

Keeping Them Safe

It's a given that animals always need our help if they are lost, stolen, abused, or hurt. Fortunately there's a lot of ways we can give that help. Here are some important things to watch for, and some strategies to keep animals safe.

How To Help

An animal in distress always needs veterinary care and a case may require investigation by authorities. Alberta's Animal Protection Act (2019) defines an animal in distress as an animal that:

- Is injured, sick, in pain or suffering
- Has been deprived of adequate shelter, ventilation, space, food, water, veterinary care, reasonable protection from heat or cold
- Has been abused or subjected to undue hardship, privation, or neglect

If you find an animal that is in distress, there are places that you can call for help.

Local Resources

Look for local resources first, then escalate to other agencies as required.

For time-sensitive medical emergencies, always start by calling 911. The dispatcher will ask questions to determine what resources will be required.

For less time-sensitive medical emergencies, contact a local animal hospital or veterinary clinic. Most communities in Canada have a 311 information line. Dial 311 to find 24 hour vets and clinics that take wildlife if needed.

For issues with wild animals, it is good to look for a local wildlife rescue/rehabilitation centre, or contact provincial Fish and Wildlife services. Otherwise, contact your local Humane Society, appropriate vet clin-



ics, local police or Animal Control agency, or your provincial SPCA or RCMP.

To open an investigation into the case of an injured animal to determine abuse or malicious injury, the investigating agency will need timely and first-hand details from you, such as personal observations, location address, a description of the animal, as well as your name and contact information.

Investigators work in partnership with other agencies to ensure animals receive safe harbor and to ensure that support is received by those impacted by the situation. Mistreated animals that are seized are taken to a caretaking facility, then may find new homes or be sold, with the proceeds going to the local SPCA or Humane Society.

Animal cruelty is a criminal matter under the federal Criminal Code sections 445.1 and 446 (1), and/or

the provincial Animal Protection Act. Convicting courts may impose conditions that allow authorities to check on the animals or may prohibit the person from owning animals at all.

Animal Abuse

Animal abuse or animal cruelty is defined as the crime of inflicting physical pain, suffering, or death of an animal beyond necessity for normal discipline. Animal abuse can be a precursor to abuse and violence towards humans, or may be a component of domestic violence. Abandonment and neglect are also both forms of abuse.

In domestic violence, abusers may use family pets to demonstrate the power and control they have over their partner. They may threaten, harm, or even kill pets. 40% of domestic violence victims are unable to escape abusers because they are concerned about their pets' welfare when they leave.

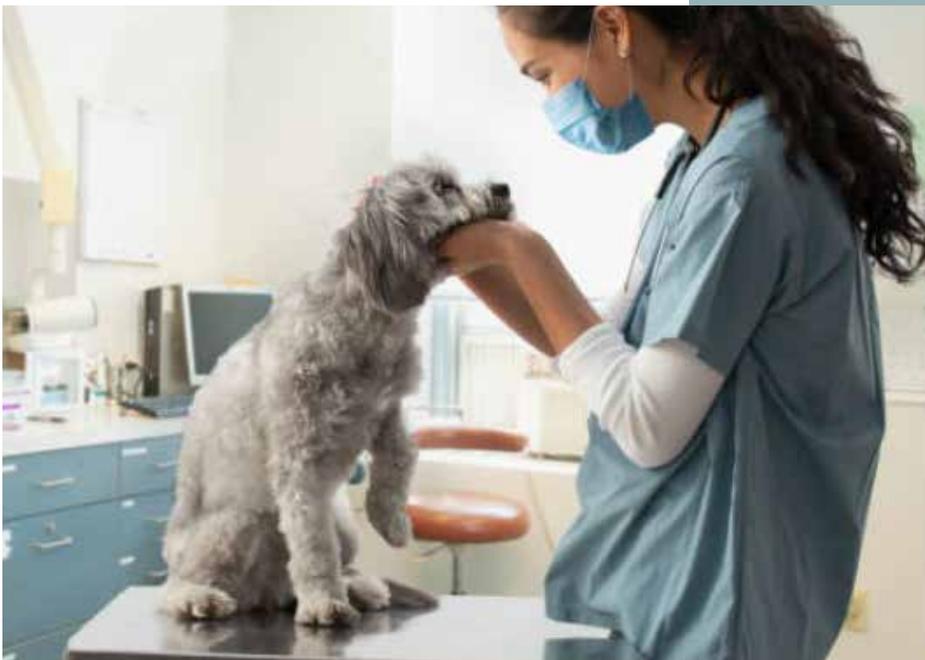
Red flags of animal abuse include signs of neglect or physical trauma.

- Unkempt, matted or filthy coat.
- Physical trauma, such as open sores, open wounds, scars, infections, or missing body parts.
- Flea or tick infestations.
- Being underweight, bones clearly visible.
- Limping/inability to walk.
- Congested eyes or ears.
- Animal is in obvious physical distress, needs immediate veterinary care.
- Lack of food or water - No obvious sources of food and/or water, animals may also act aggressive or lethargic due to starvation or thirst.
- Lack of shelter - Fully exposed to inclement weather and constant sun.
- Lack of sanitation - Feces and/or debris cover animal's living area.
- Chains or padlocks around the animal's neck.
- Tied or caged with little room to move.
- Left in a house or yard that appears abandoned or empty.
- Evidence of being trained or being used to fight, such as training implements or severe physical trauma.
- Too many animals living on one property.
- Owner observed being overtly violent against the animal.
- Overly anxious or fearful behavior - howling or barking for several hours may indicate a need for immediate care beyond separation anxiety.



If you are in a domestic situation where you fear for the safety of your pet if things are volatile, you may want to do the work to prepare for a quick departure if necessary. You should:

- Register pets in your name as proof of ownership.
- Gather your pet's vaccination and medical records, pet license records and tags, spay and neuter certificates, other documents, bowls, medications, bedding, etc. Prepare a pet 'go bag' that has the originals of all necessary documents and information (keep copies in the house), spare bowls, doubles of favorite toys or blankets, leashes, collars, harnesses, brushes, nail clippers, cold or hot weather protection such as coats or booties, supplies of food, water and treats and carriers. Use this if there is no time to gather. This is also invaluable in the case of a natural or other disaster so that you can just grab and run.
- See if a family member or friend can care for your pet for a while.
- Contact local humane society
- see if they have a program to temporarily keep pets of victims of domestic violence
- Do not reclaim animals from



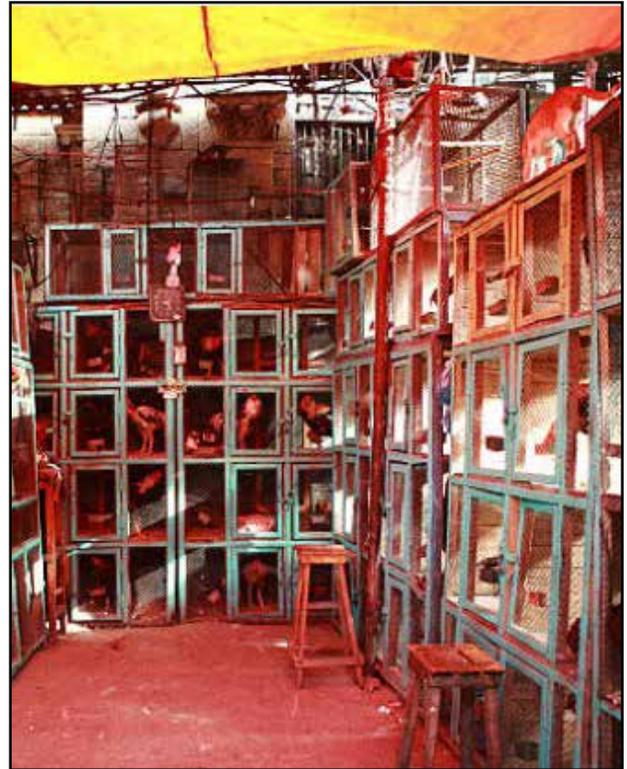
the abuser alone - ask for help from animal care and control officers, or local law enforcement.

Abandoned animals are those that have been left for more than 24 hours without adequate food, water, or shelter; left for 5 days or more after the expected retrieval time, or are found on the premises after tenancy agreement has been terminated. Treat them like any other abused animal and get them appropriate help.

Pet Theft

Pet theft is when someone steals or lures an animal, usually a dog or cat, away from its owners. Thieves may sell the animal for a profit, collect reward money from guardians (less common), or use animals for fighting rings or unlicensed breeding operations.

“Dognapping” may also be referred to as “dog flipping.” Thefts often involve high-value dogs such as Dogue de Bordeaux, Chow Chows, Shiba Inu’s, purebred Huskies, Shepherds and other working dogs, or smaller dogs that are easy to grab and run away with. Common small targets are English Bulldogs, French bulldogs, Chihuahuas, Yorkshire Terriers. Dogs stolen for fighting are almost always Bully breeds such as Pit Bulls, Staffordshire Terriers, Bull Terriers, and even Mastiffs. There’s no reliable figures for how often pet thefts occur. Pet thefts are typically planned ahead for maximum efficiency. “Catnapping” happens more than we think as well. Breeds that are targets include Savannahs, Bengals, Siamese, Maine Coons, Ragdolls, Munchkins, Persians, Lykoi and Sphynx. These are almost exclusively sold for profit.



Puppy or Kitten Mills

Puppy or kitten mills are unlicensed and unregulated animal breeding operations. They produce animals to sell for profit, but fail to take care of them. The animals are often kept in neglectful conditions. Signs of puppy or kitten mills that relate to this neglect are:

- Loud and constant barking/yelping is coming from the housing buildings.
- Animals are rarely brought outside for exercise.
- Malnourished, excessively thin animals.
- Females are constantly kept pregnant.
- Animals are kept in unsanitary cages – often stacked on top of each other.
- Stalls or cages are caked in excrement.
- Minimal veterinary treatment and, sometimes, visible health problems.
- Matted fur and/or long, untrimmed nails.
- Huge numbers of dogs or cats in one small area.
- Puppies of many different breeds in one place.

If you suspect you have found a puppy or kitten mill, contact the local humane society, SPCA, or contact local police for assistance.

Preventative Practices

To ensure the safety of your pet, the two biggest things you can do is to keep your pets supervised, and ensure their vaccinations and other information are up to date.

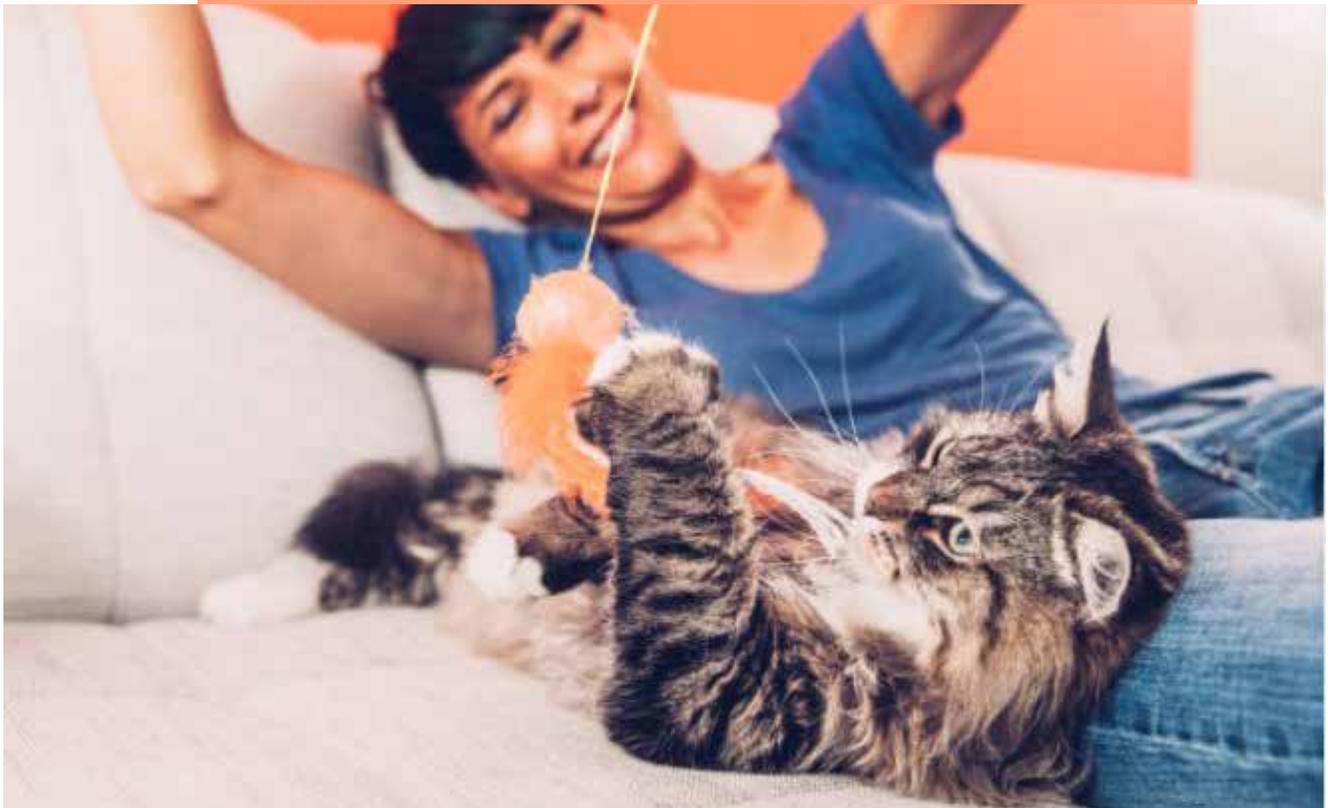
Keep your pets indoors, and/or don't let them roam off-leash. Don't leave them unattended, even for quick errands, as this is when they are most vulnerable to theft. Watch for strangers in the neighborhood that seem too nosy, communicate with neighbors about these issues, and report suspicious activity to the police. Security systems with cameras are also a good deterrent or may provide evidence for what happened if there is an incident.

Use a unique collar for easier identification, and keep your pet's collar, microchip, and licensing information up to date. This will help them return home if you get separated. Make sure your pet's collar has their name, your name and contact information. Also make sure the collars will easily break if the animal gets caught on something.

Spay or neuter your pets. This reduces the animal's desire to roam around and will render them undesirable for breeders and medical labs.

If your pet is stolen or missing, call your local police, sheriff, and/or animal control and file a report. Call your microchip company, and contact local shelters or lost-dog or stolen-dog databases you know of in your area. Be aware that you may have to do most of the legwork in looking for your animal, and that it may take time.

Make fliers and social media posts with your pet's name, color, markings, breed, last location seen, and a phone or message number that people can call at any time. Comment on what your pet will answer to and their demeanor - if they are shy or super friendly. If a kitty goes missing be sure to note if it is an outdoor



cat or a strictly indoor one. Indoor cats will hunker down and hide most times while outdoor cats may roam further, looking for home. Noting that your animal needs medical attention may prompt a different response. Leave fliers at places where other pet owners are likely to gather.

Walk around and call your pet's name in areas last seen, especially in the evening or early morning when traffic noise is quieter. Increase your search radius over time.

Leave your pet's food/water/litter/scent near your door in case they're lost.

If you believe your pet was stolen and you have located the person who stole them, do not confront the person instead contact local law enforcement or an animal control officer first.

If someone claims to have found your animal, ask specific questions to ensure it's really your animal before meeting with them.

When returning a stray animal to its owner, request proof of ownership, such as photos or licensing papers.



When purchasing an animal, refuse to buy cut-price dogs without the right paperwork or adequate background checks.

If you have no choice and must rehome your pet, include adoption fees, check the guardian's references, visit the premises, or have them sign a pet adoption contract. Rehoming can be devastating for pets, especially cats as bonds of trust take longer to be built. Please do everything in your power to keep them with you. Call 311 and ask what is available for financial help with food, medicine and other supplies. Also, ask for help finding affordable pet-friendly housing.

Adding these extra steps to transactions involving animals will reduce opportunities for "dog flippers" to make a profit, and will help ensure everyone's pets are kept safe.

