



Investigators: Strong link between animal abuse and domestic violence

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SCHENECTADY, N.Y. - A number of recent high profile animal abuse cases suggest that offenders are getting caught more often.

The SPCA credits a police force and public more active in reporting and investigating suspicions. Some people may not know how life-saving their efforts are.

"It's a good thing that these are not secrets being kept behind closed doors," said Dave Dean, Schenectady County SPCA Investigator. Investigators say animal abuse is commonly linked to domestic violence. They say animal torture becomes a way to control human victims. "It's psychological warfare," explained Dean. "It's terror...and you can imagine, it's not a large leap to think of that large knife going into the dog, into the victim."

It's made Martha Lasher-Warner question how her daughter's husband treated the family pets, before he murdered Liza Ellen Warner in 2004.

Lasher-Warner was left to care for one of Liza's dogs after her death. "The dog that I adopted was very skittish, you know, he was always fearful," said Lasher-Warner. She feels she's learned a lot about the role animals can play in a violent partner relationship. "A lot of women hesitate to leave because of their animals. They don't want to leave their animals in the house," Lasher Warner said.

Liza had made the decision to leave, but she returned home to pick up her dogs and cat while her husband was away. He broke in the next day and killed her.

Lasher-Warner is working to set up a shelter for pets of victims trying to get to a safe place, "so that once the woman leaves the abuser, then the animals will be temporarily cared for until she becomes established," she explained. It's a dream she has for other women like her daughter. "Liza loved animals. She just adored her dogs and cats."

When you call police or your local humane society to report abuse, experts say it's important to provide a concise, written, factual statement of what you saw, giving dates and times whenever possible.