

Should People Who Abuse Animals Be Jailed?

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Thesis Statement

The scope of this research paper is to discuss on whether people who indulge in animal abuse should be legally punished and sent to jail.

Introduction

Violent acts toward animals have long been acknowledged as indicators of a violent psychopathology that does not confine itself to animals. Studies have now convinced sociologists, lawmakers, and the courts that act of cruelty toward animals merit our attention. They can be the first augury of a violent pathology that includes humans.

The lack of effective enforcement of the law against animal abuse throughout the world is well acknowledged by most people. Localized individual cruelty inflicted to innocent animals occurs much too often, one of the problems being that no law and punishment is implemented to the ones who do such mentally unstable purely cruel acts.

Animal Abuse- Does it make sense?

Many people who in their hearts love animals are culpable of the most common form of abuse. Due to the fact that so many pet owners are irresponsible by either not constraining their dogs and cats, or else failing to have them spayed, or neutered, millions of dogs and cats are destroyed every single year due to over population. It is truly a deplorable sight when you visit a local animal shelter and see numerous household pets living out their days in tiny cages. As one passes by their cages dogs are seen begging the visitors to take them home! They have been bred over the centuries to be man's friend and servant. They often place their bodies up against the side of the cage in an effort to have the person outside pet them. Only the hardest of hearts cannot be moved by this. Domestic cats are an even greater problem. Felines are competent of producing up to six litters of kittens a year. A very revealing poster can be seen at many animal shelters that evince a basket of cuddly kittens gazing out at the camera. In bold print below the message of "pick one, kiss the others goodbye" stands out at you. There are simply not enough homes for all of the millions of dogs and cats and as a result they are put to death and disposed of.

Other people who keep pets do not offer a safe and healthy environment for them to live in. It is cruel to chain a dog to a tree or post. Most responsible animal shelters will not allow adoption if they know this is the intention of the potential owner. It is crucial that your dog has a fenced yard, or an inside dwelling to spend it's time. Regular walks are crucial to the animals mental as well as physical well-being. Cats that are allowed to run loose outside of ones house on average have a life span of around three years. Those that live on the inside can live to be fifteen to twenty years. Another common form of domestic animal abuse is when owners have a total misunderstanding as to how to discipline their pets. Inflicting physical pain upon an animal to get a point across is never the solution. Professional animal trainers might advocate the use of a rolled up newspaper to spank a puppy. Pet owners should never hit their pets with a bare hand. Newspaper hitting is not meant to inflict pain, but to cause a loud popping sound to get the animals attention. No more than one or two blows should ever be imposed upon your dog.

Animal Abuse- Hard Facts

There are numerous stories, which inform that certain demented individuals get some sort of pleasure in torturing animals. In 1993 two Texas teenagers decided it would be fun to beat a horse to death with baseball bats! One dog owner in New York put his young Cocker Spaniel inside a burning gas oven for wetting on his floor.

Animal rights advocates from around the world have disclosed even more gruesome acts of cruelty in other nations. In Korea there are millions of people who eat dogs! Dog meat is even served in restaurants. There is a ritual that thousands of Koreans participate in every year. They will obtain a dog and keep it as their household pet for one year. Then they will take it out and tie a rope around its neck, and hang it from a tree. In no way is this humane hanging, by design the dog is to slowly strangle to death. The reason being? It is believed the animal's meat will be tender when consumed!

In certain third world countries domestic cats are regarded as a delicacy. Live cats are kept inside cages much like we see lobsters in grocery store aquariums. They are sold in open market places.

Once a buyer picks out the one that they want, the vendor takes the cat out of the cage and drops it in a boiling pot of water and places a lid on top. The poor cat desperately scratches and screams in a futile attempt to get out prior to death. These types of abuses are very repugnant to human decency.

Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse

Extensive research has documented the links between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence (Lockwood & Ascione, 1998; Ascione & Arkow, 1999). As a result, some communities have formed coalitions of human service and animal welfare organizations to deal with the interrelated problems of woman battering, child maltreatment, and animal abuse.

Since domestic abuse is aimed toward the powerless, animal abuse and child abuse often go hand in hand. Parents who neglect an animal's need for proper care or who abuse animals may also abuse or neglect their children. Some abusive adults who know better than to abuse a child in public have no such scruples about abusing an animal publicly. In 88 percent of 57 New Jersey families being treated for child abuse, animals in the home had been abused (DeViney et al 1983).

While animal abuse is a significant sign of child abuse, the parent isn't always the one harming the animal. Children who abuse animals may be duplicating a lesson learned at home; like their parents, they are reacting to anger or frustration with violence. Their violence is addressed at the only individual in the family more vulnerable than themselves: an animal. Indeed, domestic violence is the most common backdrop for childhood cruelty to animals.

Animal Abuse- Who are Involved?

Studies reveal that there are three main reasons why people abuse animals.

Unintentional Abusers

Majority of the people who abuse animals don't do it intentionally. They offend animals because they don't think about or realize what they are doing. Many of these people are not aware that what they are doing is cruel. Some people will try to keep their pet under control by using cruel types of discipline. They may think that punishment and deterrence are the best ways of solving problems.

Other people are cruel because they don't pay attention. For example, someone might forget to give their cat water for a few days or leave their dog in a car on a hot day with the windows rolled up. Often these people know better, but they either forget or don't care enough to pay attention.

Finally, some people hurt animals even though they think they're helping them. For example, some people have so many pets that they can't care for them all. These people are called hoarders, and they take in so many animals because they love them. Unfortunately, they can't care for all the animals they take in, and the animals end up living in a place that's cramped and unhealthy.

Intentional but Intermittent Abusers

The next category of animal abusers do it on purpose, but don't keep doing it for a long period of time. For example, a group of kids may decide to throw rocks at a nest of baby birds they happened to see, or they may hurt a stray cat they find.

These people are normally young, and they hurt animals because they aren't thinking, or because they can't stand up to their friends and peer pressure. The ones who are aren't really thinking might be mad at someone else (like their parents) and kick their pet dog because they can't kick their parents. Or they may think it's fun to watch an animal run away frightened without really thinking about how the animal feels. The ones who are giving in to peer pressure might be attempting to show off to their friends. Or they may be with a group of friends who are all trying to imprint each other, and so they go along with what everyone else is doing.

Intentional but Sustained Abusers

This group of people is the worst offenders. These are people who intentionally hurt animals because they enjoy hurting things, or because it makes them feel powerful. Many of these people would hurt other people if they could get away with it, they just choose to hurt animals because animals are more helpless than people.

Why do these people do this? There are different reasons. A lot of these people want to have command over others. They will hurt an animal because they think this means they control the animal. Or they may hurt the animal to control another person. Others simply enjoy pain and violence. Those who relish violence might also destroy inanimate objects as well as animals and people.

Animal (ab)use in today's society

In our modern society, animals are handled as objects that are there for our use and pleasure, rather than as fellow sentient beings. There are two major areas where animals are treated particularly badly, namely in farming and in medical research.

1. Modern Factory Farming processes include the keeping of animals in pens where their movement is exceedingly restricted, the injection of growth hormones (linked to health risks in humans), and artificial insemination to keep milk cows pregnant (with calves being removed from their mothers almost at birth to make the milk yield as high as possible). Farming of all animals, due to the drive to maximize profits, has little or no regard for the animals and reaches the heights of barbarity and redundant cruelty. The many recent food scares have shown that intensive farming also affects the quality and safety of the food. Perpetual use of artificial fertilizers and pesticides is also detrimental to our health, as well as poisoning our rivers and wildlife. The drive to bigger farms indicates we are losing valuable wildlife habitats as more and more hedges are grubbed out and land is drained. Even with free-range organic farming, the animals are often kept in quite crowded conditions and still suffer stress and pain before their eventual slaughter. We have no need for animal products in our diet - indeed their intake is often harmful. There is another reason why the farming of animals must stop
2. The second factor is linked with population explosion. The ever-growing number of domesticated animals is contending for land, food, water and other resources with the

ever-growing human population, as well as producing an ever growing amount of methane which is one of the major greenhouse gases.

Society's response to Animal Abuse

Schools, parents, communities, and courts that shrug off animal abuse as a "minor" crime are ignoring a time bomb waiting to explode. Instead, communities should be aggressively penalizing animal abusers, probing families for other signs of violence, and requiring intensive counseling for perpetrators. Communities must recognize that abuse to any living individual is unacceptable and endangers everyone. Additionally, children should be educated to care for and respect animals in their own right.

Remedial Measures against Animal Abuse

When stories of animal abuse and neglect appear in the news, there is always a public outcry and a huge number of letters written to governments, media and other organizations, denouncing the acts and demanding more effective deterrents and punishments. Many people react with concern and even anger, often directed at what they consider the law's inability to deal adequately with conduct that seems obviously wrong. Existing penalties appear to do little to deter people who abuse animals; the result may be a loss of public confidence in the law. This is a genuine concern. In our modern society where everything moves very fast and even human life has become very cheap and pales when this is extended to animals. Despite all possible initiatives taken by different organizations and individuals it has become imperative that stringent legal recourse is essential to counter animal abuse.

Legislation against Animal Abuse

In order to prevent cruelty against animals countries across the globe have come up with varying legal measures to counter abuse in any form. This principally attempts to broadly cover the following issues

1. Animals are recognized as having intrinsic value and as sentient beings capable of feeling pain and suffering, not like property such as a car.

2. Unowned animals such as strays, wildlife and other animals should be protected by a Criminal Code.
3. Provisions to prohibit ownership, possession, custody, control and/or use of an animal should be increased from two years to an unlimited period of time.
4. Prison terms/ Penalty could be awarded to offenders based on the nature of crime committed.

Can Law Mitigate Animal Abuse?

As it now stands, first-time cruelty-to-animal offenders in any state are charged with misdemeanors regardless of how badly they treat an animal or the number of animals they abuse. Perpetrators hardly ever go to jail. They frequently duck out of paying the costs of treating their ailing pets. Some even get to take their animals back home. Repeat offenders face felony charges unless their first convictions are dismissed, which are often the case.

Case Studies of animal abuse Vs Legal punishment

Case Report 1

Dog mutilator Larry Drown Jr. was sentenced to 11 months and 29 days in jail for cutting the testicles off a dog.

Case Report 2

March 8, 1997, volunteers for the Noah's Ark Animal Shelter arrived at work to find a gruesome discovery. Sixteen cats dead and six others severely injured. Blood was splattered everywhere. David and Laura Sykes, the founders of Noah's Ark, found dozens of other cats hiding and trembling in fear. Arrested were Chad Lamansky, Daniel Myers, and Justin Tobin.

Case Report 3

In Colorado, the case of two boys who set a cat afire prompted the legislature to consider toughening animal-cruelty penalties. Many lawmakers shared public outrage that the boys, 16 and 17,

spent only two days in jail after last year's assault, but a bill to make a repeat animal-cruelty offense a felony died in committee in April.

Case Report 4

In Florida's Pinellas County, Robert Pettyjohn received a five-year prison sentence in April for killing one llama and partially blinding a second in a February 2001 attack when he was 18. Pettyjohn was convicted earlier of shooting bulls with arrows.

Case Report 5

In Amsterdam, New York, Nicholas Brodsky, 18, and Carly Furman, 16, face up to two years in jail and \$5,000 fines if convicted in the mutilation and killing of three cats. The teens, jailed while awaiting trial, are among the first people charged under New York's so-called Buster's Law, which toughens punishment for animal cruelty and was named after a kitten burned to death in 1997.

Need Animal Abusers be jailed?

Regardless of past criminal behavior, such violent, cruel actions deserve immediate action. Animal abusers have been shown time and time again to be repeat offenders. Our judicial system needs to recognize this and punish offenders accordingly, so as to prevent a second offense. A strong message must be sent to any person who feels they can dominate, abuse or torture another creature.

Conclusion

It is imperative that any criminal justice system should treat crimes against animals more seriously. It could function as a more effective deterrent to morally reprehensible behavior. This connotes a trend, which threatens not only the welfare of animals, but also the moral and physical welfare of society at large. Law enforcement experts have long considered intentional cruelty as an indicator of the potential for increasing violence and dangerousness, and studies have shown that many serial killers and mass murderers have a history of animal abuse (e.g. Kellert and Felthous, 1985). Animal abuse may also be an indicator of other forms of violence in the home, such as abuse of a child,

spouse or elderly person (e.g.wo DeViney, Dickert, & Lockod, 1983). In short, cruelty towards animals is certainly not a trivial issue.

Today there is growing evidence that childhood violence toward animals is often a sign something is terribly wrong, and acts as a warning of future violence against humans. With guidance from adults children can be taught to empathize with the sentience of other creatures. Without intervention and/or positive mentoring they may become locked into a lifetime of perpetuating cruelty. Violence - whether the victim has two or four legs, wings, or fins - is violence.

Remember, animals can't speak for themselves. We must be the voice for animals in need. It's the least we can do.

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