

“The man who beats his wife, the woman who abuses her children, the child who hurts the neighbour’s cat, they’re all caught up in the cycle of violence.”

UNITED STATES HUMANE SOCIETY

Strike out all abuse

By **Sara Carbery**

A DOG HANGED on a tree, a cat nailed to a sign, seal pups bludgeoned to death, puppies pickled in a jar, a goat stabbed to death on the roadside, live kittens fed to a dog, a puppy beaten to death with a golf club, a kitten burned to death in front of a child ... what do these atrocities say about our society?

While animal cruelty in itself is a horrendous crime, it’s even more disturbing when considered as part of the cycle of abuse that directly affects humans as well.

In recent decades, numerous studies have found a strong link between animal cruelty, family violence and child abuse. There’s now no debate: in a home where an animal is being harmed, it’s very likely other family members are being harmed as well.

Arnja Dale, curriculum leader of the Animal Welfare Investigations programme at Unitec, has recently completed the first New Zealand research investigating the co-occurrence of animal abuse, child abuse and domestic violence. Her study found that people who abuse their children, or perform domestic violence in front of them, are 22 times more likely to abuse animals.

In a national United States study, 85% of battered women’s shelters reported that women seeking refuge talked about incidents of pet abuse. In another American study, 83% of families with a history of animal

