What if Crimes Against Domesticated Animals Were Punished as Punitively as Crimes against Humans?
A Horrific Event: December 16th, 2010

- Location: Muddy Paws
  - Considered to be a respected dog rescue
- Owner: Diane Eldrup
  - Also, the defendant and abuser in this case
- Event: Animal Abuse causing severe neglect and death
  - They discovered dead bodies of 17 dogs which were stacked in a closet.
  - They also found dead bodies of cats and birds
Defense: She meant well...
- She claims she really wanted to take care of these rescued animals.
- But things got out of hand and she emotionally shut down...

Charges: Probation to 5 years in prison
- That's it!
- She was the cause behind the death of 17 innocent dogs! If these bodies were human, the punishment would have been much more severe.
A Necessary Change to the Criminal Justice System

- Most domesticated animals, especially dogs, have unconditional love and are extremely loyal to their human caregivers.
- They pass no judgement and some will even risk their own lives for their human caregivers.
- They are considered “man's best friend”...
- Yet, their lives are ranked lower than the lives of humans...
- ...something isn't right with this picture.
The Structure of this Presentation

- Terms Defined and Compared
- Government Documents related to Animal Cruelty
- Evidence showing a linkage between Animal Cruelty and human interpersonal abuse
- Reasons why domesticated animals “turn” on humans
- My theory in how to prevent animals from “turning” and how to treat these innocent victims to be able to adapt to society again.
Terms

- Abuse:
  - **Animal abuse** occurs when someone inflicts harm or suffering on an animal for the person's personal gain other than self defense
  - **Human abuse** occurs when “any action that intentionally harms or injures a person”

** Very similar definitions
Terms continued...

- **Neglect:**
  - **Animal neglect** is defined as not providing necessary essentials for their companion animals such as food, water, shelter, love, and veterinary care.
  - **Human neglect** can be defined as when a caregiver fails to provide food, water, shelter, love, and medical care for a dependent person.

** Again, very similar definitions
Again, more terms...

- **Mistreatment/misuse:**
  - Animal mistreatment/misuse is defined as using the animal to perform tasks for a person's gain despite the well being of the animal.
  - Human mistreatment/misuse can be defined as forcing a human being to perform tasks ethically “wrong”, such as forcing a child to engage in sexual acts or also to force them to engage in adult activities like work.
    - This can also be considered the endangerment of a minor

*** Similar definitions for the most part
Abandonment:

- Animal abandonment is defined as leaving an animal behind without the proper care supplied that causes harm to the animal.
- Human abandonment is when a caregiver leaves behind a dependent person, this does not include legal adoption, that can lead to harm of the person.

*** Again, very similar definitions
So, what does this mean?

- If the definitions in the legal terms that are denoted to areas of cruelty for Animals and Humans are so extremely similar, why are the punishments for such crimes so much different?
- Either punishment towards human abusers is too punitive, or the punishment towards animal abusers is too lenient...
  - Many would agree that it is the latter that is occurring in society rather than the first theory...
Government Documents/Movements/Policies pertaining to Animal Cruelty

- “Crush Video Act” of 1999
  - focused mainly on the possession or selling of media known as “crush videos” with its intentions to expand to other acts of other depictions of animal cruelty, including dog fighting.
  - These videos contained gruesome acts of women “crushing” animals' heads in with their bare feet or while wearing high heels.
  - **This was a huge step in the right direction!**
  - But not for long, the Supreme Court recently overturned this ruling because this statute contained an exemption clause permitting depictions of animal cruelty to be legal only if it was for “serious religious, political, scientific, educational, journalistic, historical, or artistic value”.
  - I am still confused with how women brutally murdering animals with their high heels could fall into that exemption clause....
However,

- If this statute was made to protect humans from this form of cruelty, it wouldn't have been overturned.
- Society doesn't even need a statute relating this type of crime to humans, because it is just a given that it is illegal.
- Some examples of statutes that pertain to a group of humans that can be seen as defenseless and innocent as domesticated animals are...
Federal Child Pornography Statute

- states that producing, selling, buying, or receiving child pornography can result in 5 to 30 years in prison.
Disabled Persons Protection Commission of 2005

- Statute in Massachusetts

- it is a felony to either actually commit assault and battery of a disabled person or make and sell media depicting such acts and is subjected to three to ten years in prison.

**Both of these statutes, as well as any other crime, if it was caught on camera or other forms of media that capture the event would be used as evidence to prosecute the offender.**
Some States are moving in the right directions...

- **Alabama:**
  - If someone intentionally tortures an animal, that person can face up to 10 years in prison and $5000 fine.
- **Massachusetts and the District of Columbia:**
  - If someone intentionally kills a domesticated animal that person can face up to 5 years in prison and a $25,000 fine.
  - While the prison time is short, the fine is pretty hefty.
Some...not so much

- Alaska, Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Utah:
  - if a person engages in acts of animal cruelty they can face up to only a year in jail and up to $2000 in fines
Linkage between Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Human Abuse

- There has been a strong correlation noted between Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Abuse.
- Thus a decrease in Animal Abuse (which is to be expected if the punishment for abusers increases), would lead to a decrease in interpersonal human abuse and vice versa.
Abuse Occurring at the Same Time

- Animal Abuse and other forms of abuse such as child and domestic abuse has often been shown to co-occur at the same time in the same household.
  - One study shows that up to 75% of abused women have also had a companion animal abused as well. While only 5% of non-abused women have also had a companion animal abused.
More on the subject...

- 70% of animal abusers also have a criminal record for other crimes, often times interpersonal violence.
  - Most often times, a domesticated animal is used to intimidate another member of the household.
  - They can use threats of violence towards the animal or actually hurt the animal to get the other member to comply or to just gain control and dominance in the household.
Animal Abuse in Childhood

- It has been noted that children who either experience abuse themselves or observe abuse of others as a child, will often times grow up and commit forms of abuse on others, especially animals.
  
  - Many of these children possess a disorder known as **Conduct Disorder** which causes them to have a difficult time engaging in socially acceptable behaviors and often time the unacceptable behaviors they do engage in involve violence towards others, human and non-human.
Conduct Disorder

- Individuals with Conduct Disorder often times engage in violence against animals, but not always.

- A study was conducted with a group of individuals with Conduct Disorder that were cruel to animals and a group of individuals with Conduct Disorder who were not cruel to animals. The researcher observed acts of severe torture or killing an animal, violence that didn't result in serious injury, and sexual inappropriateness with an animal within each group.

- It was noted that the individuals with Conduct Disorder that were cruel to animals were more than twice as likely to have greater histories in physical child abuse, sexual child abuse, and exposure to domestic abuse than the group that just had Conduct Disorder and were not cruel to animals.
Preventing this Phenomenon

- While not all individuals with Conduct Disorder act out violently towards animals, it has been noted that violence towards animals is one of the earliest symptoms to arise in this disorder.

- Thus if a child is engaging in this type of behavior, the child needs immediate medical and psychological attention. This type of behavior can be eliminated with professional help.

- Conduct Disorder in children often times leads to Anti-Social Personality Disorder in adults.

- 85% of individuals incarcerated in the United States corrections have been diagnosed with having Anti-Social Personality Disorder.

- So, if we lower the rate of violence against animals we can thus lower the rate of incarceration rates.
  
  - Simple enough
When Our “Friends” Turn

- This presentation will focus on the most common household pet, the dog
- The dog is “man's best friend”
- It is loyal and shows unconditional love for its caregiver
- However, it is also considered a part of the family in most households and is thus subjected to the same kind of abuse other members of the household receive....
This is often times how aggression begins...

- There is estimated to be about 4.7 million dog attacks a year towards humans
  - 238 of these being fatal
- A dog is more likely to attack when physically abused, neglected by starvation and dehydration, lack of socialization with other people or animals, and being constantly placed in a kennel or chained up in a back yard.
  - There is only so much a dog can take before it “snaps”. Just like humans, we can only endure so much before we fight back.
The Consequences of Abuse

- Physical abuse can lead to a mistrust in Humans
  - If there is not a trusting and respectful relationship between the dog and other humans, especially its caregiver, the dog soon loses the trust in humans and thus changes its priorities from the love towards humans to its own survival
If a dog is abused by only one member of the family and still receives love and comfort from other members of the family, the dog is less likely to attack because it is receiving what it needs.

However, if a dog is abused and thus there is no love or comfort and is often times isolated from society (such as being kenneled or tied up), the dog is more likely to attack.
Why is this?

- Dogs are genetically determined to thrive in groups
  - This can be groups of other dogs or even just being included in the family
  - Thus shunning them from this type of socialization can turn a domesticated dog into a wild animal basically
    - 58% of fatal dog attacks in the United States in 2010 were from a dog that was chained up and thus isolated from society.
Physical Consequences of Isolation

- This pertains to dogs that are chained up outside
  - Most often if a dog is left outside for periods of time, the dog’s collar can become too tight and can cause irritation. The dog may also receive injuries from other animals or insects that can be very painful.
  - If a person attempts to help this dog, the dog may lash out because of the pain and because the dog has associated pain with human contact.
Dog fighting

- While the previous reasons for dogs attacking humans are important and need to be addressed, they aren't the main reason dogs attack.
- Dog fighting is a form of mistreatment/misuse of an animal because humans use these dogs to win fights and thus they earn a profit off of this.
- Dog fighting is used as a form of entertainment and gambling.
The Basics

- Dog fighting is when two dogs, which have been specifically bred, conditioned, and trained to fight, are placed in an “arena” which is often times just a small area surrounded by plywood walls.

- In this “arena”, the dogs fight each other until one of the dogs can no longer fight; is either too injured or is killed.

- Dog fighting is illegal in all 50 states. But this hasn't stopped this horrific event from occurring.
The Consequences

- Most often, these fights can last longer than two hours
- Both dogs receive injuries with the “losing” dog receiving the worst injuries
  - While most “losing” dogs do not die during the fight, but they soon lose the fight for their life after the fight due to shock, blood loss, dehydration, infection, and just pure exhaustion.
How to achieve a Champion Fight Dog

- It all begins with genetics.
- A prior champion fight dog, often times male, is determined and placed in a room with a female dog of the same breed (if she is a champion fight dog, that is even better)
- The female is then strapped to a “rape stand” and thus the male dog is allowed to impregnate the female dog.
- Apparently, rape is also okay in these households.
- The more puppies the greater the chance of producing a good fighting dog.
- However, genetics alone isn't necessary to produce a good fighting dog...
Training

- By means of conditioning, the dog is physically prepped to fight. This means creating the strongest, meanest, and most bodily modified dog to produce the best outcomes.

- People who condition these dogs, make the dogs endure some harsh things
  - These include having to drag heavy tires or chains around their necks, run on treadmills to receive food after a long period of starvation, injecting the dogs with steroids, and some cases have been reported of the trainers injecting the food of these trainees with poison so that when their opponent bite onto their fur, it tastes bad causing the opponent to not bite them.
Cheating?

- A fight dog's body may even be modified
- This is to make the dog look more intimidating and to even help the dog “cheat”
  - The ears and tail can be cropped, causing the opponent to be unable to latch on to these areas.
  - Some even have their dog's teeth sharpened to cause greater injury during a fight.
Practice and the Day of the Fight

- These dogs are starved until their practice fight with a “bait dog” and until their actual fight.
- During practice fights, a starved fight dog is placed in an area with an often time smaller animal, such as a bird, cat, or a smaller dog (a bait dog), and is thus rewarded with food by killing this smaller animal.
  - This is a reason why most dog attacks occur towards children.
- The dog thus generalizes this behavior to the “arena”. Kill the other dog, receive food.
Once aggression has been taught in these animals, it is often times hard to diminish or eliminate because this has been the dog's way of life.

Once law enforcement discovers the dog fighting ring, they will seize the dogs and take them to a shelter to be assessed medically and psychologically.
• While it is difficult to diminish/eliminate these aggressive behaviors, in most cases, it is not impossible.

• The dog just needs “therapy”
  - It needs to be shown the appropriate behaviors that are thus rewarded, and inappropriate behaviors that will no longer be rewarded.
Critics claim that...

- Animals and humans are different
- They look different
  - Dogs often have snouts that encompass both their nose and mouth, while humans have a separate nose and mouth. Humans walk upright, dogs do not unless trained to do so. Etc..

**However, why should the physical difference between two differing groups determine different kinds of treatment to be okay? Isn't that how slavery came about in the United States?**
Mental abilities are different

Humans have a much higher ability to problem solve and comprehend sentences and phrases and words

Dogs have the mental capacity of a 2-3 year old human.
  - They can comprehend up to 80 words/phases
  - They can't plan ahead and thus do not worry about the future. They worry about the moment in time and their survival.
  - I'm sure we all wish we didn't worry about the future
- Genetic Make-up
- Humans have 23 chromosomal pairs while dogs have 39.
- However, humans and dogs share 5% of their genetic makeup.
  - It might seem small, but it shows that there is a greater similarity between humans and dogs than most people think.
- Verbal capabilities
- Humans communicate mainly through verbal spoken language
- Dogs communicate mainly through body language and gestures
  - Dogs thus pick up on the slightest change in body language and even the tone and pitch in someone's voice and can then perceive a situation, where most humans do not pick up on these slight changes.
  - This is a feature humans could benefit from to avoid dangerous or awkward situations.
Many criticize that most dogs are just born bad based on their breed.

- Pit bulls, Rottweilers, and other dogs deemed naturally bad are also thought of as “ticking time bombs” and very unpredictable.

Dogs have their own personalities that they are born with, however, behavior is something that is shaped throughout the dog's life. So, aggressive behavior is not something a dog is born with, but something that dog learns over time.
In comes, Behavioral Analysis!

- Behavioral Analysts view every action an organism engages in as a behavioral contingency that is being maintained through the means of either reinforcement, punishment, avoidance, penalty, or escape.
  - A **behavioral contingency** is basically what caused the behavior, the behavior, the the consequences of that behavior.
  - An action or behavior will only **continue** to occur if in the past it has been reinforced. And an action or behavior will only **decrease** if in the past it has been punished.
Psychology terms that you already know

- A **Reinforcer** is an object that the organism enjoys such as food, money, or attention.

- An **aversive condition or punisher** is an object that the organism greatly dislikes such as pain and yelling.

- **Reinforcement** is when an organism engages in a behavior and is then presented with a reinforcer thus causing an increased future frequency of that behavior.

- **Punishment** is when an organism engages in a behavior and is then presented with an aversive condition or punisher and thus the future frequency of that behavior decreases.
And, some more...

- **Avoidance** is when the organism either has a reinforcer or doesn't have an aversive condition but in order to maintain having that reinforcer or not having that aversive condition, the organism must engage in a specific behavior thus causing the future frequency of this behavior to increase in the future.

- **Penalty** is when an organism has the reinforcer it desires and then engages in an undesirable behavior and thus has the reinforcer removed causing a decreased frequency in this behavior.

- **Escape** is when there is already an aversive condition or punisher present and the organism engages in a behavior in order to get the aversive condition or punisher removed and thus that behavior's future frequency increases.
How these contingencies can cause aggression

- **Aversive Condition:** Physical Abuse
- **Escape Contingency:**
  - The dog is receiving physical abuse (the before), the dog runs away or fights back (the behavior), the dog is not receiving the physical abuse anymore at that time (the after)
- **Avoidance Contingency:**
  - The dog sees the abuser (the before), the dog growls or runs away (the behavior), the dog no longer sees the abuser (the after)
● Punishment:
  - The dog doesn't receive punishment (the before), the dog engages in some sort of playful or loving activity (the behavior), the dog receives punishment (the after)

● Reinforcement:
  - The dog has no food (the before), the dog attacks a small animal or child (the behavior), the dog has food (the after)
    ● This is why dog fighting occurs.
My Stance

- I understand that it is literally impossible to end all forms of animal abuse.
- However, it can be reduced with harsher punishments for abusers.
  - Because right now, in most states, it is basically a slap on the wrist.
- If abuse is detected in a home, all members of the family need to be evaluated for signs of abuse.
I believe that any individual who abuses an animal, should be prohibited from owning animals there after.

- They should be placed on some sort of registry to allow for frequent monitoring of these individuals.
Rehabilitation Training

- This involves decreasing inappropriate behaviors and increasing appropriate ones.
- This often times include undoing the previous pairings of pain and starvation with humans, to pairing human contact with much more reinforcing stimuli such as providing constant food, water, shelter, attention, toys, and love.
  - Many of these animals take time to trust humans again, but do you blame them? But with persistence and the right training, the past can be undone for many of these abused dogs.
Education

- Members of society and the household need to be educated in how to engage with abused or strange dogs.
  - Many children lack the understanding in how to engage with dogs are often too rough when petting, often approach strange dogs without the owners permission, and when petting often pet the dogs head which can cause a dog to attack out of fear (it is recommended to pet a dog under the chin at first)
  - Dogs and children should never be left unsupervised!!!!
"The dog has seldom been successful in pulling man up to his level of sagacity, but man has frequently dragged the dog down to his."

James Thurber (Neville, 2007)