

April is Prevention of Animal Cruelty Month

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The following article was adapted from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). For more information on this topic and more, go to <http://www.asPCA.org/>.

Kicking the dog is a phrase that has become common use in the English language. However, we shouldn't be so flippant when using a euphemism that describes an act of animal cruelty. Animal cruelty is defined as acts of violence or neglect perpetrated against animals.

Examples of animal cruelty include overt abuse, dog fighting and cock fighting, and companion animals being neglected or denied necessities of care, such as food, water or shelter. Animal welfare organizations across the country work daily to educate people about how to care for their companion animals and how they can prevent animal cruelty.

April is Prevention of Animal Cruelty Month. In honor of this month, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) is offering these 10 tips on how to identify animal cruelty.

1. Be aware. Without phone calls from concerned citizens who report cruelty in their neighborhoods, humane organizations wouldn't know about most instances of animal abuse. Get to know and look out for the animals in your neighborhood. By being aware, people are more likely to notice, for example, that the dog next door who was once hefty has lost weight rapidly--a possible indicator of abuse.
2. Learn to recognize animal cruelty. The following are some signs:
 - Wounds on the body; patches of missing hair; extremely thin, starving animals; limping, etc.
 - An owner striking or otherwise physically abusing an animal.
 - Dogs who are repeatedly left alone without food and water, often chained up in a yard.
 - Dogs who have been hit by cars—or are showing any of the signs listed above—and have not been taken to a veterinarian.
 - Dogs who are kept outside without shelter in extreme weather conditions.
 - Animals who cower in fear or act aggressively when approached by their owners.
3. Know who to call to report animal cruelty. Every state and every town is different. In some areas, people may rely on the police department to investigate animal cruelty; in others, people have to contact their local animal control or another municipal agency. The ASPCA® has a section of its web site devoted to helping people find local services for investigating animal cruelty, please visit [the ASPCA](#) for more information.
4. Provide as much information as possible when reporting animal cruelty. It helps to write down the type of cruelty that you witnessed, who was involved, the date of the incident and where it took place.
5. Call or write your local law enforcement department and let them know that investigating animal cruelty should be a priority. Animal cruelty is a CRIME--and the police MUST investigate these crimes.
6. Know your state's animal cruelty laws. They vary from state to state, and even from city to city. You can visit the ASPCA web site at <http://www.asPCA.org/statelaws> to find information about the laws in your state.
7. You can fight for the passage of strong anti-cruelty laws on federal, state and local levels by joining the ASPCA Advocacy Brigade to lobby your legislators and help get the laws passed.
8. Set a good example for others. If you have pets, be sure to always show them the love and good care that they deserve. It's more than just food, water, and adequate shelter. If you think your animal is sick, bring him to the veterinarian. Be responsible and have your animals spayed or neutered.
9. Talk to your kids about how to treat animals with kindness and respect. One of the most powerful tools for preventing cruelty to animals is education. It is important to plant the seeds of kindness in children early, and to nurture their development as the child grows. Children not only need to learn what they shouldn't do, but also what they can and should do. When children see that their pets are happy and loving, it will make the child feel good, too. This in turn will help the children care for their pets' feelings.
10. Support your local animal rescue organization or shelter with donations of money, food or supplies. Volunteering your time or fostering a shelter animal is a good way to make a difference.