

How we can fight against animal cruelty

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



Human beings have a tendency to view themselves as superior to all other beings on the Earth. This is understandable considering our higher brain capability and capacity. The question that we should ask ourselves is: shouldn't we use our higher functioning to help the animals with less? As a human being I think the answer should be yes. Others in the world think differently. Every single day there are animals subjected to cruel and unusual punishment for no other reason than entertainment. These animals are required to put complete trust into humans. Each dog or cat brought into a home is full of innocence and has the potential for loyalty and love for their masters. Despite this, there are people in the world who believe it is okay to exploit that. At what point did people begin to believe they were so much better than our fellow animals that they could exhibit such behavior and it be okay? I worked in an animal shelter for a year and a half. I saw first-hand the cruelty and absolute disregard some people have for animals. In several states in the US there are no laws against animal abuse. Animals are seen as property, and with that point of view, owners are given the right to do, or not do, anything they please.

The fight against animal cruelty is not a new one. The ASPCA, an organization known for sad commercials and advocacy for animal rights, has been fighting this fight since April 10, 1866. Susan J. Pearson wrote a book called "For the Prevention of Cruelty." In the summary for her book, it is described as a book that "tells its story through a series of largely chronological chapters" (Pearson). The ASPCA did not begin the battle for animal rights however. "From the end of the Civil War through the end of World War II, most animal advocacy was conducted through the Societies for

the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and their confederate body, the American Humane Association (AHA). The diverse interests of those organizations included mitigating conditions for the nation's laboring animals, restricting the use of feathers and fur in fashion, regulating the interstate transportation of livestock, and establishing the painless slaughter of food animals. Activists also undertook positive initiatives by providing ambulances and clinics for animals, humane education of children, and the nation's first animal shelters." (Pearson). While the knowledge of animal abuse and the need for animal rights has been around for a long time, there are still people who don't see the value in treating their pets with dignity.

Animal abuse is more common than one might think particularly in adolescence. According to Anna Baldry:

" Two in five preadolescents admitted abusing animals at least once in their life, and one in three bullying peers at school, with a higher prevalence among boys."(Baldry). " The results suggest that discovery of animal abuse should prompt further enquiries about other problems that a child may have. Detection of animal abuse by a child could offer an early opportunity for intervention to alleviate internalized damage or other aggressive behavior."(Baldry).

While this paper is not focused directly on child abuse, children often abuse animals. The reality is increasingly concerning because animal abuse could be a sign of more abuse. Animal abuse doesn't just hurt animals. It can show signs of other kinds of abuse happening in a house hold. The way a person treats an animal is a very good sign of their character.

What plagues our country most in terms of animal rights is dog fighting and puppy mills. What most people don't know about pet stores or AKC registered puppies is , that almost all of the puppies sold in big pet stores come from puppy mills. The Humane Society defines a puppy mill as " a dog breeding operation offering dogs for monetary compensation, in which the physical, psychological, and/or behavior needs of the dogs are not being fulfilled due to inadequate housing, shelter, staffing, nutrition, socialization, sanitation, exercise, veterinary care and/or inappropriate breeding." (The Gazette) The reason puppy mills are such an affront to animal rights is the fact that these animals are completely innocent and undeserving of such treatment. A typical puppy mill has hundreds of dogs used solely for breeding and many times they don't receive the proper care that they deserve. The Humane Society of the United States battles every day with the horrors of puppy mills. They go in and rescue these animals from people who only view them as a way to make profit. Several states including Ohio are enforcing new laws on puppy mills. The Associated Press in Ohio Printed, " The licensing requirements that take effect with the new year mean dog breeders who produce at least nine litters and at least 60 dogs in a year will need to get a state license. Those who buy from breeders and sell to pet stores must also get a license. Ohio has had a reputation of being soft on oversight of large dog breeding operations. The legislation regulating puppy mills has been seven years in the making and was approved more than a year ago," (The Associated Press).

Requiring a license for all of those involved in buying and selling AKC registered animals is a step in the right direction toward ending puppy mills.

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If someone has records of all of the things going on, it is easier to ensure the proper care of the animals. “ But because rules about care, caging and other standards had to go through a legislative process the Ohio Department of Agriculture set the licensing deadline for Jan. 1.”(The Associated Press). The state of Ohio is leading the way in legislation of puppy mills. Their process involves many things. “ How many breeders will be licensed isn’t known yet. About 300 people have identified themselves as high-volume breeders in a survey, said Erica Hawkins, a spokeswoman for the department of agriculture The department has about 100 license applications in progress and has completed 13, she said.”(Associted Press). These technicalities are vital to the proper care of animals because without them, there is no regulation whatsoever. “ The law sets standards for housing and care of puppies and dogs. Those include making sure kennels are clean, properly ventilated and have temperature controls. It also regulates how much space the dogs have and requires shelter from weather. Background checks and insurance also will be required for breeders. They also must have a relationship with a veterinarian who can provide care for the animals.” (Associated Press). Keeping breeders accountable is most of the battle. If they are the ones who could get in trouble for neglect, then they will be the ones to make the changes themselves. The state of Ohio has placed the responsibility of upkeep in their own state legislature. Therefore them as a state can fight puppy mill cruelty. It is very exciting to know that some states are making the decision to make laws against puppy mills. It would be great progress to see the rest of our country following suit.

In terms of animal rights, dog fighting is another issue that is incredibly pressing. . . pitbull terriers are typically the dogs used in dog fighting. It is because of dog fighting that most people view pit bulls as mean and ferocious. In my experience with the animal shelter, that view is totally wrong. Pit bull terriers are among the most loyal and friendly dogs a person could find. The people who use this breed to fight to the death for sport are the ones to blame for that misconception. Now I think it is safe to assume most people have heard of dog fighting, but most people don't realize how common it really is. The number of animals being killed by this sport is higher than most would think. In an article written by Yilmaz, Orhan, Fusun Coskun, and Mehmet Ertugrul says:

“ Dog fighting is an entertainment for very few people but enough to cause 16, 000 dogs which equals to 44 dogs per day each year to be killed by organized dog fighting.”(Yilmaz, Orhan, Fusun Coskun, & Mehmet Ertugrul). The animals in these fighting rings are far more damaged than a person might think. “ Training of dogs for the fights contains the destruction of other animals including cats. Dogs rescued from fighting make poor pets and must often be destroyed. Organizers of dog fights face prison terms of five years and \$250, 000 in fines. In some jurisdictions, even attending a dogfight can result in imprisonment and fines.” (Yilmaz, Orhan, Fusun Coskun, & Mehmet Ertugrul). Even with the threat of jail time and huge fines, people still continue to gamble and use dog fighting for sport. Dogs who fight have been trained and therefore cause more animals to be killed. “ In victims of dog fighting there must also be mentioned about bait animals. Bait animals are used to test a dog's fighting instinct. Those animals are often mauled or

killed in the process. Trainers provide bait animals from several sources including wild or feral animals, animals obtained from a shelter, or in some cases, stolen pets. Sometimes the animals are also obtained through “ free to a good home” advertisements.” (Yilmaz, Orhan, Fusun Coskun, & Mehmet Ertugrul).

The cruelty of some humans is astounding and the fact that things like this still happen is highly concerning.. It is hard to understand how anyone could just idly stand by and watch dogs rip each other to shreds for sport. Many know the story of Michael Vick who got arrested for having a dog fighting ring, this is just one real life example of how people are abusing animals. People who exploit animals for this sort of entertainment have desecrated the dignity of our world and deserve to be locked away. It is also our job as fellow animals in the animal kingdom to fight against animal cruelty.

Organizations such as the ASPCA and The Humane Society of the United States, work very hard through the media to expose the horrors that thousands, maybe even millions of animals are experiencing in our own country. Anyone with cable has seen the sad ASPCA commercials that have a sad song and sad footage of animals. Despite the fact that most people don't like to see such emotional footage, it is still a very true issue that our country faces. It is necessary for these foundations to use the media because without it, the ways of shining light on this very dark truth aren't as effective.

According to Corwin Kruse, “ Mass media play an important role in determining both what type of activities a social movement organization engages in and the timing of those activities. In addition, the media help to

set the context in which audience attitudes regarding movements are formed.”(Kruse).

Organizations such as the ASPCA and The Humane Society of the US already use the media to exploit animal cruelty. They could do more. In my experience people are unaware of the number of puppy mills used, or the fact that dog fighting really does happen. The media is a solid way for the information to be put out. The more people know, the more they can do to help find a means to an end.

Although the truth behind all of this is something most people would like to ignore, it isn't something that will just go away. It is vital that if a person suspects animal abuse, that they report it. From working in an animal shelter I have seen many different signs of abuse. One cannot forget neglect either. If you come across an animal who may be tied up in a yard and you can very easily see its ribs, that is most likely a malnourished animal. One of the best ways to tell if a dog has been a part of dog fighting is to check its face. More often than not, they have several scars or even bites taken out of ears.

Another indicator of abuse is the body language of an animal. In my experience most animals welcome people. If a dog seems scared of you or has its tail between its legs and refuses to look at you, that is prime indication of abuse. Contrary to popular belief, animals that have been abused are not dangerous or unsalvageable. Just like people who experience abuse, all they need is patience, love, and kindness. Rescuing an animal from a horrible situation can be one of the most rewarding things a person can do. To watch a dog that has clearly been abused, bounce back and be

happy again has been by far some of the most joyful times of my life.

Animals are living creatures that deserve the same respect and decency that people have. They may be less intelligent than we are, but they still have emotions and feel pain. We are all animals, we should all do our part to make this planet the best place it can be.

All creatures on Earth deserve respect and dignity. Us as human beings are the only ones who have the choice to treat animals better. There really is no need for dog fighting, or puppy mills. There are millions of stray animals in our country that would greatly benefit from a home. The fight against animal cruelty is not a new one. People all across our country fight these battles every day. All they ask is for us as humans to be decent. It is the least that could be asked of us and it could greatly benefit so many abused animals lives. Animals deserve rights, just like we do.