

Kids and Critters:
Links between Child Maltreatment and Animal Abuse

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the links between child maltreatment and animal abuse, how these two forms of maltreatment often occur simultaneously within a family and how the existence of one maltreatment type should alert professionals to the potential for other types of harm. File reviews were completed at both Family and Children's Services of Renfrew County (FCS) and the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA), Renfrew County Branch. Data were collected on relevant variables, including maltreatment type, removal and return of children/animals, legal involvement and risk ratings. A total of 188 common files were found, representing almost 25% of OSPCA cases in a 6-year period; 48% of these cases were open at both agencies at the same time. When the files for the two agencies were merged, several statistically significant correlations were found, including: correlations between physical harm to pets and domestic violence for FCS clients; between *Criminal Code* charges for FCS clients and police involvement for OSPCA clients; and between removals of children from families involved with FCS and neglect of pets. These findings suggest that there is a need for cross-training and cross-reporting between child protection and animal welfare sectors to ensure better protection of both children and animals.

RESUME

La raison pour cette étude était d'examiner les liens entre le mauvais traitement des enfants et l'abus des animaux, comment ces deux formes de mauvais traitement souvent arrivent simultanément dans une famille et comment l'existence d'une sorte de mauvais traitement devrait alerter les professionnels du potentiel de tout autres types de mal. Revision des dossiers ont été complétés à la Société à l'enfance du comté de Renfrew (FCS) ainsi que la Société de l'Ontario de prévention de la cruauté des animaux du comté de Renfrew (SPCA de l'Ontario). Des données ont été recueillies sur des variables pertinentes, incluant le type de mauvais traitement, l'enlèvement et le retour des enfants / animaux, l'implication légale et le taux de risque. Un total de 188 dossiers en commun ont été trouvés, représentant presque 25% des cas du SPCA de l'Ontario dans une période de 6 ans, 48% de ces dossiers étaient ouverts aux deux agences en même temps. Quand les dossiers des deux agences ont été fusionnés, plusieurs statistiques corrélatives significatives ont été trouvées, incluant: corrélations entre le mal physique aux animaux et la violence domestique pour les clients de FCS; entre les accusations du *code criminel* pour les clients de FCS et l'implication policière pour les clients du SPCA de l'Ontario; et entre l'enlèvement des enfants dans les familles impliquées avec FCS et la négligence des animaux. Ces données suggèrent qu'il y a un besoin de croisement de formation au niveau des deux agences ainsi que un croisement de reportage entre les secteurs de la protection des enfants et la protection des animaux pour assurer une meilleure protection pour les enfants et les animaux.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Respect for all living things and taking responsibility for those who cannot care for themselves are key factors in human development. As we learn to take responsibility for our own actions, we transfer this learning into our dealings with other people. Extending kindness, mercy and justice to animals allows us to become more kind, considerate and just in our relations with one another. (OSPCA brochure, n.d. para. 1)

Children and companion animals – they are both living, breathing beings; they both require that their basic needs for food, shelter and medical care be met, they both can complete a family. However, they are both sometimes victims within those families – of abuse, of neglect, of being forgotten about or given away. “Children and animals have one thing in common - both are easy to hurt” (Child and Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence, n.d., para.1).

In the role of a child protection worker, abuse and neglect, and their impact and effect on a person or family, are seen on a daily basis. Reports of child maltreatment are investigated and assessed; decisions are made regarding child safety and plans for intervention are put in place, the ultimate goal being for a child to live in an environment free of risk. Any effort to prevent such acts before they occur is foremost in helping the children we attempt to protect in our work. With the knowledge that acts of abuse or neglect do not occur in isolation, nor do they impact only one part of a family (directly or indirectly), it is essential to make the links between the populations in order to reduce the number of incidents and/or the number of different victims, whether it be partner assault, child maltreatment or animal abuse. It was my attendance at a “First Strike” conference in Kingston, Ontario in November 2002 which solidified my interest in the links between child and animal populations and the various types of harm that can happen to them.

This study examined the links between child maltreatment and animal abuse, specifically looking at the common characteristics between caregivers (to children) and caretakers (to companion animals) when they are clients of Family and Children’s

Services of Renfrew County (FCS), a Children's Aid Society (CAS), or the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA), Renfrew County Branch.

For the purposes of this thesis, a child is defined as a person under the age of 16. A companion animal is defined as an animal such as, but not exclusive to, a cat or dog; it is not an animal whose purpose is for economic purposes, such as food or clothing (Becker & French, 2004, p. 400).

Children and companion animals are frequently victims of abuse. The term "child abuse" refers to:

The violence, mistreatment or neglect that a child or adolescent may experience while in the care of someone they either trust or depend on, such as a parent, sibling, other relative, caregiver, or guardian. Abuse may take place anywhere and may occur, for example, within the child's home or that of someone known to the child. (Department of Justice Canada, n.d., para.1)

This may include physical harm, sexual harm or exploitation, neglect or emotional harm.

Ascione (1999) defined animal abuse as:

Socially unacceptable behaviour that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering, or distress to and/or the death of an animal; the definition includes physical abuse and neglect, including acts of commission and omission and sexual abuse that may involve bestiality. 'Animal abuse' and 'animal cruelty' are often used interchangeably. (p. 51)

The examination of common characteristics between these two populations is relevant as we live in a society that views the protection of certain vulnerable segments of society as paramount. There are child protection agencies, animal welfare societies and shelters and support services for women who are victims of domestic violence. All too often, these agencies work in isolation of one another, which can be a detriment in protecting these vulnerable members of society. In recent years, several American studies, and fewer Canadian ones, have started to examine the link between animal cruelty and child maltreatment, whether it be as a result of domestic violence or neglect/abuse at the hands of a caregiver. With the knowledge that "animal abuse happens in a community context; it's a clear signal that the abuser may some day turn aggressive toward humans or that a family is already suffering from violence" (OSPCA brochure, n.d., para. 4); there is considerable value in working together.

1.1. Child Maltreatment, Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse:

People and Pets:

Many children and adults alike find solace in the relationship they share with their companion animals. Some people celebrate their pets' birthdays, they purchase them gifts on their birthday or holidays, they receive cards 'from' their pets, etc. In a family where pets are treated humanely, a child can learn valuable life lessons about unconditional love, companionship and nurturing. Becker and French (2004) discussed the beneficial outcomes of the relationship between animals and children, stating "there is evidence in UK research that animal companionship can help children move along the developmental continuum and promote the development of resilience" (p. 404). McNicholas (2001) (as cited in Becker & French, 2004) found that the majority of primary school age children whom she interviewed regarded their pet as being in their top 10 "most special relationships". She also argued that "interacting with pets can help children to develop their social skills and their ability to show empathy for others" (p. 404). Gilligan's (2001) (as cited in Becker & French, 2004) writing suggested:

That in some circumstances pets may be a valuable tool for helping traumatized children in the care system to rebuild trusting relationships and develop positive self-esteem. Caring for a pet provides an opportunity for children to take responsibility for the care of a living thing and to receive warmth, recognition and attention which may have been lacking in their past. (p. 404)

Melson (2003) wrote about the presence of a pet in a child's life as having many meanings for a child:

Hundreds of studies identify lack of human social support as a significant risk factor for physical and psychological problems, especially for vulnerable groups of children and adults. There is evidence that many pet-owning children derive emotional support from their pets. (p.35)

Melson (2003) also referred to various American studies: Bryant (1985) polled a group of 7 to 10 year olds in California, which found that pet owners "were as likely to talk to their pet about sad, angry, happy feelings or secrets as with their siblings." Covert, Whirren, Keith & Nelson (1985) had a sample of Michigan 10-14 year olds where 75%

said they talk to their pets when they are upset. Melson and Schwarz (1994) did a study in Indiana involving 68 five-year olds, where 42% spontaneously spoke of turning to a pet when they feel sad, angry, happy or wanting to share a secret (p. 35). “Because pets are dependent on human care for survival and optimal development, companion animals provide children the opportunity to learn about, practice and become motivated to appropriately nurture another being” (p. 35).

Ascione and Arkow (1999) commented on companion animals being significant, but often forgotten, members of today’s concept of “family”. They further stated:

A well-cared for pet may easily outlast the length of the parents’ marriage. More households have pets than have children. Americans spend more money on pet food than they do on baby food. Emotional attachments to pets often run so high that protocols are in place regarding rescue of pets from disaster areas and for the therapeutic use of animals in institutional and clinical settings. The nuclear family may be disappearing, but pets seem to be here to stay. (p. xv)

Pets and Their Value Within our Society:

For the most part, members of society would not debate that children are worthy of a level of care and protection, that they have rights that should be upheld and fought for. However, some members of society would debate that the same is true for companion animals. Hurley (1999) wrote:

Some people refuse to accept that animals have any rights at all. Animal rights opponents frequently argue that since animals do not possess the same intellectual abilities as humans - because they cannot reason, write, speak or create art - their lives deserve less consideration than human lives. (p. 22)

Research does show that animals are intelligent beings, but intelligence should not be the deciding factor in providing a population with rights:

All human and nonhuman life, regardless of its intelligence, is unified by one important quality: Animals, like humans, possess the capacity to suffer. Despite whether animals have intellectual abilities, it is impossible to argue that animals do not feel pain; an animal in pain screams and writhes just as a human does”. (p. 24)

This author further stated “if morality requires us to refrain from inflicting pain upon

other people, then it should require us to refrain from inflicting pain upon animals as well". (p. 24)

The Need to Report:

Child abuse, domestic violence and animal abuse often occur simultaneously within a family:

Because domestic abuse is directed toward the powerless, animal abuse and child abuse often go hand in hand. Parents who neglect an animal's need for proper care or abuse animals may also abuse or neglect their own children. (Helping Animals, n.d., para. 6)

Often, animal abuse is discovered earlier than domestic violence or child abuse because it occurs in plain sight. In addition, child or adult victims of abuse might be more willing to discuss animal abuse or neglect rather than what is happening to themselves (para. 9). Sometimes animal humane societies are able to respond sooner to reports of neglect than child welfare agencies are, due to lighter caseloads. The literature suggests if the animals are being neglected, the children are too (Healthypet.com, n.d., para. 3). Community members report being more reluctant to contact a Children's Aid Society to report their concerns as opposed to reporting to animal welfare agencies. There is a lot of fear or worry on the part of callers in respect to the perceived repercussions for calling a Children's Aid Society.

Animal Abuse:

Becker and French (2004) have done some key research in the area of animal abuse. They have extracted four key themes in the American and Canadian research they reviewed on the possible relationship between child abuse and animal abuse. They are:

- 1) Animal abuse as part of the continuum of abuse with the family; 2) Animal abuse perpetrated by children who show later aggressive and deviant behaviour; 3) Animal abuse as an indicator of the existence of child abuse and 4) The therapeutic potential of animals in child development and within post-abuse work. (p. 401)

A major concern in the area of animal abuse is that animal abusers may be children themselves - the youth of today who become the parents of tomorrow. Davies (1998) wrote:

Research by social scientists has identified that children are very likely to be abused in families where pets are abused and neglected. A 1983 survey of 57 pet owning families under treatment by New Jersey's Division of Youth and Family Services revealed that, in 88% of the families, at least one person had abused animals. In two-thirds of these cases, the abusive parent had injured or killed a pet. In the remaining cases, children were the animal abusers. (p. 10)

Animal Abuse is Family Violence:

Abuse towards animals is linked to child maltreatment and domestic violence. "Violence against animals is often a coercion device, and an early indicator of violence that may escalate in range and severity against other victims" (Ascione & Arkow, 1999, p. xvii). The Latham Foundation is a national clearinghouse of information on the links between animal abuse, child abuse and domestic violence. The foundation gathers and disseminates information to educate the professional communities and the general public about the links between cruelty to animals and other family violence (OPDV Bulletin, n.d., para. 2). Since the 1980s, the Latham Foundation has been publishing articles and videos that address the issue of animal abuse. These serve to "redefine animal abuse not as an isolated incident with only an animal victim, but rather as an under-recognized component of family violence with serious implications for multiple victims and for society" (Ascione & Arkow, 1999, p. xvii). The work of the Latham Foundation had an impact on violence prevention personnel who began to put animal abuse "on their radar". The "link" had emerged and professionals were taking notice.

Lockwood (1999) of the Humane Society of the United States stated "attention to animal cruelty and human violence has helped society to recognize first of all that animal abuse *is* family violence" (p. 6). The author continued stating "this connection has helped us move away from blaming the victims of violence for their victimization, because it is often easier to see animal victims as truly innocent, thus placing the spotlight

on the problem of the abuser” (p. 6). Arkow (n.d., a) wrote:

The growing interest in the “link” is not meant to imply that animals are more important than people. It does imply, however, that no forms of family violence should be tolerated and that when any member of the family is abused, others are at risk. (para. 1)

Women’s Shelters and Animal Cruelty - American Survey Results:

Ascione, Weber and Wood (1997) completed a survey in collaboration with a battered women’s shelter in northern Utah. Thirty-eight women were surveyed upon their admission to the home. They found that:

74% of the women reported having a pet currently or in the past twelve months. Of those women, 71% indicated that their boyfriend or husband had either threatened harm to their animals or had engaged in actual maltreatment and/or killing of an animal. Thirty-two percent of the 22 women with children gave examples of children hurting or killing animals. In this sample of women with pets, nearly one in five (18%) reported that they had delayed entering the shelter because of concerns about their pets’ safety. (para. 12)

These authors (as cited in Davies, 1998) also completed a study that surveyed one women’s shelter per state in the United States. Of the 48 responses, they found: 85% of the women entering the shelter talked about incidents of abuse; 63% of children reported seeing animal abuse; 83% of shelters had evidenced the coexistence of domestic and pet abuse; 27% of shelters had questions in their intake survey about animal abuse and only 6 of the 48 shelters mentioned collaboration with other agencies (p. 10).

Further research conducted at the Center for Prevention of Domestic Violence in Colorado Springs, Colorado, found that 24 % (N=122) of women seeking safe-house refuge reported that their abusers had abused animals in their presence. A study conducted by the La Crosse, Wisconsin Community Coalition against Violence was completed with 72 women who were involved with domestic violence prevention services. Eighty -six percent of these women reported having pets and, of these women, 80% had experienced their partners’ maltreatment of pets (Ascione et al, 1997, p. 4). A

further American national study, as reported by the National Crime Prevention Council (n.d.), noted:

Of 101 battered women living in shelters, 54 percent had experienced the injury or death of a pet at the hands of their abusers, compared to only three percent of a community sample of women who were not abused. Abusers may use harm to pets as a type of emotional abuse - a threat or warning of what could happen to the child or partner. People who neglect or abuse their animals are at a high risk of behaving the same way with their children. (para. 3)

The OSPCA 2000 Survey of Women's Shelters:

In Canada, the OSPCA completed a survey of Women's Shelters in 2000. There were 21 participating Shelters with a total of 130 respondents. Eight of those women currently had a pet or animal. Thirty-one women did not currently have a pet, but had one within the previous 12 months. Of those surveyed: 111 women (85% of all respondents) had one or more animals within the previous 12 months; 49 women (44%) reported their partner had previously abused or killed one or more of their pets; 47 women (42%) stated their partner had threatened to hurt or kill a family pet; 18 women (16%) confirmed that other members of the family had either abused or killed one of their pets; and 48 women (43%) stated that concern over their pet's welfare had prevented them from leaving the abusive situation sooner (OSPCA survey, n.d., para. 26).

In terms of delaying departure from a relationship, there were similar findings in the United States. Ascione (as cited in Ingrassia, 2001), stated that his work and the OSPCA's study "indicated this is not a geographic-specific phenomenon. This is a problem associated with domestic violence wherever it occurs"(p. 6). Due to the large number of women who delay leaving an abusive relationship because of their concerns for their pet's welfare, a response by the OSPCA has been to develop a program called The Family Violence Assistance Program, which provides safe emergency shelter for abuse victims' companion animals. This is occurring in Renfrew County, with the OSPCA Branch housing approximately 10 pets per year over the past 8 years.

Animal Abuse and Child Abuse:

Lacroix (1999) stated “whether the abuse of a companion animal in a household is directly related to the risk of child abuse in the same household is an area of research that is largely uncharted and in need of more investigation” (p. 65). The author described three studies, which looked at these two forms of violence and raised the suspicion that they were directly linked. The first (Hutton, 1983) was a British pilot study, which found evidence suggesting that children are at risk of abuse or neglect in households that abuse their family pets. The results showed that, of the 23 families that had a history of animal abuse, 83% had been identified by human social service agencies as having children at risk of abuse or neglect. Hutton then concluded that the evaluation of companion animals in the family might “be a useful diagnostic tool for social workers in their investigations of alleged child abuse” (p. 65). The second study (Walker, 1980) looked at a Pennsylvania county SPCA and a youth social services agency. The results showed that the behaviour patterns toward one’s children were similar to those toward one’s pets (p. 66). The third study (DeViney, Dickert & Lockwood, 1983) reported:

The results of a study that surveyed the treatment of animals in 53 pet-owning families in which child abuse had occurred. In 60 percent of these families, at least one family member had abused the family pet; of the families in which physical child abuse had occurred, 88 percent also had animals that had been abused. (p. 66)

1.2. The History of Protection:

Protecting vulnerable populations is not a new phenomena; the notion goes back many centuries. Initial protection initiatives served to protect animals, with the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals opening in Canada in 1869 (Zilney & Zilney, 2005, p. 48). In 1874, in the United States of America, Mary Ellen Wilson became the first child to be protected under the animal protection laws. In Ontario, John Joseph Kelso was instrumental in developing child welfare agencies across the province beginning with the Toronto Humane Society in 1887. It is important to remember how the origins of child welfare began, as echoed in Arkow’s (n.d., b) statement “what people often forget is that the first child protection laws were modeled after animal welfare laws:

for many decades, humane societies had dual responsibilities in preventing abuse to both children and animals” (para. 14).

1.3. Child Protection in Ontario:

In Ontario, there are 53 Children’s Aid Societies, primarily based on geographic divisions. Each society receives its funding from the Provincial government. While the mandate of each Children’s Aid Society is the same, and is governed by the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) (2003), each has its own Mission Statement. The Mission Statement of FCS is:

Our Mission - Helping Families Protect Children - Family and Children’s Services will act to assist and ensure that children are protected from harm and will do so by respecting the integrity of the family and the capacity of the community to respond to the best interests of children. (FCS Policy Manual, 2000)

Referrals to a Children’s Aid Society are received through telephone intakes, letters of referral or through walk-in visits with referral sources. The CFSA (2003) delineates a professional duty to report under Section 72 of the Act. This section applies to:

Every person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children including, (a) a health care professional, including a physician, nurse, dentist, pharmacist and psychologist; (b) a teacher, school principal, social worker, family counselor, priest, rabbi, member of the clergy, operator or employee of a day nursery and youth and recreation worker; (c) a peace officer and a coroner; (d) a solicitor; and (e) a service provider and an employee of a service provider. (pp. 68-72)

When a referral is received, a child protection worker determines whether the referral is eligible for service, investigates and assesses protection concerns and determines if long term CAS intervention is warranted. In 1998, Children’s Aid Societies in Ontario began to follow the Ontario Risk Assessment Model (ORAM), which is a systematic manner by which to assess protection concerns. This model gave Children’s Aid Societies a common language and a standardized method by which decisions are

made. There are three major components to this model: the Eligibility Spectrum, the Safety Assessment and the Risk Assessment.

The Eligibility Spectrum (2000) is a guide, which divides forms of child maltreatment into five major sections with several sub-sections, each with its own coding connecting it to the Child and Family Services Act (2003). These sections include: Physical/Sexual Harm by Commission, Harm by Omission, Emotional Harm, Abandonment/Separation and Caregiver Capacity. Referral information is coded using the relevant section/sub-section, either above the Eligibility line (requiring intervention) or below the line (not requiring intervention). If information is placed above the line, it guides intervention time-lines as being either within 12 hours (abuse, extremely severe) versus a 7-day response time (non-abuse, moderately severe). Some referral information is assessed as not requiring intervention and is placed below the intervention line. A referral is coded with a primary coding and, where applicable, a secondary coding. This is called the initial referral. Should new and different service reasons be reported, a subsequent referral document is completed with a determination whether a new investigation is required or if the current investigation is merely continued. The Eligibility Spectrum structure is the basis of the formula by which a CAS receives its funding.

When a referral is coded above the eligibility line, an investigation occurs which generates a Safety Assessment. If the Safety Assessment substantiates protection concerns, a subsequent tool called a Risk Assessment is completed prior to transfer to an on-going worker. This document, accompanied by a Service Plan, identifies the risk issues and the goals of intervention in order to diminish risk for the child within a family. The Risk Assessment tool has a risk rating of 1 to 5, 1 being No/Low Risk and 5 being High Risk. If the investigation verifies risk issues, intervention with a family occurs either voluntarily or through a court order under the CFSA (2003). A court order would involve either a period of supervision by the Society, which puts conditions on family members in an effort to reduce risk, or an apprehension of the child from parental care pending a reduction of risk. In such a case, an application goes before the court requesting a period of wardship.

There is a joint protocol between FCS and two of the police departments within Renfrew County. This protocol comes into play when allegations of physical or sexual abuse are being investigated. While the two agencies work together during an investigation, the roles vary. The CFSA (2003) is the act used for child protection matters. The *Criminal Code of Canada* is used by the police, and clients are typically charged for offenses related to physical assaults, neglect or sexually related offenses.

The CFSA (2003) covers many areas involved in child protection work. The primary section utilized in defining a child in need of protection is section 37(2), subsections (a) to (l). These subsections include: harm that has occurred or risk of harm in the areas of physical, sexual or emotional harm, as well as harm as a result of a lack of medical care, harm due to a developmental condition, harm because a child has been abandoned, a child under 12 years old has seriously injured another person or caused damage to a person's property, or if a parent is unwilling or unable to continue to care for the child and the parent presents the child to the court, and the child (age 12 and older) is consenting to placement (pp. 33-35).

A file remains open at a Children's Aid Society pending the reduction of risk or the development of a permanent plan for a child where it is deemed too risky for them to return to their previous caregivers. If a family was working voluntarily with the Society, a file closes once risk is reduced. If a family was working with the Agency on an involuntary basis, the Court will terminate the order when it is assessed that risk has been reduced. If a child is in the care of the Society, a child might be returned to their family or a child might remain a Ward of the Crown where parental rights are terminated. This can either be with or without access to the parent.

1.4. Animal Welfare in Ontario:

The OSPCA consists of 27 directly operated branches and 32 member humane societies in communities across the province. It is a charitable organization that is funded by individual donations, as well as donations from associations and corporations (OSPCA

website, n.d., para. 1). There is a single Mission Statement governing all members of the OSPCA:

The mission of the Ontario SPCA is to facilitate and provide province-wide leadership on matters related to the prevention of cruelty to animals and the promotion of animal welfare. The Ontario SPCA provides protection, shelter and care to thousands of animals across the province and has been protecting abused, stray and neglected animals since 1873. Today, the Society and its 60 local member humane societies provide animal protection services and the rehabilitation of injured and orphaned wildlife to all areas of the province. (OSPCA brochure, n.d., para. 3)

Referrals are received by the OSPCA via walk-in or telephone call referrals from community members. Cruelty complaints usually involve the observation of the following:

Lack of food and water, lack of veterinary care for illness or injury, severe matting or filth, poor condition, lack of sanitation, abandonment, ingrown collars around neck, tied or caged animals without room to move around, burns, trauma, poisoning, mutilation and animal fighting. (Domestic Violence Council, n.d., p. 8)

There is no duty to report legislation pertaining to the OSPCA. A veterinarian is not obligated to report if they suspect animal maltreatment. However, veterinarians will not be considered to be in breach of confidentiality if they choose to report to an agency. Ontario Regulation 1093, Veterinarian's Act, states:

17. (1) For the purposes of the Act, professional misconduct includes the following: 6. Revealing information concerning a client, an animal or any professional service performed for an animal, to any person, other than the client or another member treating the animal except, in subsection (i) with the consent of the client or in subsection (iv) when it appears that the animal has been abused.

Referrals are responded to by OSPCA investigators who attend at the residence of the pet to determine whether a concern is justified and warrants intervention. These investigators follow the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, R.S.O. 1990. Chapter 0.36. This Act "is the provincial legislation that gives OSPCA investigators their policing powers to act on reported instances of animal cruelty, issue orders to improve an animal's living conditions and to remove animals from specific

circumstances” (Quigley, 2005, p. 9). Sometimes, all a caretaker requires is some basic education and direction in terms of better pet care. At other times, orders are written to the pet owner/caretaker in respect to alleviating the level of distress a pet might be suffering; these orders might include obtaining medical care or to provide proper shelter. If orders were not followed, more intrusive intervention would be taken to protect the pet from further distress. An inspector or agent of the OSPCA must either obtain the owner’s consent, actually witness an animal in distress or obtain a warrant in order to enter a private property to assess animal welfare concerns.

For the OSPCA, The *Criminal Code of Canada*:

Is the principal tool used by investigators to bring cases of extreme cruelty and neglect to court. However, loopholes, omissions and ambiguities within the legislation often leave investigators unable to charge offenders, let alone get them convicted and sentences are frustratingly weak.
(Quigley, 2005, p. 8)

Charges are primarily laid under section 444, Injuring or Endangering Cattle, section 445, Injuring or Endangering other Animals, section 446, Causing Unnecessary Suffering and section 447, Keeping Cockpit. (Martin’s Annual Criminal Code, 2003, pp. 717-721)

Justice Minister Irwin Cotler reintroduced legislation to amend sections in the *Criminal Code*, known as *Bill C-50*. These amendments propose that the penalty for intentional cruelty is raised to a maximum of five years’ imprisonment (up from six months) and would give judges the authority to increase fines for summary conviction offences to \$10,000 versus the current maximum of \$2,000. There would no longer be a cap on indictable offences and cruelty offences would no longer be considered as property offences. The legislation would also remove the two years maximum ban on owning animals and would give judges the power to order anyone found guilty of animal cruelty to be responsible for paying restitution to the animal welfare organization that cared for the animal (Quigley, 2005, p. 8).

1.5. The Current Situation in Renfrew County:

Currently, at FCS, there is no systematic method of identifying animal abuse. The ORAM Safety Assessment identifies domestic violence, physical and sexual harm and neglect, but there is nothing specific in terms of animal maltreatment. The OSPCA does not systematically address the presence of children in a family either. The local women's shelter does ask about animal abuse, but the questions serve only to identify the risk for the women, child or the shelter itself in order that protective measures, like police notification, can occur. The questions about animal abuse are asked in relation to identifying risk and the impact of abuse on the family; the questions are not posed in an effort to protect the animal specifically. Typically, a referral to the OSPCA is not made. The Shelter would be mandated to contact FCS regarding child protection concerns if there is domestic violence within a family.

1.6. Hypothesis:

The hypothesis tested in this study was that caregivers who abuse or neglect children are likely to abuse or neglect their companion animals, causing similar involvement with social services agencies. To test this, a sample of cases common to both FCS and the OSPCA was located in agency files and examined to find the common traits. It was anticipated there would be a relationship between the reasons for intervention and the intervention outcomes for clients of these two agencies.

2. METHOD

2.1. Design:

This study was a non-experimental design, examining the relationship between variables from two separate data sources, FCS and the OSPCA.

2.2. Preliminary Arrangements:

Ethical approval by McGill University Research Ethics Board - II was obtained in April 2005 (Appendix A). This study fulfilled all the requirements regarding confidentiality. This study involved only file reviews; therefore, there was no direct contact made with clients of either the OSPCA or those of FCS.

2.3. Sample and Data Collection:

Data collection began with the review of client files at the OSPCA office. The decision to begin there was based on the fact that they have had significantly fewer client contacts than FCS had during the same time frame. It was sensible to start with the smaller number of client cases in order to verify matches. In addition, because neither FCS nor the OSPCA systematically document the presence of pets (FCS) or children (OSPCA), this was the easiest route to take to begin generating a list of common files.

The OSPCA did not have any documentation of client contacts prior to 1999. Data collection was labour intensive, as the OSPCA did not have a computerized database of their client contacts. Their system involved hand written reports, kept in alphabetical order in filing cabinets. A client list was formulated by reviewing all files, compiling a list of the names of all 790 clients they had since 1999.

FCS has a computerized client database, the Child Welfare Information System (CWIS). Once the OSPCA client list was complete, each client name was entered into CWIS to see if there were matches. This process generated 394 matches of clients known

to both the OSPCA and FCS.

The next step was to examine the file type and date of contact of the matched names with the FCS database. As the OSPCA files did not begin prior to 1999, it was decided that matches with FCS would only be looked at if the FCS client was known to the agency either during 1999 or since 1999 until June 2005. Also, the FCS client had to be involved with the agency for protective reasons, that is, not as a foster or adoptive home or for preventative services. For the OSPCA file, only files involving companion animals were included; files involving wildlife or farm animals were eliminated. The focus of this research was on the commonalities between abuse and neglect of child and companion animals only.

This process of elimination garnered matches in 217 files. A comprehensive file review was completed of both the OSPCA file and the FCS file. Further elimination of files occurred, as sometimes the common person did not have involvement in the FCS matters during the requisite time period. The final sample was comprised of 188 common files.

In summary, every person who was known both to the OSPCA and FCS since 1999, investigated for companion animal reports or child maltreatment reasons respectively, comprised the sample.

FCS Data Collection:

The sample of 188 common files involved 585 reported incidents. Each file was reviewed using a checklist to capture the relevant variables (Appendix B shows how the variables were coded):

- the incident start and end date
- the geographic location of the family at the time of the report
- the type of maltreatment alleged - this was based on the eligibility codings as described in the Eligibility Spectrum. There were often primary and secondary codings listed in a new/subsequent referral, only the primary codings were captured for the purposes of this study. This resulted in 70 eligibility spectrum codings being included in the maltreatment type variable

- whether the maltreatment coding was above or below the Eligibility Spectrum intervention line
- whether this incident was a new referral or a subsequent referral on a currently open case
- the caregiver relationship in the maltreatment, that is, female as primary caregiver, male as primary caregiver, male and female couple as primary caregiver or other relationship (not a primary caregiver)
- the number of children in the family, if the children were removed and returned, if consent for removal was given
- if the police were involved, if Criminal Code charges were laid or if CFSA court activity occurred
- if the alleged maltreatment was verified
- the ORAM risk rating

The files at FCS were very comprehensive. The information relevant to this study was extracted by reviewing only certain segments of the file. These included the referral/new information document, the investigation document and the investigation disposition document, as well as the Court activity document, which captures Criminal Court or CFSA Court activity.

OSPCA Data Collection:

The 188 common family files involved 256 separate incidents. They were reviewed using a checklist format to capture the relevant variables (Appendix C shows how the variables were coded):

- the incident start and end date
- the geographic location of the family at the time of the report
- the type of maltreatment alleged: the OSPCA does not have a coding system; therefore, the nature of the referral was categorized into three primary categories - physical harm, sexual harm and neglect
- the category of neglect was broken down into subcategories, capturing whether the neglect was of shelter (i.e., inappropriate housing), nutrition (i.e., food or water issues) or medical (i.e., fleas, medical care)
- the category of neglect was further subdivided to capture multiple types of maltreatment within the same incident, i.e., neglect - shelter and nutrition, etc. This process resulted in 11 different codings for this variable

- the caretaker relationship in the maltreatment, that is, female as primary caretaker, male as primary caretaker, male and female couple as primary caretaker or other relationship (not a primary caretaker)
- the number of pets in the family, if the pet was removed and returned, if consent for removal was given
- if the police were involved, if Criminal Code charges were laid or if OSPCA orders were written
- OSPCA rating on the validity of the investigated report

The OSPCA files were much less comprehensive than the FCS files; therefore, they were reviewed in their entirety and the relevant information captured accordingly.

2.4. Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 13 for Windows. Data from FCS and the OSPCA were compiled and entered into two separate SPSS data files.

The SPSS Aggregate procedure was used for each file to combine the multiple incidents for each case.

The SPSS Merge Variables Procedure was used to match the cases in the two files and combine the two files into a single common file. This common data set made it possible to correlate variables for the two agencies. This required some data reduction and recoding as described below.

2.5. FCS Variables Used in the Common Data Set:

The common data set included the following variables and coding for each case:

- Maltreatment Type: The Eligibility Spectrum has five major maltreatment categories; individual codings under each major category were condensed to 5 coding categories versus the original 70-plus
 - 1 - Physical/Sexual Harm by Commission - includes actual harm, cruel and inappropriate treatment, sexual harm and threats of harm
 - 2 - Harm by Omission - includes supervision issues, neglect of basic physical needs, caregiver's response to physical health and to mental, emotional, developmental condition and concerns where a child under 12 has committed a serious act

- 3 - Emotional Harm - includes caregiver causing emotional harm or their response to child's emotional harm or risk of emotional harm and adult conflict
- 4 - Abandonment/Separation - includes orphaned/abandoned child and caregiver-child conflict/child behaviour
- 5 - Caregiver Capacity - includes caregiver's history of abuse/neglect, caregiver's inability to protect, caregiver with a problem and caregiving skills
- For each maltreatment type, the sum of occurrences over all incidents was entered
- Police, Criminal Code charges and CFSA Court: the sum of occurrences over all incidents was entered
- Number removed and number returned: the sum of child removals or returns over all incidents was entered
- Risk rating: 1 - no/low risk; 2 - moderately low risk; 3 - intermediate risk; 4 - moderately high risk and 5 - high risk; the maximum value for any incident was entered
- Start and End date: the initial start date and final contact date for each case were entered

2.6. OSPCA Variables Used in the Common Data Set:

The common data set included the following variables and coding for each case:

- Maltreatment Type: the original codings from the OSPCA data set were modified in the common data set to include these changes: 2 - sexual harm, was eliminated as no reports included this maltreatment type, codes 3 to 9 were condensed under one coding for Neglect and codes 1, 10 and 11 were condensed under one coding for Physical harm; the sum of occurrences over all incidents was entered
- Police, Criminal Code charges and OSPCA orders: the sum of occurrences over all incidents was entered
- Number removed and number returned: the sum of pet removals and pet returns over all incidents was entered
- OSPCA rating on the validity of the report: the maximum value for any incident was entered
- Start and End date: the initial start date and final contact date for each case were entered

3. FINDINGS

A total of 790 OSPCA files were reviewed; almost 25% of these were matched with FCS client files. The final sample consisted of 188 matched client files, during the period from January 1999 to June 2005, representing 585 FCS incidents and 256 OSPCA incidents.

3.1. Family & Children's Services of Renfrew County:

Table 1 is a summary of the data collected for the FCS sample. Females, alone, were the primary caregivers in the largest group of incidents investigated during this period. The highest number of incidents involved Eligibility Spectrum codes under the Caregiver Capacity heading, which includes caregiver with a problem (i.e., drug abuse, mental health), or caregiver skills. Incidents categorized under Physical/sexual harm by commission, Harm by omission and Emotional harm together comprised two-thirds of the sample. The distribution of maltreatment types is illustrated graphically in Figure 1. Children were not removed from the care of their caregivers in the majority of the incidents. Police were involved in one-third of the incidents, laying *Criminal Code* charges in 10% of the situations. Twenty-three percent of the incidents included *Child and Family Services Act* involvement. In the majority of the incidents, the completion of an ORAM risk rating was not required.

3.2. The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals:

Table 2 is a summary of the data collected for the OSPCA sample. The majority of pet caretakers as identified in the OSPCA files were female. Neglect, in its various forms (e.g., issues with nutrition, shelter and medical attention), totaled almost 90% of all cases. The distribution of maltreatment types is illustrated graphically in Figure 2. In the majority of incidents, pets were neither removed nor surrendered during the course of the investigation. If a pet was removed, it generally involved only one pet.

Table 1. Description of FCS Sample ($N=585$)

	<i>N</i>	%
Caregiver Reported Relationship		
Female primary caregiver	230	39.3
Male primary caregiver	155	26.5
Male & Female couple as caregivers	164	28.0
Male or Female as secondary caregivers	36	6.2
Maltreatment Types		
Physical/Sexual harm by commission	130	22.2
Harm by Omission	121	20.7
Emotional Harm	131	22.4
Abandonment/Separation	50	8.5
Caregiver Capacity	153	26.2
Removals of Children		
0	508	86.8
1	42	7.2
2	26	4.4
3	7	1.2
4	1	0.2
5	1	0.2
Legal Activity		
Police involvement	227	38.8
Criminal Charges	58	9.9
CFSA Court Involvement	136	23.2
ORAM Risk Rating		
Risk rating not applicable	378	64.6
No/low risk	13	2.2
Moderately low risk	19	3.2
Intermediate risk	61	10.4
Moderately high risk	89	15.2
High risk	25	4.3

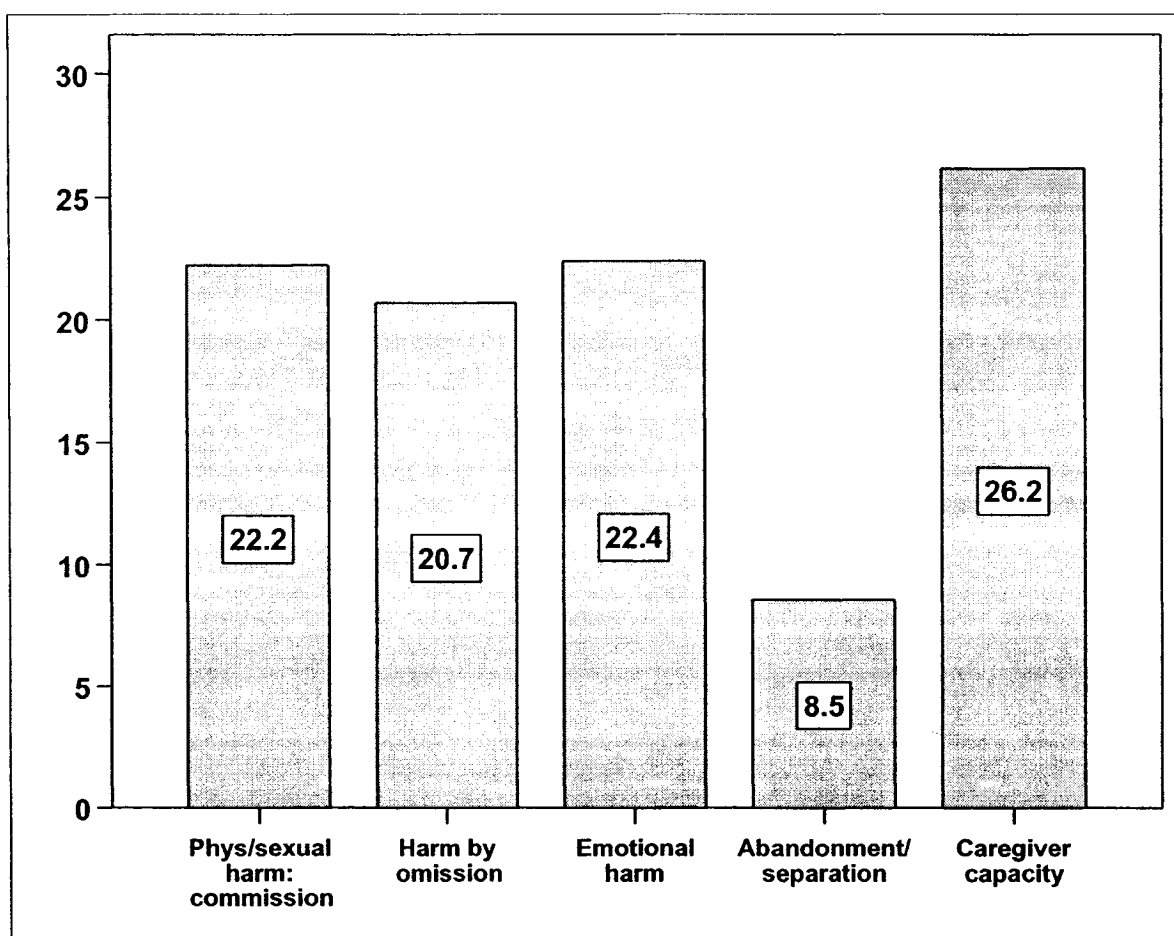


Figure 1. FCS: Percentage of Incidents by Maltreatment Types

The police were involved in very few incidents. On five occasions, *Criminal Code* Charges were laid. The most frequent mode of formal intervention involved the issuing of *OSPCA Act* orders. Almost half of the 256 investigated incidents were deemed to have a justifiable concern, warranting OSPCA intervention.

Table 2. Description of OSPCA Sample (N=256)

	<i>N</i>	%
Caretaker Reported Relationship		
Female primary caretaker	132	51.6
Male primary caretaker	84	32.8
Male & Female couple as caretakers	40	15.6
Maltreatment Types		
Physical harm	24	9.4
Neglect - shelter	35	13.7
Neglect - nutrition	16	6.3
Neglect - medical	33	12.9
Neglect - shelter, nutrition, medical	12	4.7
Neglect - shelter, nutrition	118	46.1
Neglect - shelter, medical	6	2.3
Neglect - nutrition, medical	9	3.5
Physical harm & neglect - shelter	2	.8
Physical harm & neglect - shelter, nutrition	1	.4
Removals of Pets		
0	190	74.2
1	37	14.5
2	8	3.1
3	6	2.3
4	6	2.3
5	2	.8
6 and higher	7	2.0
Legal Activity		
Police involvement	12	4.7
Criminal Charges	5	2.0
OSPCA Orders	59	23.0
OSPCA Rating of Report Validity		
False rating	55	21.5
Reasonable concern	84	32.8
Justified concern	117	45.7

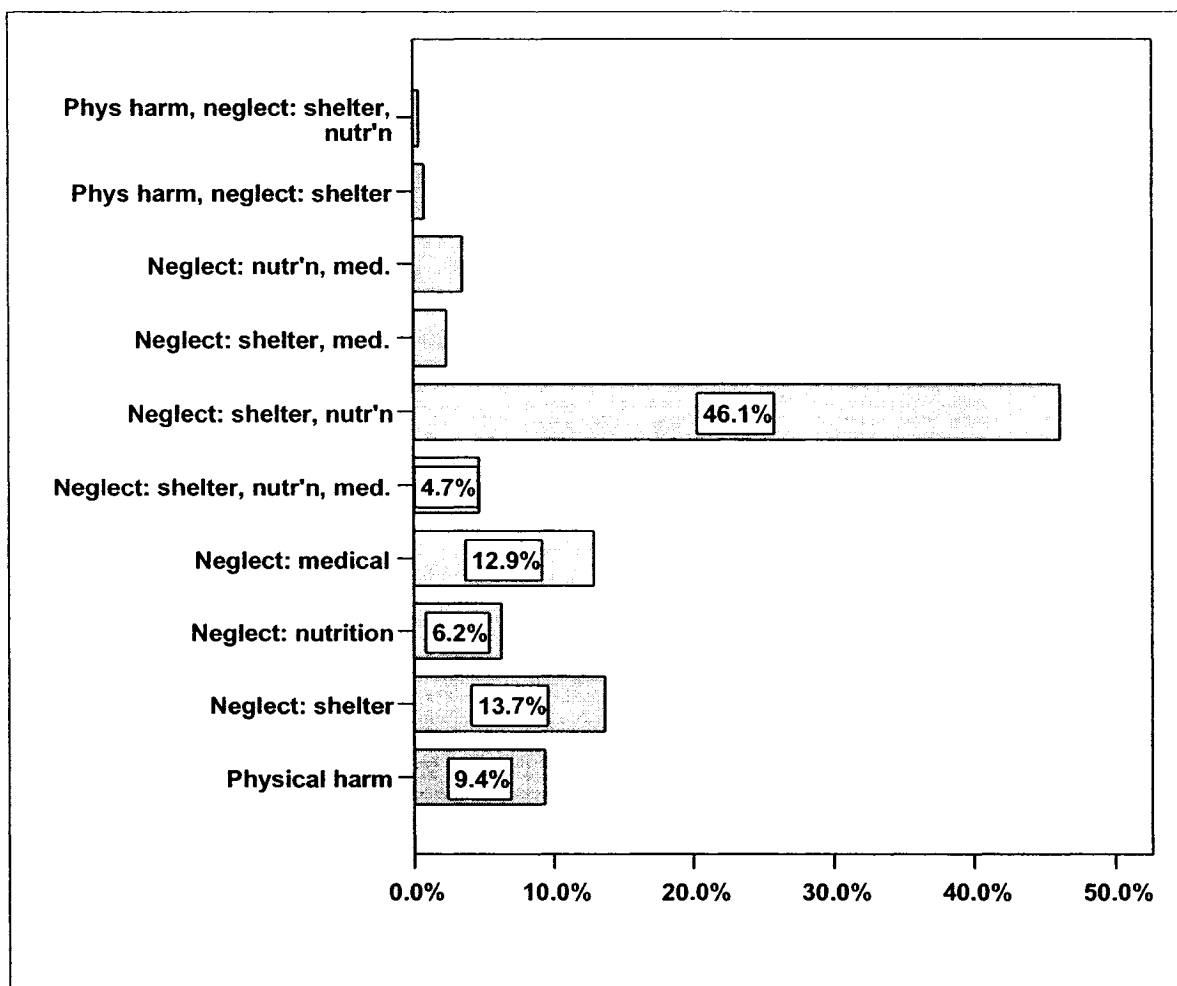


Figure 2. OSPCA: Percentage of Incidents by Maltreatment Type

3.3. FCS and OSPCA Common Data Set Analysis:

Almost 50% of the common files were known to both FCS and the OSPCA simultaneously. Of those known with a date overlap, 80 cases were known to FCS first and 10 were known to the OSPCA first. Over 30% of these common cases were referred to the OSPCA first; this is significant in terms of early detection of child maltreatment. The distribution of date overlaps is illustrated graphically in Figure 3. Anecdotally, during file reviews, there were only a handful of cases noted having had communication with the other agency. Most intervention work is done with a family by one agency in isolation from the other agency.

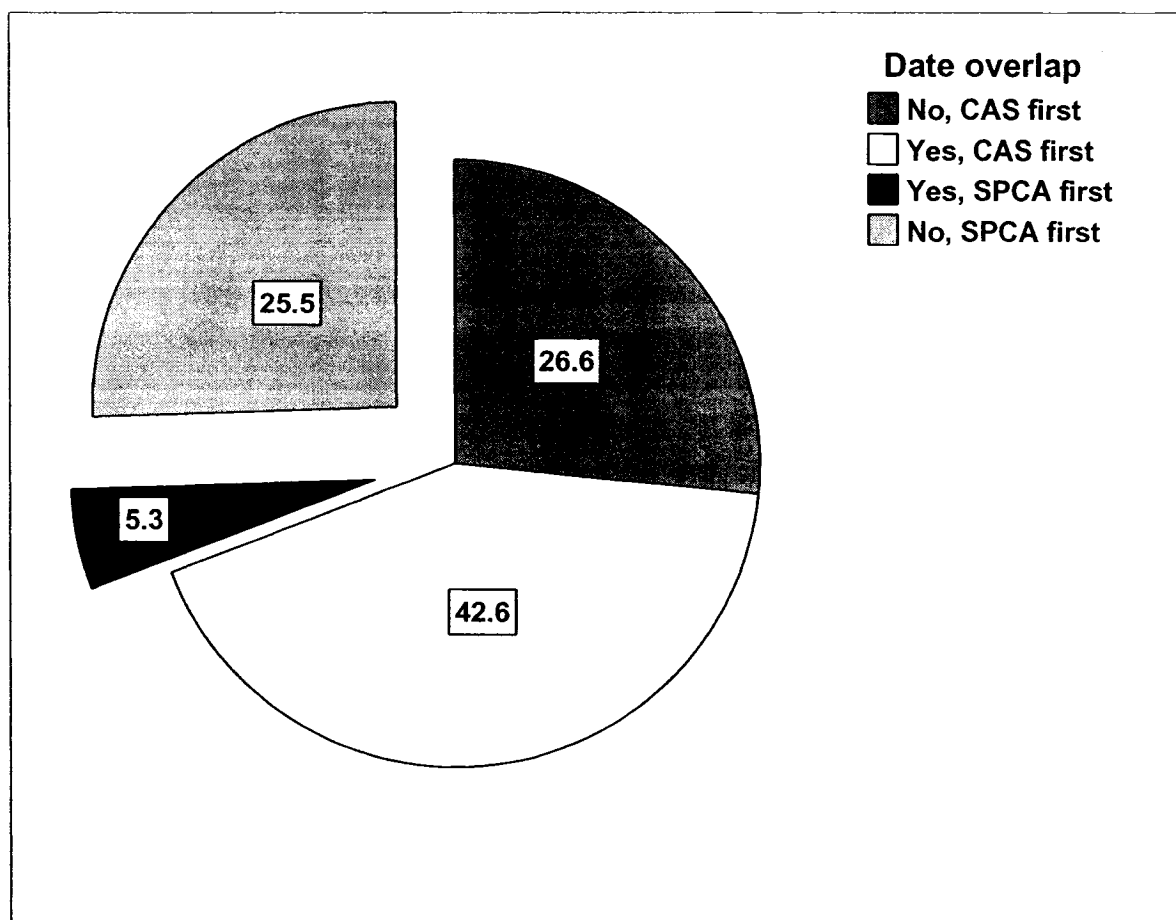


Figure 3. FCS and OSPCA Date Overlap

Table 3 is a summary of the aggregated data for FCS and the OSPCA. This table shows mean values of the variables for the sample of 188 cases, together with the maximum value for any case and the Standard Deviation for the sample of cases.

The Minimum for all variables was always zero (0). In the FCS data, one family had a child or children removed 14 times. In the OSPCA data, one family had 23 pets removed throughout their involvement. Police were involved more often with FCS clients than with OSPCA clients. Families involved with FCS had a maximum number of 9 involvements with CFSA Activity, which is very different than OSPCA clients, where the highest number of times a family had OSPCA Act orders written was only 3. The mean values of legal actions by case, is illustrated graphically in Figure 4. Children

Table 3: FCS and OSPCA Common File Aggregated Data (N=188)

Scores	Max.	<u>FCS</u>			Max.	<u>OSPCA</u>	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Physical/Sexual Harm	5	.69	1.00	Physical Harm	2	.14	.37
Harm by Omission	8	.64	1.17	Neglect	5	1.22	.74
Emotional Harm	8	.70	1.08				
Abandonment/ Separation	4	.27	.67				
Caregiver Capacity	9	.81	1.38				
Police involved	8	1.21	1.28	Police Involved	2	.06	.29
Criminal Code Charges	3	.31	.58	Criminal Code Charges	1	.03	1.61
CFSA Activity (a)	9	.73	1.43	OSPCA Orders	3	.31	.57
Total Removals	14	.66	1.61	Total Removals	23	.92	2.48
Total Returns	12	.34	1.23	Total Returns	1	.03	.18

Note: (a) N=187

were more likely to be returned to their parents after a removal; for OSPCA families, pets were not returned as frequently, often because the pet's caretaker surrendered them to the OSPCA where they were subsequently placed for adoption or euthanized if the pet was too ill.

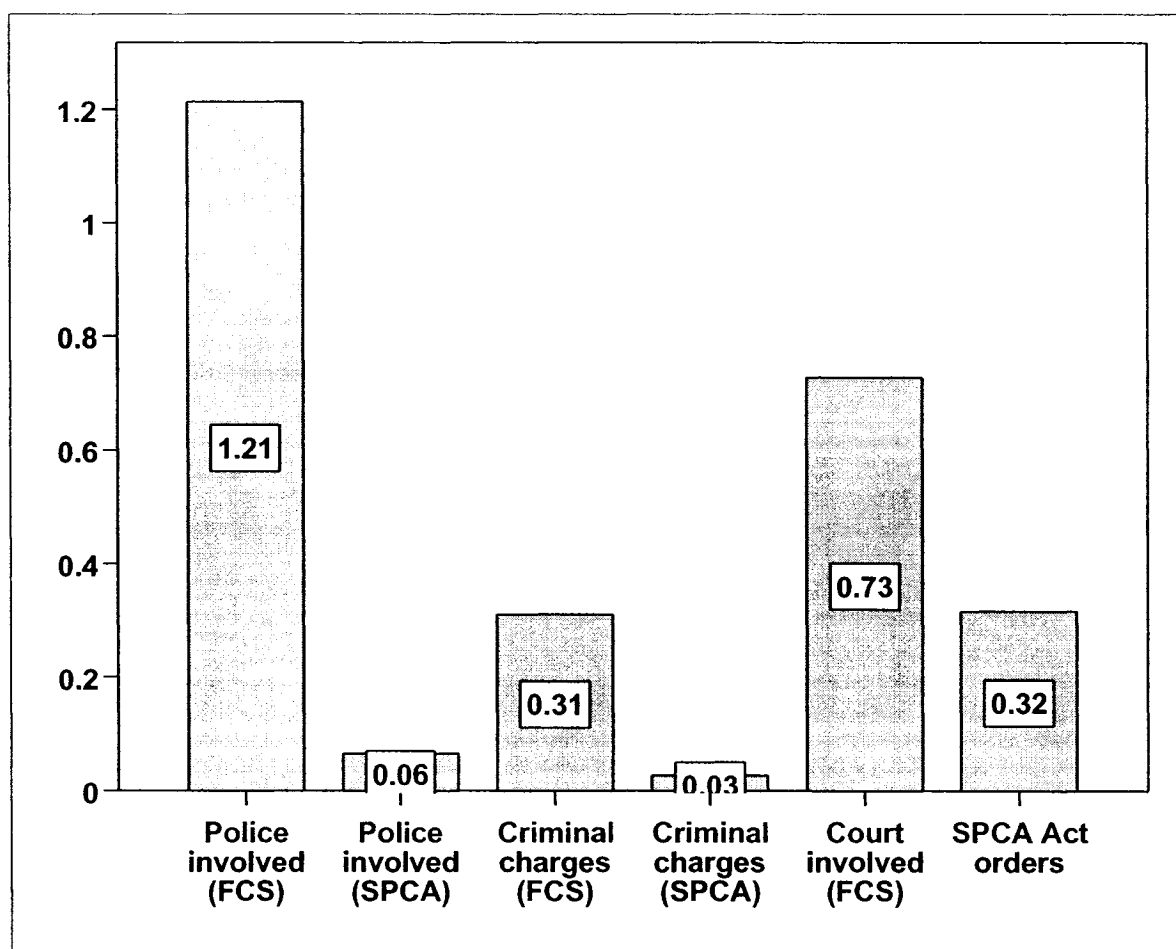


Figure 4. Comparison of Legal Actions for FCS and OSPCA: Mean Number Per Case

Table 4 shows, for any incident, the maximum value of risk ratings for FCS families and the maximum value for the validity of OSPCA reports received per family.

Table 4: FCS ORAM Risk Ratings & OSPCA Ratings (N=188)

	<i>N</i>	%
FCS Risk Rating		
No/low risk	5	2.7
Moderately low risk	12	6.4
Intermediate risk	29	15.4
Moderately high risk	42	22.3
High risk	12	6.4
Not Completed	88	46.8
OSPCA Report Validity Rating		
False	36	19.1
Reasonable Concern	56	29.8
Justified	96	51.1

Completion of an ORAM Risk Rating was not required for almost half of the files. This was because the concerns were either not verified or a file was closed without needing longer-term intervention. Of those cases with a Risk Rating, the most frequent category had a Moderately high risk rating and long-term service was provided. The OSPCA rates the validity of the report that was received. This is completed at the conclusion of an investigation. The majority of cases received a validity rating of Justified.

3.4. Correlations:

Table 5 shows correlations between all FCS and OSPCA variables in the common data set, except for 3 variables (i.e., maltreatment type 4 - Abandonment and Separation, maltreatment type 5 - Caregiver Capacity in FCS data set and Criminal Code charges in the OSPCA data set); these were not significantly correlated with any other variables.

Table 5: Correlations between FCS and OSPCA Variables (N=188)

Scores	OSPCA	Physical harm	Neglect	Total removals	Total returns	Police involved	OSPCA orders	OSPCA rating
FCS								
1. Phys/Sex harm by commission		.03	-.02	-.02	-.13*	.11	-.13*	-.13*
2. Harm by omission		-.04	.00	.12	.03	.05	.03	.12
3. Emotional harm		.14*	-.10	-.01	-.03	-.06	-.04	.08
4. Police involved		.13*	-.05	-.04	-.03	.02	-.12	-.01
5. CC Charges		.09	.09	.09	-.05	.17**	-.05	.02
6. CFSA activity		.07	.12*	.21**	-.09	.16*	-.17**	.06
7. Total removals		.03	.12*	.10	-.06	.04	-.14*	.11
8. Total returns		-.04	.10	.08	-.05	.00	-.12*	.09
9. Risk rating		.21*	.04	-.04	-.20*	.04	-.19*	-.16

* $p < 0.05$., ** $p < 0.01$., (Pearson, one-tailed)

There were 8 significant positive correlations, showing the expected relationships, as follows:

- emotional harm (FCS), which includes domestic violence, was positively correlated with physical harm of pets
- police involvement in FCS cases was positively correlated with physical harm of pets
- Criminal Code charges for clients of FCS was positively correlated with police involvement with OSPCA clients
- the presence of CFSA court activity, an intrusive intervention, for FCS clients was positively correlated with neglect of pets as well as with the total number of removal of pets. CFSA court activity was also positively correlated with police involvement for OSPCA cases
- a high total removal of children for FCS clients was positively correlated with the neglect of pets
- a high risk rating for FCS clients was positively correlated with physical harm to pets

There were 8 significant negative correlations; however, only three showed the expected relationship, as follows:

- as physical harm for FCS clients increased, there was a decrease in return of removed pets to OSPCA clients
- a high FCS risk rating is negatively correlated with the return of removed pets to OSPCA clients
- as total returns of children increased for FCS clients, there was a decrease in OSPCA Act orders

The following significant negative correlations did not show the expected relationship:

- as physical harm for FCS clients increased, there was a decrease in OSPCA Act orders as well as the OSPCA rating of validity of the referral
- as CFSA court orders increased for FCS clients, there was a decrease in OSPCA Act orders
- as total removals of children increased for FCS clients, there was a decrease in OSPCA Act orders
- as the risk rating increased for FCS clients, there was a decrease in OSPCA Act orders

These unexpected relationships may be explained by the fact that pet owners often

surrendered their pets in the course of an investigation; therefore, there would be less need for OSPCA Act orders as the pets are no longer in their care. This differs for FCS clients who do not readily relinquish their children in the course of an investigation. It would be expected that as FCS intervention becomes more intrusive, so too does OSPCA intervention; however, a logical assumption would be that the observed relationship is due to the surrendering of pets.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Summary of Key Findings:

The most dramatic finding in completing this research is the fact there were so many common cases with common criteria during a relatively short period of time. The key findings from the present sample are as follows:

- Of the 790 OSPCA client files, 188 were common to both agencies. This is almost 25% of cases within a 6-year period.
- Ninety families (48%) had mutual involvement with FCS and the OSPCA during the same time period. Of those families, eighty families were first known to FCS with 10 being first known to the OSPCA.
- For over 30% of the cases in the sample, the OSPCA involvement preceded the FCS involvement. This is significant in that animal abuse can be a predictor of child maltreatment and should be recognized as an important facet in early detection.
- In this sample, more severe maltreatment patterns for children were associated with more severe maltreatment patterns for animals. This was shown by the statistically significant correlations; for example, between physical harm to pets and emotional harm/domestic violence in families involved with FCS; between police involvement occurring for clients of FCS with physical harm to pets; between *Criminal Code* charges for FCS clients and police involvement for OSPCA clients; and between the high total removal of children for FCS clients with neglect of pets.

4.2. Comparison with Earlier Samples:

As the results of this research are compared with some of the results of previous studies, it is observed that domestic violence and physical harm to pets are correlated. In addition, as the studies by Hutton (1983), Walker (1980) and DeViney, Dickert & Lockwood (1983) (as cited in Lacroix, 1999) showed some preliminary connections between abuse to companion animals and child abuse, this study supports that many clients of the two agencies are known for the same reasons for services, with similar outcomes, formal legal orders, removal of pets/children, police involvement and Criminal Code charges, etc. The need for even further exploration of the connections between the

two populations is highlighted. This study also supports the notion that many families are involved with several systems simultaneously (children's aid, animal welfare, domestic violence shelters, police) for reasons related to abuse or neglect, albeit sometimes with different victim populations.

4.3. Limitations to the Present Study:

This research used retrospective data only. The study was completed using the file resources at FCS and the OSPCA. Renfrew County is geographically large and is situated in a rural setting. These findings are thus limited to this setting, and cannot be generalized to the general population; the results of similar research in an urban setting might yield somewhat different results.

This study was based on reported and documented cases of abuse and neglect only. The actual number of animal cruelty cases and/or child maltreatment cases within this community is not known. In addition, neither an OSPCA file nor a FCS file shows a systematic method of documenting the presence of pets or children within a family setting. It is unknown, for the 790 OSPCA files, how many of those clients had children but never became known to FCS. Similarly, it is unknown how many FCS clients have pets but have never been reported to the OSPCA. More information about the differences between clients who become known to only one agency versus becoming involved with both would be valuable to furthering research. Those clients who qualify to become involved with both agencies (have both children and pets), but only present to one of the agencies could serve as a comparison group. The lack of a comparison group is a limitation to the current research as well as that reviewed for this study.

Recent changes to the Child and Family Services Act (2003) have involved the inclusion of the Duty to Report risk of harm versus the previous Duty to Report which covered only the knowledge that actual harm had occurred. These changes have seen an increase in referrals from Police Services, primarily in terms of their reporting any incident of domestic violence they attend. As a result of these changes, it is difficult to determine if there has been an increase in incidents, or if it is a result of better reporting.

Police Services also charge individuals for animal cruelty offenses; therefore, reports of animal maltreatment are not always investigated by an OSPCA investigator. As a result of this, these incidents are not documented at the OSPCA and therefore, there was no opportunity for these incidents to be included in this research.

Women's Shelter and Support Services ask questions about animal cruelty; however, they do not forward any report of animal maltreatment to the OSPCA for investigation. They will, however, report to FCS for child maltreatment as it relates to the domestic violence. This approach excludes clients from the OSPCA and includes clients at FCS, which can lead to disproportionate reporting results.

The FCS staff lack an awareness of what information should be reported to the OSPCA when they see animal concerns in their daily work. In the absence of this knowledge, less obvious cases of neglect or abuse are left unreported. Better awareness of reportable concerns would have increased the number of cases common to both agencies.

4.4. Implications for Practice:

The aim of this study was to identify a common population of clients from the OSPCA and FCS, and to examine the characteristics common to this population as related to animal and child welfare issues.

Now that the common characteristics have been identified, with some of the findings supporting the results of past studies, employees of both a child protection agency and an animal welfare organization should be educated on this topic, with a view to cross-training and cross-reporting strategies. Cross-training includes mutual sessions where the mandates of each agency are explained, as well as examples provided in terms of reportable situations. This would help to develop a common language for both agencies. A better understanding of the rationale for working together would emerge. Cross-reporting suggests a systematic method of communicating between agencies. For example, if an OSPCA investigator attends a home for animal cruelty concerns, which

are verified, a referral would be made to FCS for follow-up if any children are present. A similar procedure should be followed by FCS staff if child maltreatment concerns are verified; a report would be made to the OSPCA if there are animals present in the home.

Moving Forward - Asking Better Questions:

Both agencies should have questions on their investigation forms that relate to the presence of children and pets, where information is documented and systematic decisions made about the need for cross-reporting. The Humane Society of the United States suggests the following intake questions in regard to pets that could be asked by women's shelter staff as well as child protective services. These include:

Do you have a pet, currently or in the past; has your partner/parent ever threatened or caused harm to the pet; have you ever hurt or killed a pet yourself; who did the pet belong to; and did your concern for the pet prevent you from coming to the shelter or from leaving the relationship sooner than now and did you leave your partner because of animal abuse? (The Humane Society of the United States, n.d., para. 4)

The OSPCA could ask similar questions in respect to the existence of children in the family and make observations about child abuse and neglect when assessing animal welfare concerns.

Why Work Together?

Child protection agencies, animal welfare organizations and domestic violence staff should work together. Personnel from each of these sectors encounter the specific abuse they deal with as well as co-existing forms of abuse; there are common perpetrators and victims. Staffs of these agencies are trained in identifying the risk issues specific to their population and would need minimal training to help identify the other forms of abuse. These professionals are morally, ethically and sometimes legally bound to report abuse and are part of breaking the cycle of abuse. Individually, these professionals also come into contact with other helping professionals and can help to promote education in respect to the links between these types of maltreatment (Arkow, n.d., a, para. 7).

4.5. Future Research Implications:

This study used retrospective data. A preference for a future research model would be to use current data. Cross-training initiatives and cross-reporting strategies would be developed at the onset of the research project. The subsequent research would include cases that occur in a specific time frame following the cross-training. This method of data collection could eliminate some of the current limitations pertaining to language and reporting issues. The data set of the current research was developed based on matched names in two systems. Using the above-mentioned method, data could be gathered in a more systematic manner, for example, common clients known for a specific service reason or comparing content more specifically in terms of concerns being verified or not and examining what variables within the family context might have made that difference.

This area of research, examining the connections between child maltreatment and animal abuse, is currently under-researched. This study shows the connectivity between two vulnerable populations and should be researched further in an on-going effort to protect children and animals from harm.

4.6. Social Policy Implications:

The creation and implementation of a working protocol between child and animal welfare agencies could have significant benefit in earlier identification of risk issues and of protecting vulnerable populations. The inclusion of joint training initiatives and cross-reporting strategies in an agency's protocol and procedure manual would assist in ensuring workers are looking for these co-existing types of abuse. A recognition, by the Ontario Government, of the co-existence of these types of family violence could result in changes to the current legislation as well as the current Risk Assessment Model.

The Duty to Report section of the CFSA (2003) could be modified to include these animal related professions. At this time, neither an OSPCA employee nor a

veterinarian is required, by law, to report protection concerns to a Children's Aid Society. The Duty to Report as outlined in the CFSA (2003) speaks specifically to professionals who work with children or hear of children in their work. The OSPCA and veterinarians work with animals. While speculative, there might be a significant benefit for children if professionals from both sectors were obligated to report concerns about child maltreatment and neglect. It is also curious why veterinarians do not share in any Duty to Report legislation, given they may well frequently come into contact with families where animal cruelty and domestic violence co-exist. In the absence of a duty to report on their part, some cases go unreported and abuse continues for the victims. Consideration of Duty to Report legislation for professionals who learn of animal cruelty issues in their work would also help to make the link between child maltreatment, domestic violence and animal abuse.

Currently, FCS has child protection social workers located in two police departments and a local hospital. The caseloads of these workers are generated by reviewing police reports and hospital charts respectively, looking for issues that are child protection related. The presence of a child protection social worker within the office of the OSPCA, would be beneficial. This worker would screen animal welfare investigations for child welfare concerns and provide child protection intervention accordingly, while animal welfare issues were addressed by shelter staff. Using this approach increases the opportunity for earlier intervention with families who present to an OSPCA before they present to a Children's Aid Society.

This research has examined the common characteristics or the links between clients of an OSPCA and FCS. The creation of a "Links" group within a community serves to bring attention to the subject on a larger scale. A "Links" group is comprised of community members who share an interest in further examining these links. Members of the group could include personnel from child and animal welfare sectors, the police, the education system and the medical and legal community, as well as the women's sector. A "Links" group educates the public about the co-existence of animal and child welfare issues in an effort to increase early identification of risk issues for vulnerable populations,

with a view to prevent eventual abuse from occurring. The two forms of abuse are not mutually exclusive. This process can serve to build public support for violence prevention. As community education and momentum on the subject increases, changes to legislation, such as the proposed amendments to *Bill C-50*, might be overwhelmingly supported.

4.7. Conclusion:

The present study examined the link between child maltreatment and animal abuse by looking at the characteristics common to clients of FCS and the OSPCA. The findings validate that there are common characteristics within these two populations. These results emphasize the importance of understanding that connections do exist, the importance of cross-training and cross-reporting initiatives between the various sectors and the opportunity to ameliorate the safety and well being for both children and companion animals.

Future studies on this topic will continue to perpetuate the knowledge of the connectivity between the two populations and the on-going need for awareness, education and collaborative efforts by the animal welfare and child protection sectors. Davis (1998) wrote:

The Ontario SPCA, through its work, sees evidence of violence on a daily basis. Abused animals are brought to shelters and the animal protection services investigate incidents of cruelty and neglect. Humane Society inspectors become aware of the relationship between neglect and cruelty to animals and family violence. (p.10)

More than ever, it is time for children's aid societies and animal welfare agencies to develop working protocols in order to better address the maltreatment and abuse of children and animals.

APPENDIX A: Ethics Certificate



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Tel: (514) 398-6831
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 Ethics website: www.mcgill.ca/rgo/ethics-human

Research Ethics Board II Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

REB File #: 164-0405

Project Title: Examining the links between clients of Family and Children's Services of Renfrew County (a Children's Aid Society) and the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals **Applicant's**

Name: Marjorie Walker **Department:** Social Work

Status: Master's student

Supervisor: Dr. S. Duder

Granting Agency and Title (if applicable): N/A

This project was reviewed on April 11, 2005 by _____

Expedited Review ☒
 Full Review ☐

Eleanor V. Stubley

Eleanor Stubley, Ph.D.
 Acting Chair, REB II

Approval Period: April 25, 2005 to April 24, 2006

This project was reviewed and approved in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects and with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects.

-
- * All research involving human subjects requires review on an annual basis. A Request for Renewal form should be submitted at least one month before the above expiry date.
 - * When a project has been completed or terminated a Final Report form must be submitted.
 - * Should any modification or other unanticipated development occur before the next required review, the REB must be informed and any modification can't be initiated until approval is received.

APPENDIX B: FCS Variables and Coding

Geographic location:

- 1 - Petawawa, Pembroke
- 2 - Chalk River, Deep River
- 3 - Westmeath, Beachburg
- 4 - Golden Lake, Eganville, Dacre, Barry's Bay, Round Lake, Killaloe
- 5 - Renfrew, Arnprior
- 6 - Cobden, Douglas, Forrester's Falls, Haley's Station

Caregiver gender relationship:

- 1 - female as primary caregiver
- 2 - male as primary caregiver
- 3 - male and female couple as primary caregivers
- 4 - male or female other relationship

Maltreatment types:

Used Eligibility Spectrum (ES) codings to indicate the maltreatment type.

Intervention Line: was Eligibility Spectrum coding above or below the intervention line?

- 0 - below intervention line
- 1 - above intervention line

Removed: were children removed?

- 0 - not removed
- 1 - removed

Number removed: number of children removed

data missing - n/a

Consent: was consent obtained from caregiver in respect to removal of child/ren?

- 0 - no consent
 - 1 - consent given
 - 2 - consent given for one child, no consent for the other
- data missing - n/a

Returned: were children returned?

0 - not returned

1 - returned

data missing - n/a

Number returned: actual number of children returned

data missing: n/a

Police: were police involved?

0 - no police involvement

1 - police involved

CC charges: were there Criminal Code charges?

0 - no charges

1 - charges

CFSA court: did CFSA court occur?

0 - no CFSA court

1 - CFSA court

Verified: was alleged maltreatment verified?

0 - not verified

1 - verified

Risk Rating: what is the ORAM risk rating?

data missing - n/a

1 - No/low risk

2 - moderately low risk

3 - intermediate risk

4 - moderately high risk

5 - high risk

Subsequent referral: was this an initial referral or a subsequent one on an open case?

0 - not subsequent

1 - subsequent

APPENDIX C: OSPCA Variables and Coding

Geographic location:

- 1- Petawawa, Pembroke
- 2 - Chalk River, Deep River
- 3 - Westmeath, Beachburg
- 4 - Golden Lake, Eganville, Dacre, Barry's Bay, Round Lake, Killaloe
- 5 - Renfrew, Arnprior
- 6 - Cobden, Douglas, Forrester's Falls, Haley's Station

Caretaker gender relationship:

- 1 - female as primary caretaker
- 2 - male as primary caretaker
- 3 - male and female couple as primary caretakers
- 4 - male or female caretakers - other relationship

Maltreatment types:

- 1 - physical harm
- 2 - sexual harm
- 3 - neglect - shelter
- 4 - neglect - nutrition
- 5 - neglect - medical
- 6 - neglect - shelter, nutrition and medical
- 7 - neglect - shelter and nutrition
- 8 - neglect - shelter and medical
- 9 - neglect - nutrition and medical
- 10 physical harm + neglect - shelter
- 11 - physical harm + shelter and nutrition

Removed: were pets removed?

- 0 - not removed
- 1 – removed

Number removed: actual number of pets removed
data missing - n/a

Consent: was consent given by caretaker in respect to removal of pet/s?

0 - no consent

1 - consent

data missing - n/a

Returned: were pets returned?

0 - not returned

1 - returned

data missing - n/a

Number returned: actual number returned

data missing - n/a

Police: were police involved?

0 - not involved

1 - involved

Criminal Code charges: were Criminal Code charges laid?

0 - no charges

1 - charges laid

OSPCA orders: were OSPCA orders written to caretaker?

0 - no orders

1 - orders written

OSPCA rating: the OSPCA rating on the validity of the investigated report.

0 - false

1 - reasonable concern

2 - justified

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