

Animal Cruelty: A Possible Warning Behavior for Terrorism and Other Premeditated Violence Against Humans Which Needs Reporting and Further Vetting

Clinical and forensic data on mass murder incidents, including terrorist attacks, reveals the vast majority are premeditated rather than impulsive. Premeditated murders often display observable warning behaviors. Although warning behaviors cannot predict targeted violence, they are useful in identifying an accelerated and increased risk of violence that should elevate authorities' concern. Animal cruelty^a, particularly when premeditated^b in nature, is one example of a novel aggression warning behavior^c. Through this behavior, an individual tests his or her ability to actually engage in a violent act and can be thought of as experimental aggression. Numerous studies indicate that animal cruelty is often linked to a variety of other crimes, particularly violent offences toward humans. In 2017, there were two instances in the Homeland of ISIS supporters who abused animals for various reasons prior to their arrest, and who were plotting to conduct a terrorist attack.

NOTE: FBI research has sought to differentiate between individuals who commit acts of animal cruelty on the basis of impulsive/affective versus premeditated/predatory nature of the violence. Both modes of violence are distinctive and important to understanding human aggression.

- In early 2017, a family member of an identified US person notified local law enforcement that his relative possessed a weapon and intended to kill the family dog. Local law enforcement officers responded, discovered a large knife wound on the dog, and took the identified US person into custody. While in custody, the identified US person stated that he justified stabbing the dog because of his religious views. Approximately five days before the incident, the subject posted a photo of the family dog on social media with a message indicating he hoped the dog would die soon. Upon further investigation of his residence, it was determined the US person planned to construct and use a pressure cooker bomb in New York City on behalf of ISIS, according to court documents.

^a Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly taking an action that mistreats or kills any animal without just cause, such as torturing, tormenting, mutilating, maiming, poisoning, or abandonment.

^b Premeditated/predatory violence is characterized by the absence of emotion and a threat and is cognitively planned versus impulsive/affective violence, which is reactive and is based on emotions of anger or fear, in response to a perceived imminent threat.

^c An act of violence that appears unrelated to any targeted violence "pathway" warning behavior and is committed for the first time. A person may be engaging in this behavior in order to test his or her ability to actually engage in a violent act.



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- In 2016, the FBI researched 259 adults who were arrested from 2004 to 2009 for committing acts of animal cruelty. Forty-five percent (117 out of 259) of these offenders were arrested for another criminal incident after their act of animal cruelty. Seventy-four percent (192 out of 259) had information regarding acts of interpersonal violence, and 60 percent of the 192 (115) individuals demonstrated an official or unofficial^d history of interpersonal violence.

REPORTING AND VETTING ANIMAL CRUELTY:

Reporting, investigating, and prosecuting animal cruelty may help minimize violent acts toward humans, including terrorism. With an increased awareness of the potential link between animal cruelty and human violence, professionals from various disciplines (first responders, animal control, animal shelters, social services, and veterinarians) as well as peers, neighbors, and family members may be well positioned to report animal cruelty to appropriate authorities for further vetting. Their participation becomes a force multiplier and may assist communities and law enforcement with identifying, assessing, and managing threats of planned violence while promoting public safety.

- Animal cruelty can be a complex crime requiring cross-disciplinary attention, information sharing, and intergovernmental collaboration. Neighbors or veterinarians may witness and report animal abuse earlier than reluctant family members who are fearful or intimidated by the perpetrator's abusive actions. This reporting is critical for authorities and can facilitate dialogue, which may ultimately uncover the perpetrator's intent or violent acts toward humans. Depending upon the jurisdiction, animal control officers may be first to respond to animal abuse calls and be granted access to residences before representatives of other law enforcement and social service agencies. Similarly, first responders may uncover animal cruelty incidents requiring the attention of animal-care professionals.
- For law enforcement, conducting National Crime Information Center (NCIC) checks and being familiar with aggression warning behaviors, such as animal cruelty (NCIC Code 7201), may assist in assessing the totality of facts and circumstances that could lead to violent offences toward humans.
- Given every state has animal cruelty felony provisions, it is important to be familiar with anti-cruelty laws within the jurisdiction and maintain lines of communication with animal protection. Investigating, prosecuting and sentencing individuals who commit animal cruelty, may expand the scope of the investigation – providing prosecutors another crime to charge, which may strengthen their case.

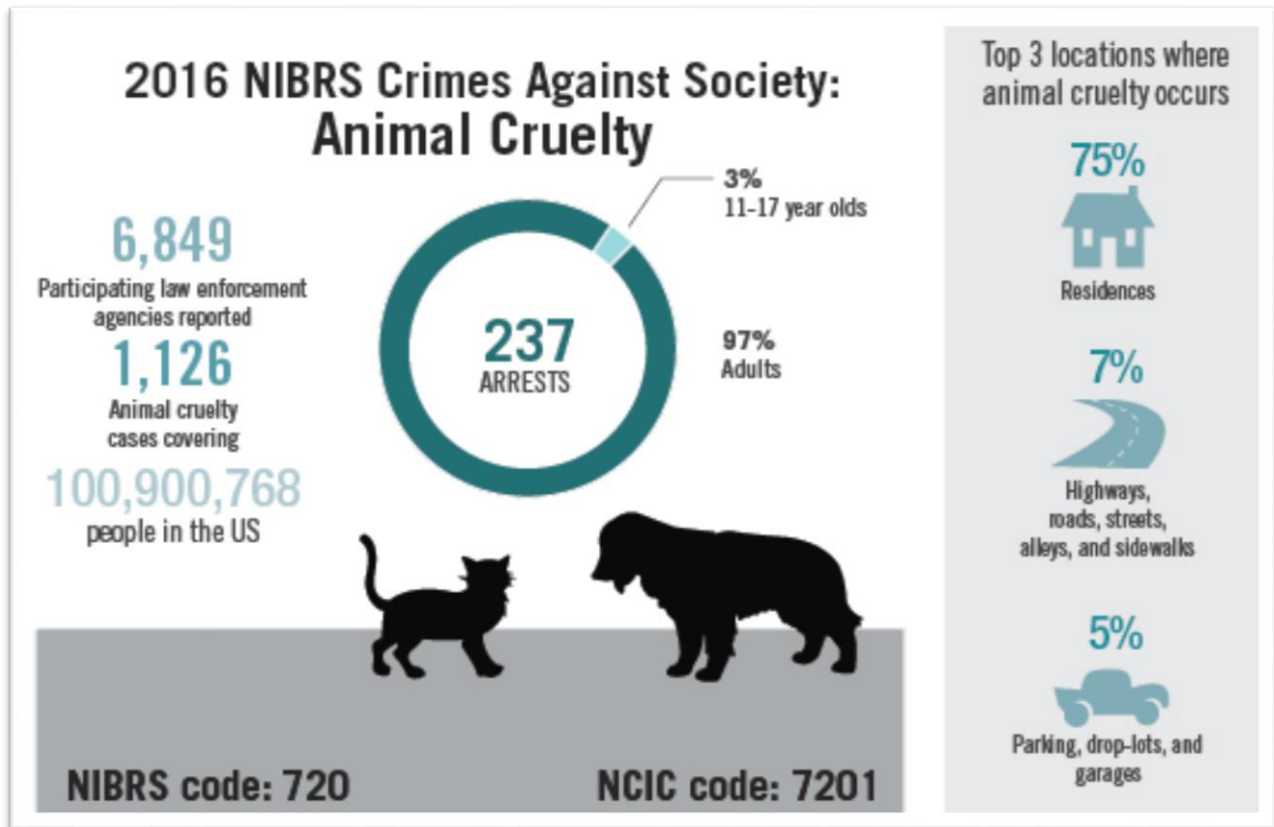
TRACKING ANIMAL CRUELTY:

Before 2016, crimes involving animals were lumped into an "All Other Offense" category in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program's Annual Crime Report, which is a survey of crime data provided by approximately 18,000 federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies. However, in 2016, the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) began collecting detailed data from nearly 7,000

^d Unofficial reporting includes incidents in official law enforcement reports that did not result in an arrest. These incidents include acts such as stalking or threatening life of an intimate partner, child, or pet.



participating law enforcement agencies on acts of animal cruelty, including gross neglect, torture, organized abuse, and sexual abuse. By adding animal cruelty offenses to NIBRS and participating in



reporting in NIBRS, law enforcement agencies and communities over time will have a much richer dataset, which they will be able to use as a strategic resource for analysis, intervention, and enforcement.

ON-SCENE ARRIVAL AND ANIMAL CRUELTY INVESTIGATIVE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Determine location of suspect and secure scene
- Determine if any weapon is involved and recover and inventory for evidentiary purposes as appropriate
- Determine what crime has occurred, if any
- Separate suspect and witness and interview separately, including children
- In the event of an injured animal, request response from appropriate animal care service
- Document and photograph the animal's condition and the crime scene, including obvious injuries, blunt, or penetrating trauma, etc.
- If possible, follow up to obtain a copy of the animal's medical treatment report and attach to the incident report



FIRSTRESPONDER'S TOOLBOX

- If animal is dead, communicate to animal services to preserve as evidence
- Run the suspect's records, both in and out-of-state
- Document the suspect's description of animal's alleged action
- If the actions are indicative of animal cruelty, determine if the violence appears to be premeditated or impulsive in nature
- Be observant for other indicators of animal crimes or suspicious warning indicators of violence toward humans. Spouses, partners, family members, roommates, classmates, friends, and co-workers may be best positioned to report on the following inquiries:
 - Social media, email, and electronic devices for implicit or explicit commitment or intent to engage in violent activity or communication with like-minded individuals
 - Literature, internet research, or other interest(s) associated with violent extremist groups or regarding weapons construction or intended target
 - Acquisition of weapons, ammunition, personal protective gear, tactical clothing, or other items, which is a departure from the individual's normal patterns
 - Interest in explosive devices or acquisition of parts to construct one
 - Recent and significant personal loss or humiliation, whether real or perceived, such as a death; breakup or divorce; or loss of a job, status, or self-image
 - Statements or behaviors that seem to indicate suicide, end-of-life planning, or an interest in destructiveness toward the world at large
 - Seeking religious or political justification for violent acts
 - Leakage of information (verbal, written, texted, posted to social media, etc.) demonstrating commitment or intent to engage in violent activity with the intent to harm another person
 - Planning or attempting to travel to a conflict zone in support of a foreign terrorist organization

RESOURCES:

- FBI, **2019 National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) User Manual** available at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/nibrs-user-manual/view>
- FBI, **Commonalities in Behavioral Characteristics of Active Animal Cruelty Offenders** (23 December 2016) available through the Behavioral Analysis Unit Chief 703-632-4302 or the Critical Incident Intelligence Unit Chief at 703-632-4330
- NCTC, **Homegrown Violent Extremist Mobilization Indicators** (December 2017 Edition) available through www.nctc.gov
- FBI, **Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks** available at <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/making-prevention-a-reality.pdf>



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