

Animal Cruelty: A Review

Mogbo, T. C^{1*}, Oduah, F.N², Okeke, J. J³, Ufele, A. N⁴, Nwankwo, O. D⁵
1.Department of Zoology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
2.Department of Biotechnology, Federal University Oye-ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.
E-mail: mogbotoochi@yahoo.com.

Abstract

Animal Cruelty cases make headlines around the world every day, whether it's the person who kills the neighbour's cat, the hoarder of sick and dying animals or the family whose freezing, starving dog is tied up outside in the middle of the winter. Animal Cruelty has several types which may be one of Simple Neglect, Gross Neglect, Intentional Abuse, Animal Hoarding, Organized Abuse, Ritualistic Abuse or Animal Sexual Assault. These cases of Cruelty cannot be overlooked as it has proven to have severe implications ranging from the fact that it is linked to other crimes, to the factual truth that these practises inflict great pain on these animals that have nobody to speak for them. Combating this menace of Animal Cruelty is a Journey that must be undertaken and everybody including the Government, NGOs and even Culture has a major role to play in this. This review looks at Animal Cruelty in the world while paying a little more attention to Nigeria.

1.0 Introduction

1.1. Definitions:

An animal activist's definition of animal cruelty may be very different from that of a hunter or a farmer. There is also a legal definition of Animal Cruelty (Duel, 2000). These varied definitions of animal cruelty have created a dilemma which has existed since the very beginning of the animal-protection movement. While much progress has been made for animals in our society, particularly during the past 50 years, the continuing absence of a widely accepted definition of cruelty to animals remains an enormous obstacle. Every activity that threatens the well being of animals – and that has not already been remedied through legislation – must be challenged and overcome on a largely individual basis.

1.1.1 Animal Cruelty – The Common Understanding

Animal cruelty cases make headlines around the world every day, whether it's the person who kills the neighbour's cat, the hoarder of sick and dying animals, the family whose freezing, starving dog is tied up outside in the middle of winter. These acts would likely constitute animal cruelty under any state's animal cruelty statute, and would also fit with the public's common understanding of the term (Duel, 2000).

However, when it comes to animals other than cats and dogs, peoples' concept of the term Animal Cruelty varies greatly. Most animal activists would say that traditional agricultural practices such as de-beaking, tail docking, castration and confinement on factory farms are animal cruelty. Most people would probably agree, but factory farmers and most states Animal Cruelty laws would disagree (Randour, 2004).

While some might base their definition of Animal Cruelty on how much the animal suffers or feels pain during death, the amount of suffering is not relevant for animal rights activists because the animals are deprived of their right to live and exist free of human use and abuse. Some may also base their definition on which type of animal is involved or how intelligent they perceive that animal to be. The slaughter of dogs, horses or whales for meat may be the epitome of Animal cruelty to some, while the killing of cows, pigs and chickens is acceptable to those same individuals (Randour and Davidson, 2008).

Similarly, to some, the killing of animals for fur or cosmetics testing may constitute unacceptable animal cruelty while the killing of animals for food is acceptable.

Among the general public, the more culturally beloved the animal is and the more unusual the harm is, the more likely they are to be outraged and label the harm to that animal as Animal Cruelty. To animal activists, a much wider range of harms is referred to as Cruelty. Animal rights activists would argue that cruelty is cruelty, regardless of how common or legal the harm is.

1.1.2 Animal Cruelty - The Legal Definition

The California Penal Code defines animal cruelty as the malicious or intentional maiming, mutilation, torture or wounding of a living animal, and states that any person who overworks, tortures, torments, deprives of necessary food, drink or shelter, cruelly beats, mutilates or cruelly kills an animal is guilty of a misdemeanor or felony. Any person, who owns, possesses keeps or trains a dog with the intent to engage the animal in exhibition fighting, as well as any person who is knowingly present as a spectator at an exhibition of fighting of dogs, is guilty of a misdemeanor. In addition, any person who wilfully abandons any animal is guilty of a misdemeanor (Lockwood, 2006).

The Nigeria constitution holds that any person who:

1. cruelly beats, kicks, ill-treats, over-rides, over-drives, over-loads, tortures, infuriates or terrifies any

- animal or causes or procures or being the owner, permits any animal to be so used.
2. unreasonably does or omits to do any act or causing or procuring the commission or omission of any act, causes any unnecessary suffering, or, being the owner, permits any unnecessary suffering to be caused to any animal.
3. conveys, carries, or being the owner permits animals to be conveyed or carried in such manner or position as to cause such animal unnecessary suffering.
4. wilfully without any reasonable cause or excuse administers, causes, procures or being the owner, permits such administration of any poisonous or injurious drug or substance to any animal or wilfully without any reasonable cause or excuse causes any such substance to be taken by any animal.
5. subjects or causes or procures or being the owner permits animals to be subjected to any operation which is performed without due care and humanity
6. causes or procures, or assists at the fighting or baiting of any animal, or keeps, uses, manages, or acts or assists in the management of, any premises or place for the purpose, or partly for the purpose, of fighting or baiting any animal, or permits any place to be so kept, managed or used, or receives or causes or procures any person to receive money for the admission of any person to such premises or place.

is guilty of an offence of cruelty and is liable to imprisonment for six months or to a fine of fifty naira, or to both such imprisonment and fine (COFRN, 1999).

2.0 Types of Animal Cruelty

The types of animal cruelty recognized across the globe today are as follows:

2.1 Simple Neglect:

This involves failure to provide adequate food, shelter, water, or veterinary care to one or few animals, usually due to ignorance. This form of animal cruelty is the most common around the world today (Randour, 2004). The most common example of simple neglect found everywhere today is the case of dog owners chaining their dogs around the neck without a dog belt and most times the dog is kept stagnant at the backyard for hours if not days without proper shelter.

2.2 Gross Neglect:

It can also be called wilful, malicious or cruel neglect. It is important to make a distinction between simply failing to take adequate care of animals and intentionally or knowingly withholding food or water needed to prevent dehydration or starvation. Gross neglect is therefore the intentional act of withholding food or water from an animal or group of animals (Lockwood, 2006). A typical example of this type of cruelty is the case of people throwing away their sick dogs callously, some leaving their dogs out in the cold or rain.

2.3 Intentional Abuse:

Cases of intentional cruelty are the ones of greatest concern to the general public and the ones more likely to involve juvenile offenders. There is legitimate fear that the individuals involved in violent acts against animals present a danger to the public. Intentional animal abuse is often seen in association with other serious crimes including drug offenses, gang activity, weapons violations, sexual assault and domestic violence and can be one of the most visible parts of an entire history of aggressive or antisocial behaviour. Such cases are often easier to prosecute than neglect or hoarding cases since the effects of the crime on the victim may be easier to document and the intentionality of the offense is more clearly recognized (Lockwood, 2006).

2.4 Animal Hoarding

This is the accumulation of a large number of animals and failing to provide minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation and veterinary care; to act on the deteriorating condition of the animals; and to recognize or correct the negative impact on the health and well-being of the people in the household (Arluke and Lockwood, 1997). Examples of animal hoarding cases are: the transportation of large numbers of animals in an in-humane way, the keeping of birds and other animals in a very poor and un-conducive environment, pigs and other animals kept to starve to death at livestock farms etc.

2.5 Organized Abuse—Dog fighting and Cockfighting

“Blood sports” such as dog fighting and cockfighting have been singled out for special attention in the anticruelty laws of the United States and the United Kingdom since their inception in the 19th century (Lockwood, 2006). A glance at the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria also reveals this act as a crime. This act involves the setting of two or more dogs, cocks or any other animal in a fight circle and allowing them to brutally kill each other for the sole purpose of entertaining the spectators.

2.6 Ritualistic Abuse

The phrase “Occult and ritualistic animal abuse” immediately evokes many disturbing images: a cat nailed to a crucifix and burned, the head of a dog left on the steps of a building with a piece of paper bearing a curse stuck in the animal’s mouth, a goat’s throat slit as part of a ritual sacrifice (Lockwood, 2006). Few other crimes against

animals create such intense concern within a community. Most crimes in which animals are killed or mutilated and left where they will be discovered immediately raise fears of “satanic” or cult activity and concern about what other crimes the perpetrators of such acts may have committed or be capable of (Randour and Davidson, 2008).

2.7 Animal Sexual Assault (Bestiality)

Bestiality is defined as an affinity, attraction or sexual attraction by a human to non-human animals. This act of using an animal for the purpose of sex as awful and nasty as it sounds and despite the fact that most people believe this to be a sin committed against nature, the issue of bestiality has been raising alarm across the globe including Nigeria. In 2011 San Francisco Chronicle one of the largest news outlets in California had the picture of a man making love to a dog on its headline; Sunday Tribune on the 17th of October reported a case of a 32 year old man who engages in bestiality with goats.

3.0 BENEFITS OF ANIMAL CRUELTY STUDY

Animal Cruelty should be taken seriously because it is a form of violence and violence rarely exists in a vacuum; the study of Animal Cruelty can give insights to other forms of social vices.

3.1 Reveals tendency for other crimes

Acts like Animal cruelty are linked to a variety of crimes, including violence against other people, property crimes, and drug or disorderly conduct offenses (Arluke and Luke, 1997). Reporting, investigating, and prosecuting animal cruelty can help take dangerous criminals off the street.

The evidence of a link between animal cruelty and violence to other people – including child abuse, spousal battery, and other types of criminal violence is compelling. In the vast majority of cases, animal cruelty is just one aspect of a social environment marked by violence. Researchers studied 50 violent and 50 nonviolent inmates to determine if and how animal cruelty was associated with their development and behaviour (Merz-Perez and Heide, 2003).

The result showed that a statistically significant greater proportion of the offenders had committed acts of animal cruelty. These results match with the earlier studies (Kellert and Felthous, 1985).

3.2 Exposes Family Violence

If an animal is being abused in a family, it is likely that a child or other family members are also being hurt or threatened. This is according to a six-year study conducted in 11 metropolitan cities (Walton-Moss *et al.*, 2005). In a national survey at the U.S of battered women’s shelters, 85% of shelters reported that women seeking services at safe houses talked about incidents of pet abuse (Ascione *et al.*, 1997).

3.3 Exposes a Dysfunctional Youth.

This is according to the National School Safety Council, the U.S Department of Education, the American Psychological Association, and the National Crime Protection Council (Randour, 2001). It is an indicator that the child poses risk to others. Ongoing longitudinal studies begun in 1987 demonstrate that chronic physical aggression by elementary school boys increases the likelihood they will commit continued physical violence as well as other nonviolent form of delinquencies during adolescence. Animal cruelty is one significant form of physical aggression (Broidy, *et al.*, 2003). A survey of college sophomores in the U.S revealed a link between childhood animal cruelty and a tolerance for interpersonal violence as adults. Those students who admitted to engaging in animal cruelty as youths were more likely than the non-abusers to agree that it is permissible to slap someone’s wife (Flynn, 2000).

Experts agree that early implementation of prevention and treatment strategies for conduct behaviours, such as Animal cruelty is key to salvaging dysfunctional youths. Some suggest the most strategic point for intervention is the preschool and early elementary school years. As aggressive children get older, they are less responsive to therapeutic intervention (Kazdin, 1995; Loeber, 1990).

3.4 Animal Cruelty Links with Extreme Violence

At the extreme end of the violence spectrum, serial killers and school shooters almost invariably have histories of abusing animals. Ted Bunny, Jeffery Dahmer, Albert DeSalvo (the confessed “Boston Strangler”), and many others committed heinous acts of animal cruelty. Of 36 convicted multiple murderers questioned in an often cited study, 46% admitted committing acts of animal torture as adolescents (Cohen, 1996). It also has been reported that more than half of the school shooters whose deadly rampage made national headlines during the late 1990s were known to persistently abuse animals.

4.0 Combating Animal Cruelty

4.1 Role of the Government

The government has a major role to play in combating cruelty to animals across the globe, ranging from the creation of laws against animal cruelty to the proper implementation of those laws. In the United States, there is no federal animal cruelty law, while some federal laws like the Animal Welfare Act, the Marine Mammal

Protection Act or the Endangered Species Act restrict when or how certain animals in certain situations may be harmed or killed, these federal laws do not cover the more typical case, such as the person who intentionally kills the neighbour's dog which is a major deficiency in that law.

In Australia, many states have enacted legislation outlawing cruelty to animals; however, it is argued that welfare laws do not adequately extend to production animals.

In Nigeria animal cruelty laws have been enacted under the criminal code section of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria, but poor implementation has been the case.

4.2 Role of Individuals

Individuals such as you and I and members of the society at large have the most important role to play in combating this animal cruelty that has eaten deep into our society today. Individuals should not fail in reporting any case of cruelty which they witness within their jurisdiction to enable the law enforcement agencies function properly.

4.3 Role of NGO's

Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) across the globe play a major role in informing the general public about animal cruelty and also the rescue of animals that are victims of cruelty. Some of the NGOs leading the front line in the fight against cruelty in the world today are:

- The International Animal Rescue Foundation, (IARF). Recently carrying out a rescue project at the Benue state zoo in Nigeria.
- The International Animal Rescue, (IAR).
- Royal Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Australia. (RSCPA).
- The humane Society of the United States, (HSUS).

4.4 Role of Culture/Tradition

The role of culture and Tradition in combating animal cruelty is a case that cannot be overlooked. Taking Nigeria as a case of study, places like Nnewi in Anambra state has a cultural practice which prevents citizens of the town from killing or eating Giant rats (*Cricetomys gambianus*) and this goes a long way in dismissing cruelty practises towards this animal in that town. In Awka also in Anambra state, there is a custom that prevents citizens from killing and eating monkeys, and for that reason cruelty against monkeys in Awka has never been recorded. More so traditional rulers should be used as a medium to impact anti-cruelty practices on their subjects.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Animal cruelty as highlighted in this review is an issue that demands urgent attention. Proper studies, investigation and prosecution of animal cruelty cases will go a long way in securing our society today. It is therefore recommend that proper studies should be carried out on Animal cruelty cases around us, and governments of developing countries like Nigeria should review their animal cruelty laws and see to their proper implementation.

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