

# **Naturewatch Foundation submission to the College of Policing ‘Conducting effective investigations guidelines’ consultation, August 2022<sup>1</sup>**

## **Who we are**

1. Naturewatch Foundation is an animal welfare charity based in the UK (registration no. 1039679). We welcome the UK College of Policing’s consultation. We are responding as the matter of effective investigation is relevant to one of the key messages we deliver in our training to police officers, public protection agencies and animal groups around the world: namely that, when animal cruelty is taken seriously, the whole of society can benefit.
2. Our Campaign Manager (and author of this submission) is a subject matter expert in this area, having run programmes in 11 countries, and with a background as a former UK senior detective. The report author would be happy to expand on this submission or meet for discussions.

## **There is already change, with prosecutions for animal abuse ahead**

3. In January 2021, the RSPCA stated that under their 10-year plan they would explore the option to no longer take private prosecutions for animal cruelty offences under Section 6(1) of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985. This responsibility would therefore move towards the police/CPS route.
4. One of the rationales behind this decision was that often animal abuse requires a complex investigation. Of course, the RSPCA as a charity do not have any formal powers to gather evidence and often require the police to do so, and then begin a ‘joint’ investigation.
5. Another area of particular interest for our submission is, that since at least 1751, there has been a known connection between those who abuse animals, and those who abuse people. This link includes,
  - a. The abuser who uses an animal to inflict coercive control on their human victim.
  - b. The adolescent abuser who begins a trail of violence with animal cruelty
  - c. The child who abuses animals because they are abused themselves.
6. A more holistic approach to investigating animal abuse is required. Ontario, Canada has recently undergone such a shift (Dr Kendra COULTER, 2021<sup>2</sup>).
7. The UK College of Policing currently makes a small reference to the position of animal abuse in public protection, but only as far as child abuse is concerned.<sup>3</sup> There is no reference to animals used as part of coercive control (as accepted now in Scottish domestic violence legislation).<sup>4</sup>
8. What the current investigation process doesn’t fully recognise is the connection with domestic violence, although one question is admittedly contained in the ‘DASH’ form.<sup>5</sup> This simple question asks whether the abuser has ever mistreated an animal. However, as far as we are aware, very few police officers who will ask

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<sup>1</sup> Please contact Mark Randell at [mark@naturewatch.org](mailto:mark@naturewatch.org) for further information about this submission.

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[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357849564\\_The\\_Organization\\_of\\_Animal\\_Protection\\_Investigations\\_and\\_the\\_Animal\\_Harm\\_Spectrum\\_Canadian\\_Data\\_International\\_Lessons](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357849564_The_Organization_of_Animal_Protection_Investigations_and_the_Animal_Harm_Spectrum_Canadian_Data_International_Lessons)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.college.police.uk/app/major-investigation-and-public-protection/investigating-child-abuse-and-safeguarding-children/police-response-investigating-child-abuse/risk-and-associated-investigations#animal-abuse>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2018/5/notes/division/3/1/3/4>

<sup>5</sup> <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Dash%20risk%20checklist%20quick%20start%20guidance%20FINAL.pdf>

this question have ever been trained in investigating animal abuse, and certainly not had any official 'link' training. This fails domestic violence victims and animals.

### **Children and animal abuse**

9. The idea that children who witness violence against animals are more likely to offend in the future has been contained in academic reports for many decades and now is a strand of work at the United Nations. It is also included in Article 299 of the Ukrainian Penal Code, which increases the maximum jail sentences for those who abuse in front of children. In July 2022, The Republic of Moldova formally accepted this concept in their legislative process, too.
10. Indeed, perhaps more holistic investigations into Venables and Thompson's placing of rabbits on a railway line before killing Jamie Bulger, or the horrific crimes of the 'Dnipro Maniacs' on street animals before killing 21 people in 2007, or the cases of 6-year-old Miroslava Tretyak in Sary Saltov and Caroline Crouch in Athens, may have prevented deaths. There are so many more examples like this.

### **Other crimes linked to animal cruelty**

11. Murderers are not the only criminals who are also involved in animal cruelty. Many who abuse children sexually are too. Our investigation work shows that 73% of extreme pornography cases involve animal sexual abuse. This is a figure consistent with research carried out by Dr Hannah Bows and Professor Clare McGlynn of Durham Law School, which found that 85% of extreme pornography charges during the period from 2015-2017 were for possession of 'bestiality' images.<sup>6</sup>
12. Our training to police officers around the world is based on real cases including,
  - a. The 21 murders in Dnipro, Ukraine, that were committed by young men who progressed from killing street animals.
  - b. The terrorist caught in New Jersey after stabbing the family dog
  - c. The case of extreme coercive control in Athens, Greece, that led to murder and a 10-year sentence for animal abuse.

### **The Naturewatch Foundation nine-point plan to Protect Animals, Protect People.**

13. There are also strong connections with domestic violence, elder abuse and more. That is why we brought two highly experienced retired police officers from either side of the Atlantic to write a generic nine-point plan that aims to Protect Animals, Protect People. The plan is available to read here: <https://naturewatch.org/campaigns/ukraine-animal-welfare/what-were-doing/the-link-protecting-animals-protecting-people/>.

### **How is this relevant to the new effective investigation guidelines?**

14. This submission only touches the surface of what we feel should be at least referenced in the College of Police guidance. We think there are opportunities in the following parts of the Guidelines:

*'Guidelines for investigators'*

*Paragraph 1 'Follow all reasonable lines of enquiry', 'be professionally curious' and 'assess the threat, risk and harm to victims'*

*'Guidelines for supervisors and chief constables'*

*Paragraph 4 'ensuring their staff have appropriate skills to investigate'*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0022018319877783>

15. We can no longer ignore the harm that animal abuse can play in a relationship, family unit or a community, and can no longer expect that aspect of a public protection investigation to rest with a charity. Investigators – civilian and police – should all at least have an awareness of the ‘link’ between animal and human violence as is becoming the norm within many countries.
16. Including this within the guidance will help to protect animals, protect people. Not doing so will lead to increased recordable violent crimes in each force area.