



lucy's project
Safe Families - Paws and All



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Someone is hurting my animal

If someone is hurting you or your animals it is not OK.

Is it domestic/family violence or abuse?

Domestic/ family violence or abuse (DVFA) describes an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse perpetrated by one person against another person or animal.

People who hurt animals often don't stop there. You and your animals have the right to be safe.

Always take animal cruelty and threats of harm to all animals, seriously.

Types of animal abuse

Abuse against animals often involves the 'lack' of something, or being deprived of something such as medical care, food, water or exercise. It can include psychological or emotional abuse such as being yelled at, being deprived of affection or witnessing violence against a guardian. Animal victims might be subjected to sexual abuse. Physical abuse can include burning, drowning, hitting, kicking, strangulation, shooting or poisoning.

Remember that wildlife, feral animals, stock animals, birds, reptiles and any other type of animal count too. You do not need to own or even like the animal.

Threatening to abuse or harm animals can be domestic violence.

What to do

If you or your animal is harmed or threatened by someone close to you, there are things you can do. It is important to mention any threats of harm or actual harm to yourself or your animals when speaking to support services: police, caseworkers, lawyers or other professionals assisting you.

Remember- Ensure your safety first. You can only keep your animal safe when you are safe.

Seek help and support

- Ring 000 if you are in immediate danger.
- Contact 1800RESPECT - a free 24/7 telephone (1800 737 32) and online information, referral and counselling service 1800respect.org.au
- Contact a domestic/family violence service, legal service or law enforcement (ask for the DV worker)
- In NSW contact the NSW DV hotline – 1800 656 463

Document 'ownership'

If you choose to leave with the animal, it may be important to keep evidence that the animal is yours.

- If the animal has been registered to you, purchased by you or transferred into your name, keep a copy of the registration papers with you.
- If the animal is not registered to you, but you consider yourself to be that animals' guardian, collect all evidence of the care you have given the animal. Vet bills, receipts for food, receipts for flea treatments/farrier/groomer etc. can support your claim.





Collect evidence

Keeping track of abusive incidents will enable you to better identify specific red flags, take steps toward safety, and prepare yourself if you decide to seek legal help.

Evidence can include:

- Text messages
- Photo/electronic images
- Electronic messages (email, WhatsApp, Messenger etc)
- Physical notes or letters
- Voice mails.

Record as many details of the threat as you can:

- Dates/times
- Which animal/s were threatened?
- What exactly did the person say or do?
- Names of any witnesses.

If the animal was injured, record as many of the circumstances around the attack as you can:

- How was the animal injured?
- How did the animal respond?
- What steps were taken by you to care for the animal? (if any were possible)
- Names of any witnesses (of the attack, recovery/treatment)
- If you have a good relationship with your vet, but the person abusing the animal does not, consider asking the vet to help you gather evidence.

Compile your evidence and keep it in a safe place.

Relocating with animals

You may have to temporarily find alternative accommodation for yourself and your animals.

- Set aside some cash to pay for boarding for a few nights or purchase a voucher using cash (so that the charge doesn't appear on a bank statement that might be seen).
- If your dog or cat is vaccinated, keep a copy of the vaccination certificate in a safe place in case you need to find emergency shelter for the animal at a cattery/kennel.
- Ensure your horses are Hendra vaccinated (NSW/QLD) so that you can access public horse facilities such as showgrounds and pony clubs. These facilities often offer temporary accommodation. Also keep a record of their vaccination for strangles/tetanus.
- See our factsheet on animal safety planning.

Where to report animal abuse

You can report animal abuse to:

- The RSPCA
- Animal Welfare League (in NSW)
- Police
- See also our factsheet on where to report animal abuse.