

# “We need to protect animals in order to protect people.”

- EPS Constable Ilka Cunningham,  
Animal Cruelty Investigation Unit



## What is animal cruelty?

Animal cruelty is the severe neglect, malicious inflicting of pain, sexual abuse, mutilating, torturing, or wounding of a living animal. It is also the malicious and intentional killing of an animal without a lawful reason. The animal may be domesticated, a pet, a wild animal or a wild animal kept in captivity.

Severe neglect includes failing to provide animals with adequate basic necessities supporting health and well-being for extended periods leading to suffering, permanent injury or death.

## What does animal cruelty include?

Animal cruelty includes any activity that causes unlawful and unnecessary distress, pain or suffering, injury, disability, or death to an animal. Examples of animal cruelty include, but are not limited to, starving, abandoning when wounded or ill, strangulation, drowning, kicking, hitting, choking, hanging, stabbing, shooting, setting on fire, organized animal fighting, and poisoning. Mental abuse that creates a negative emotional or psychological state such as fear, distress or depression is also considered animal abuse.

## What is ACIU?

Research has proven that violence towards animals and people are often interconnected. The presence of animal cruelty and its level of severity may play a role in predicting other types of violent behavior. The connection between animal cruelty and other violent crimes may include homicide, sexual assault, arson, family violence and child abuse, and is often described as **“The Violence Link”**.

The Edmonton Police Service recognizes this connection and takes all concerns of intentional harm to animals or cases of severe neglect extremely seriously. **“The Violence Link”** is the reason why the Edmonton Police Service launched an Animal Cruelty Investigation Unit, the first of its kind implemented by a law enforcement agency in Canada. Simply put, we need to protect animals if we want to protect people. The ACIU’s unofficial motto is **“To serve and protect all of us”**.

## The Facts

- As of August 2016, there were more pets living in Edmonton than children.
- There were 195,243 licensed cats and dogs in the City.

- Animal Cruelty investigations are unique requiring a different set of investigative skills and legal knowledge. For example, animal seizure authorities and offences pursuant to the Animal Protection Act of Alberta, as well as the evidence required to substantiate the specific offences in the Criminal Code relating to the treatment of animals.
- These investigations often require the opinions of expert witnesses such as Forensic Veterinarians, Forensic Animal Pathologists and Animal Behaviorists with a doctorate in biological or behavioral science. In case of the death of an animal, a necropsy should be conducted by a Forensic Veterinarian or Forensic Animal Pathologist to determine manner of death. Animal abuse investigations are unique in that the victim, much like an infant, is unable to provide a statement.
- Alberta Statistics from 2012 (Clark and Crawford) reported that 59% of abused women delayed leaving an abusive relationship due to concern for the welfare of their pets; 36% of intimate partner abusers had also threatened or harmed their animals; 85% of threats against animals were carried out; in 85% of these incidences, children had witnessed the threat and/or harm.
- One in three households has a pet and many have more than one animal.
- Pet owners often have strong emotional ties to their animals, which can make them vulnerable to abuse.
- A 2018 University of Washington study reported that 23 US school shooters from 1988 to 2012 had prior histories of animal cruelty.



## What information do police require?

- Description of the animal(s) involved;
- Details of the condition of the animal(s) and why the witness believes there has been cruelty or neglect;
- Address/description of where the animal(s) are;
- Name and address of the person the witness believes may be responsible for the cruelty and neglect if possible;
- Name, address and contact details of any other witnesses who may be able to help.

### Emergencies: 911

Animals in imminent danger of death or serious injury (including animals left alone in hot or cold cars that are exhibiting signs of distress).

### Non-emergencies: 780-423-4567

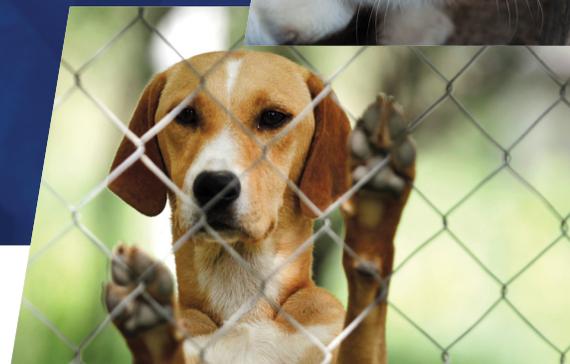
The Edmonton Police Service investigates concerns of intentional harm or severe and willful neglect to animals as defined under the Criminal Code of Canada.

### Neglect or abandonment: 311

Animal Care and Control will respond to these complaints and any bylaw-related issues.

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# Animal Cruelty Investigation Unit (ACIU)



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## Did You Know?

**Individuals convicted** of violent crimes were significantly more likely to have committed animal cruelty.

**Children who** witness domestic violence are 3x times more likely to abuse animals than other children.

**Individuals with a history** of animal cruelty were 11 times more likely to have committed homicide.

**94% of child protection workers** reported in 2012 that they observed evidence of animal neglect during their investigations.