

HELP STOP ANIMAL ABUSE/NEGLECT AND ABANDONMENT!

Most of us that work in the animal rescue world are continually appalled by the amount of animal neglect, abuse and abandonment that occurs every day in our society. When we speak to caring individuals about these on-going problems we are often asked "how can we help prevent this from happening?" Here are a few things to consider.

- **Learn more about animal cruelty and the laws that protect animals.** In the State of Washington animals are protected to some degree by the Regulation Codes of Washington (RCWs). Unfortunately the laws in many situations are not that strong. The more you know about the current laws the better you will be able to identify animal cruelty when you see it. Please realize that animal cruelty comes in many shapes and forms. Two common elements we see in a large number of cases are: the cruelty is done out of sight of the general public (behind fences or barriers). This true with companion animals (dogs/cats) and also livestock. Secondly, the perpetrator is an intimidating factor in the community and people are often reluctant to get involved.

But that doesn't mean that animal cruelty (i.e. abuse/neglect or abandonment) should not be reported:

- **Report animal cruelty.** If you witness an animal being abused/neglected or abandoned or you suspect that abuse is going on, the most important action you can take is to report the cruelty to your local law enforcement agency.

Please be mindful of the following things:

1. **If you witness animal cruelty in progress, call 911.** Animal cruelty is a crime. Your call to law enforcement may help save animals and people too. Did you know that people who commit crimes against animals are five times more likely to be involved in other types of abuse (i.e. child, spousal or elder abuse)
2. **If the abuse is continually happening.** Please try to document everything you see or hear. Keep a written log of any incidents with the time and date clearly noted. If you have contacted law enforcement regarding the situation, keep

records of each time you have contacted the authorities asking them to respond and secure an incident number for each call. If you have discussions with the suspected abuser please make notes of those conversations too. If you feel that you or your family is being threatened at anytime, call 911 and document everything.

3. **Documentation is of utmost importance.** If you can **SAFELY** obtain video and photography documentation that is the best form of evidence. Only attempt to take photos and the video if you can safely obtain them without trespassing. A date and time stamp on the evidence is very helpful too. Please note that illegal trespassing on private property may put your safety at risk, and the photos and video obtained usually won't be allowed as evidence, since the act of obtaining the photos was against the law.
 4. **Be as factual as possible.** If you can talk to neighbors, delivery people who are legally entering the property or witnesses to the potential abuse, see if they are willing to document what they have seen too. The more detailed information from multiple sources the stronger the case becomes. Attempt to be very factual and document the time and date on all of your reports. We realize that emotions run very strongly in these circumstances but substantiated facts are what are needed.
- **Don't try to solve the situation yourself.** Law enforcement is there to assist and the better your documentation is the better their chances of helping you are. Also note there are multiple animal rescue groups in the region that may be able to help. Joplin's Sanctuary and Animal Rescue (www.joplinsanctuary.com) is just one of a network of rescue groups that may be able to assist you.
 - **Help strengthen animal laws (RCWs) in the State of Washington.** As earlier stated, Washington State has animal cruelty laws on the books (RCWs). Breaking these laws can result in both felony and misdemeanor charges being filed against a perpetrator. Unfortunately we need more and stronger laws to help further protect both companion animals and livestock. We encourage you to write to your legislator about animal abuse/neglect and abandonment. You can find who your local legislator is by going to the following website:
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/Default.aspx>.

- **Support local rescue groups who are involved in helping protect animals:** It is critical that local animal rescue groups like Joplin's Sanctuary and Animal Rescue receives donations from the public to continue their work against animal neglect/abuse and abandonment. The inherent cost of rescue, inclusive of veterinary care, food/sheltering and re-homing of the animals is extensive. Providing monetary donations is only one way to help though. Spreading the word about the information contained in this article is also hugely important. The more educated we are as a community re: animal cruelty the better.

Thank you for reading this article and for your on-going support and interest in stopping animal abuse/neglect and abandonment.



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