



Education Centre
AGAINST VIOLENCE



Health

“There’s More to the Story”

Report on the NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence Roundtable on Animal Abuse (AA) and Domestic and Family Violence (DFV)

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i. Acknowledgement of Country

The authors acknowledge that this Roundtable took place on the land of the Darug people, was convened on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and written on Gadigal land and the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. The authors pay respects to Darug, Gadigal and Wurundjeri Elders past, present and emerging. We extend this respect to all First Nations peoples across the country and the world. We acknowledge that the sovereignty of these lands were never ceded. This always was and always will be Darug, Gadigal and Wurundjeri land.

ii. About NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence

The NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV) has been established for 35 years. ECAV is a state-wide agency responsible for workforce development in the specialist areas of prevention and response to Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Child Abuse and Neglect. ECAV also has a specific focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Communities (ATSI), Cultural and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD), Men's Domestic and Family Violence Interventions, and Disability and Sexual Violence. ECAV provides state-wide face to face and online worker training, community awareness and development programs, agency and policy consultation, clinical supervision and resource development for NSW Health, other government and non-government organisations.

ECAV manages a number of state-wide NSW Health workforce development that support the following programs: the Adult Sexual Assault Medical & Forensic Care; Integrated Violence, Abuse & Neglect Specialist Support & Counselling Services; Aboriginal Family Wellbeing & Violence Prevention Network; Domestic Violence Routine Screening Implementation and Child Protection Facilitator Training.

Introduction

In the context of Domestic and Family Violence (DFV), animal abuse can be understood as a tactic of coercive control. Animal abuse is deliberately used by perpetrators to increase the compliance of victims/survivors and to minimise their capacity to resist violence and abuse (Hardesty et al, 2013). Perpetrators often abuse animals in conjunction with other tactics of DFV such as economic abuse, isolation, emotional abuse, threats and victim blaming (Fitzgerald et al, 2020). Animal abuse in the context of DFV perpetration is a significant indicator of risk and is associated with sexual assault and homicide (Tiplady, 2015; Arkow, 2015). The intersection between animal abuse and DFV has been taken up by a burgeoning international movement and the dedicated advocacy of a small number of Australian-based services. However, the significance of animal abuse and DFV has not been widely recognised in Australian policies, nor in Health, DFV, Legal and Judicial systems. To discuss these intersections, in 2018 a Roundtable event was convened by the NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV). The Roundtable was attended by 61 experts in their fields and representing a wide range of services and peak bodies from animal rights and human service sectors. This report describes the key discussions and practice and policy recommendations from the Roundtable. Roundtable participants identified that the intersection between animal abuse and DFV is a specific knowledge and practice gap in Australian DFV services and greater interagency collaboration was recommended. Australian DFV services and workers are uniquely placed to identify and assist in the prevention of DFV and the perpetration of the many forms of coercive control, including animal abuse. Workforce capacity building will also ensure that DFV workers can contribute towards minimising the shame and internalised responsibility that many victims/survivors are likely to hold as a result of animal abuse occurring within the context of DFV.

The Problem

In the last decade, there has been increased attention paid to the relationship between animal abuse and DFV. While public awareness of the issue has increased (Coulter, 2019; Gleeson, 2019; Kotzmann, 2019; RSPCA, 2019), critical gaps remain in the response and primary prevention of animal abuse within the context of DFV. In particular, a lack of coordinated data collection and reporting has implications for research, policy and practice.

With limited data on the prevalence of animal abuse in DFV, appropriate response pathways remain undeveloped. These gaps present a significant barrier to the safety and wellbeing of victim/survivors. There is an urgent need to raise awareness of this issue and to appropriately resource response and primary prevention initiatives.

Current State of Knowledge

The abuse of animals¹ is strongly associated with DFV, involving both child and adult victims/survivors (Taylor & Fraser, 2019; Coorey & Coorey-Ewings, 2018; Allen et al, 2006; Ascione, et al, 2007). The perpetration of animal abuse is also associated with child sexual assault (Arkow in Tiplady, 2013; DeGue and DiLillo, 2009; Conroy, 2015). Violence against animals represents a significant escalation in the severity of violence used by perpetrators of DFV (Macias-Mayo, 2018; Peak, Ascione, & Doney, 2012; NSW Ministry of Health, 2014). Animal abuse has been ranked among the three most reliable indicators of lethality, alongside the perpetrator threatening self-harm and suicide and the perpetrator's access to assault weaponry (Simmons and Lehmann in Tiplady, 2015; Creevy et al 2013, Arkow, 2015a).

Animal abuse in the context of DFV is frequently used by perpetrators as a tactic of coercion, control and psychological torture (Peak & Ascione, 2008; Arkow, 2015b). This is because animals and humans often experience meaningful, caring and emotionally-bonded relationships with each other and animals are often regarded as family members (Taylor & Fraser, 2019; Walsh, 2009). Perpetrators exploit this attachment to control victim/survivors. Furthermore, many older persons and people living with disabilities often depend on animals for companionship and/or assistance (Peak & Ascione, 2008; Arkow, 2015b).

The intention by a partner, family member and/or carer to perpetrate harm, injure or kill an animal, causes significant, long-term emotional and psychological distress to both animal and human victims/survivors (Peak & Ascione, 2008). Over the last two decades, animal abuse in the context of DFV and sexual assault² has gained increasing recognition in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand (NZSPCA 2016; Coorey-Ewings 2018). Alongside growing international awareness, animal abuse in DFV has been the recent focus of

¹ The term 'animal' is used to encompass domestic pets, companion animals and farm animals.

a Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) report (DVNSW, 2020). The report found that 42% of DFV workers had worked with victim/survivors that had delayed leaving a perpetrator for more than a year due to barriers in accessing support related to their animals. The DVNSW survey was conducted in July 2020 with 100 domestic and family violence workers across NSW and found 55% of workers have supported victims who disclosed a perpetrator killed an animal or multiple animals (DVNSW, 2020). Despite being an area traditionally neglected in Australian social policy, research and animal, health and human service provision, the intersection between animal abuse and DFV is gaining increasing attention.

Roundtable Method

In 2018, the NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV) convened a Roundtable event to raise the profile of this emerging field of practice and inquiry. Roundtables promote interchange of ideas, sharing of information and create greater capacity for collaboration (Romich & Fentress, 2019). The ECAV Roundtable focused on possible service responses and strategies to increase the interagency capacity of the DFV, sexual assault and Animal Welfare sectors. In particular, the Roundtable aimed to explore complex gaps in knowledge, practice and service provision by focusing on animal abuse and DFV experienced by the following population groups:

- a. Animal abuse and women experiencing DFV
- b. Animal abuse and child abuse
- c. Animal abuse and the abuse of older persons
- d. Animal abuse and abuse of people living with disabilities.

The conveners selectively invited people who held specialist knowledge and expertise from a diverse range of services, including senior First Nations trainers and educators, DFV services and peak bodies, Veterinary Services, animal rights and Animal Welfare organisations, Police and child protection services, legal services, homelessness services, disability services, aged care, local councils, The Australian Association of Social Workers (NSW branch), school teachers and higher education and training organisations. The event was attended by 61 people and was premised on the understanding that concern for human safety and welfare (physically, emotionally and psychologically) often includes concern for animal safety and wellbeing (Wadiwel, 2015). The Roundtable began with a recognition that animals are

legitimate victims/survivors of DFV (Taylor & Fraser, 2019; Tong, 2016). As an extension of this ethical commitment, the Roundtable also provided a vegan-only catering menu to reflect practices and understandings which minimise harm towards animals.

Keynote speeches, panel discussion and feedback from the small group discussions were transcribed and coded for key themes. Themes and key recommendations were sent via email contact to all participants to review and to provide comment prior to the publication of this report. The authors received 11 responses in February 2019, which endorsed the description of and the key recommendations from the Roundtable. Participants were invited to complete an evaluation form that included a pre and post self-assessment survey component where they were asked to rate their knowledge and confidence in working at the intersection between animal abuse, DFV and sexual assault (Appendix A).

This paper reports on the descriptive findings and key recommendations arising from the Roundtable participant small group discussions and the Roundtable evaluation survey.

Roundtable Findings

Identifying the Link Between Animal Abuse and DFV

The occurrence of animal abuse during DFV is a critical gap in knowledge for DFV practitioners. A significant portion of the Roundtable participants reported that prior to attending the Roundtable event, they were privy to minimal discussion about the use of animal abuse in specific contexts such as DFV, sexual assault, child abuse, abuse of older people and people with disabilities who relied on assistance from animals. The reflection of one participant that “there’s more to the story” when animal abuse occurs, encapsulated a collective feeling that there was an important relationship between the abuse of animals and humans that has been neglected in DFV policy and practice. The range of violent behaviours that can accompany the abuse of animals are similar to the forms of violence and coercive control that victim/survivors of DFV face. The link between these behaviours and animal abuse was often missed in human-centred DFV services. One group, comprised primarily of workers from DFV services and women’s refuges, stated:

We don’t always note what’s happening for the animals unless it’s really obvious. In counselling, [animal abuse] is not something that is explored.

While some participants did have some knowledge and understanding of the link between animal abuse and DFV, many felt uncertain about *how to respond* when the link was made. As a new and emerging field in DFV, understanding the link between animal abuse and DFV is complicated by a general lack of understanding of the physical and mental health of animals. The veterinarians present at the Roundtable reiterated that animal abuse is a challenging forensic area. Response to animal abuse was further complicated by a lack of knowledge of National mandatory reporting expectations and a lack of consistency across Human and Animal Welfare sectors. While the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) encourages members to report animal abuse to Police and child protection agencies, veterinarians are not mandated to report suspected non-accidental injuries in animals. The AVA supports this position with an understanding that mandatory reporting may discourage people from seeking treatment for injured animals (Australian Veterinary Association, 2013).

Current response pathways involve veterinarians notifying NSW Police *Crime-Stoppers* to anonymously report suspected DFV. This form of notification would be undertaken as a concerned citizen, not as a forensic professional. According to Dr Anne Fawcett, Lecturer at the Sydney School of Veterinary Science, Sydney University, reporting presents numerous occupational health and safety risks for veterinarians, including the possibility of being victimised and harassed by DFV perpetrators. These challenges are exacerbated by the absence of clear protocols, legal frameworks and interagency understandings to support veterinary staff to identify and respond to potential DFV. In addition, many participants were concerned that the absence of clear and detailed safety planning (which involves communication and support from DFV services and Police, notifications to policy and statutory child protection agencies) could place both animal and human victims/survivors at further risk of harm.

Participants noted that beyond the DFV sector, there is very limited knowledge and attention given to animal abuse in the context of DFV and child protection concerns. One group recorded that there is “no representation for, or awareness of, animal abuse in Safety Action Meetings”, the meetings where victim/survivors are assessed of harm or lethality.³ To

³ The SAM's are formal interagency meetings chaired by Senior Police Officers and are attended by key DFV NSW government and non-government service providers (NSW Government, 2014) with authority to make urgent decisions about allocation of essential resources. Safety Action Meetings (SAM) were implemented in NSW under the Domestic and Family Violence Framework for Reform to prevent DFV and DFV-related homicides (NSW Government, 2014). Animal abuse is a risk factor identified by the DV Safety Assessment Tool (DVSAT), which is used by Police and other agencies to determine the level of risk for victims/survivors. If it is

identify and respond to animal abuse and DFV in a collaborative manner have implications for the safety and wellbeing of victim/survivors of DFV. Collaborative initiatives rely on raising awareness of the intersection. Moo Baulch, Chief Executive Officer of Domestic Violence New South Wales (DVNSW), suggested:

There needs to be a Police campaign to see animal abuse as part of DFV and an indicator of serious threat. Once Police understand animal abuse is the same thing as DFV, people may be more willing to report animal abuse.

Increasing awareness of the risk of animal abuse and DFV has significant implications for victim/survivors. DFV services could support victims/survivors to monitor animal abuse perpetrated in the context of DFV and assess the risk of harm to their animal, children/dependants and themselves. As Renata Field, Director of Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS) stated, "We talk to women about how pet abuse is part of DFV. Often people don't have the language to describe that". Naming animal abuse as a deliberate tactic used by perpetrators can also support victims/survivors to identify animal abuse as a tactic of DFV and assist in the help-seeking process. Roundtable participants reiterated that a growth of awareness of the link between animal abuse and DFV will help victim/survivors when collaborative response pathways are established and resourced.

Responding to Animal Abuse and DFV: Collaborative Approaches

A key focus of the Roundtable was the need for collaborative response pathways to address incidence of animal abuse and DFV. In particular, interagency and inter-sectorial collaboration and communication were identified as key to an effective response to animal abuse in DFV contexts. The focus on interagency collaboration is consistent with current best practice approaches to DFV. Evidence suggests that when individual workers and services are isolated from a wider network of support, they face difficulties in increasing the safety of victims/survivors (Laing and Humphreys, 2013). In contrast, a "network of coordinated services" increase the safety and wellbeing of victim/survivors and their families (Laing & Humphries 2013, p.67). Such a network may include, "Police, courts, housing, child protection, family support, immigration, drug and alcohol and income support services" as

determined the victim is At Serious Threat, there is a referral to the SAM. SAM's need to consider the risk to animals as another way of assessing the potential lethality for human victims/survivors.

well as informal community and advocacy groups. Roundtable participants were enthusiastic about the building of inter-sector collaboration between DFV and veterinarian and Animal Welfare services.

Interagency collaboration and networking across animal and human sectors will ensure best practice response to victim/survivors and their animals. This is particularly the case when addressing the specific manifestation of animal abuse and DFV in the case of the abuse of children, older persons and people with disabilities, where a collaborative approach better serves the communities who are being subjected to DFV. However, a number of barriers to collaboration were identified. These included a lack of knowledge of either animal abuse or DFV as well as a lack of existing response pathways in metropolitan areas and a scarcity of options in rural and regional areas. Selected participants from Animal Welfare organisations stated that they felt apprehensive about responding to DFV following the positive identification of a non-accidental injury on a pet or animal. One veterinarian stated that she felt anxious about making a notification to Police due to lack of training and knowledge. Similarly, participants from Human Services said that responding to animal abuse as a DFV issue was outside their current knowledge and skill set.

A broad range of strategies were identified to address gaps in knowledge and increase the confidence of participants, with the aim of encouraging collaboration. Most participants stated that increasing the spectrum of interagency knowledge and responses to DFV and animal abuse would foster collaborative practice. One participant wrote “each agency has a depth of knowledge of particular issues” and commented that there is a need to combine perspectives and practices from both Human Services and Animal Welfare agencies. Dr. Anne Fawcett, reflected:

It was truly an education to know what DFV support professionals deal with in their case-loads. Just becoming familiar with this was a useful experience. Just hearing from people who work on a day to day basis about the severity of DV cases is very valuable.

Inter-agency collaboration could include expanding training regarding DV screening and safety planning approaches (used by DFV services and women’s refuges) to include veterinarian and Animal Welfare services. At this time, interdisciplinary training for DFV service staff about animal abuse and its relationship to DFV is not widely available.

Participants recommended that interdisciplinary courses be developed and existing forms of cross-sector training and reporting be expanded.

Cross-Sector Training and Reporting

The sharing of expert knowledge between DFV services and animal welfare services is critical to effective response and prevention. Cross-sector training programs could help raise awareness of animal abuse in DFV and introduce DFV screening and safety planning to veterinarians.

There are initiatives that provide a template for cross-sector collaboration. For example, the Veterinary Training Program at the University of Sydney has partnered with NSW Police to give a one-day workshop and training to vet students on the links between DFV and animal abuse and appropriate and safe ways of responding. Interdisciplinary training for DFV service staff is extremely limited.

In relation to DFV services, this cross-reporting would require detailed animal abuse questions being incorporated into all DFV and Child Protection risk assessment tools. Currently, NSW Police have included animal abuse screening questions in the Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool (DVSAT). Incorporating the animal abuse and DFV questions in the risk assessment tool developed by the Eastern Domestic Violence Services (EDVOS) based in Victoria (see appendix B) was raised. Screening questions for DFV should reflect an understanding that animal abuse is a tactic of coercive control and as such, that abuse can include, although is not limited to, physical assaults, verbal, psychological and emotional abuse, neglect, and other forms of deprivation and cruelty towards an animal.

DFV service staff stated that they would benefit from training and education from Veterinary and Animal Welfare services, such as an introductory forensic knowledge course which explores the identification of non-accidental injuries in animals. Dr. Anne Fawcett, stated:

Multiple forensic challenges complicate the processes for firstly identifying and secondly proving that an animal has sustained injuries from intentional (non-accidental) violence. Identifying animal abuse also relies on the current owner's willingness and financial capacity to cover the costs of "non-essential" diagnostic tests. This is impossible where the owner is being financially abused and has no control of finances. As such, veterinarian documentation of animal injuries provides a vital body of evidence which can be used in the prosecution of perpetrators of DFV, sexual assault and animal abuse.

In addition to the value of veterinarian documentation, the legality of viewing animals as property needs to be understood because it has implications for responses to animal abuse

and DFV. Sandra Ma, Service Manager of Community Programs within the RSPCA, and Ingrid Reilly, Senior Constable with NSW Police, described how perpetrators of DFV often manipulate and coerce victims/survivors of DFV when an animal has been micro-chipped with the registration in the perpetrator's name. Perpetrators may threaten to legally euthanise or re-home an animal if the animal is registered as their property. Speakers and participants agreed that responding to this highly complex issue requires collaboration and potentially, a dedicated police task force equipped to penalise animal abuse.

Roundtable participants made it clear that building interagency knowledge does not displace the need for specialisation. Rather, interagency responses to animal and human abuse can directly inform the development of local and national interagency models and formalised Memorandum Of Understandings (MOUs). This type of interagency collaboration can be understood as a principle linkage which describes the shared conceptual understandings, practice approaches and priorities (Ehrlich et al, 2009). Many participants stated that formalising networking strategies would assist in establishing standards, protocols and guidelines for responding to animal abuse, DFV and child protection concerns across Australia.

Practice Implications: Rethinking the Animal/Human Relationship

The terminology around animals as 'property' does not recognise animals as sentient beings that have meaningful, caring and emotionally-bonded relationships with humans and are often regarded as family members (RSPCA, 2019). The strong attachments between humans and animals plays a key role in the decision by a perpetrator to abuse animals during DFV. A qualitative study from USA indicated that DFV perpetrators were more likely to target and abuse animals when they perceived that a victim/survivor shared a close, emotional bond with an animal/s (Hardesty et al, 2013). Conversely, DFV perpetrators were less likely to harm animals in circumstances where victim/survivors were perceived to have neutral feelings towards an animal/s (Hardesty et al, 2013). This suggests that perpetrators of DFV intentionally target and exploit the emotional bond between humans and animals as a tactic of coercive control. For this reason, animal abuse may also reflect an escalation in the severity of the perpetration of DFV (Taylor & Fraser, 2019; Macias-Mayo, 2018; Coorey & Coorey-Ewings, 2018; Arkow, 2015b; Peak & Ascione, 2008; Allen et al, 2006).

Understanding the human/animal bond is essential for successful safety-planning strategies. Many participants understood that animal safety and human safety are inextricably linked

with an Officer from the Animal Welfare League stating, “I can’t help that pet unless I help the person”. The Officer elaborated that Animal Welfare Officers frequently identify animal abuse in the context of DFV, but an absence of adequate DFV training and resourcing means that Animal Welfare Officers often feel unable to engage with human victims/survivors of DFV. This barrier to engagement is particularly the case when victim/survivors do not feel safe discussing their concerns. Another participant stated that “Pets play an important role within families and their wellbeing is often of primary concern for women making decisions to flee family violence”. Given the importance of the bond between animals and human, victims/survivors are likely to experience psychological trauma when compelled to leave pets/animals with a perpetrator.

Several initiatives have focused on how to identify and respond to animal abuse in DFV contexts in a way that recognised the importance of the human/animal bond. Programs such as the RSPCA’s *Community Domestic Violence Program* as well as temporary animal fostering and co-housing for animals and pets within pet-friendly women’s refuges, increase the physical and psychological safety for human and animal victims/survivors alike. These programs also minimise the risk of re-traumatising victims/survivors through separation or through neglecting to respond to the risk of harm for animals. While these programs and refuge models are expanding, the demand for animal and pet-friendly DFV services exceeds the current capacity of women’s refuges and crisis accommodation services. Jackie Largo from *Paws and Recovery* reflected on the need for community temporary animal housing,

People living with DFV, or who are homeless, can be waiting a long time before they find accommodation. Women have to take accommodation that is not pet-friendly. I am in the situation where I see people who have to surrender their pets.

Paws and Recover extends beyond DFV to include finding temporary accommodation for pets of individuals requiring hospitalisation but with a lack of similar services, many human and animal victims/survivors often have no choice but to leave an animal with a perpetrator. As such, participants emphasised the need for human and animal service workers to provide space for victims/survivors to share their grief, distress and their stories of endeavouring to resist animal abuse in the context of DVF. Speakers and participants also acknowledged the limited resourcing available to pet-friendly services, and of the DFV sector more broadly, as a significant constraint to safety planning.

Social and financial barriers to support for animal abuse and DFV

Victim/survivors who report the abuse of their companion animals have an increased chance of having experienced emotional abuse or financial abuse by 38.6% and 7.5% respectively (Fitzgerald et al, 2020). There are also specific costs that accompany animal care that exacerbate financial abuse. For example:

- The debt incurred as the result of veterinary fees. While the RSPCA's pet insurance covers animals who are victims of violence, most private insurers do not cover DFV.
- A shortage of rental accommodation that will accept animals. This shortage means that victims/survivors can delay leaving DFV due to concerns for the wellbeing and safety of their animals (Hardesty et al, 2013; Volant et al, 2008; Tong 2018).

There are also specific barriers for older people, people with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ people who have a unique caring relationship with companion animals. For example:

- For many older victim/survivors repeated hospitalisations and permanent aged care placements mean losing "custody" of an animal. As a result, older people may delay seeking medical assistance and defer going into care permanently in favour of staying with an animal.
- Where people are reliant on their animals (e.g. guide dogs for people who are blind or have a vision impairment or assistance animals for people who experience panic attacks, so on.). This contributes to a further layer of vulnerability for both the animals and the humans who are being subjected to DFV (Arkow, 2015, ECAV, 2019).
- Companion animals play a key role in the lives of LGBTIQ communities with evidence of higher rates of ownership than heterosexual peers (Wright, 2019) and evidence of unique relationship between animal abuse and DFV (Taylor, 2017). LGBTIQ+ communities also face additional barriers getting DFV recognised, taken seriously and addressed through the provision of financial assistance and long-term accommodation (Taylor et al, 2017). Crisis shelters are inaccessible for many transgender and non-binary people and the unwelcoming nature of available accommodation compounds the existing problem of accommodating companion animals. This is despite the fact that family violence rates are similar if not higher in LGBTIQ communities (Rollè et al., 2018).

Barriers such as government funding cuts to women's homelessness services, closures of women's refuges, and under-resourcing of Animal Welfare services, constrain the capacity for DFV and Animal Welfare agencies to provide more comprehensive services to assist both human and animal victims/survivors of DFV. These systemic constraints can compromise human and animal victims/survivors' safety, health and wellbeing.

The importance of recognising the human/animal relationship for the wellbeing of victim/survivors was a key theme of the Roundtable. Anna Ludvik Director, 'Lucy's Project'⁴ in her keynote address stated, "we all need to realise there is secrecy and shame (experienced by victims/survivors) around domestic violence. The animal is often the only witness to the domestic violence". Ludvik argued that the bond between human victims/survivors of DFV and their animals is often very strong. She acknowledged the trauma inflicted both on the animals as well as the trauma experienced by the victims/survivors who witnessed or were aware of violence against their animals. Witnessing and/or being aware of animal abuse has comparable traumatic impacts on human victims/survivors as being personally subjected themselves to violence, abuse and exploitation (Tiplady 2013). Ludvik also argued that "It is unrealistic to ask victims and survivors to leave their pets behind in DFV situations". Services intervening in animal abuse and DFV need to recognise this significant relational attachment and work with human victims/survivors to ensure their animals are safe.

Conclusion

Identification and response to animal abuse in the context of DFV is a relatively new and emerging field of practice in Australia. Animal abuse takes place at the intersection of other forms of financial, emotional and physical abuse (Fitzgerald, 2020). Animal abuse during DFV is a key indicator of sexual assault and potential lethality. Early identification and response to animal abuse is critical to the prevention of injury, disabilities, sexual assault, trauma and deaths for both humans and animals.

The animal abuse and DFV Roundtable clarified the significance of increased awareness of abuse of animals as a tactic of coercive control in DFV. The importance of subsequent appropriate inter-agency responses and the need for training and collaborative practice between human and animal rights and welfare agencies was identified. In line with established evidence, participants reiterated that effective responses to animal abuse, DFV and sexual assault are reliant on interagency collaboration between a wide ranging number of organisations including Police, Health and welfare services, statutory child protection

⁴ ECAV acknowledges the long-term work of Anna Ludvik and the establishment of Lucy's Project in raising awareness of the intersection of animal abuse and DFV. Lucy's Project was the organisation which facilitated the first nationwide conference on this issue and continues to raise awareness at a national level. ECAV was honoured that Anna Ludvik was a key-note speaker at the Roundtable in 2018.

services, women's refuges, schools, legal services, services for older people, child related services, NGOs, mental health services, veterinarians, disability services, animal rights and Animal Welfare groups. These findings are consistent with the international research evidence (Febres et al, 2014). Interagency collaboration can be sustained through dedicated funding for ongoing training, regular interagency meetings and skill-sharing opportunities such as webinars and workshops.

The Roundtable identified current gaps in research, practice and policy that have significant implications for the DFV and animal welfare sectors. The association between the perpetration of animal abuse and DFV, sexual assault and homicides were new knowledge for many participants. Participants also indicated that the Roundtable helped them to understand that safety and healing for animal and human victims/survivors of DFV and sexual assault are inextricably linked. Participants identified further areas of inquiry and possible themes for future Roundtable or training topics. These areas included:

1. The use of animal abuse as a tactic of coercion and control by perpetrators.
2. The impacts of animal abuse as a form of psychological torture for child and adult victims/survivors.
3. Healing and support for traumatised human and animal victims/survivors.
4. Culturally safe approaches to work with people from First Nations families and communities and people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds.

Future investment in the research on animal abuse and DFV will encourage the growth of evidence-informed practice. The Roundtable findings also contribute to the visibility of practice-based knowledge and the critical role DFV and animal welfare practitioners can play in shaping research, policy and practice on animal abuse and DFV.

Selected Recommendations

A summary of the key Roundtable recommendations:

- Support and resource an umbrella organisations like *Lucy's Project* to continue to drive a coordinated, collaborative, information-sharing and consistent approach nationally, to address this intersection between animal abuse and DFV.
- Raise awareness of animal abuse and DFV. Resource organisations such as the NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV) to develop training packages to be

delivered to both NSW Health and non-government organisations on identification, response, prevention and reporting requirements regarding animal abuse in the context of DFV.

- Increase and standardise data collection on animal abuse in the context of DFV. Resource the animal welfare and DFV sectors to increase awareness of animal abuse in DFV and implement reporting processes. Sustained, enduring and measurable action requires reliable and comprehensive data collection. Animal abuse is currently likely to be significantly under-reported (Lockwood, 2002).
- Build the capacity of animal welfare and DFV services to respond to animal abuse and DFV. In particular, veterinarians have a key role to play in identifying the physical and psychological injuries inflicted on animals. Consult, develop and distribute an accessible and evidence-based tool-kit to help vets respond to animal abuse and DFV, develop appropriate response pathways and disclosure protocols.
- Veterinary care to be covered by the Victim Services payments as part of the ‘immediacy payments’ so victims can get the animals assessed as victims of DV.
- Involve veterinarians and animal welfare organisations in the process of establishing a history of cruelty by perpetrators of DFV. For example, records could be used to report a pattern of non-accidental injuries over time.
- The terminology around animals as ‘property’ be amended to recognise animals as sentient beings that have meaningful, caring and emotionally-bonded relationships with humans and are often regarded as family members (RSPCA, 2019).
- Adopt an intersectional approach to response and the primary prevention of animal abuse and DFV. Recognise the unique family and intimate relationships that people with disabilities, older people and LGBTIQ+ people have with their animals and that influence their experiences of animal abuse and DFV.

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First Responders Panel:

NSW Police: Ingrid Reilly, Senior Constable and Domestic Violence Liaison Officer

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Appendix A

In the survey component of the Roundtable evaluation, most participants reported that the forum had increased their knowledge and confidence in identifying and responding to animal abuse in the context of DFV. Participants also reported that the Roundtable increased their understanding of other agencies which work in the Animal Welfare and Human Service sectors.

Figure 1:

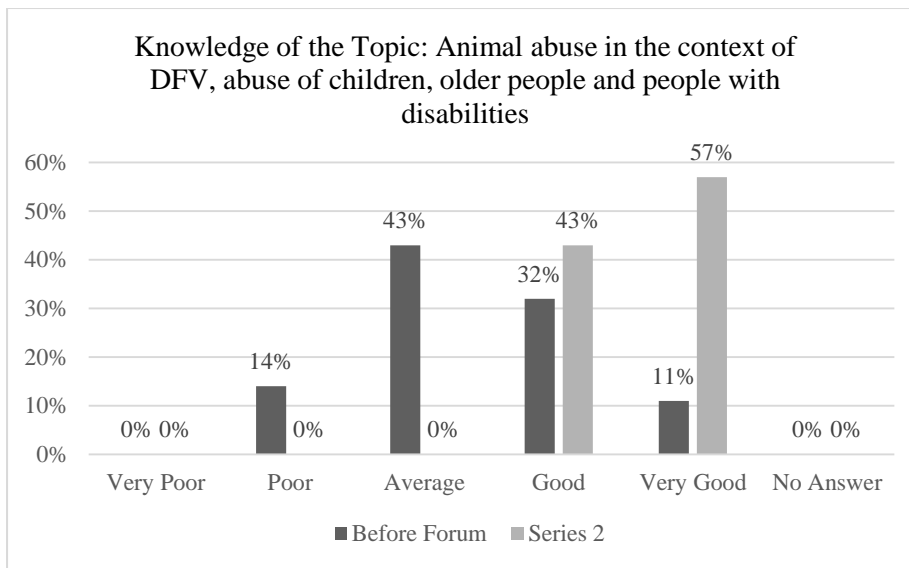
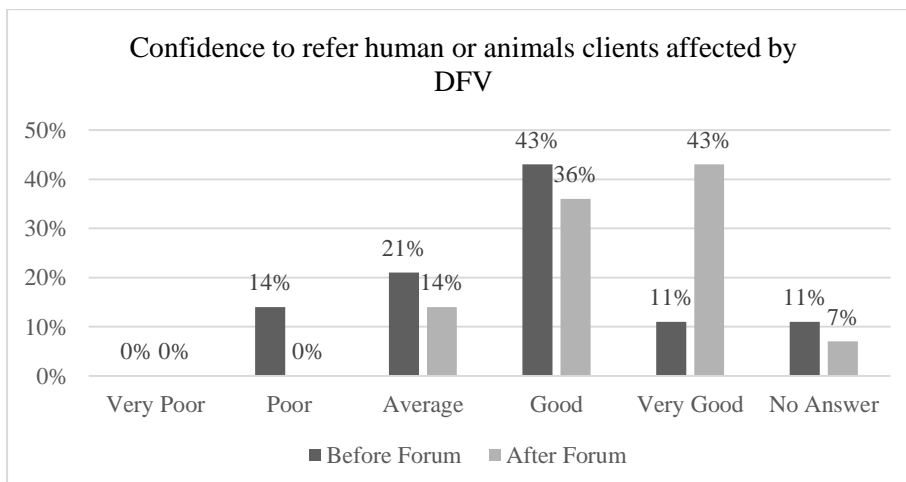


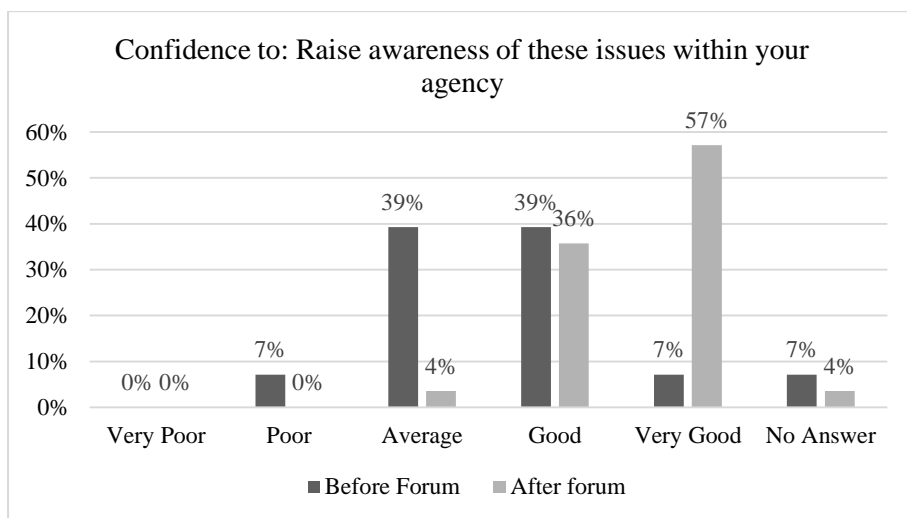
Figure 1 indicates that participants' knowledge improved significantly as a result of attending the Roundtable. At the conclusion, all participants rated their knowledge of the complexities of the issues and understanding as either "good" (43%) or "very good" (57%).

Figure 2:



As indicated in Figure 2, prior to the Roundtable event, only 11% of participants rated their professional confidence in recognising and responding to animal abuse as a critical DFV concern as “very good”. However, the percentage of participants who rated their confidence as “very good” rose to 43%, in the post Roundtable survey.

Figure 3:



At the conclusion of the Roundtable, almost all participants rated their confidence as “good” or “very good” in advocating for a greater focus on animal abuse and DFV in their services (see Figure 3).

Appendix B

Animal Risk Assessment

Source: Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS)

Supplement: Animal's Risk Assessment						
Animal experienced physical abuse?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
Animal experienced verbal abuse?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
Perpetrator has made threats against the animal? Including threats to harm, withhold or take animal		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
Perpetrator neglects or denies care for animal/s		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
Has the animal/s intervened directly in the violence?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
Have you noticed any behavioural changes in your animal/s?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Eg. Aggressive towards humans or other dogs, issues around food, attachment to woman/children		
Animal has any physical impairment/injuries?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
Pets' details						
Name	Species	Breed	Sex	Age	Vaccinated	Desexed
Notes:						