature to increase understanding of the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence
- key informant semi-structured interviews with Women's Refuge Staff, adult victims of family violence and representatives of key government agencies
- a survey of Women's Refuge clients to provide a better understanding of the role of pet/animal abuse within violent situations and estimate the scale of the issue.

## 2 A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s a growing number of anecdotal reports circulated about the co-occurrence of animal cruelty within family violence relationships. Specifically, concern centred on the degree to which women and children might remain in family violence situations because of threatened or actual animal cruelty. Over the last two decades a growing amount of research attention has focused on exploring a link between the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence.<sup>8</sup> These studies have generally focused on estimating the prevalence of animal cruelty within family violence situations and, more recently, understanding the way in which animal cruelty manifests as well as the impact(s) of the abuse.

This section provides a review of the family violence-related animal cruelty literature. The review aims to provide a snapshot of the most notable studies to date and their key research findings.

### 2.1 Framing the study

Animal cruelty and animal abuse are used interchangeably within the literature and in this review. This report utilises the following definition of cruelty:

“ . . .socially unacceptable behaviour that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering or distress to and/or death of an animal. . .” (Ascione, 1993, p.228).

Further, despite extensive research, family violence is not easily defined. For the purposes of this research, the definition of family violence encompasses:

“physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, and other controlling tactics such as economic or spiritual deprivation against an intimate partner (including married, co-habiting, or dating, current or estranged intimate partner) by the other partner” (Onyskiw, 2007 p. 10).

This review has primarily focused on companion animals given that companion animals have been the focus of the majority of studies published in the area. In addition, previous research on the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence have predominantly focused on intimate partner violence.

### 2.2 The prevalence and manifestation of animal cruelty and family violence

In a study that surveyed 50 women’s shelters across the different states of the United States, Ascione, Weber and Wood (1997) questioned shelter staff to establish how many women and children, who had sought refuge from family violence situation, discussed pet abuse and if the shelter staff had encountered the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence in their

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<sup>8</sup> The majority of the literature that has explored animal cruelty and family violence comes out of the United States, with the exception of the Australian study conducted by Volant et al. (2008) and the Italian study by Baldry (2003).

time at the shelter. Of the 48 shelters that responded to the survey, 41 (85.4%) stated that female victims of family violence recounted pet abuse, with 29 of 46 shelters (63%) indicating that children also mentioned abuse of an animal. Of those that were surveyed, 40 of the 48 shelters (83.3%) reported that they had noticed the concurrence of animal cruelty and family violence.

The first study to directly survey family violence victims about the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence was conducted at a women's shelter in Northern Utah in the United States (Ascione, 1997). The sample was made up of 38 female family violence victims who required shelter in a safe house. The interviews were conducted by shelter staff, with questions requiring the women to report and describe the presence of threatened or actual harm to pets and also report if one of their children had ever harmed or killed one of their pets (Ascione, 1997). The majority of those questioned were pet owners, with 28 women (74%) owning a pet at the time or in the last year and dogs and cats were reported to be the most popular pets (Ascione, 1997). Of those who indicated pet ownership, 20 women (71%) indicated that their male partner had threatened to harm or had abused or killed one of their pets, with over half of these (16 women, 57%) involving actual abuse or death of a pet (Ascione, 1997).

In a similar, yet more in-depth study, Flynn (2000a) questioned 107 abused women in a shelter in South Carolina. Forty-three women (40.2% of women surveyed) indicated pet ownership at the time of completing the survey or at some point in their violent relationship (Flynn, 2000a). Of those who owned animals, 20 (46.5%) signalled that their partner had threatened to harm and/or had abused their pet/s. Nine of the women indicated that their partner had threatened to harm the animal and eleven of the women reported that their partners had indeed abused the animal. Eight of eleven women whose animal had been abused also indicated that their animal had been threatened (Flynn, 2000a). Flynn's (2000a) research also gathered information on animal cruelty by children and in this case there were only two incidents of animal abuse, with only one of those children living in a situation where animal abuse had been committed by an abusive male partner.

A rather small study conducted by Faver and Strand (2003) compared battered women who lived in both urban and rural centres in the United States. Participants were 61 women who were either residing in or receiving assistance through a family violence group in two rural and four urban shelters in a south-eastern state. Fifty women (82%) indicated pet ownership in the last 12 months. Of these, only 41 completed the survey fully (41.5% rural and 58.5% urban) and the data from these 41 participants were used for this study. The study questioned incidents of threatened harm/death to a pet and actual harm/death to a pet (Faver & Strand, 2003). Of the 41 participants, 20 (48.8%) indicated that their abusive partner had threatened their pets, with 19 (46.3%) reporting actual harm.

In a study conducted closer to New Zealand, Volant, Johnson, Gullone and Coleman (2008) were the first to explore the co-existence of family violence and animal cruelty in Australia. Volant et al. (2008) questioned 102 female victims of family violence who owned a pet in their current violent relationship. The sample was sourced from 24 different family violence centres across Victoria. A comparison group which consisted of 102 females, who were sourced from the community and also owned a pet in their present or last relationship, not involving abuse, was also surveyed. Volant et al. (2008) found that pet abuse was much more common in the family violence group than in the non-family violence group. In fact, none of the non-family

violence group reported actual cruelty to animals and only six (5.8%) reported threats. In comparison, 54 women (52.9%) of the family violence group reported actual animal cruelty and 47 in this group (46%) indicated that their pet had been threatened.

All of the research discussed thus far has focused on female victims of abuse within a heterosexual relationship. However, a study of family violence within lesbian relationships conducted by Claire Renzetti (1992) also identified animal abuse, with 38% of participants who had pets reporting that their abusive partner had also maltreated their pet. This study indicates that animal cruelty and family violence do not occur only within heterosexual relationships and illustrates that males are not always the perpetrators of violence towards both humans and animals.

### 2.3 An indication of escalating family violence

The importance of understanding the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence was discussed by Ascione, Weber, Thompson, Heath, Maruyama and Hayashi (2007) who argued that uncovering the presence of animal abuse within a violent relationship is crucial as it may be indicative of the perpetrators' ability to be physically violent and it may also signify mounting violence. Ascione et al. (2007) assessed levels of partner violence using the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979) and the findings revealed that the existence of extreme physical violence in a relationship was a predictor of animal cruelty, even when other factors such as marriage status, age and ethnic group were taken into account.

Findings from a study conducted by Simmons and Lehmann (2007), which investigated the connection between animal cruelty and controlling behaviours in a violent relationship, led the authors to warn that the violence of those men who participate in acts of animal cruelty may be more severe than those who do not. The participants (n = 1,283) were all women who had entered a shelter in Texas over a four year period and had indicated that they owned a pet during their violent relationship. The authors discussed how their results revealed that those women who reported pet abuse within their violent relationship, also suffered a greater range of violence and this violence was more serious than that reported by the women whose pets had not been abused (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007).

### 2.4 Type of abuse towards animals

Ascione (1997) and Volant et al. (2008) examined the types of animal abuse reported in family violence relationships. Ascione (1997) stressed that abuse extends beyond physical abuse to encompass neglect, refusal of veterinary aid or food. Acts of violence included:

*“ . . .slapping, shaking, throwing, or shooting dogs and cats, drowning a cat in a bathtub, and pouring lighter fluid on a kitten and igniting it.” (p. 125).*

Volant et al. (2008) reported that kicking was the most common form of pet abuse described by their participants, followed by punching and hitting, with throwing of a pet the third most common. Other forms of abuse that occurred, but were not as common, included beheading, breaking of necks, choking, stabbing and shooting (Volant et al., 2008).

## 2.5 Pets and animals used to delay leaving a relationship

A number of studies have reported that women in abusive relationships often postpone leaving the relationship because of concern for their pet's welfare. Across studies the rates of women who reported that worry for their pet had impeded them leaving their violent situation ranged from 18% (Ascione, 1997) through to 65% (Carlisle-Frank, Frank and Nielsen, 2004).

Ascione (1997) found that five women (18%) expressed that they had delayed seeking shelter due to anxiety surrounding the safety of their pet and concerns surrounding the fact that they may have to abandon a pet due to the lack of suitable alternative accommodation or the fact that they had to leave it with neighbours. Similarly, Flynn (2000a) reported that eight of the 20 women (40%) whose pets had been maltreated stated that worry surrounding their pets had prevented them coming to the shelter earlier; five of the eight women indicated that their concerns had prolonged their stay in the relationship for more than two months (Flynn, 2000a).

In a study that compared the behaviour, attitudes and perceptions of animals by men who commit animal cruelty to those who do not within violent relationships, Carlisle-Frank et al. (2004) surveyed 48 female domestic violence victims, 34 with pets, who were seeking shelter at one of seven domestic violence shelters in upstate New York. The study also questioned the women on the circumstances surrounding their leaving and reported that 16 (48%) of the victims indicated that they delayed leaving the relationship due to concerns about their animal. In cases where the animal had been abused, which was the reality for 18 (53%) of the women who had pets, this figure rose to 65%.

Thirty-three of the participants in Volant et al. (2008) study were residing in shelters at the time of the survey and they were asked an additional question about whether or not concern for their pet's well-being had postponed them coming to the shelter. Eleven of the 33 women (33%) indicated that they had postponed leaving their abusive situation due to worries surrounding the safety of their pets (Volant et al., 2008). When asked how long concern about their pets delayed their escape, one delayed one week, another one delayed three to four weeks, with most of the sample (seven) reporting that they had delayed more than eight weeks. Two participants could not provide a timeframe. Flynn (2000a), also questioned the participants as to how long they put off seeking refuge due to worries about a pet's safety and provided the parameters of one-two weeks, three-four weeks, five-eight weeks and more than eight weeks. As with Volant et al. (2008) the majority (five of the eight women) deferred seeking shelter for more than eight weeks (Flynn, 2000a).

Ascione et al. (2007) explored whether or not there was a difference in reports of delay between those women who reported threats, harm, both threats and harm or the presence of neither threats nor harm. Twenty-three (22.8%) of their 100 participants indicated that concern over a pet's welfare had postponed their entry into a shelter. In the 18 cases where a pet had been threatened, but not harmed three of the women (16.7%) postponed seeking refuge. Nineteen women reported that their pets were harmed, but not threatened. Of these, three women (15.8%) reported that they had delayed seeking shelter. Of the 35 women who indicated that a pet had been both threatened and harmed this figure rose to 34.3%, with 12 women postponing coming to the shelter (Ascione et al., 2007). Similarly, both Ascione et al. (2007) and Flynn (2000a) reported that delays to leaving a relationship was more commonly the case when it came to childless women who were close to their pet.

A United States study conducted by Doherty and Hornosty (2004) examined the issue of domestic violence in a rural population. The study focused on the accounts of 50 women based in rural New Brunswick, New Jersey. The study found that abused rural women also delay leaving violent relationships due to worries surrounding the well-being of their animals. However, for rural women, ties to their animals was reported as emotional and financial. For instance, Doherty and Hornosty (2004) noted that farm animals are often a rural women's livelihood and thus for many leaving could mean financial disaster. Abusers were reported as exploiting this factor by forcing women to stay in violent relationships. The worry that their abusive partners may hurt their animals if they were not present also stops many women from leaving (Doherty & Hornosty, 2004). Though there is scant literature on this particular demographic of abused women, Doherty and Hornosty's (2004) study indicates that both emotional and financial reasons impact on the ability of rural women to leave abusive relationships.

## 2.6 Returning to an abusive relationship

A number of anecdotal reports have documented how a woman's concern over an animal's wellbeing may encourage her to return to an abusive relationship but there have been few studies that have examined this in-depth. Carlisle-Frank et al. (2004) asked the 34 of their 48 participants who had pets and had left a violent relationship, whether or not they would return out of concern for their pets. The authors reported 16 (48%) of their participants with animals had deliberated going back to the violent relationship due to fears they held regarding their pets safety. Nine (25%) of the participants reported having returned to an abusive relationship in the past out of concern for their animals. Further, six of the 18 women (35%) whose partner had previously performed acts of cruelty had returned out of worry for their pet (Carlisle-Frank et al., 2004). The worry and stress associated with leaving a pet to enter a shelter not only results in the possible return to a violent relationship, it also has a large emotional impact, with many women reporting guilt at having to leave an animal behind.

## 2.7 Children

Ascione et al. (2007)<sup>9</sup> carried out interviews with 39 children of the women in the family violence group, using the *Children's Observation and Experience with Their Pets Survey*. This instrument queried the children's experience of witnessing pet abuse, committing pet abuse and protecting animals from harm. Maternal reports were also gathered from the mothers of the 39 children who were interviewed and 58 mothers from the non-family violence group, who answered questions from the Complete Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991). This measure assesses children's behaviour, internalising and externalising problems. The results of the interviews with the 39 children from violent households indicated that 14 out of the 35 children who answered the question had heard pets threatened (40%). Twenty-six out of the 39 children had witnessed or heard their pets harmed (66.7%) and 18 out of 37 children reported that there had been a time when they had protected their pets from harm. As to whether they had harmed or caused the death of a pet themselves, five of the 38 children

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<sup>9</sup> Ascione et al. (2007) surveyed 101 women who were part of a family violence program at one of five shelters in the State of Utah. This study differed as it included a comparison group of 120 women from the community who self-reportedly had not been the victim of family violence. The study also differed in its investigation of a child's experience of pet abuse, as it not only relied on maternal reports of a child's experience with observing or initiating pet abuse, but also interviewed the children directly.

(13.2%) living in a violent family indicated that they had. The results of the behavioural measure also indicated that those children living in a family violence setting had a greater number of behavioural issues than those children living in non-family violence setting (Ascione et al., 2007).

Other studies have attempted to investigate the incidence of threats and harm to animals by participant's children, however, rates of animal cruelty amongst those children living within a violent household vary amongst the studies and no clear statement can be made regarding the impact witnessing pet violence within a family violence situation has on a child's propensity to commit animal cruelty themselves. For instance, in Ascione's (1997) study, seven (32%) of the 22 female participants in the study who indicated they had children detailed various incidences of abuse committed by their offspring. Of these seven women, five out of seven specified that partner abuse of the pet had also taken place. In contrast, the manifestation of pet abuse amongst the children of family violence victims was not apparent in Flynn's (2000a) South Carolina study, with only two reported cases of animal cruelty, one threatened (7%) and one actual (7%). Only one of these two children lived in a situation where animal abuse was carried out by the male aggressor. A similar finding was revealed by Volant et al. (2008) with five of the 93 domestic violence group participants with children reporting one of their children had threatened to harm an animal. Eighteen of these 93 women (19%) reported that one of their children had actually hurt an animal. Twenty-seven (29%) of mothers indicated that their children had witnessed abuse of a pet within a family violence context. There is much difference in reported numbers of children both witnessing and committing threats and harm to animals, which could be due to the limited sample sizes of the aforementioned studies and the fact that in some cases the data was sourced from maternal reports of what a child had witnessed or how a child had behaved. As only one study to date has queried children directly, the results of Ascione et al. (2007) study are informative and if future research produces comparable figures, it would seem that many children living domestically violent homes see and hear more threats of and actual animal cruelty than those children where violence is not present.

## **2.8 Motivations underlying animal abuse within a family violence context**

Much of the research detailed above has focused on the prevalence of animal cruelty in family violence situations and only a handful of studies have investigated the reasons why pet abuse arises in family violence situations. DeViney, Dickert and Lockwood (1983) explained how scapegoating of pets can account for incidences of animal cruelty within a violent situation, as an innocent pet is blamed by the perpetrator for current troubles and therefore subjected to maltreatment. Further, Albert and Bulcroft (1988) found that people think of pets as a member of their family. The results of their study, which explored how Americans viewed their family pet, found that animals were especially meaningful to particular groups, amongst which were childless couples, empty-nesters and those who are experiencing heightened levels of stress (Albert and Bulcroft, 1988). As Flynn (2000b) suggests attachment to a companion pet may anger the abusive partner and lead to the animal being used as a target of abuse. Animal cruelty may also be used by abusers to psychologically hurt victims, with DeViney et al. (1983) referring to "triangling", a situation in which the perpetrator directs abuse towards someone (for example a treasured family pet) who is important to the victim, as an indirect way of inflicting pain on the victim (DeViney et al., 1983). As Flynn (2000b) pointed out, unfortunately being considered part of the family makes animals susceptible to abuse, especially if abuse is

already present in other forms within the family. Onyskiw (2007) argues that threatened or actual animal abuse can also be used by an abuser to scare, manipulate and/or subdue their victim. The author maintains that threats of cruelty and actual animal harm are an effective tool in coercing women to stay within a relationship or remain closed lipped about the abuse that is occurring (Onyskiw, 2007). Onyskiw (2007) considered it to be an influential form of emotional blackmail as the threat of possible harm to a pet can control the actions of a victim, even when the abuser is not present. Onyskiw (2007) also commented on the coercive role that pet abuse can play in controlling children. Threats to pets and actual harm can also be used against children to ensure that they do not tell anyone about the abuse their mother is subjected to (Onyskiw, 2007).

Feminist researchers have also explored why men use animal cruelty in conjunction with intimate partner violence. Adams (1995) argued that animal cruelty is used in a violent relationship as a means to manipulate and exercise dominance. According to Adams (1995) by abusing animals, men are able to

*“demonstrate their power. . . teach submission, isolate a women from a network of support. . . express rage at self-determined action by women and children. . . perpetuate the context of terror. . . launch a pre-emptive strike against a woman leaving... punish and terrorize by stalking and executing an animal...force her to be involved in the abuse. . . confirm their power” (p.71 – 73).*

How violent partners view pets may also be a reason behind the use of animal cruelty in a violent relationship. Research by Carlisle-Frank, Frank and Nielsen (2004), examined, amongst other things, how men who abuse pets view animals. The data was not derived from animal abusers directly, but reported by those women who had been subjected to family violence and who had sought shelter at refuge centres. The study involved two groups, one group of women who were family violence victims, but did not report pet abuse with the relationship and another group who reported both pet and personal abuse. The results indicated that men who abuse animals and commit family violence perceive animals to be property, with 13 of the 18 women (70%) whose animals had been harmed indicating that this is how their partner's felt. This is compared to 10 of the 16 women (64%) who lived in violent relationships where pet abuse was not present who apparently considered their pet as part of the family. The men who abused pets also displayed less affection towards to their animals than those who did not maltreat their family pet (Carlisle-Frank et al., 2004).

A review of previous research provides support to the many anecdotal reports of the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence. Research indicates that pets are used as pawns to not only prevent women from leaving a relationship, but are also used to coerce abuse victims into returning to a relationship and even to coerce them into performing criminal acts.

## **2.9 Similarities and differences across the studies**

The studies discussed above share many similarities and provide evidence to suggest that animal cruelty and family violence do frequently co-occur. The percentage of women who indicated that their partner had threatened or actually hurt their pet ranged from 38% (Renzetti, 1992) through to 75% (Loring & Bolden-Hines, 2004), with the majority of prevalence rates hovering within a few percentage points of 50% (Flynn, 2000a; Faver & Strand, 2003; Ascione

et al., 2007; Volant et al., 2008). The study by Loring and Bolden-Hines (2004) reported a higher than average incidence of threatened or actual pet abuse (75%). This could be attributed to the fact that their participants were not limited to abused women seeking shelter but included a wider spectrum of participants (i.e. participants were not restricted to crisis sheltered accommodation). The prevalence of animal cruelty within a violent relationship was also high amongst those participants in Ascione's (1997) study, with 71% positively indicating threats or harm to pets. The higher than usual result could be attributed to a small sample size of only 38. Ascione et al. (1997) survey of shelter staff reported that on average staff considered in 44% of homes where family violence exists, so does animal cruelty, however, the use of third hand reporting affects the validity of this finding (the estimates ranged from 1% to 85%).

All but two studies have recruited through refuge shelters. The exceptions are Volant et al. (2008) who surveyed women accessing a spectrum of family violence services and the studies that examined animal cruelty and abuse in rural and farm women (Faver & Strand, 2003; Doherty & Hornosty, 2004) whose rural participants were recruited through advertisements in the community or abuse support groups.

The findings in regards to whether or not this threatened or actual animal cruelty serves as a barrier to women extricating themselves from violent situations were also comparable. Those who indicated that concern for an animal delayed them leaving the violent relationship for which they had sought shelter, ranged from 18% (Ascione, 1997) to 65% (Carlisle-Frank et al., 2004). Of the studies that asked the participants to indicate how long they delayed the majority of the participants indicated eight weeks or more (Flynn 2000a; Volant et al., 2007).

In relation to whether or not there was a difference in the rates of women who delayed due to threats or actual harm, Ascione et al. (2007) found that if animals were threatened and not hurt, 16.7% delayed seeking shelter. If pets were hurt, but not threatened this number was 15.8% and if pet had been subjected to both threats and harm, this number jumped to 34.3%. Rather interestingly, 14.3% of women who delayed seeking shelter reported neither pet harm nor threats, so perhaps even just the idea of being separated from a loving pet was a barrier to seeking refuge. For those participants in Carlisle-Frank et al. (2004) study who had animals that had suffered abuse, 65% indicated that they had delayed leaving due to concern for their pet/s.

The studies may have varied on the rates of animal cruelty amongst the children of battered women, but the two studies that explored the emotional attachment abused women and their children have to their pets were in agreement. Abused women are generally close to their companion animals and pets provide a great amount of support, especially if the woman is childless (Flynn, 2000a; Ascione et al., 2007). Children in Ascione et al (2007) study also reported being very troubled (59.3%) or kind of troubled (33.3%) when their animal was harmed or killed, which would illustrate that pets are also very important to children, with the authors commenting that pets play a central role in helping children cope in a family violence situation.

**Table 1: Data summary of those who report pet ownership, threats or abuse to pets and those who reported delays in leaving a relationship due to concern for pets**

Study	Sample (n)	% and n of sample with pets	% and n of sample with pets who report abuse or threats of abuse	% and n of sample with pets who report that concerns for animal welfare delayed/affected decision to leave
Ascione (1997)	38	74%(n= 28)	71% (n=20)	18% (n=5)
Flynn (2000a)	107	40.2%(n=43)	46.5%( n=20)	19.5% (n=8)
Faver and Strand (2003)	61	82% (n=50), only n=41 who fully completed surveys used	<i>Threats</i> 48.8% (n=20) <i>Actual</i> 46.3% (n=19)	26.8% (n=11)
Loring and Bolden-Hines (2004)	107	62% (n=72)	75% (n=54)	N/A
Ascione et al. (2007)	Shelter Group (SG) n= 101 Non Shelter Group (NSG) n=120	100% both samples Study recruited only pet owners	<i>Threats</i> SG – 52.5% (n= 53) NSG – 12.5% (n= 15) <i>Actual</i> SG – 54% (n= 55) NSG – 6.0% (n= 7)	SG = 22.8% (n= 23)
Volant et. al. (2008)	Family violence Group (DG) n= 102 Non-Family violence Group (NDG) n=102	100% both samples Study recruited only pet owners	<i>Threats</i> DG – 46% (n= 47) NDG – 5.8% (n= 6) <i>Actual</i> DG – 52.9% (n= 54) NDG – 0.0% (n= 0)	n=33 of DG living in crisis accommodation 33.3% (n=11) of this sample delayed
Renzetti (1992)	n=100	N/A	38% (n=38)	N/A

## 2.10 Knowledge Gaps

While the growing body of literature on the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence suggests that animal cruelty is prevalent within violent relationships and that women do delay seeking shelter due to concerns about their pets, there are a number of gaps in knowledge. The overwhelming majority of the studies discussed in this review were conducted in family violence refuges (Ascione et al., 1997; Ascione, 1997; Flynn, 2000a; Carlisle-Frank et al., 2004), which means that we understand little about the situation of women who are still within violent relationships or those women who seek refuge from a violent relationship elsewhere (e.g. friends, family and/or motel). As many of the studies recruited participants from family violence shelters, the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence within relationships

where less severe violence is perpetrated is not well understood due to lack of data on those within different stages of the cycle of violence.

There is also little research on rural women and their experiences of animal cruelty and family violence. The only studies exploring the co-existence of family violence and animal cruelty on a rural sample was carried out by Doherty and Hornosty (2004) and Faver and Strand (2003), although the latter study was not very comprehensive. The study by Doherty and Hornosty (2004) highlighted that those women who live in farms or within rural communities often have different reasons for staying in an abusive relationship. These factors relate to not only emotional concerns about animals, but are also connected to financial worries as animals represent the livelihoods of many rural women. Doherty and Hornosty (2004) revealed that the relationship between rural women and their animals is different to that of urban women and more research is needed in this area.

With the exception of the study conducted by Renzetti (1992), all previous research has been conducted on animal cruelty and family violence in a heterosexual relationship setting. Renzetti (1992) investigations into family violence in lesbian relationships also differed in that it highlighted that women also commit animal cruelty within violent relationships (32% of their sample). Most of the other studies focused on animal cruelty committed by men, although Baldry's (2003) study also collated information on family violence perpetrated by the mother. However, despite Renzetti's (1992) and Baldry's (2003) studies, there is little insight into the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence in homosexual relationships and on animal cruelty and family violence perpetrated by female aggressors.

The evidence provided by the literature highlights that many women do indeed delay extricating themselves from a violent relationship due to anxiety surrounding the welfare of a pet. However, we know little about how long a woman puts off seeking help because of this fear. Flynn (2000a) asked their participants how long they had delayed leaving their relationship, but answers were limited by a closed ended questionnaire which capped the longest period of time as "eight weeks or more". Volant et al.'s (2008) question regarding delay was left open ended; however, the timeframes given by the women did not exceed eight weeks or more. It appears that Volant et al. (2008) collapsed responses to an *eight week or more category*. In doing so, the range of time and a median timeframe of delay are not reported. It could be that many women are delaying leaving a violent relationship for substantial periods of time and more research needs to be conducted to clarify just how long many women put off seeking help due to concern surrounding the safety of their animals. None of the studies reviewed here asked family violence victims to consider whether or not they would have left their relationship earlier if they had known of a scheme that provided accommodation for their pets. This information would enable one to judge whether or not a scheme that houses the pets of abuse victims is viable, would be utilised and would potentially have a positive impact the decision to leave earlier or not.

We also do not know whether or not the findings of the literature, which is predominantly North American, easily generalise to other non-Western countries. The majority of the participants in all the studies where ethnicity data was collected were Caucasian (Ascione, 1997; Flynn, 2000a; Faver & Strand, 2003; Loring & Bolden-Hines, 2004; Ascione et al., 2007) and whether or not findings would be similar in non-white populations requires further study. The mean age of the participants in the studies hovered around 30-35 years old (Ascione, 1997; Faver & Strand, 2003; Loring & Bolden, 2004; Ascione et al., 2007), with the exception of Volant et al.

(2008) whose mean age for their family violence group was slightly higher at 38.5 years old. Although a couple of studies did have a wide range of ages (for example Loring & Bolden-Hines, 2004 ranged from 16-73), the mean age across the studies is relatively similar. Whether or not these studies can be generalised to a younger or older groups of abused women needs to be researched further.

The impact of socio-economic status (or if there even is one) on the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence needs further investigation. Socio-economic status was not uniformly or explicitly measured across the studies. Flynn (2000a) requested the employment status of the abused participant and their partner, with Loring and Bolden-Hines (2004) using household income to illustrate status. Other studies questioned education levels (Faver & Strand, 2003; Ascione et al., 2007; Volant et al., 2008). How socio-economic status related to the findings was not assessed thoroughly, but Flynn (2000a) did note that pet owners from her study did tend to have higher rates of employment (along with being white and having more children), leading the author to assume that, as pets are expensive, they are more likely to be owned by those of higher socio-economic statuses. However, two studies that compared family violence groups to non-family violence groups reported that the non-family violence group were educated to a higher level, had fewer children and were older (Volant et al., 2008). While Ascione et al. (2007) did not test whether there was a significant difference between the demographic characteristics of the two groups, apparent differences did emerge. The non-family violence group were more likely to be married (85.7% versus 50.5%), were educated to a higher level (grade 13.83 versus grade 12.23)<sup>10</sup>, as were their partners (grade 14.37 versus 11.81). In both Ascione et al. (2007) and Volant et al.'s (2008) studies the non-family violence groups, which had low to non-existent levels of pet abuse, appeared to be in a better socio-economic position than the family violence group that had higher levels of reported pet abuse. Whether socioeconomic status impacts the likelihood of pet abuse occurring within a violent relationship or aids/hinders leaving a violent relationship in cases where concern for the safety of pets is present (for example if those who are better off are able to leave because they can afford alternative pet care) needs to be explored further before useful conclusions can be made.

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<sup>10</sup> Where Grade 12 indicates high school completion

### 3 APPROACH

The current study involved three research streams: in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews, a survey of Women's Refuge clients and a survey of 17 local SPCA centres.

#### 3.1 Semi-structures interviews

A total of 60 in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out in three areas in New Zealand (two urban and one provincial). The aim of the interviews was to elicit rich information, from multip

le perspectives, to provide a contextual overview of the issues of interest. The different geographical areas were selected to ensure that urban and provincial considerations were included in the study.

Half of the interviews (n = 30) were carried out with female Women's Refuge clients who had experienced animal cruelty as a feature of family violence. Participants' ages ranged between 18 and 64 with a mean age of 27. The majority (n = 19, 63%) stated that they were beneficiaries, six participants were employed and five were students. All but seven client participants had children.

**Table 2: Women's Refuge Clients (n = 30)**

Characteristics	Refuge Clients	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	30	100%
Male	-	-
<i>Age</i>		
< 20	4	13%
20 - 29	10	33%
30 - 39	6	20%
40 - 49	3	10%
50 - 59	2	7%
60 >	2	7%
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
NZ European	17	57%
NZ Māori	6	20%
Pacifica	5	17%
Asian	2	7%
<i>Employment status</i>		
Employed	6	20%
Beneficiary	19	63%
Student	5	17%

An additional 30 interviews were carried out with community stakeholders who were identified as having some involvement/knowledge of the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence. Stakeholders included members of the New Zealand Police, one local Work and Income office and non-government agencies specialising in family violence. In addition, three SPCAs participated in a series of semi-structured interviews. In total, four SPCA staff were interviewed. SPCA participants included two managers and four senior staff members. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Social of Development's National Office and Child Youth and Family National Office declined participation.

**Table 3: Community Stakeholder Interviews (n = 30)**

Characteristics	Refuge Workers	Police	Work and Income	NZSPCA	NGO	Subtotal	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>	<b>n</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	18	3	1	3	3	28	85%
Male	-	1	-	1	3	5	15%

### 3.2 Survey of Women's Refuge Clients

A paper-based survey was administered to Women Refuge clients over a two-week period in September 2011. The primary aim of the survey was to establish rates of prevalence and incidence of animal cruelty within a family violence relationship. However, because the survey was not always administered in line with a prevalence data collection protocol, only the incidence component was achieved. The survey was administered, via telephone and in-person, by staff of 21 local Women's Refuge offices.<sup>11</sup>

Because of the sensitive nature of the study the following criteria were established to guide participant inclusion and exclusion. Participants were required to be:

- aged 18 years or older
- new or existing clients
- judged, by a Refuge staff member, as not being in crisis at the time of the survey.<sup>12</sup>

For each completed survey, the local Refuge received a \$10 koha in appreciation of their time.

#### Participants

In total, 203 women participated in the survey. Ages ranged between 18 and 72, with a mean age of 34 (*SD* 10). The majority of participants identified as NZ European (n = 158, 77.8% ), with approximately one quarter of participants identifying as Māori (n = 56, 27.6% ). Just below 10% of participants identified as Pacifica (n = 17, 8.4% ).

<sup>11</sup> This represents approximately half of the 46 members of the National Collective of Women's Refuges.

<sup>12</sup> Ethical considerations, such as whether administration of the survey might result in duress, was mitigated by having a trained Refuge worker assess whether it was appropriate for potential participants to be asked if they would like to participate in the survey.

The majority of respondents had at least one child aged 17 years or younger ( $n = 152$ , 74.9%). The number of children ranged between one and eight with a median of two children per respondent ( $SD 1.52$ ). Further, participants generally lived or had lived in an urban area prior to going to Refuge ( $n = 157$ , 77.3%) with 44 (21.7%) having resided in semi-rural area.

The majority of respondents had been involved with Refuge for more than a week ( $n = 178$ , 87.7%). Twenty-six respondents (12.8%) had been involved with the Refuge for less than a week. Further, at the time of completing the survey, 23 respondents (11.3%) were staying at a Refuge while the remainder had their own accommodation. The lower rate of recent association and residence within a Refuge shelter is attributed to Refuge staff having judged a client's participation in the survey as inappropriate given her perceived and/or reported levels of vulnerability.

**Table 4: Women's Refuge Client Survey - Participant Characteristics (n=203)**

Characteristics	Refuge Clients	
	n	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	203	100
<i>Age</i>		
<20	10	5.0%
20 – 29	67	33.7%
30 -39	64	32.2%
40 – 49	43	21.6%
50 – 59	14	7.0%
>60	1	0.5%
<i>Live in a rural or semi-rural area</i>		
Yes	44	21.9%
No	157	78.1%
<i>Employment status</i>		
Full time employed	28	13.9
Part time employed	31	15.3
Beneficiary/unemployed	92	45.5
Home duties	38	18.8
Student	13	6.4
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
NZ European	158	77.8%
NZ Māori	56	27.6%
Pacifica	17	8.4%
Asian	6	3.0%
African	1	0.5%
North American	1	0.5%
<i>Number of children per family</i>		
<1	42	20.69%
1 to 2	99	48.77%
3 to 4	43	21.18%
>4	19	9.36%

Notes:

- 1 Due to missing data demographic subtotals do not equal the total number of survey respondents (n = 203)
- 2 Respondents were able to provide multiple responses for ethnicity.

## Survey instrument

A survey instrument was developed as a result of literature review and the identification of key, previously identified, questions. Most notably, Ascione's (1997) questions were adapted for use. The review of the literature also identified specific gaps and limitations with the way some previous surveys have been constructed. This was most notable in relation to

questions that sought to determine the length of time the respondent had remained in the relationship.

### 3.3 Survey of local SPCA managers

A survey was administered to local SPCA managers over a four-week period between September and October, 2011. The survey was administered via telephone by a National RNZSPCA office staff member. The primary aim of the survey was to test the extent to which perspectives shared during fieldwork interviews could be generalised across local SPCA centres. One manager only from 17 local SPCA centres participated in the survey. This represented 35.4% of the 48 local centres.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

#### 3.4.1 Qualitative data

A process of constant comparative analysis was used throughout the lifespan of the research which meant comparing:

- different individual and stakeholder perspectives
- data from the same individuals at different points in time
- analysis from interviews and lessons from existing literature
- provincial and urban experiences.

In practice this means that codes/themes were created within an outcomes framework. Throughout the fieldwork, information was defined and categorised through a continual review of interviews and fieldwork notes. As a result, emerging patterns were continually tested through the interview and observation process as well as the exploration of new questions that arose in the preceding interviews. This process of constant comparative analysis also provides an opportunity to explore, at greater depth, reasons underlying emerging patterns. Quotes are used to illustrate the various codes/themes that emerged.

#### 3.4.2 Quantitative data

The *Cruelty to Animals Survey* data was analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Data was screened for any errors and inconsistencies. Descriptive analyses were produced for all quantitative survey data (simple frequency counts and percentages). Cross-tabs were produced to compare responses. Some assumed differences were noted and a series of Chi-Square were conducted. No significant differences were found.

The *Survey of SPCA Managers* data was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. It was then screened for any errors and inconsistencies. Simple descriptive analyses were then produced.

### 3.5 Ethical considerations

An application for ethical approval for the study was submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee detailing procedures for fully informing those being asked to take part in interviews about the research, obtaining informed consent, providing

feedback at the conclusion of the study and procedures for storing and maintaining the confidentiality of information. Ethics approval was granted in April 2011.

The provisions of the Privacy Act 1993 with respect to confidentiality and methods of obtaining, storing and destroying information were adhered to in this study.

### **3.6 Limitations of the research**

Some caveats should be noted in relation to the findings from this research.

- the study relied on agencies (i.e. Women's Refuge, specialist anti-violence agencies), the SPCA and personal networks for the recruitment of research participants. Therefore, the experiences of survivors that are described may not be typical of all those who have experienced animal cruelty within a family violence situation. Those who agreed to participate in the research might have been influenced in one way or another by the degree and nature of their experiences – good or bad
- only a small number of family violence survivors were interviewed in each area. For these reasons, the extent to which the findings from this research can be generalised – geographically, or to all victims/survivors of family violence is limited.

## 4 THE MANIFESTATION OF ANIMAL CRUELTY IN FAMILY VIOLENCE SITUATIONS: WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES

A common feature arising out of pets as pawns literature is perpetrators' use of overt threats and actual harm to animals as a mechanism to attain and maintain control of their family. The current study's interviews with Women's Refuge clients and staff confirmed similar manifestations of animal-based control and have revealed a number of situations in which cruelty to animals manifests in family violence situations. As such, there is a need to view the co-existence of animal cruelty as complex, multifaceted and we should not restrict our understanding of abuse to threats or actual harm.

One aspect of the complexity of the co-occurrence of animal cruelty and family violence can be seen in how participants' accounts differed according to the degree to which animal cruelty was either the sole manifestation of family violence or whether it was one manifestation of a myriad of power and control mechanisms that included physical, emotional, psychological, financial and sexual abuse.

*He abused me and the animals. Sometimes at the same time but at other times the abuse was targeted at either animals or myself (Catherine, urban, Pacifica, 25 years old, no children)*

What was generally common across participants was a shared history of family violence escalating over time.

*There was a progression from emotional/psychological violence to physical violence. You can't get someone to where they are going to accept hitting until you have actually got them to a place where they think they are in the wrong. Abusers do the psychological abuse before the physical (Hilary, urban, New Zealand European, 34 years old, one child)*

Also common across all participants was the impact of animal abuse. In all cases participants described themselves, and often their children, as having tried to pacify the perpetrator by becoming compliant. Common reports included becoming silent and as invisible as physically possible.

*I would pacify him. I began to apologise before I spoke in case I said anything that offended him. I would make sure that everything was just perfect, to the best of my ability, so there was nothing to complain about. And that would go for the dog as well, you know making sure he was not too hypo and things like that (Sina, urban, Pacifica, 24 years old, two children)*

This section reviews the manifestations of abuse perpetrators employed within 30 family violence situations. The discussion is presented in two chronological categories:

- cruelty to animals within and during the relationship
- cruelty to animals after leaving a relationship.

Where possible multiple accounts are offered to portray participants' varied experiences and in an effort to portray the reality of the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence.

#### 4.1 Cruelty to animals within and during the relationship

Participants reported a number of patterns of violence involving cruelty to animals. While these manifestations of violence are presented as discrete thematic descriptions, it is somewhat of a misnomer to assume they manifest discretely within families. Rather, participants' accounts generally included two or more examples of each facet of cruelty.

##### a) **Normalised violence / psychological and emotional abuse**

The majority of participants reported that animal abuse often occurred as a normalised demonstration of anger. In this sense animals were equated with the metaphorical wall: something to be kicked or punched as a way of displacing anger.

*If the cats got in the way when he was angry he would kick them (Aroha, urban, Māori, 28 years of age, four children)*

*When the dogs weren't behaving he would grab them and beat them. Smashing them around the head and punching them all over (Helen, rural, New Zealand European, 45 years old, three children)*

*He hit a bull once with a baton and knocked it out. It was in the yards and it was doing something that it shouldn't have been doing and so he grabbed a baton and knocked it across the head and dropped it (Mary, rural, New Zealand European, 19 years old, no children)*

*A sow got away in a neighbour's maze field and he let the pig dogs out to get it. They ripped the sow to shreds (Margaret, rural, New Zealand European, 24 years old, no children)*

Gradual exposure to their partner's violence towards animals resulted in participants learning to fear their partner's capacity for harm and the development of a fear that their partner's violence towards animals might escalate to a physical attack on them and/or their children. Because of this fear, participants often described guilt at not intervening because they either knew from previous experience, or suspected, that any attempt to rescue the animal would result in them or their children being hurt.

##### b) **Perverse satisfaction gained from hurting animals**

Some participants tried to understand their partner's abuse of animals by categorising them as gaining a perverse satisfaction from inflicting pain on animals. These men fell into a separate classification because the animals that were hurt or killed were generally not the families' domestic pet(s). Further, the cruelty was orchestrated (actively seeking out animals in order to injure them) and generally occurred without any anger.

*He liked to do a lot of weird things. Like lighting up animals' private parts with torches and making us look. He would tell the kids that when he was on the*

*farm his dad used to ripped the sheep apart with his bare hands if he got angry (Aroha, urban, Māori, 28 years of age, four children)*

*He set the cat on fire. One year he tied fireworks to the tail of the neighbour's cat. He would light Roman Candles and purposely shoot them into the neighbour's property at their dogs and I am pretty sure he poisoned one of our neighbour's cats (Lisa, semi-rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, four children)*

Of note, this perverse satisfaction was reported as including domestic and wild animals.

*He likes going out to the orchard and shooting birds at really close range, like a metre away from them. And he doesn't go for their body. He goes for their heads (Gloria, urban, New Zealand European, 19 years old, one child)*

*He was also a possum trapper and the way he killed them was disgusting. He would bludgeon them to death. The longer it took the more fun he would get out of it. Normally it is one bang and they would be gone. But not with him (Trish, rural, New Zealand European, 46 years old, three children)*

While this form of violence generally excluded the families' pets or animals the fact that the perpetrator inflicted pain on animals in the presence of family members established a context of fear. Further, the random nature of the acts of violence alongside the sense that the perpetrator was not mentally stable reinforced the risk that household members had of direct physical family violence.

### **c) Cruelty to animals as a punishment**

Family violence-related animal cruelty was most commonly reported as a form of punishment. Cruelty either involved injury or death of an animal in retribution for a family member's unsatisfactory behaviour. As such, animal cruelty was orchestrated to directly hurt the woman and child(ren). The outcome of the abuse was a level of intimidation that secured the families' compliance and obedience for fear that a cherished animal would be beaten or killed.

Common across participants' account of animal-related punishment was how animals were treated as an extension of the women and, in some cases, children. In this sense, the animal had the unenviable role of acting in a proxy capacity.

*We tried to be as good as we could be so he wouldn't be cruel to the children's pets (Lisa, semi-rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, four children)*

*He saw me and the dog as one and the same. And he did genuinely like animals but as far as he was concerned that was my dog and when he was pissed off with me he was pissed off with my dog (Danielle, rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, no children)*

Multiple examples were provided of families being punished through their animals being harmed or killed.

*About five years ago we got a fish tank with tropical fish. My younger girls were afraid of the dark so instead of nightlights we had fish tanks. Every time there was an argument or things weren't going his way a cup of coffee would be poured into the fish tank. On other occasions he would pour in bleach to kill the fish. So it would be a mad rush to quickly get the fish out of the tank and drain as much water out as possible. It was quite a regular occurrence. Say I had done something wrong I would come home and there would be trash in the inside of the fish tank. Yeah all sorts of chemicals, or whatever was nearby, would be thrust into the tank with all their food. Or he wouldn't allow the power to be turned on for the heater for the tropical fish so that they would die from the cold (Tania, urban, New Zealand European, 38 years old, four children)*

*In 2004 my son and I went away on holiday to stay with my parents. I had three cats at the time and when I came home I couldn't find one cat. I went away three times and every time I went away a cat went missing. It took me a while to figure it out [laughter]. . . So it was a punishment for me going away. It was simply about power and control (Beatrice, urban, New Zealand European, 28 years old, one child)*

*At one stage I actually went out and got myself a puppy and I sort of thought that it would be nice for my son and I to have this puppy. It was a cute little black one and I called it Clark. My ex-husband wasn't impressed because he was in charge of all purchases. So he went out and he came back with two of his friends and they virtually held a court as to whether I deserved to have the dog. They decided that no, I didn't deserve to have the dog and it was taken off me and he picked up the dog and the gun and went outside. So after that I never had anything to do with another animal (Cynthia, urban, New Zealand European, 55 years old, one child)*

A second dimension of the way in which animals were used to punish family members involves the women or child(ren) being forced to actually hurt an animal as a form of punishment for their poor behaviour.

*There was one woman who had to stick needles into the dog until he yelped. He made her hold the dog down and he forced her to put needles into the dog. Once the dog yelped she was able to stop. She soon learned to behave herself because she loved the dog so much. Of course this was a way of her partner controlling her without leaving a mark on her. Quite clever and devious (Women's Refuge staff member)*

#### **d) Jealousy**

A perpetrator's jealousy of his partner's or a child's animal was identified as another motivation for engaging in aspects of animal cruelty. In these situations, the perpetrator would harm animals with which his partner and/or children had a close connection. As a consequence, women and children were placed in a position of needing to seemingly make a choice between the perpetrator and the animal. This form of abuse was identified as one of the first indications of family violence. The nature of violence would often escalate and

broaden to include physical violence towards family members. This form of animal cruelty differs from normalised violence because no apparent anger underpinned the cruelty.

Participants generally framed the perpetrator's behaviour as one of jealousy, whereby non-verbal messages were given that family members could not have affections for anything or anyone other than the perpetrator.

*If an animal liked me, he mistreated it. I mean what he treated them like in front of people was totally different to when he shut the door (Hilary, urban, New Zealand European, 34 years old, one child)*

*My ex would just kick things as he was going by. He knew that I loved them so that caused huge conflict in the relationship (Helen, rural New Zealand European, 45 years old, three children)*

*I met my now ex-husband in 2001. The first year was okay but then things got progressively worse. The real initial hurting of animals that me and my son witnessed was around 2004 or 2005. That was the first time it was really brought to my attention. I mean the little things he did, you know like kicking the cat out of the way, that was just him. I did not actually see it as abuse because the cat wasn't injured in any way. Complaining about feeding the animals, how much money was spent on the animals and blah, blah, blah was just normal. But the significant thing that happened was that we had a cat and the cat happened to adore my son and I but he didn't like my ex so one day my ex literally kicked the cat over the road where there was this fence with dogs and the dogs savaged the cat in front of my three year old son (Pamela urban, New Zealand European, 33 years old, one child)*

Other examples involved the sudden disappearance of cherished animals.

*But I did have a cat that I raised from a couple of days old. I really loved him and treated him like my baby. And my partner hated the cat and he made sure I knew that. And one day the cat vanished. And he told me that the police had come and said that three pig dogs that they had been following had grabbed the cat and ripped him apart. But I never saw his body. I never saw him again [crying]. I have always thought that it was him who got rid of him (Irihapeti, semi-rural, Māori, 24 years old, one child)*

#### **e) Animal cruelty as a threat to maintain "good behaviour"**

Threats against animals were commonly discussed Women's Refuge representatives in each of the three participating Refuges.

*I dealt with women who haven't left the relationship because of threats made to the animals. They have witnessed their partners' abuse and kill their pets and have just stayed. For example, there was a woman who had been in a five year relationship. She had two children. A two and a three year old. They lived in a rural area. This guy killed the family cat. He did this in front of the mother and*

*kids. He actually made them watch. It was the final straw. Something broke and she stayed (Women's Refuge staff member)*

Two types of specific threats emerged from the interviews. The first type of threat involved the use of animal cruelty to demonstrate the perpetrator's intolerance for rules being broken. As such, animal abuse provided the family with sufficient evidence that similar violence would fall upon family members should they dissatisfied the perpetrator.

*One time we had a farming dog called Tommy. My ex husband adored Tommy. It was his favourite dog. Anyway, one day Tommy had chased some calves. My ex was so angry he chained Tommy up by his collar to a fence and stretched him out by his tail. He made me and my three children stand there and watch as he just beat the shit out of him. He just beat the shit out of him. A huge dog. Crushed his ribs I imagine. He left Tommy chained to the fence and we weren't allowed to go anywhere near him. Of course, the next day I found Tommy was dead. So you can imagine what that did to my children. Of course the message was clear, "See what I am willing to do to my most prized possession. If you step out of line don't expect any different sort of treatment (Avril, rural, New Zealand European, 46 years old, two children).*

*I received numerous beatings throughout the years but he never hit the children. Rather he would intimidate the children by threatening their cats to get the kids to do things. They adored their cats. He would be very cruel. So his abuse was a way of controlling my children. They didn't want their animals to be hurt or taken away (Lagi, urban, Pacifica, 35 years old, mother of four)*

A second type of threat centred on threats made to animals in the event that the woman left the relationship. Approximately one third (n = 11) of interview participants reported this form of threat.

*He started using the animals against us. He said that if we didn't come home, if we left him, he would string them up (Lisa, semi-rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, four children)*

Further, approximately one half of interview participants (n = 16) reported that their partner had actually harmed or killed an animal as a warning of what they would do to the woman and/or child(ren) if the woman left the relationship. In this sense threats and actually cruelty to animals were used as a way of maintaining the status quo. A history of cruelty to animals demonstrated a propensity for murder. This propensity created a fear within the relationship that any threats made to the woman leaving would be carried out.

*One day I was in the kitchen and he came over to me. He had my pet budgie in his hand. He grabbed a chopping board and a knife and rested the budgie on the board. He then proceeded to cut my budgie's head off and said, "This is what I can do to you". So it was a like a warning. I knew he was telling me that he would kill me if I left him (Katie, urban, New Zealand European, 70 years old, no children)*

*We had three cats. Things were alright when he was sober, but the minute he was drunk he would just sit there with an air rifle and he would just shoot at the cats. He would have them scrambling all around the room. Sometimes he would purposely miss them but other times. . . I know the older cat had at least two slugs in it that it carried around. It was, if you leave me I will hunt you down and mark you so that no one will ever want to see you again (Cynthia, New Zealand European, 55 years old, one child)*

*He would abuse my cat. It was his sick way of saying, "This is what I will do to you if you don't tow the line". He was trying to show me what he would do to me if I didn't obey him. It was like he was top dog and I was just a dirty housewife (Rachel, urban, New Zealand European, 20 years old, no children)*

#### **f) Apparent collateral damage**

Rather than a direct or obvious link between the perpetrator and animal cruelty the following two examples highlight a dimension of family violence that has a secondary consequence and is therefore labelled *collateral damage*. In both cases a seemingly innocuous act, giving a kitten to his son and taking a dog hunting resulted in the death of both animals. However, it is noteworthy that both events occurred despite the pleading of family members. Both examples are showcased as a dimension of family violence because seemingly innocuous events contribute towards the family's continued silencing: a reinforcement that the perpetrator was the head of the household and that family members feelings and connections with their animals were incidental to the perpetrator's decision-making.

*When we got this house the first thing he [the perpetrator] did was get a Pitbull Terrier. It was a very dominant, aggressive dog. And then, for some reason, he brought home a kitten for our son and I said, "The kitten isn't going to survive around the dog" and he said that it was up to our son to keep that cat safe and that my son had to keep the kitten in his bedroom. I pleaded with him and said that was ridiculous. That he couldn't have the cat live in his bedroom but my ex said that our son, our three year old son, "had to learn how to manage these things". So of course, one morning, very early on my son opened his bedroom door to go to the toilet and the dog got into his room and in front of my son it bit the head off the kitten. My son never ever got over that (Cynthia, urban, New Zealand European, 55 years old, one child)*

*My son had a dog called Oscar and my ex took her hunting but she wasn't a hunting dog. I had begged him not to but he took her anyway. Well she got gored up all along her stomach by a tusk and she ended up dying a few hours later. It devastated my son (Helen, rural New Zealand European, 35 years old, three children)*

#### **g) Hurting animals to avoid police attention**

Two participants described abusive situations that involved perpetrators purposefully harming animals, rather than their female partner and/or child(ren), to avoid a family violence conviction. In each example, perpetrators were known to the police for past family violence violations. As such, hurting animals as a way of controlling partners provided a level of

protection from police attention as the Police were not perceived as taking sufficient action against animal cruelty situations (see Police Responsiveness in this chapter).

*After his first arrest for assaulting me he learnt that he couldn't physically hurt me without the police coming down on him. And I think that he was scared of going back to jail because he was on bail conditions. So he began hurting the dog as a way to vent and to put me in my place. It was like, "What can she do if I am hurting the dog. There is no evidence that I am hurting the dog" I would sit there shaking, not being able to do anything. I would say to him, "Leave her alone, stop it" but he would do it more the next time round. If I stood up for her then the dog got abused more (Te Huia, urban, Māori, 25 years old, one child)*

*He would know that you can't go to the Police and say, "Look he has been hurting the dog". You're not going to the Police about a dog because what are the police going to do (Melissa, urban, New Zealand European, 21 years old, no children)*

#### **h) Pets used as sexual objects**

Bestiality was raised by the participating Refuges and SPCAs as a form of animal cruelty that remains an unappreciated phenomenon in New Zealand. For instance, each of the three participating Refuges related that at least one client disclosed some form of abuse involving sex with animals every four to six months.

Three interview participants who had been involved in violent relationships shared their experiences of bestiality in an attempt to try and understand how animals are used in family violence contexts. In each case, participants' partners had attempted to force them to watch animal-related pornography and, in two cases, engage in sexual activities with animals. While participants realised that bestiality was another power and control tactic they found it insidious as it forced the woman to go against her own values. As such, participants described it as the worse type of abuse that they had experienced as the perpetrator had robbed them of their own value system. With other forms of abuse they knew that the perpetrator was in the wrong. With bestiality they felt they had been forced or manipulated into being complicit in hurting a cherished animal.

*My ex-partner got huge enjoyment out of upsetting me. He liked to talk about people doing sexual things with animals. He would say that sort of stuff to me. He kept on saying that my sister was married to our dogs and would suggest that she was having sex with our dogs. He wanted me to watch women having sex with animals on the Internet and he would talk about how, in India, girls get married to dogs. I think in a way he was trying to do something to me because of what I believe in. Like by making me do something horrible would ruin me once and for all. You see I don't believe that it is ever okay to do something like that with animals or even to do something outside of the marriage. He always would try and push sexual things on me. I think with animals, it was just a step higher. By making me do that would be the final straw that actually broke me for good (Miriam, urban, Māori, 28 years of age, four children)*

Perpetrators were also described as relishing the distress that bestiality caused the women. Further, as Aroha indicates below, perpetrators' use of bestiality occurred within a series of complex motivations that reinforced women's secondary role and his misogyny.

*My ex always wanted me to believe that women are quite revolting really and that they have all these sick desires. He was always trying to convince me that I was a lesbian that he would be doing a favour if he brought another woman into the relationship. He had a really negative view of women. He tried to encourage my son to run women down. He would show my kids programmes on TV that are really inappropriate for children. Like if he refused to turn them off I would have to get the kids out of the room. Women are just objects to him. Either a sexual object or an immoral, evil object. So bestiality was proof really. If a woman engaged in sex with animals it proved that she has no morality (Aroha, urban, Māori, 28 years of age, four children)*

## 4.2 Cruelty to animals after leaving the relationship

Many participants described having left their relationships in a crisis situation, when violence had escalated to an extremely dangerous level, and they had not had time or opportunity to secure alternative accommodation for themselves and their animals. Because the animals were left in the perpetrator's care the perpetrator was provided with the opportunity to manipulate the woman. This manifested in two primary ways, the first of which were issuing threats to the woman and/or her children. In these situations it was common for perpetrators to communicate (e.g. via telephone, text or third parties) their intention to harm the animals left in their care. This created anxiety for the woman and children and was commonly cited as a reason for the woman returning to the relationship.

*After I left he used to text me and tell me that he was going to shoot the dogs if I didn't come and get them and I used to say that I had no where I could take them. And that still goes on. Or I get a text that says, "I've shot the dogs. They are in the pit if you want to come and bury them" (Trish, rural, New Zealand European, 46 years old, three children)*

*He often said that everything should die. When I left, he left messages on my phone, saying that if I came back to the house, and if he wasn't there, he would make sure that the kids and I burned. And I believed him. He knew what to do. I had seen him kill animals in the most brutal way so I knew that he could go as far as killing me and the kids (Lisa, semi-rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, four children)*

The second form of manipulation involved actual harm to the animal(s) that had been left in the perpetrator's care. In this sense, harm and/or death were interpreted as a malicious punishment for the woman leaving the relationship.

*I had to leave the relationship. I had to leave the farm and move into town. I took as much as I could with me but I had to leave most of my pets behind. But then my pets died. I don't know what happened. My house cow apparently died*

*in a bog. My two horses, he apparently sold to a trekking place<sup>13</sup> which distressed me greatly because I knew they wouldn't like that life and I think he knew they wouldn't and that is why he did it. My pets just disappeared over a six-month timeframe (Shona, rural, New Zealand European, 35 years old, two children)*

*My daughter was 15 when I left and she had a pet pig which disappeared. She had reared him and taken him to school he was gorgeous. But he disappeared. Yeah so she was really upset about that (Trish, rural, New Zealand European, 46 years old, three children)*

*Later on we got chickens which he thought would be a good thing for the kids and ummmm when everything started to go really wrong when we left he put them into cages and literally let them starve to death. A couple of them I found had been dismembered when I managed to get back to the property. A couple had their wings completely ripped from their bodies. A couple had their necks snapped. Other ones had been put into boxes with wood and bricks put over the top of them. So they were without food or water. There was one attached to the fence like with a nail gun. Which I took as a warning to me (Lisa, semi-rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, four children)*

*We had 15 chickens. Out of those only six survived after they were left alone with him for six days (Tania, urban, New Zealand European, 38 years old, four children)*

A third type of cruelty to animals following the woman having left her partner involves isolating the women and children from third party support systems; namely friends and family. While not commonly discussed in reference to animal cruelty, three interview participants related how friends' and extended families' pets and animals had been harmed by the perpetrator in retribution for helping his partner and children leave the relationship.

*My friend Yvonne was helping me leave an abusive relationship. She came to my home with a moving van and she helped me load the van with my furniture and what have you. She then drove me 150 kilometres to another friend's house. Someone my partner did not know. My ex-husband was ropable when he came home and found that all my stuff was gone. A neighbour described Yvonne to him and he put two and two together and he went around to Yvonne's. He didn't say a word. He just went up to her dog and cut its throat. That was Yvonne's punishment for helping me [crying] (Janene, urban, 55 years old, no children)*

*My ex went around to my mother's house and kicked her dog to death because she was helping me (Fiona, urban, New Zealand European, 19 years old, two children)*

<sup>13</sup> Horse trekking involves a horse-assisted expedition of traversing the countryside on horseback.

### 4.3 Delay in leaving the relationship

Each of the 30 survivors of family violence were asked whether their partner's cruelty to animals, or threats of cruelty, had dissuaded them from leaving the relationship. The majority of participants (n = 18, 60%) said that they had not stayed exclusively because of the animals but that, through a process of abuse that involved animal cruelty, they had gradually lost confidence and developed an overwhelming fear of leaving. Participants attributed the fear of leaving, at least in part, to the perpetrator's abuse of animals.

*I stayed there for 18 months. It wasn't just because of the animals but I didn't want to leave the farm. It was my farm (Helen, rural New Zealand European, 45 years old, three children)*

A further six interview participants (20%) stated that, by the time they were about to leave the relationship, they had ceased caring about the welfare of the animal and were solely focused on their own and their children's wellbeing. Specifically, participants explained that over time, and especially in response to the escalation of family violence, what was once a heightened concern for animals was eroded as the women were forced to focus on their own survival.

*After four years of abuse it became a matter of survival. I was just feeding the cats. It was a matter of me and my son being safe rather than the animals. 'Cause the cats knew how to hide. I didn't. And it got to the point that the animals knew him [the perpetrator] and they just weren't around when he was there (Natalie, urban, New Zealand European, 29 years old, one child)*

*I think I had gone past caring about the pets. I used to really worry about the pets. Especially the fish because of my daughter because the look on her face. . . then it just got to the point that [crying] hey they are fish whereas I need to look out for my kids. You can get fish somewhere else. You can go to the pet store and get some more (Lisa, semi-rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, four children)*

*It took me four years to leave the relationship; from beginning to end. At the beginning the animals were a really big part of my life. I was really affectionate with animals. There was a two-way relationship. As time went on I felt under siege and I started going through the motions. Almost like a robot. I was just living. That's all I was doing. And when I left to go to the Women's Refuge I honestly didn't think about the cat. It was only after I got to the Refuge that I remembered the cats and I rang a friend who agreed to go and look after it. But there was no thought of animals because it was me or him. It was life or death (Catherine, urban, New Zealand European, 25 years old, three children)*

*I had no thought about the animals at that stage to be honest. It was my life or his. I knew if he came back I was dead (Hilary, urban, New Zealand European, 34 years old, one child)*

*No, I have got to say that what I was going through with him and what I was trying to protect our child from going through took precedence over the animals.*

*So I must admit that the animals were the last thing on my mind. I mean the cruelty got to me but it was more self-preservation. And frankly, I am embarrassed to say it, but while he was doing stuff to the animal then he was leaving us alone. Although you knew that if he was winding up he could tell if he was really getting nasty. . . like if he actually hit one of them, then you knew that chances were that he was going to come after you when he got bored with that (Cynthia, urban, New Zealand European, 55 years old, one child)*

One fifth of family violence survivors interviewed (n = 6, 20%) stated that they had remained in the relationship because of their animals. As with the existing family violence literature, women without children reported a greater propensity to remain in the relationship because of the animal.

*There have been times when I have wanted to get away but I have been worried about who will feed the cat. Who will look after the cat? Or whether he might be purposely mean to the cat (Danielle, rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, no children)*

*I felt that if I left without the animals then something would happen to them. Like they would end up dead. So I developed a leaving plan. I went and got a full-time job which he didn't like one bit. He used to come down to where I worked and sit in the car park and watch me through the window. Then I put the animals with the SPCA. Once I got rid of the animals I had a sense of freedom. He had one less thing he could control me about (Gloria, urban, New Zealand European, 19 years old, one child)*

*If it hadn't have been for the animals I would have left much sooner. I just didn't want to leave the animals. I knew that if I left he would have killed the animals and he would have done it in a really nasty way. Like the way he used to kill the possums. It is the hardest thing I have ever had to do; walk away and leave those animals there (Trish, rural, New Zealand European, 46 years old, three children)*

#### **4.4 Barriers to leaving an abusive relationship**

Aside from the threats of retaliation discussed above, a number of structural barriers to women leaving their violent relationships were explored through a combination of interviews with SPCA, Women's Refuge staff, 30 family violence survivors, local non-government agencies and a survey of each of the 17 SPCA local managers. Barriers included:

- a lack of rental accommodation available to people with animals
- prohibitive cost and an insufficient amount of kennel or animal boarding facilities
- a number of logistical difficulties and a series of structural impediments
- a series of misconceptions that precluded women from utilising SPCA's services
- a number of legal considerations and Police responsiveness.

Each of these barriers is discussed in detail below.

**a) Lack of affordable rental accommodation**

The most commonly reported barriers to women with animals leaving an abusive relationship was finding rental accommodation that allows pets.

*It is impossible finding rental accommodation that lets you have a cat or a dog. So you get stuck. There just isn't anywhere to go (Janene, urban, New Zealand European, 55 years old, no children)*

*It is so difficult trying to find a rental property that allows animals. We had one woman at the end of last year and she fled to X [name of city] and took her three dogs with her because she wasn't prepared to leave them behind. It meant that she had to live in her car for a while with her three dogs. Her struggle was finding a rental property that would allow animals. It is a really big issue. It's virtually impossible to find rental accommodation that allows animals. She eventually had to give away her animals. She struggled for a long time to keep them. Over a year. But in the end she had no option but to give them away (Women's Refuge staff member)*

**b) Cost prohibitive cost of care and a lack of animal boarding facilities**

Given difficulties locating rental accommodation that permits pets, family violence survivors and Women's Refuge participants reported that the next largest barrier to women easily being able to extricate themselves from an abusive relationship was being unable to either locate animal boarding or kennel facilities. A situation that was more difficult in provincial areas as there was a marked lack of supply. Further, participants unanimously agreed that existing services were cost prohibitive.

*It is quite expensive putting your animal in care. It is easily between \$100 and \$120 a week to board your animal (Women's Refuge staff member)*

*It was \$12 per day. Which is like four dog rolls (Women's Refuge staff member)*

*I don't know of being able to place animals around here. I know the SPCA do do something involving dogs but I am not sure about cats. But in saying that I have to think about the expense. I am on a Sickness Benefit so I really don't have any extra money (Danielle, rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, no children)*

*There is nowhere for the women to go. They are actually stumped there. They actually have to stay in that environment (Women's Refuge staff member)*

Survivors and Refuge participants also stated that the existing boarding and kennel facilities were generally geared to cats and dogs only. As such, horses, sheep and cattle were excluded. This exclusion was reported as keeping women and children locked into abusive relationships. In addition, access to catteries and kennels is generally contingent on the animal being fully immunised which was often beyond the financial means of participants on low incomes.

*A lot of catteries want the cats to be fully immunised and that is another expense. It is hard enough to be able to afford getting them speyed (Natalie, urban, New Zealand European, 29 years old, one child)*

Interviews with Refuge staff highlighted their lack of ability to help women house their pets at their shelters as other women staying at the shelter may have allergies. Further, experience had shown that many of the animals in question have been so abused that they were not able to be placed with people they did not know as they now posed a risk to others.

*There is nowhere for the animal to go. Every now and then we might put a little dog or a cat in the shelter but we can't really do that. We have to think of the women and children with allergies. Also a lot of the dogs have been so abused that they might bite a child or a mother walking past (Women's Refuge staff member)*

### **c) Logistical difficulties**

Three logistical issues were raised that create a barrier to women leaving relationships with their animals. Firstly, many participants who had had to leave an abusive relationship either did not own a car or had limited funds to purchase petrol. In some situations a lack of car ownership was attributed to low incomes but one third of survivor participants (n = 10) related that their partners had controlled all finances and access to the families' vehicles.

*Well for me I don't have a car. So I would have to sort out how to transport us. Especially cats like him that you just can't pick up. He doesn't like to be picked up. So I would have to think about actually how to take him from A to B and being able to do it in such a way that he wasn't aware. I would have to leave without him [perpetrator] being aware that I was going so that he didn't threaten the cat anymore or do something to him out of spite to me (Shona, rural, New Zealand European, 35 years old, two children)*

*A lot of the time too is the transportation of the animals. A lot of the time, he has the car or the Ute. As part of his control he doesn't allow her to have her own car. So how is she going to get her two big dogs to temporary accommodation? She can't put them on a bus (Women's Refuge staff member)*

Next, SPCAs are generally located on the city or town fringe. For instance, the mean distance from the SPCA and the CBD was 8.5 kilometres.

*This is a wee way out. Like from where we are here it is quite a wee way out (Danielle, rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, no children)*

This distance becomes even more unmanageable in light of the large catchment areas each of the local SPCAs service. For instance, in the Wellington, Wairarapa, Southland and Manawatu there is only one SPCA. In Southland this means having to travel to either Invercargill or Dunedin. In the lower North Island a woman needs to access the SPCAs in Wellington, Palmerston North or Masterton. Each is a considerable distance to travel with an animal and is reliant on finances for the petrol and access to a car. Notably, horses, cattle and larger animals are excluded.

#### d) **Barriers associated with the SPCA**

Women's Refuge and survivors of family violence discussed a number of structural barriers specific to the SPCA. Many of these barriers were later found to be misconceptions that have prevented women from approaching or accessing the SPCA's services. The most common misconception was that the SPCA would euthanise the women's animal if the animal was not rehoused after the woman had surrendered the animal to SPCA's care.

*There is a belief that the animal will be euthanized if the SPCA can't find a home for the animal (Women's Refuge staff member)*

Rather than a misconception, participants were also aware that if a woman could not afford to board her domesticated animals somewhere then the most likely option would be to surrender the animal to the SPCA. This was extremely difficult for survivor participants as they reported needing temporary accommodation for their animals until they could secure accommodation for themselves, their children and their pets and they did not want to surrender their animals.

*They have a boarding facility out at the SPCA but if she wanted to put the animal into to shelter it they may want her to surrender the animal. The thing is, that cat is her baby. No one is going to give up their baby (Women's Refuge staff member)*

Further, a number of SPCAs reported requiring an owner to pay a surrender fee in situations where the owner was surrendering the permanent care of their animal to the SPCA. While SPCA staff generally viewed the fee as nominal, regarding the fee as a small contribution to the animal's food and care, survivor participants stressed that it was often cost prohibitive.

*I stayed in my relationship because I didn't have anywhere to take the dogs. Everything around cost a lot of money. I did ring up the SPCA and they said there was a fee to hand them over and I just didn't have any money. And even if you explain the circumstances you are told you have to pay. I got told that you either had to surrender it or else it was \$25 per day per animal. I just couldn't pay that. 'Cause we had five dogs. Yeah well I couldn't afford the kennel fees and I didn't have anywhere I could take them (Trish, rural, New Zealand European, 46 years old, three children)*

*There was a \$10 charge [surrender fee] which was more than I could afford. I needed all the money I could get to leave the bastard (Gloria, urban, New Zealand European, 19 years old, one child)*

*I couldn't afford to the surrender fee. So I took him to a really nice neighbourhood and let him out hoping that someone would take him in. I still feel really guilty about that (Ofa, urban, Pacifica, 38 years old, five children)*

In the opinion of some SPCA staff, the surrender fee is viewed as a deterrent to those who may habitually surrender their pets. In some situations, survivor participants had been told that that a donation was acceptable. However, survivor participants reported that even a donation was cost prohibitive.

*People ring up and try and say anything to get rid of an animal. If we say yes you can bring the animal to us we put a surrender fee on. There are some people that need to learn to take some responsibility for their animal (SPCA staff member)*

This is an important consideration as survivor participants stressed that they had felt that they had approached SPCA in extremely vulnerable situations. While some participants had disclosed to the SPCA staff member that they needed help with their animals because of a family violence situation, others had not disclosed because of shame and embarrassment and had reported that they needed to surrender their animals because of the landlord's tenancy requirements. Given this context, a surrender fee that is geared to reinforcing the individual's responsibility for their animals may actually act to revictimise the woman.

*The way each SPCA deals with domestic violence differs. I honestly think that it depends on what is going on for them. I don't think the majority of people who work at the SPCA know much about domestic violence. When I was there their immediate thing was obviously the welfare of the animals that they already had in their care and how overwhelmed they were because they had so little funds. So they had to try their utmost to get those animals rehomed because they were overwhelmed and there was a lot to get through so I got the sense that they were at absolute capacity at that time and they didn't really discuss with me anything to do with that. They were more worried about homing the animals they had (Danielle, rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, no children)*

SPCA staff in each of the three case study sites reported having had training on animal abuse and cruelty but demonstrated little knowledge of family violence and whether or not there is a connection between animal cruelty and family violence. This differed in one situation where the participant had lived in a family violence situation for a number of years and had witnessed extensive animal cruelty as a means of her then partner's efforts to maintain power and control of the relationship.

#### **e) Police responsiveness**

Women's Refuge and many of the family violence survivor participants stated that the Police had acted promptly and appropriately in the majority of the family violence situations in which they were involved. Further, all Women's Refuge staff commented that Police knowledge of family violence had improved greatly in recent years as the Police have historically had a low awareness of family violence and have often positioned women as being equally culpable.

Participants indicated that the one area of Police responsiveness that needs improvement is in regards to the role of animal cruelty in family violence situations. Women's Refuge staff appreciated that the Police have recently demonstrated an awareness of the co-occurrence of animal cruelty and family violence: namely the inclusion of an animal-related question in the Police Family Violence Incident Reports (PoIFVIR). However, animal cruelty was generally viewed as being outside of their scope of concern. As such, the connection between animal cruelty and family violence remains unappreciated.

*Police responsiveness? Do they take action around animal cruelty? The only time it has come up is on the PoIFVIR check sheets (Women's Refuge staff member)*

*Did the Police respond appropriately? Not really. They were more worried about me. I had a big black eye. And they will charge him for male assaults female and threatening to kill. And that is when I said I wanted them to charge him for cruelty to animals because it all started with my going out the laundry to see if everything was alright. It is not their area, I guess, to care about the animals (Hera, urban, Māori, 19 years old, 1 child)*

*If there is a safety issue, you know the woman and her children's safety, the Police are pretty good at dealing with that. But what they are not good at is dealing with the way in which animals are hurt in family violence situations. The police tend to play it down, "It's just a dog or a cat" (Women's Refuge staff member)*

Further, survivor participants commonly stated that they had not raised the issue of animal cruelty with the Police because they did not feel as though the Police would take the cruelty seriously and there was a degree of uncertainty whether about the degree and nature of animal cruelty required before a threshold for Police action is reached.

*Did I tell the police about him killing all the chickens? It didn't seem worth it. He didn't even get charged for destroying my house for six days (Lisa, semi-rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, four children)*

*As far as the police are concerned, I wasn't sure what would be considered as crossing the line. You know, what would be seen as an offence. Like for me even taunting or being cruel to an animal you shouldn't be doing that period but what is considered as crossing the line, where say they are not physically hurting you but they are actually hurting your animal. Whether that is justification for calling the Police and saying, "Hey, this person is hurting my animal", whether that is something that could be used to secure police intervention. If there was clarity around it, you know that people could be prosecuted for making threats, maybe this could be another deterrent for people in domestic violence situations. Not only are the woman and children considered but also the animals. At what point is enough enough? (Danielle, rural, New Zealand European, 33 years old, no children)*

Further, a woman's reluctance to raise the issue of animal cruelty with the police was traced to a possible fear that the woman might be held culpable for the animal's abuse given that the abuse has generally gone on for considerable periods of time and the woman did not take action.

*What comes up time and time again is that women don't report the animal cruelty. Its like, "Oh god no. He would kill me" if she is still in the relationship or even if she is out of it. I think there can be a fear of culpability. She was there. She witnessed the abuse so why didn't she stop it. The police might not understand that if she tells someone then she will get it too. So that falls back under that control umbrella really (Women's Refuge staff member)*

**f) Legal considerations**

Participants representing SPCA, Women's Refuge and survivors of family violence raised concerns that there is a need for clarity surrounding the individual's legal right to restrict her partner's (the perpetrator) access to their animals. Namely, participants were concerned that the perpetrator could demand access to the animal, on the basis of ownership, in the event that the animal was placed in a shelter. For instance, the dog might be registered in one of the partner's names only. In the event that the animal is registered in the name of the perpetrator then there is a risk that the perpetrator could therefore demand the animal from the SPCA.

*They also have to think about legal protection. What if I took the animal to somewhere like the SPCA and my partner gets angry and storms down to the SPCA to get the animal. So what is going to happen there? Will he have a right to get the animal. Because believe you me my ex would have gone in there, picked up the cat and driven down the road and rung its neck (Katie, urban, New Zealand European, 26 years old, one child)*

*Like my dog is actually registered in his name. So if I put my dog in the SPCA does that mean he could get him out. So where is the protection there? (Catherine, urban, Pacifica, 25 years old, three children)*

## 5 SURVEY FINDINGS

A survey of Women's Refuge clients was carried out to better understand the role of pet/animal abuse within violent situations and estimate the scale of the issue. While previous studies have often restricted their samples to women in actual shelters the current study extended participant eligibility to include any new or existing client of Women's Refuge. As such, participants included a spectrum of experiences that ranged from crisis to those who were no longer in a family violence situation.

Of note, the survey provides a prevalence of participants' experiences with family violence and animal cruelty only; specifically this is not a nationally representative sample. While it was originally hoped that the study would prevalence data, the methodological requirements proved too cumbersome for the Refuges that were administering the survey. Specifically, a prevalence study required a record of all new and existing clients who contacted the Refuges over a set period of time. Given Refuge staff workload and the opportunities for human error the following analysis is framed around those sampled only.

The following discussion has been structured around the survey's primary areas of enquiry.

- threats to and actual injury or death of a pet or animal
- perpetrators
- children
- pets, farm animals and other types of animals
- issues pertaining to leaving an abusive relationship.

### 5.1 Threats and actual injury or death

Women's Refuge survey participants were asked whether a family member or partner had ever threatened to injure or kill one of their pets and whether or not a family member or partner had actually injured or killed one of their pets, animals or farm animals. Of the 203 survey respondents, 54.7% (n = 111) stated that, at some point, either a family member or their partner had threatened to kill one of their pets, animals and/or farm animals. Of these 111 respondents, 79.1% (n = 87) stated that at least one threat had occurred within the last two years. Those who reported abuse occurring within the last two years equates to 42.9% of all 203 respondents.

Approximately one third of respondents (36.5%, n = 74) reported a pet or animal had actually been injured or killed some time in their relationship. Of these, 50 respondents (68.5%) said that the injury or death had occurred within the last two years; a figure that represents one quarter (24.6% ) all 203 survey respondents.

Of note, 20 respondents who reported a threat of abuse also reported actual injury or death of an animal. This means that a total of 165 respondents reported either a threat or actual harm or death of an animal sometime in their relationship. Further, actual injury or death of the pet or animal was sometimes reported as occurring without any previous threat being

made. For instance, 11.8% (n = 24) respondents indicated that actual injury or death occurred without any previous threat.

**Table 5: Threats and Actual Injury and Death of Pets and Animals and/or Farm Animals (number and percentage)**

	Threatened		Actually Injured	
	n	%	n	%
Ever	111	54.7	74	36.5
Last two years	87	42.9	50	24.6
Not applicable	-	-	79	38.9
Missing	5	2.5	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table notes:**

1. Five of the 203 respondents did not answer whether or not one of their pets or animals had been ever been threatened in the last two years
2. One respondent did not answer whether or not either the threat of injury or death had occurred in the last two years. As such, the two-year timeframe has been calculated from a total of 110 respondents.

## 5.2 Perpetrators

The majority of respondents reported that it was their partners who had either threatened to harm or actually injured and/or killed their pet, animal or other type of animal. As illustrated in Table 6, approximately 90% of threats and actual harm to a pet, animal or other animal were made by partners. Just under 10% of threats and actual injuries or death had been perpetrated by a family member (other than the individual's partner<sup>14</sup>). Threats or abuse by "someone else" was least common.

<sup>14</sup> Other family members include children, siblings, parents and grandparents.

**Table 6: Perpetrators of Animal Abuse: Threats and Actual Injury and/or Death (number and percentage)**

	Threatened		Actually Injured		Combined Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Partner	99	90.0	67	90.5	166	90.2
A family member	9	8.2	6	8.1	15	8.2
Someone else	2	1.8	1	1.4	3	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table notes:**

1. Due to missing data from one respondent the number of respondents who responded to the question about those who had made a threat to harm a pet, animal or other animal was 110
2. None of the three participants who reported threats or actual physical abuse having occurred by 'someone else' disclosed their type of relationship with the perpetrator.

Location data (residence within a rural or urban environment) and reports of threats and actual injury or death of an animal were examined for any notable differences. Similar proportions of actual injury were found between rural/semi-rural and urban locations (36.4% and 35.8% respectively) whereas a slightly higher proportion of threats against animals were reported in rural/semi-rural areas (56.8% compared to 53.5%) (see Table 7).

**Table 7: Threats and Actual Injury and/or Death Against Residents within a Rural/semi-rural or Urban Environment (number and percentage)**

	Count	Do you live in a rural or semi-rural area		Total
		Yes (n = 44)	No (n = 157)	
Threats reported against animals	Count	25	84	109
	%	56.8%	53.5%	54.2%
Actual injury or death of animal	Count	16	56	72
	%	36.4%	35.7%	35.8%
<b>Total</b>				<b>n = 201</b>

### 5.3 Children

Of the 159 participants with children, 32.7% (n = 52) stated that one or more of their children had witnessed their partner or a family member that lives in the home threaten to injure or kill

a pet or animal. A further 24.5% (n = 38) had witnessed someone in the family actually injure or kill a pet or animal.

The majority of threats of abuse, witnessed by children, were made by the women's partner. For instance, 94.2% (n = 49) of threats witnessed by children were made by respondents' partners and 94.7% (n = 36) of actual abuse witnessed by children was carried out by the women's partner. The remaining threats and actual abuse were made by other family members (n = 3 and n = 2 respectively) (see Table 8).

**Table 8: Children as Witnesses to Abuse: Threats and Actual Injury and/or Death (number and percentage)**

	Threatened		Actually Injured or Killed		Combined Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Partner</b>	49	94.2	36	94.7	85	94.4
<b>A family member</b>	3	5.8	2	5.3	5	5.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

## 5.4 Pets, farm animals and other types of animals

Interviews conducted with women in three Women's Refuges revealed three types of animal relationships in which animal cruelty occurred. First, as identified by international literature, cruelty to pets was commonly cited. Next, abuse towards farm animals was raised as a second form of cruelty. Finally, participants discussed animal cruelty in regards to *another type of animal* which was interchangeably referred to as *wild animals*. In these situations, examples were given of pigeons, having flown into the property were cruelly treated as well as stray domestic animals (i.e. not pets of anyone in the abode) and rats found on the property.

Building upon the qualitative component of the study, Women's Refuge survey respondents were asked what type of animal, defined by their relationship with the animal, had been either threatened or actually injured or killed. The majority of respondents stated that threats were most commonly directed towards pets (n = 102, 85.7%) as was actual incidence of injury and/or death (n = 65, 81.3%).<sup>15</sup> Next, approximately 10% (n = 12) of threats had been directed towards farm animals<sup>16</sup> and just under 14% (n = 11) of actual injuries and/or deaths had been carried out on farm animals.<sup>17</sup> Least common were threats or actual injury or death towards 'other types of animal' (4.2% and 5% respectively) (see Table 9).

<sup>15</sup> This represents 43.3% (n = 150) of participants who had pet in the last two years.

<sup>16</sup> This represent 38.7% (n = 31) and of participants who had farm animals in the last two years.

<sup>17</sup> This represent 35.5% (n = 31) and of participants who had farm animals in the last two years.

**Table 9: Type of Relationship with Animal Threatened or Actually Injured/Killed (number and percentage)**

	Threatened		Actually Injured or Killed	
	n	%	n	%
Pet	102	85.7	65	81.3
Farm animal	12	10.1	11	13.8
Other types of animal/ wild animals	5	4.2	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table notes:**

1. Because participants were able to make multiple responses the total exceeds the total number of people who indicated threats and/or actual injury or death of a pet, farm animal or another type of animal.
2. Respondents could report more than one type of animal. As such, in terms of threats, 119 represents a total number rather than the number who reported a threat being made (n = 111). Similarly, 80 reflects a total number rather than the 74 respondents who reported actual injury and/or death.

Women's Refuge survey respondents were asked what kinds of animals had been threatened, injured or killed. Dogs were most commonly reported (n = 80, 45%). This was followed by cats (n = 59, 33%), birds (n = 10, 6%) and cows (n = 8, 4%). Table 10 outlines animals reported to have been threatened and who suffered an actual injury and/or death.

**Table 10: Animals Threatened, Injured and/or Killed**

	Animals Threatened, Injured and/or Killed (n = 178)	
	n	%
Dog	80	45%
Cat	59	33%
Bird	10	6%
Cow	8	4%
Rabbit	4	2%
Sheep	4	2%
Chicken	4	2%
Fish	2	1%
Horse	2	1%
Guinea Pig	1	1%
Goat	1	1%
Mouse	1	1%
Rat	1	1%
Pig	1	1%

**Table notes:**

- Multiple responses were obtained and percentages add up to over 100 because of rounding.

## 5.5 Leaving an abusive relationship

As previously discussed, interviews with family violence survivors and Women's Refuge staff revealed a number of barriers to women with animals remaining in abusive relationships.

The survey investigated the following most commonly reported barriers:

- fear that one's partner will harm pets/animals
- lack of alternative accommodation
- prohibitive cost of care and a lack of care options.

A delay in leaving the abusive relationship was discussed as a primary outcome of these and the other barriers explored in the qualitative component of the study. As such, respondents were questioned about the amount of time, if at all, they had remained in the relationship because of their animals.

### 5.5.1 Fear that a partner will harm pets/animals

Women's Refuge survey respondents were asked if they had remained in the relationship because they feared some form of retribution from their partner; in the event that the woman left the relationship but left the animals behind. In response, approximately one third of respondents (n = 67, 33%) reported 'completely' or 'somewhat' having stayed in the relationship for fear of their partner taking out some form of retribution on the animal (see Table 11).

**Table 11: Reasons for Staying in the Abusive Relationship – Fear of Partner Harming Animals**

	Worried that partner would harm the pets or animals if they were left behind	
	n	%
Completely	25	12.3
Somewhat	42	20.7
Not at all	93	45.8
N/A	38	18.7
Missing	5	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table notes:**

1. 165 respondents reported either a threat or actual harm or death of an animal sometime in their relationship
2. N/A refers to those who did not report any threats, actual injury or death of an animal.

### 5.5.2 Lack of alternative accommodation

Women's Refuge survey respondents were asked to what degree, if at all, they had stayed in the relationship because of difficulties finding accommodation that would permit animals. Approximately 40% of respondents (n = 81; 39.9%) reported that they had remained in the relationship, either completely or somewhat, because of difficulties securing alternative accommodation that would permit animals (see Table 12).

**Table 12: Reasons for Staying in the Abusive Relationship – Lack of Alternative Accommodation**

	Unable to find alternative accommodation that would allow pets or animals	
	n	%
Completely	24	11.8
Somewhat	57	28.1
Not at all	84	41.4
N/A	35	17.2
Missing	3	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table notes:**

1. 165 respondents reported either a threat or actual harm or death of an animal sometime in their relationship
2. N/A refers to those who did not report any threats, actual injury or death of an animal.

**5.5.3 Prohibitive cost of care and a lack of care options**

A survey of each of the 17 local SPCA offices was carried out in an effort to triangulate findings from the qualitative semi-structured interviews with SPCA staff and Women's Refuge clients and staff. Of the 17 SPCAs, six provided some form of temporary boarding or housing for select animals. Cost per day and per week for the type of animal cared for by the specific SPCA are presented in Table 13. For illustrative purposes, costs are presented for each of the six SPCAs individually. Cats were most commonly catered for, while only one SPCA provided some form of boarding for horses. The mean weekly costs reflect the cost prohibitive nature of the experiences reported by Refuge clients that were interviewed. For example, a weeks accommodation for one cat ranged between \$31.50 and \$63.00.

**Table 13: Boarding and/or Kennelling Costs for Select Animals  
(per day and per week in dollars)**

	NZSPCA #1	NZSPCA #2	NZSPCA #3	NZSPCA #4	NZSPCA #5	NZSPCA #6	Mean Cost
Cat	\$4.50 pd (\$31.50 p/w)	\$9.00 pd (\$63.00 p/w)	\$7.00 pd (\$49.00 p/w)	First fortnight free	Donation	Donation	\$6.83 pd (\$47.83 p/w)
Dog	\$8.00 (\$56.00 p/w)	\$12.00 (\$84.00 p/w)	N/A	First fortnight free	Donation	Donation	\$10.00 pd (\$70.00 p/w)
Rabbit, Guinea Pig, Mouse, Rat, Birds	N/A	\$3.00 (\$21.00 p/w)	N/A	First fortnight free	Donation	Donation	\$3.00 pd (\$21.00 p/w)
Horse	N/A	N/A	\$2.86 pd (\$20.00 p/w)	N/A	Donation	Donation	\$2.86 pd (\$20.00 p/w)

**Table notes:**

1. Mean cost is calculated on those centres that provide a financial cost only.
2. The following abbreviations are used - per week is denoted by p/w and per day is abbreviated to p/d.

### 5.5.4 Time taken to leave

Fifty-six Refuge survey respondents (27.6% ) reported that they would have left their abusive relationship earlier if they had not had a pet or animal. Respondents were then asked how many weeks, months or years they stayed in the relationship because of the pet or animal. Length of time ranged from one week to 22 years.<sup>18</sup> The median amount of time that respondents had remained in the relationship was two years.

Of interest, a review of the literature identified that that childless women were more likely to remain in the relationship out of concern for their pet's safety (Ascione et al. (2007); Flynn 2000a). While no statistically significant relationship was identified in the current study (see Table A1,  $\chi^2(2) = 2.034, p = 0.362$ ) it is noteworthy that a greater proportion of women without children (54.3%) reported having remained in the relationship to some extent because of concern that their partners would harm their pet than women with children (40.7%) (see Table 14 below).

<sup>18</sup> Of interest, of the 56 people who answered this question, three respondents were not able to quantify the amount of time they had stayed and attributed this to a multidimensional nature of violence (including psychological, emotional, sexual, physical and financial forms of violence) as well as the often intermittent manifestation of violence.

**Table 14: Exploring the Association Childlessness and Delay in Leaving an Abusive Relationship**

To what extent did you stay because you were worried that your pet would be harmed if you left?	Count	Do you have children		Total
		Yes	No	
Not at all	Count	77	16	93
	Percent	61.6	45.7	58.1
Somewhat	Count	30	12	42
	Percent	24.0	34.3	26.3
Completely	Count	18	7	25
	Percent	14.4	20	15.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>160</b>

**Table notes:**

1. Table 15 excludes missing data and participants who did not report any threats, actual injury or death of an animal

## 6 POSSIBLE RESPONSES

A number of structural barriers were identified hindering women from leaving abusive relationships (see Chapter 4). It is also noteworthy that these barriers contributed to significant delays in many women leaving the relationship. Approximately one quarter of Women's Refuge Survey respondents stated that they would have left the relationship if they did not have a pet or animal and that the length of delay ranged between one week and 22 years with a median of two years remaining in a relationship.

Participants, including Women Refuge clients and staff, NGO representatives as well as government representatives made similar suggestions. Suggestions have been grouped thematically below.

### 6.1 Early intervention and awareness raising

#### 6.1.1 Public awareness

The current study's findings highlight that possible responses to the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence need to be cognisant of early intervention and awareness raising. Family violence survivor interview participants (n = 18, 60%) related that they had not stayed exclusively because of the animals but that, through an abusive process that incorporated animal cruelty, they had gradually lost confidence and were too intimidated to leave the relationship. Further, as the family violence moved into crisis situations, other participants described that the welfare of their animals became secondary to their own and their children's wellbeing. In both situations, participants stated that if they had recognised the significance of animal cruelty when it first began they would have left the relationship earlier which would have avoided the eventual injury to themselves, their children and their animals.

*There is a need for some form of promotion saying that if this is happening in your home then this is family violence. People need to know that it might start with the cat getting kicked and that it is probably going to get worse (Cynthia, urban, New Zealand European, 55 years old, one child)*

*People need to be educated to know that certain behaviours are not okay. Like if it was on TV you can question whether or not something is okay. It can show you that you are not the only one. That his behaviour is not acceptable. And above all, something on TV will tell you that you are not going to be laughed at when you tell someone that your partner is abusing your cat (Melissa, urban, New Zealand European, 21 years old, no children)*

#### 6.1.2 Increased awareness amongst SPCA and NZ Police

The need to increase awareness of the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence was also discussed in relation to SPCA staff and the NZ Police. Specifically, while the SPCA were continually reported as having extensive knowledge of animal cruelty, they were generally regarded as having little knowledge of family violence. It was perhaps because of

a lack of family violence knowledge that some SPCA staff described having minimised or mistrusted women's explanations that they were surrendering their animals because of needing to leave a family violence situation. Similarly, opportunities were identified for the NZ Police to increase their knowledge of the interplay between animal cruelty and family violence as a number of survivor participants and Women's Refuge staff reported feeling as though the Police often minimised or did not sufficiently respond to animal cruelty.

It is recommended that SPCA staff and Police undergo extensive training, with Women's Refuge involvement, on the co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence. The training should provide the Police and the SPCA staff with the ability to:

- understand that animal cruelty is a form of family violence
- understand that animals can be used as pawns to keep the women and children in the relationship
- understand difficulties experienced by women choosing to disclose this information
- treat the disclosure of animal cruelty as a component of family violence as confidential
- investigate or refer the case to an appropriate agency in the event that animal cruelty indicates possible family violence.
- minimise a host of barriers associated with animals that prevent the woman leaving the relationship (e.g. cost of kennelling, surrender fees and difficulties finding alternative accommodation)
- identify and develop a network of provider agencies that can result in appropriate and timely responses to family violence-related animal cruelty

## 6.2 Accommodating animals

Similar to international findings, participants unanimously agreed that there is a need for some form of temporary accommodation for animals to enable women to leave abusive situations (Faver & Strand, 2003; Ascione et al., 2007; Volant et al., 2007).<sup>19</sup> Further, rather than accommodation per se a number of women reported needing financial and logistical assistance to transport their animals to a safe area (e.g. friends and family).

*We need a safe house for animals that provides free boarding facilities (Katie, urban, New Zealand European, 26 years old, one child)*

*My brother up in X [town] organised somewhere for me to take my horse but I didn't have any way of transporting them 200 kilometres (Margaret, rural, New Zealand European, 24 years old, no children)*

Participants strongly suggested that any programmatic response should:

<sup>19</sup> Notably, accommodating the animal removes one barrier that might prevent the women from leaving the relationship but it also prevents women and children returning to the relationship because of concerns regarding the safety of their pet they left behind (Carlisle-Frank et al., 2004).

- provide free temporary accommodation
- provide confidential accommodation so that a perpetrator is not able to locate the animal (Ascione, 1998)
- enable women and children to have regular updates and visit the animal while it is in care. Similar findings have been reported internationally as women and children suffer great emotional distress when separated from a beloved companion animal (Ascione, 2000; Flynn, 2000a; Loring & Bolden-Hines, 2004)
- include provision for veterinary expenses and assume the need for animal immunisation and restricted access to other animals because of the animals vulnerable state (as a victim of abuse) and the risk that the animal may injure a third party.

No consensus was reached about how the programme might best be accessed. While a number of participants suggested that the programme might ideally sit with Women's Refuge there was some concern that not all women in an abusive relationship might want to access Women's Refuge services. As such, there is a need to be cognisant that the programme aim to provide broad accessibility and be mindful that stigma associated with accessing the service may act as a deterrent.

Two accommodation and programme issues remain unaddressed. First, larger animals and farm animals were generally excluded from the above programme discussion as animal accommodation was geared towards domestic pets such as cats, birds and dogs. As such there is an outstanding need to discuss possible strategies that could assist women with farm and larger animals leave abusive relationships. Finally, there is also a need to clarify an individual's right to restrict a perpetrator's access to their animals. While placing the animal in publically restricted (confidential) accommodation may alleviate the risk of a perpetrator demanding access to their animal it would be prudent seeking legal clarity.

It is recommended that:

- a funding programme be developed for women to place their animals in temporary accommodation and associated veterinary costs
- key agencies (e.g. RNZSPCA, the National Collective of Women's Refuges and the Ministry of Social Development) discuss how the funding programme might be best administered
- a means of securing accommodation for women with animals is develop with key government agencies. Possible partners might include Housing New Zealand and the Ministry of Social Development.

### **6.3 SPCA-related barriers**

A number of public misconceptions and beliefs about SPCA were identified as acting as a barrier to women engaging with the Society. These barriers include:

- a belief that SPCA will euthanise the women's animal if the animal was not rehomed after the woman had surrendered the animal to SPCA's care
- not wanting to engage with SPCA because they did not want to surrender the animal (i.e. needing temporary accommodation only)
- not being able to afford a surrender fee (or donation) in situations where the owner was surrendering the permanent care of their animal to the SPCA.

Further, as previously discussed, transporting animals to alternative safe accommodation is difficult for many women in a family violence relationship because they may not have access to a car or the finances to pay for petrol. In addition, considerable distances were reported between the women's residence and the closest SPCA.

It is recommended that:

- RNZSPCA euthanasia practices be widely circulated to remove public misconceptions
- establish a supplementary funding source to remove the burden of surrender fees/donations
- develop mechanisms to assist women without transport or funds to surrender or place their animals in the SPCA's care.

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## Appendix I: Cruelty to Animals Survey

Refuge name \_\_\_\_\_

Date completed \_\_\_\_\_

### INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

1. Women's Refuge is carrying out a national survey on family violence. Your answers would help us better understand family violence. Would you like to participate in a brief survey? (please tick one)

Yes  → go to question 4a

No  → end call. Set this survey aside to be sent back to National Office.

### SCREENING QUESTIONS

2. Have you had a pet or animal in your home in the past **two years**? (please tick one)

Yes

No

3. Have you or your partner had farm animals in the past **two years**? (please tick one)

Yes

No

**If the respondent has answered YES to EITHER question go to Question 4.**

**If the respondent has answered NO to BOTH questions then thank them for their time and end the survey.**

**The screening portion of the survey needs to be sent back to National Office with the completed surveys. This helps us estimate prevalence.**

### VIOLENCE TOWARDS ANIMALS

4. a) Has a family member or your partner **EVER THREATENED** to injure or kill one of your pets, animals and/or farm animals? (please tick one)

Yes   
 No  → go to question 5a  
 Not applicable  → go to question 5a

- b) Has this happened in the last **2 years**? (please tick one)

Yes   
 No

- c) Was this a pet, farm animal or another type of animal (eg a wild animal)? (tick all that apply)

Pet   
 Farm animal   
 Another type of animal

- d) Was the person who made this **THREAT** your partner, a family member or someone else you live with? (please tick one)

Your partner   
 A family member   
 Someone else

If someone else, please state who: \_\_\_\_\_

**The next series of questions looks at whether or not an animal was actually harmed.**

5. a) Has a family member or your partner **EVER ACTUALLY** injured or killed one of your pets, animals and/or farm animals? (please tick one)

Yes   
 No  → go to question 6  
 Not applicable  → go to question 6

- b) Has this happened in the last **2 years**? (please tick one)

Yes   
 No   
 Not applicable

- c) Was this a pet, farm animal or another type of animal (eg a wild animal)? (tick all that apply)

Pet   
 Farm animal   
 Another type of animal

- d) Was the person who **ACTUALLY** injured or killed the animal your partner, a family member or someone else you live with? (please tick one)

Your partner   
 A family member   
 Someone else

If someone else, please state who: \_\_\_\_\_

## ANIMALS

6. What types of animals were threatened, injured or killed (please tick all that apply)

- Cat
- Dog
- Bird
- Guinea pig
- Rabbit
- Fish
- Horse
- Sheep
- Cow
- Other

If Other, please state: \_\_\_\_\_

## CHILDREN

7. Do you have children? (please tick one)

- Yes  → go to question 8
- No  → go to question 16

8. How many children do you have? (please state)

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What are their ages? (please state)

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Have your children/child **EVER** witnessed your partner or a family member you live with **THREATEN** to injure or kill one of your pets, animals and/or farm animals? (please tick one)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

11. Was the person who **THREATENED** to injure or kill the animal your partner, a family member or someone else you live with? (please tick one)

- Your partner
- A family member
- Someone else

If someone else, please state who: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Was this a pet, farm animal or another type of animal (eg a wild animal)? (tick all that apply)

- Pet
- Farm animal
- Another type of animal

**The next series of questions looks at whether or not an animal was actually harmed.**

13. Have your children **EVER** witnessed your partner or a family member you live with **ACTUALLY** injure or kill one of your pets, animals and/or farm animals? (tick one)
- Yes
- No  → go to question 16
- Not applicable  → go to question 16
14. Was the person who **ACTUALLY** injured or killed the animal your partner, a family member or someone else you live with? (please tick one)
- Your partner
- A family member
- Someone else
- If someone else, please state who: \_\_\_\_\_
15. Was this a pet, farm animal or another type of animal (eg a wild animal)? (tick all that apply)
- Pet
- Farm animal
- Another type of animal

## LEAVING

**Sometimes women stay in abusive partner relationships because of their animals. They might not have anywhere to place the animal or they might be worried that their partner will injure the animal if it is left behind. I just need to ask you some questions about this.**

**For the next two questions please rate your responses on a scale of 1 to 3. Where 1 means “Not at all”, 2 means “Somewhat” and 3 means “Completely”.**

16. To what extent did you stay in the relationship (partner) because you found it hard to find somewhere to live that allows pets or animals? (please tick one)
- 1 Not at all
- 2 Somewhat
- 3 Completely
- Not applicable
17. To what extent did you stay in the relationship (partner) because you were worried that your partner would harm the pets or animals if you left them behind? (please tick one)
- 1 Not at all  → go to question 20
- 2 Somewhat
- 3 Completely
- Not applicable
18. Would you have left the relationship earlier if you did not have a pet or animal? (tick one)
- Yes
- No
19. If yes, how many weeks, months or years did you stay in the relationship because of your pet or animal? (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

I just have a few questions that will help us develop a profile of those who have participated in the survey.

20. How old are you? (please state)

\_\_\_\_\_

21. What is your ethnicity (please tick all that apply)

NZ European/Pakeha

Māori

Samoan

Cook Island Māori

Tongan

Niuean

Chinese

Indian

Other (please state): \_\_\_\_\_

22. Employment status (please tick one)

Full-time employed

Part-time employed

Beneficiary/Unemployed

Home duties

Student

23. Do you live in a rural or semi-rural area?

Yes

No

24. How long have been involved with Refuge?

A week or less

More than a week

25. Are you currently staying in a Refuge/Whare?

Yes

No



### Type and cost of accommodation provided

5. Do you provide boarding or housing accommodation for domestic animals (dog/cat/small animals (pocket pet), rabbit, guinea pig, rats, mice etc)

Yes  -> go to question 6

No  -> go to question 9

6. How much does your SPCA charge to board each of the following per day?

Cat \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Dog \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Horse \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

7. If the owner is a beneficiary, would Work and Income pay for the boarding costs while the women finds somewhere to live?

Yes

No

8. If the owner cannot not afford to board their animal with you the options are:

The owner surrenders the animal to the SPCA

The owner keeps the animal

Gives the animal to someone outside of SPCA

Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

9. Is there a surrender fee or do you always take animals for free?

Yes  -> go to question 10

No  -> go to question 12

10. How much is the surrender fee for:

A cat \$ \_\_\_\_\_

A dog \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Horse \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

11. On a scale of 1 – 5 please indicate you agree with the following statement where 1 means “completely disagree”, 3 means “neither agree nor disagree and 5 means “completely agree”

11 a) I would charge a surrender fee if I did not believe that the person’s reason for surrendering the animal was related to domestic violence (i.e. if I thought they were lying)

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 5  
**Strongly disagree**                      **Neither agree nor**                      **Strongly agree**

**Disagree**

12. Are there any boarding kennels/catteries that your SPCA has an established relationship with (ie that could take referrals)

Yes

No

13. If there was an opportunity to have a formal agreement to help the public at difficult times in the future - leaving abusive relationships, domestic violence, family violence situations – would your SPCA be supportive of this.

Yes

No

May be

Already have this

**SPCA**

14. What is the name of the SPCA?

(please state) \_\_\_\_\_

15. What is the name of the city/town?

(please state) \_\_\_\_\_

16. How many kilometres are you from the CBD? (please state)

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix III: Chi-square Table

**Table A1: Exploring the Association Between Childless Women with Animals and the Propensity to Stay in an Abusive Relationship**

Childless	Count	Would have left earlier if I did not have a pet or animal		Total
		Yes	No	
Yes	Count	42	44	86
	Expected count	44.2	41.8	86.0
No	Count	14	9	23
	Expected count	11.8	11.2	23.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>Count/ Expected count</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>109</b>