

Petition to the Government of Canada Requesting Mandatory Risk Assessment and Treatment for Anyone Convicted of Animal Cruelty Under the Criminal Code

Why is this petition important?

Animals are easy targets for abuse as they are vulnerable and without legal rights. Although the crime of animal cruelty may be viewed by some people as unimportant or trivial when compared with other crimes, studies show that people who harm animals may also be involved in other criminality, including crimes of violence toward humans, either simultaneously or in the future. Furthermore, according to the National Link Coalition animal abusers often kill and abuse pets to orchestrate fear, violence and retribution in homes marked by domestic violence. They add that animal cruelty rarely occurs in isolation—it's usually “the tip of the iceberg” and frequently the first opportunity for social services or law enforcement agencies to intervene.

In a speech delivered at the Congressional Informational Briefing on Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence in 1998, Special Agent Brantley of the Federal Bureau of Investigation noted the link between animal abuse and violence toward humans (typically referred to simply as “the link”) and revealed the importance of taking animal cruelty into account when assessing a perpetrator’s behaviour when he stated the following: “Some in our society make too much out of qualitatively distinguishing between violence against humans and violence against animals. Ladies and gentlemen, violence against animals *is violence* and when it is present, it is considered by the people I work with to be synonymous with a history of violence.” As animal cruelty is not only a crime of violence unto itself but one that is linked with violence against humans, the focus should be placed more on the *behaviour* demonstrated by someone who inflicts violence than on the species or legal status of the target victim. As psychologist Dr. Lynn Loar states, “the behaviour that harms the animal is the same behaviour that harms the human.”

As a result of recognizing the link between animal cruelty and violence toward humans, animal protection organizations, social services, and law enforcement agencies in the United States have been working together to address the link since the 1990s. Canada seems to be moving forward in this regard but there is more to be done. People convicted of animal cruelty typically still receive minimal sentences and there does not appear to be adequate recognition by the courts and other criminal justice workers of the potential risk animal abusers may pose to public safety. If someone convicted of animal cruelty does happen to be sentenced to significant time in custody, available risk assessment tools and treatment options are not designed specifically to allow the assessor to expose and gather information about animal abuse and the perpetrator’s motives for it. These deficiencies need to be addressed. The Colorado LINK Project found that “an animal cruelty offender’s potential risk to public safety may vary from little to none to extreme” and recommends that “animal abuse by adults and children be examined carefully through comprehensive and developmentally sensitive evaluation to help determine the context and seriousness of the abuse, causative factors and the perpetrator’s level of blameworthiness.” As animal cruelty is a crime of violence that is linked to violence against humans, then animals, people, and communities will be safer if everyone convicted of animal cruelty under the Criminal Code of Canada is required to undergo mandatory risk assessment and treatment developed specifically to target animal abuse.

Carole DeGroot,

Former parole officer (retired), Correctional Service Canada

E-mail: animalcrueltyriskassessment@gmail.com

Charlene Myers,

Founder, Animal Cruelty Legislation Advocates Canada

E-mail: ACLACanada@live.ca

Links to further resources:

<http://nationallinkcoalition.org/>

<http://nationallinkcoalition.org/faqs/prevention>

http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/abuse_neglect/qa/cruelty_violence_connection_faq.html

<http://coloradolinkproject.com/treatment-and-supervision/>

PETITION INSTRUCTION SHEET

Petition for mandatory risk assessment and treatment for anyone convicted of animal cruelty under the Criminal Code

INTRODUCTION

This petition calls upon the House of Commons to require that adequate risk assessment tools and intervention programs are developed and that everyone convicted of animal cruelty under the Criminal Code of Canada be required to undergo mandatory risk assessment and treatment developed specifically to target animal abuse.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SIGNING AND SUBMITTING THIS PETITION

Signing the petition:

- 1) Only residents of Canada (anyone who has lived in Canada for 6 months or more) may sign this petition.
- 2) The petition form should be printed one-sided only to prevent “bleed” of ink from one side of the paper to the other.
- 3) Please do not write anything (such as comments) in addition to what is requested on the petition form.
- 4) Please **PRINT** the **FULL NAME OF THE TOWN OR CITY** in which you reside (**NO ABBREVIATIONS ARE PERMITTED**); Provinces MAY be abbreviated.

Submitting the petition:

Before mailing the petition to the address below, please ensure the following:

- 1) All required information (name, address, signature) is provided on the petition form.
- 2) Your return address is on the envelope in case it needs to be returned to you for any reason such as insufficient postage.
- 3) Please mail **ORIGINAL** signed petitions (**PHOTOCOPIES ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE**) to:
ACLA Canada (short for Animal Cruelty Legislation Advocates Canada)
7895 Gladstone Drive
Prince George, BC V2N 3K5

The petition is available for download in PDF format at the following location by clicking “Download”: https://www.facebook.com/JusticeForCaptainPetition/app_112190812172796

Any questions about this petition may be directed to the following e-mail address:
ACLACanada@live.ca

TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED

Petition for mandatory risk assessment and treatment for anyone convicted of animal cruelty under the Criminal Code

We, the undersigned Residents of Canada, draw to the attention of the House the following:

Whereas, rather than being a minor crime with no relation to other criminal behaviour, studies show animal cruelty is, in fact, a "red flag indicator" of the potential for other criminality, including violence to humans, to be either co-occurring or occur in the future;

Whereas, there are many convicted animal abusers in Canada who have also been convicted of other crimes, including violence toward humans, such as Brian Whitlock of Vancouver, British Columbia who was convicted on June 12, 2013 of animal cruelty for beating his dog Captain in the head and body with a baseball bat and was sentenced to 60 days in jail, mandatory psychological counselling and 3 years of probation, but had also been convicted of assault and has subsequently been charged with killing his mother;

Whereas, animals, people, and communities will be safer if animal abuse is detected early and intervention happens immediately with the use of appropriate risk assessment tools and treatment programs created specifically to target animal abuse;

THEREFORE, your petitioners call upon the House of Commons in Parliament assembled to require that adequate risk assessment tools and intervention programs are developed and that everyone convicted of animal cruelty under the Criminal Code of Canada be required to undergo mandatory risk assessment and treatment developed specifically to target animal abuse.

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Please mail **ORIGINAL SIGNED PETITIONS ONLY** to:
ACLA Canada, 7895 Gladstone Drive, Prince George, British Columbia, V2N 3K5

