

ARE YOU CRUEL TO YOUR PET WITHOUT KNOWING IT?



An animal lover's misguided affection can harm a pet as much as any bully

By **RUTHERFORD
T. PHILLIPS**

Executive Director, American Humane Association

MANY ANIMAL LOVERS are shocked to learn that the most common cruelty to animals is by those who love them best.

We at the American Humane Association still fight brutality, cruel animal shows, sadistic hunting and slaughtering but find the most widespread cruelty is born of misguided affection.

Here are the most common ways in which animal lovers unwittingly hurt their pets. Do you know the right answers to these questions?

■ **Should you give your pet the freedom to run?**

Putting the cat or dog out at night is so common most of us think it is right. The truth is, millions of animals spend winter nights huddling for warmth in frozen corners. They become nuisances to neighbors. They are hurt in fights or killed by autos. They catch diseases. They become lost.

Your pet deserves a place in your home. Fencing him in is not cruel, but turning him loose, away from your protection, is.

■ **Do you give your pet what he likes to eat?**

Pets do not know what is good for them. They will eat spoiled food or poisoned food. They will eat cold food (which upsets some). Dogs love chicken, but any bone that splinters can choke them. Kittens love milk and birds love crackers, but their digestive systems do not take much. Many pet owners unwittingly keep pets in a state of digestive upset.

A serious cruelty is giving your pet the quantity he wants to eat. Most will eat far too much. Obesity damages an animal's health. A nice, plump animal is usually one that faces a shortened life.

■ **Do you spoil your pet?**

This is a great cruelty. Animals, like children, become neurotic and unhappy without discipline. Be consistent in discipline, or you will have a nervous, confused pet headed for trouble.

To punish, don't hurt your pet. He won't understand. Most trainers feel that a sharp command or scolding tone of voice can do the job. Act quickly and consistently, and soon a word and a look will be enough.

■ **Should you allow your pet to breed?**

Many think it is cruel to deny breeding. As a result, we now have 25 million stray cats in America as testimony to our "kindness." We have millions of other unwanted, hungry animals because pet owners didn't want to be "cruel."

Unless you are prepared to give the young a home, we urge that you have your pet painlessly neutered just at maturity. It will live longer and be easier to control. It will not be frustrated.

■ **Should you give a child a pet as a gift?**

Of course, if—

If the parents agree and will take responsibility for its care.

If the child will be taught to respect the animal as a fellow, feeling creature. Many a child has hurt or killed a small animal by careless play.

You must find out what the pet needs and teach this to the child.

If the animal is a suitable pet, not a holiday toy doomed to early death.

■ **Should you give an unwanted pet a "sporting chance" for life?**

Your circumstances may no longer allow for a pet. But it is cruel to abandon him, as so many do, thinking he will manage somehow.

He will live—for a while, hungry, exhausted, bewildered—until accident, wild animals, or exposure end his torture. If you can't find a home for him, take him to your animal shelter. Perhaps he will be adopted. If not, at least he can be spared a cruel, losing fight.

■ **Should you adopt a homeless animal?**

But is he homeless?

Call your animal shelter. Check around your community. An anxious owner may be waiting. If not, you may adopt the pet in good conscience.

Never, never adopt young birds or wild animals, however. Very knowing people may be able to handle them properly, but for most people to try is cruel.

■ **Do you doctor your sick pets?**

If so, are you a veterinarian?

Experienced owners may tell distemper from a cold, or stomach upset from feline enteritis. But most can't. It is appalling how many pets reach a veterinarian too late to be saved. It is cruel to keep a pet from medical attention.

■ **Should you shower a new pet with attention?**

No. A new young pet should be given time alone. Kittens and puppies are often exhausted or terrified by too much play with children or too many demands to perform. Give the pet hours without strain.

■ **Should you choose a house for your pet because of its beauty?**

This is one of the most common cruelties. Don't assume a commercial manufacturer knows what your particular animal needs.

Typical is the spherical fish bowl. Fish tanks need large surfaces exposed to air. A spherical bowl can suffocate fish. Many lovely cages are cruel. The smallest bird needs a cage at least two feet square to exercise.

The real answer to loving cruelty? Find out from experts what your pet really needs—in food, discipline, medicine, housing, and all the rest. Don't guess or assume. And remember, real kindness sometimes means denying things which affection makes us want to give.

Free Facts About Pets

The American Humane Association has several useful pamphlets which cover the care of animals and can help you guard against unintentional cruelty to your pet. Pamphlet titles are "Dogs," "Cats," "Birds," "Small Animals," "Fish," and "Horses and Burros." To get your free copy of any of these, write to: American Humane Association, Dept. FW, P.O. Box 1266, Denver 1, Colo.

COVER:

It took the expertise of famed animal photographer Walt Chandoha to get this charming set of kittens to "hold it." For a helpful story about pet care, see above.

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