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## Criminal or Savior? Animal Hoarding 101

Cat lady. Abuser. Animal hoarder. Criminal. Pet collector. Sanctuary owner. Nut case. Self-neglector. Animal lover.

They are referred to by many names. But for the adult protective services workers, humane law enforcement officers, and other professionals who are asked to deal with them, one term may sum them up: difficult cases.

"Animal hoarders" is a term that was coined in 1997 by the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium (HARC) in Massachusetts. HARC, part of the Tufts Center for Animals and Public Policy, is headed by veterinarian and professor Gary Patronek, Ph.D. and includes other Massachusetts professionals from the fields of psychiatry, sociology, social work, psychology, and the humane society. The group is conducting a national surveillance project to collect case studies, interviewing animal hoarders, analyzing media reports, and otherwise seeking to expand awareness and understanding of this phenomena.

HARC defines hoarders in a way that excludes "*simply owning or caring for more than the typical number of pets and is not about legitimate sheltering or rescue.*" Its current working definition of a hoarder is someone who:

- accumulates a large number of animals;
- fails to provide minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation, and veterinary care;
- fails to act on the deteriorating condition of the animals (including disease, starvation, and even death), or the environment (severely overcrowded and unsanitary conditions);
- fails to act on or recognize the negative impact of the collection on their own health and well-being.

In its initial research, HARC has outlined some common "themes" in hoarder cases. These include:

## December 2002 Editor's Note

Adult Abuse Review is a free, monthly, online newsletter for the wide variety of professionals and community members involved in preventing and intervening in adult abuse. AAR tells you exactly what you need to know about new publications, research, services, policy efforts, web-sites, and more.

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Animal hoarders make up only a very small percentage of cases brought to the attention of adult protective services and law enforcement, but they are particularly difficult cases to resolve. Although the phenomenon (not unlike vulnerable adult abuse itself) is still vastly under-researched, advice and experience *are* available...if you know where to find it. To make sure you are among those who can find the information when you need it, *AAR* is pleased to present a Hoarding 101 article, an annotated literature and resource review, and an interview with a social worker who specializes in working with animal hoarders.

The field of vulnerable adult abuse owes much to its better-known sister fields, domestic violence and child abuse. Yet because borrowers usually rely on other fields' "conventional wisdom," we are not always aware of emerging challenges and controversies within those fields. This edition of *AAR* reports on two recent, prominent *New York Times* articles that question some fairly well established assumptions in the domestic violence field. *AAR* will continue to explore controversies and developments in related fields to encourage us to continue to think critically about the models we use.

In October *AAR* reported on a sex scandal involving Kentucky's Governor and a nursing home owner. This scandal, while devastating for the residents and families directly involved, has continued to produce a steady stream of (yes, we'll admit it) entertaining accusations, revelations and developments. Talk about soap opera! But as *AAR* reported in October, this is also a very high-profile situation that challenges the integrity of Kentucky's -- and, by extension, all other states' -- nursing home inspection process. We will therefore continue to follow media coverage of the scandal and bring you summary updates such as the one you'll find in this issue.

Finally, we want to thank the nearly 200 of you who rushed to sign up to be notified of new editions of *AAR*. Many of you sent extremely complimentary and encouraging comments along with your subscription requests. We are reprinting some of these comments in this issue. As you read them, please remember that what's said is also about *you*, because *AAR* is about the work *you* do. Without you, there'd be no reason for us to exist. Thank you for partnering with us.

## Pilot Project Provides Long-Term Social Work Assistance to Hoarders: An Interview with Jane N. Nathanson

by Loree Cook-Daniels

*The Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium (HARC) was established in 1997 to "investigate the problem of animal hoarding from an interdisciplinary perspective." Based at The Center for Animals and Public Policy, Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine in North Grafton, Massachusetts, HARC's membership includes Massachusetts professionals from the fields of psychiatry, sociology, social work, psychology, epidemiology, veterinary medicine, and the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' animal protection division.*

*One of those professionals, Jane N. Nathanson, is currently heading a pilot project that allows her to provide long-term social work services to selected animal hoarders. Adult Abuse Review interviewed Ms. Nathanson to learn more about her project.*

### AAR: How did this project come about?

Nathanson: One of the purposes of the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium [HARC] is to develop the data and the diagnostic criteria about animal hoarding that we need to make grounded recommendations about intervention. But these cases scream "NEED!" at you, and I didn't feel it was a prerequisite to have the research all in place before you provided some crisis intervention and remedial services. I felt that there was enough information from clinical and service experiences with related populations of persons at risk that some of the premises could be transferred to this population.

For instance, take self-neglect. In these cases, we see medical non-compliance, resistance to services, reclusiveness, and a lack of attending to one's personal or home care, or health and cleanliness standards -- all characteristics we frequently see with animal hoarders. There's also a great body of experience with crisis management of cases of a broader nature, that may be transferable.

So in 1999, I wrote up a proposal for intervention. I reviewed Randall Lockwood and Gary Patronek's literature on animal hoarding, and applied what I knew from specific counseling approaches, case management, and what I've seen work in rehabilitation and social work practice to come up with a construct of intervention. It was funded later that year, under the sponsorship of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [MSPCA]. I also at that point became a participant in HARC. Until then HARC members were primarily researchers and academicians; I brought in a view from the outside, as someone who was a direct service provider and consultant for individuals and families. I offered HARC insights from that point of view.

### AAR: What is the background you bring to them?

Nathanson: I have experience in both the public and private sectors of social service and rehabilitation. Although I was in education and training for many years, for the past 26 years I've specialized in social work and rehabilitation counseling for elders and persons with disabilities. In 1987, I expanded my private consulting to including human/animal bonding and loss issues. In 1990, I began a pet loss support program for MSPCA. In 1993, I was hired for the state's elders-at-risk program and worked there part time for about three years. I've also consulted with veterinary staff on client communications and relations related to human/animal bonding and loss.

My experience with the elders-at-risk program had a lot to do with this pilot project. There is a tendency for such adult protection programs to "disown" animal hoarding as a problem for their intervention, largely because it's most often considered to be either an "animal" issue, or the elder is considered to be competent and have a right to self-

*(Continued on page 11)*

## Animal Hoarding: A Review of the Literature

### Animal Hoarding Basics

- "The Problem of Animal Hoarding," by Gary J. Patronek, Ph.D. and the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium, *Municipal Lawyer* magazine, May/June 2001. Available at [www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding\\_pubs/MunicipalLawyer.pdf](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding_pubs/MunicipalLawyer.pdf)

This is a good introductory article for professionals of many types. It includes information on the characteristics of animal hoarders, possible causes, health issues, "concerns with prosecution," possible legal interventions and preventions, the link between hoarding and adult abuse or neglect, and the benefits of multidisciplinary task forces. It also includes "management recommendations," a bulleted list of suggestions for approaching hoarders.

- "Prosecuting Animal Hoarders is Like Herding Cats," by Susan E. Davis, *California Lawyer*, September 2002. Available at [www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding\\_pubs/Herding\\_Cats.html](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding_pubs/Herding_Cats.html)

This article is a general introduction to animal hoarding and how it can be prosecuted. Contains several interesting case descriptions.

- "Too Many Pets," by Margaret Combs, broadcast by *Living on Earth*, November 22, 2002. Both an audio version and a transcript are available in the archives at [www.loe.org](http://www.loe.org).

This 8-minute radio segment offers a short introduction to animal hoarders. It includes a statement that toxic levels of ammonia present in homes with a great deal of cat urine may cause confusion in hoarders; although ammonia is a topic on the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium

website ([www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/)), this reviewer could not find additional evidence supporting this hypothesis.

- "Animal Hoarding: A Public Health Problem Veterinarians Can Take a Lead Role in Solving," by Bridget M. Kuehn, *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, October 15, 2002. Available at [www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/oct02/021015a.asp](http://www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/oct02/021015a.asp)

Another basic introduction to animal hoarding, this article stands out because of its "tips for identifying hoarders," which may be useful to those who see one or more animals outside of a hoarder's home.

- "Veterinarians and Animal Hoarders." Undated fact sheet, Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium. Available at [http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding\\_pubs/vettips.html](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding_pubs/vettips.html)

This one-page fact sheet is aimed specifically at vets, giving them more tips on how to spot animal hoarders and how they can use their unique position to aid such hoarders.

- "Loving Animals to Death," by Chris Colin, *Salon.com*, March 8, 2002. Available at [www.salon.com/people/feature/2002/03/08/hoarders/print.html](http://www.salon.com/people/feature/2002/03/08/hoarders/print.html)

In this readable article on the animal hoarding phenomena, the author points out that echoes of St. Francis of Assisi's work with animals can be heard in modern-day hoarders' descriptions of what they are doing.

- "People Who Hoard Animals," by The

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## New York City Challenges Current Thinking On Domestic Violence

In November and December 2002, the *New York Times* published two unrelated articles on domestic violence that suggest the city is grappling with exactly how to think about and address violence in intimate relationships.

In a long feature published on Sunday, November 17, reporter Deborah Sontag challenged conventional thinking about domestic violence by exploring such issues as reciprocal abuse and the advisability of mandatory arrest policies. The article, "Fierce Entanglements," is built around the story of Michael, a self-identified abuser, and his partner Sylvia, who says their dynamic was mutually violent from the beginning: "[W]e would beat each other. We would destroy the house. It became kind of dangerous for both of us. I didn't know who was going to kill who."

"It was a complex situation, murkier than the black-and-white portrayal of domestic violence that currently guides public policy," Sontag writes. She goes on to suggest that many other domestic violence situations are likewise murky. A keynote speech at a fall New York City-sponsored domestic violence conference given by Linda Mills, a legal scholar and victim of domestic violence ("at the hands of a man she described as a violence-prevention expert"), for instance, is covered. Although Mills' abuse eventually came to include rape, Sontag reports,

[S]he wouldn't have wanted the police to know. She would never have testified against him. "Doing so would have robbed me of the little dignity I had left." And, she said, the "system" needs to respect women who feel that way. The system, she said, patronized victims by failing to listen to them, usurping their decision-making power and underestimating them -- underestimating their ability to negotiate their own safety and underestimating their role in the abusive relationship. Domestic violence is construed as a one-sided aggression, when often there is a

warped dynamic of intimacy in which both the men and the women are players. It is dishonest, she went on, to stifle conversation about the ways in which women, too, are aggressive and violent.

Sontag also reports on those who question the effectiveness "of the mandatory arrest policies that advocates fought so long and hard for." First she notes that many women feel disempowered and judged by a system that mandates they go through the criminal justice system to address abuse: "They don't want to be humiliated for choosing their partners, pressured into leaving them or blamed. They don't want to be 'battered by the system,' as a recent workshop given by survivors of domestic violence in New York was called." Then she summarizes the history of how mandatory arrest policies developed, and what happened next.

An experiment in 1984 in Minneapolis played a defining role in reshaping the police approach. On the basis of 314 domestic violence cases, a study conducted by the criminologists Lawrence W. Sherman and Richard A. Berk concluded that arrests discouraged batterers from committing future acts of battery. The authors cautioned that the sample size was small and the findings preliminary, but their caution was not heeded. Citing their work, a federal task force recommended that arrest become the standard response to misdemeanor domestic violence cases. It did; most states now have mandatory arrest laws. After his Minneapolis study, however, Sherman refined his thinking on the basis of further studies that revealed a far more complicated picture. He oversaw one such study in Milwaukee, which showed that arrest makes low-income men more violent

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# New Developments in Kentucky Nursing Home Scandal

In early October 2002, *Adult Abuse Review* published an article on allegations that Kentucky Governor Paul Patton had used state regulators to first benefit and then harass his former lover, Birchtree Healthcare nursing home owner Tina Conner. The controversy continued to boil over the intervening three months. What follows are some of the key developments.

- Medicare and Medicaid denied Birchtree's bid to again become eligible for funding.

During mid-October, the Cabinet of Health Services sent an inspection team, made up of a federal surveyor and people from other regions who had not previously inspected Birchtree, back to the nursing home to see if the deficiencies that had led to Birchtree's de-certification had been remedied. Eleven deficiencies were found, and re-certification was denied.

The most serious deficiency concerned the facility's investigation of a large bruise that appeared on a resident's thigh in August. According to the inspection report, "The facility failed to conduct an internal investigation that included an initial assessment of the resident with emphasis on identifying potential abuse. An alleged perpetrator was named and the facility failed to utilize procedures to protect residents while an investigation was conducted by allowing the alleged perpetrator to continue providing direct care to residents." Birchtree officials said they had investigated appropriately and had determined that the bruise had been received while the resident was staying in a hospital.

A letter from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to Birchtree said, "Based on the findings of this survey, we have determined that the reasons for terminating your provider agreement have not been removed. The facility was not able to provide reasonable assurance that the reasons for termination will not recur." A Birchtree official, however, characterized the findings as "paperwork deficiencies," and alleged that a surveyor had altered a resident's medical record, potentially causing a dangerous delay in the administration of a prescribed medication. Conner also apparently gave "investigators" the tape of a

conversation in which a state official said she was working to "close down" the nursing home. Birchtree officials also charged, "the findings on this particular survey should be negated based on the fact that the agency did not follow the process," by releasing a news release that said the inspection had been completed three hours before it was actually finished.

- A bankruptcy court closed Birchtree Healthcare and established an 18-month lease for the facilities by a Kentucky nursing home chain.

In December, a bankruptcy judge approved a plan for EPI Corp., owner of 23 Kentucky nursing homes, to lease the former Birchtree Healthcare facility for 18 months, with an option to buy the nursing home for \$2.7 million. Birchtree had said it had a \$3.2 million debt when it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganization in September. Eight remaining residents were moved out in December, and EPI will spend two months reapplying for federal and state operating licenses.

Conner said she would contest the agreement because the lease amount was \$22,794 a month, whereas she had had a verbal agreement with EPI to take a five-year lease at \$35,000 a month. EPI disputes her allegation.

- Some of Conner's lawsuit against Governor Patton and the state of Kentucky was thrown out of court in December.

In September Conner had filed a lawsuit against the Governor and the State alleging sexual harassment, defamation, wasting taxpayer money, engaging in outrageous conduct, and intentionally causing her emotional distress. In December, a judge ruled that the State should not be a defendant. He also threw out two of the charges against Patton -- sexual harassment and wasting taxpayer money -- because he ruled Conner did not have standing to bring them.

As *AAR* reported in October, this complicated scandal has involved several colorful characters. Further revelations in the past three months have only increased the juiciness factor.

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## ... Animal Hoarding 101 (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

- Hoarders typically believe that they are their animals' saviors; that without them, the animals would be dead.
- Hoarders may have grown up in chaotic or abusive households where animals represented the only stability.
- The animals "may be the exclusive resource from which [the hoarder] derives a sense of trust, control, and self-esteem. The animal hoarder may regard the animals as being devoted family members, with whom there are no conflicts, only constant pleasurable interactions, providing continuous gratification."
- Hoarders therefore may have or develop a strong control need. "[G]iving up anything [they own] can be associated with tremendous fear, apprehension, and even a grief-like reaction."
- Hoarders may be *unable* to perceive the actual condition of their animals. "Hoarders often firmly believe they are providing quality care and have special empathy with the animals," HARC says. In one interview, Patronek even suggested hoarders may suffer from a "focal delusional disorder" that makes them incapable of acknowledging their animals' health problems.
- "Hoarders often view the world as a very hostile place for both animals and people, and may have almost delusional levels of paranoia about officials...understand that a uniform represents the most extreme threat they could imagine."

HARC also found in its initial research that more than 3/4 of hoarders are female; nearly half are 60 or older; most are unmarried; half live alone and half of the households include other members

(including dependent elders and children); and dead or sick animals were found in 80% of reported cases.

### Understanding the Problem

In 60% of the cases HARC studied, the hoarder denied that either the animals or the hoarder were suffering from health problems. Most strongly resist removing and sometimes even treating any of the animals, often holding that without their care, the animals would be killed by a shelter (which, in fact, often happens to these animals when they're removed, due to their poor health).

Public attitudes and legal constraints also confuse the picture. In a 2002 analysis of media coverage of hoarding, HARC researchers found five common emotional themes in the coverage: drama, revulsion, sympathy, indignation, and humor. They said that the media often focuses more on the hoarder's personality than on "the horrific condition of the animals":

The emphasis in articles on the disgusting or horrifying state of hoarders' homes and lifestyles overshadowed reports of animal suffering. The use of superlatives to describe animal suffering was less common than their use to describe squalor and uncivilized behavior.

"Instead of mental disorder or criminal behavior," the researchers said, the media often described hoarders as suffering "from a blind spot that prevented them from seeing the ill effects of their basically good intentions." "Many articles characterized the impulse to 'save' animals as a matter of having 'too much love' or 'compassion'."

More evidence for this thesis comes from a December 2002 Florida case trying 65-year-old

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## ... Animal Hoarding 101 (cont.)

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Colleen Freeman for 70 counts of animal abuse after 48 of her Chihuahuas died in a fire, and 24 more were found in an adjacent trailer. Rescuers said the trailer was piled nearly to the ceiling with trash and papers, and the dead animals were found in cages filled with their own waste and with no food bowls in evidence. Some of the dogs were unable to stand because their nails had curled beneath their paw pads.

Nevertheless, a follow-up article, written by the same reporter who wrote about the initial testimony, began, "Devastated after losing most of her prized Chihuahuas in an April kennel fire, Colleen Freeman cried softly after a jury acquitted her of 70 charges of animal abuse Thursday -- relieved, she said, that a months-long nightmare was over." Neither story quoted any statement from Freeman that indicated how she felt about her animals. Instead, the articles focused only on her lawyer's charges that the rescue workers had lied and that the case was unproven because "prosecutors had only offered evidence about the condition of the kennel and mobile home after the fire, and not the conditions in which the dogs actually had been kept." The article saying Freeman was "devastated" by her dogs' deaths did note, however, that the defense had called no witnesses and presented no evidence to attest to Freeman's treatment of (or feelings about) her animals.

Because media reports often focus on the hoarders' statements or presumed beliefs, the HARC researchers posit, "articles deemphasizing animal neglect may not elicit enough horror in readers to lead them to regard hoarding as a serious problem or prompt them to take action to prevent or better manage it."

This public ambivalence about the problem extends to professional responses. Hoarders typically

refuse to allow visitors into their homes, and judges frequently refuse to take allegations of animal cruelty seriously enough to issue the warrants necessary for officials to enter the premises and document the animals' conditions or the presence of other code violations. Protective services workers may intervene because the hoarders' home conditions may suggest self-neglect, or there may be an allegation of abuse or neglect of a human dependent. Law enforcement and public health workers may be involved because of allegations of health code or public safety violations. However, even when these agencies are able to partner with a humane society to remove the animals, *no* agency is charged with or able to work with a hoarder long-term to ensure she or he does not recreate the original problem, and recidivism rates approach 100%.

Although California and a few other states require animal abusers to receive psychological treatment if they receive probation, HARC notes that "because the problem of animal hoarding is a very new area of study, it is unlikely that you will find mental health services that specialize in intervention with animal hoarders." Obviously, the hoarder would also have to be convicted of the abuse before such counseling could be mandated. No state criminalizes hoarding per se.

### Interventions

Because of limitations in the law, agencies' inability to do long-term intervention, and a lack of knowledge of the problem, HARC has developed intervention recommendations for those most likely to end up trying to resolve the problem: family and friends. In "Animal Hoarding: Recommendations for Interventions by Family and Friends," HARC offers "guidelines based on

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## ... Animal Hoarding 101 (cont.)

(Continued from page 8)

outreach practices associated with crisis management for at-risk persons resistant to assistance and care which we believe to be applicable to many hoarding situations."

These guidelines are built on the idea that "maintaining or developing favorable social interaction may be a key, initial step toward an improved way of life for the animal hoarder, who has likely become isolated, unchallenged by social norms or contrasting values, and extremely fearful or resistant to change.... [A]s you engage in a steadfast, consistent, and positive manner of sensitive communication and demonstration of genuine concern, the animal hoarder may develop greater tolerances for social interaction in general. In this way, there can be greater potential for your role to provide the animal hoarder with the motivation and support that facilitates the process of change."

HARC recommends that interveners listen attentively to the hoarder and "[f]ocus on the values, wants, and needs that the animal hoarder may express or imply," rather than on what the intervener feels is most important. "Be receptive to learning what may be specific and critical to motivating or inhibiting the person's behavioral response to alter the status quo." "In order to facilitate access, convey simply that you are concerned about the well-being and safety of both the animal hoarder and the pets."

As the alliance develops, it may become possible for the intervener to offer specific assistance such as getting containers to store pet food, obtaining and helping move garbage cans, putting up shelving and organizing where the pet supplies go, re-screening windows, or installing smoke detectors. Once these sorts of assistance are accepted, it may gradually be possible to address more threatening issues such as

getting animals treated and sterilized.

The guidelines close by noting that interveners need "to be continually aware of the contributing physical, mental, and emotional factors that may adversely affect the animal hoarder's response," and to "[m]aintain realistic expectations regarding...the animal hoarder's capabilities to change attitudes and behaviors of long standing."

### Professionals' Involvement

Because these cases are so difficult to resolve, professionals have been known to literally tell hoarders to go away: police in at least four different states chose to respond to one woman who kept 115 dogs in a school bus by simply telling her to move elsewhere.

However, there is a growing awareness that there is often a link between animal cruelty and family violence, including elder abuse. The Humane Society of the United States had a partnership with the National Center on Elder Abuse to create resources on this linkage; the results include:

- "Making the Connection: Helping Vulnerable Adults and Their Pets," a brochure which is available through the Humane Society's First Strike Campaign ([www.hsus.org/firststrike](http://www.hsus.org/firststrike));
- Cross-training of adult protective services workers, animal care and control officers, law enforcement officials, and veterinary medicine professionals in at least six states; and
- Production of articles such as, "Making the Connection Between Animal Cruelty and Abuse and Neglect of Vulnerable Adults," published in the Winter 2002 edition of *The Latham Letter* ([www.latham.org](http://www.latham.org)).

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## ... *Animal Hoarding 101 (cont.)*

*(Continued from page 9)*

The growing awareness of this linkage is beginning to show up in concrete ways, as well. The Broward (Florida) Sheriff's Office has a two year old Special Victims and Family Crimes Section that handles reports of all types of family crimes. "The unit's 17 investigators are cross-trained to spot different forms of abuse and neglect and often work as a team to investigate the cases, which can begin as a report of one type of crime and lead to others," the [Miami Herald](#) reported in December 2002. California enacted two laws in 2002 that would require administrators or employees of humane societies and animal control agencies to report suspected cases of vulnerable adult abuse, and permits employees of APS agencies to report animal cruelty they come across in their work.

Coming from a social work perspective, the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has secured a grant to run a pilot project in which a social worker, Jane Nathanson, tries to develop long-term relationships with animal hoarders in an effort to change their behavior. Although she admits such hoarders are extremely difficult to change, she likens progress to the excitement one feels when a hungry feral cat actually approaches to take offered food. "I find that working with reclusive, resisting, hurting people has a similar dimension to it. When they are able to allow you into their world, you feel you've been given a privilege and a gift." When questioned her about characterization of her work as being given a gift, she laughs. "Is it a privilege to walk knee-high into feces? It's all in the way you look at it!"

## Adult Abuse Review: Compliments

Congrats on your new endeavor! This is great. Thanks so much. – *Oregon*

Congratulations and best wishes for a most successful run – *State unknown*

First issue looks terrific. – *Illinois*

Awesome resources I haven't even begun to mine yet. Thank you for sharing. – *Oregon*

This looks like a great addition to the field of Elder Abuse awareness and practice. I look forward to being notified of subsequent editions. – *Wisconsin*

It looks very useful. – *Nevada*

I followed the path to your website...What a wonderful resource, Loree! My compliments and congratulations to all who worked on the site. We can never have enough resources for elder abuse prevention, etc. – *California*

I would love to be included in your email list to receive upcoming notices on additional editions of the *Review*. The first one is great and I look forward to the future editions. – *Colorado*

I so enjoyed seeing the fruit of your labors! It looks good, is easily navigated, and the content is high quality --- BRAVO! -- *Wisconsin*

This is a terrific resource! – *Georgia*

I am impressed with the content as well as the design of the publication. – *California*

Congrats on your site!!! It looks wonderful. – *Colorado*

I love your new web site! -- *Oregon*

I enjoyed your newsletter. Please sign me up! -- *Washington, D.C.*

I have read the October issue and found it useful and informative. I've decided I shouldn't miss another issue. -- *Kentucky*

I'm thrilled to have found such great information on GLBT culture and ethnic background in relation to elder abuse! -- *Maryland*

... Nathanson interview (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

determination. But I think the piece that's been overlooked is that animal neglect is most often going hand-in-hand with human self-neglect. [The human and the animals] are sharing the same unsafe, unsanitary, substandard environment. But when adult protective services workers go in, there may be pressure, almost, to find that the elder is competent and desires the status quo, so that the worker can go out the door and close the case. And there's reluctance -- and understandably so -- to impose our own standards for how a person should live. So what happens many times is that there is a shuffling off of this kind of case, or closure before any kind of intervention can take place.

Yet we know that with elders at risk you are supposed to develop trust and rapport and a relationship *prior* to even *attempting* any change. But since there is a lot of pressure, given caseload size in these agencies, to open and close cases, just how long are you going to keep trying to develop trust and rapport? These are such challenging, hardcore, cases. It would be a gross oversimplification to think you can build the needed rapport in two or three visits. I understand that

when you work within a bureaucracy, you may have constraints. But we need to at least address the fact that those constraints may be part of what leads to whether there's a successful outcome or not.

It's mind-boggling when you go into these scenes. But if you immediately suggest downsizing the animal population, you're out the door in a flash. Because of the pilot project, I am able to really develop the trust factor and work slowly, deliberately, minding my Ps and Qs, to be able to facilitate further communication and potential cooperation.

**AAR: How do these cases come to you?**

Nathanson: Right now in Massachusetts, a case of animal hoarding will likely first come to the attention of law enforcement. The law enforcement division of MSPCA will then go in and assess whether, indeed, the animals are being neglected or abused. If there is evidence of such, the law enforcement division has its protocol of intervention. In the worse case scenario, criminal charges are placed for removal of the animals. But over the years, all we've seen is an extraordinary rate of recidivism. Within as short a time as a month, or three months later, the situation is just as it was before.

With the pilot project, the person who is in charge of the law enforcement division of MSPCA, Carter Luke, the Vice President of Animal Protection, will review the report on the situation and determine if I should become involved. If so, I then proceed to try to arrange a meeting with the person in his or her home. Getting in can be an extremely difficult part of the whole problem.

Oftentimes these hoarders are adult children in their 40s and 50s who are caring for an elder in the home. We oftentimes get situations where the individual has been reported to adult protective services because there's a dependent elder, or child protective services

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## Upcoming AAR Themed Issues:

- Training curricula and video reviews
- Institutional abuse: new developments and resources
- Reviews of new research

# INTERVENTION

... *Nathanson interview (cont.)*

*(Continued from page 11)*

for a dependent child. You often have layers of very serious things going on in these cases. In one of my cases, there were chronic reports. Every worker that went in to help with the elder -- who wasn't the hoarder -- reported my client. My client therefore associated the receipt of "help" with consequent trouble -- she believed that "anyone who tries to help me, hurts me."

In general [humane society] law enforcement comes in and takes a low-key approach, if possible, and makes recommendations and suggestions for how to make things better for the animals. They might cite specific laws about the conditions of the animals. Then they'll say, "we'll come back in X amount of time and see if you are able to make the improvements we consider necessary."

That approach may prompt some change, but that doesn't mean the change will be maintained. If the person hasn't made the changes, law enforcement must then take a much stronger approach.

I could be referred a case at any point along the line -- after animals have been removed, or in the midst of the crisis of the removal of the animals, or prior to the removal of the animals -- to try to address the human/animal quality of life conditions.

## **AAR: After you get the referral, what's next?**

Nathanson: It depends on who else is involved and what the person is facing. My intervention may be focused on trying to help them remediate the conditions so as to avoid whatever sanctions they may be facing potentially. For instance, public health may be trying to condemn the property, which means the person may be facing homelessness. The person may not be aware of what officials are doing, or care about what they're doing. Perhaps they don't think anything will ever happen.

Or the person may not *know* what is unsafe or

unsanitary. There could be huge financial difficulties going on so that a person hasn't been able to meet their basic needs. There could be medical conditions, possibly related to the unhealthy environment, or physical or cognitive impairments that limit the person's capacity to respond. What I'm trying to address with the person is, what's in it for you if you cooperate? How can I help you avoid the problem? You may not agree, but if the authorities deem this a violation of humane or human laws, things are going to happen that you may not want. What can we do to prevent that from happening?

It may be that the person may be very proud of this domain that they've created. It's extremely important to recognize that the individual's home may well be his or her entire world. Oftentimes, there's a total exclusion of social interaction with one's own kind. What the person has [with the animals] is mutual trust and a sense of control in this domain. Some vehemently deny that conditions of the animals are poor and would be horrified to think that they were not actually providing a wonderful service to these animals. You may be calling it animal neglect, but these are people who consider themselves, in many cases, as having a very strong humane orientation. It comes to many of them as a shock that they are facing charges of neglect. While there are some individuals reported to humane law enforcement who don't give a damn, we do see so many animal hoarders who profess and demonstrate a great deal of love for their animals -- each one named, each one individually adored and considered to be a perfect member of one's family.

The people where we're going to get the most potential acceptance are those who say, "Help me keep these animals. I don't want to give these animals up to a killing machine." What they are thinking about is that if these animals are brought to a shelter that practices euthanasia, they can be

*(Continued on page 13)*

... *Nathanson interview (cont.)*

*(Continued from page 12)*

killed. Even if there's a no-kill shelter, these people say, "What kind of a life is that for the animal?" Many of these people pride themselves on keeping these animals from either unacceptable situation. They say, "If it were not for me, these animals would be homeless or dead." Even though the hoarder may cage the animals or have conditions that do not fulfill their basic needs, the hoarder may say, "These animals were unwanted. Any life is better than no life." Even those who are willing to acknowledge that the animals' current conditions are untenable will say, "At least they're able to live."

One thing we have to be careful of is what we are saying about the quality of the person's life. If they can't live decently, what are we saying? Are we negating their own acceptance of their own lives? You do want to bring improvement as you might see the need for it, but as a social worker you know we still must not impose our own standards. Social workers are constantly conflicted where they see or define human need, but the individual him- or herself may not acknowledge need, and be adamant about being "left alone."

The biggest problem with all elders at risk is getting in and staying in long enough to effect improvement on *mutually agreed upon* goals. That's the kicker: how do we get to mutually agreed-upon goals?

**AAR: So how *do* you get to mutually agreed-upon goals?**

Nathanson: First I try to establish communication by way of cultivating a client-focused relationship. I recommend listening, listening, listening. That builds trust and rapport, which are essential to engaging in constructive dialogue. Only by way of attentive and thorough listening will the worker be able to learn what the individual's values, wants, and needs are -- what will essentially motivate the person to change long-standing conditions.

Listening also enhances the client's receptivity and responsiveness to intervention. Nothing is ever going to happen (in my way of viewing the world) unless this piece is in place. And just because you *think* it's in place, never take it for granted! Fundamentally, we are dealing with so much distrust. Even if you're minding your Ps and Qs, you can't slip up and can't hustle the person because you are so tentatively afforded his or her trust.

I've been working with one woman for over two years. And to this day, I can't count on her trust of me. These are very wounded people. Remember that having been hurt is one of the forces driving some people to gravitate to the world of animals, above and beyond the world of humans. The animals will not harm them. They will be their constant friends. They can be trusted implicitly forever.

So communication, trust, rapport, striving for their receptivity – that piece needs to always be there. That's the constant.

The next stage you add on is promoting the client's acknowledgement of problematic conditions. I utilize educational approaches concerning both human and animal health issues, which includes humane care and treatment of animals. I gradually approach issues of loss and grief. As needed, I provide crisis intervention and adjustment counseling.

You need to let the individual define what the crisis is in his or her own terms. Focus on the nuts and bolts, the things that they're ready to acknowledge about the crisis situation (i.e., the potential loss of their animals, home condemnation, financial hardship, consequences of utility shut-off for non-payment of bills) that they might want help with.

The second piece is to articulate a mutual acknowledgment of the problems to be addressed. I engage the client in the development and implementation of a mutually-agreed upon service plan.

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# INTERVENTION

... *Nathanson interview (cont.)*

*(Continued from page 13)*

I've often found that *written* service plans are crucial. If and when disagreement or conflict develops, I am often able to go back to the service plans for the whats, whys, and wherefores. Write a contract. You need to give the person a sense of control. The individual needs to know you won't do anything without his or her permission. You say, "I will never contact anyone without speaking to you first about it. I want you to know what I'm doing every step of the way." Listen to the client and write his or her words into the contract; that helps the individual to feel in control, too.

If we're moving along all right, then I start to facilitate linkages with community-based resources or specialized services such as legal, housing, financial assistance. Animal hoarding intervention is a team effort -- I can't go it alone! We need to find a liaison, a transitional force, to mainstream the person as much as possible. The elders-at-risk program can often help with this.

## **AAR: How does medical and psychiatric therapy fit in with your work?**

Nathanson: One of the biggest problems I've faced in the last couple of years is coordinating the community resources and having them accept and be responsive to the advisory assistance which I can provide. Teamwork within and between agencies and individuals can be quite a challenge! Different agencies feel very proprietary, and there is often a very poor relationship between the different agencies. Take mental health workers: if they don't know what to do, they may not take the time or make the effort to ask for help. And that's a real problem.

Let's say you've worked a really long time to get this person medically and psychiatrically evaluated -- when they agree to go, that's a huge leap you've taken! Let's say we get the person to a therapist; what is that therapist going to think about the relationship

between the person and the animals? Unless the therapist takes that human/animal linkage into account -- if, for instance, that therapist seems to talk to them like they've got a collection of inanimate objects -- they're not going to make progress.

A number of my clients have already been in long-term therapeutic programs for conditions such as schizophrenia, severe depression, substance abuse, and manic-depression, and the providers never knew they were an animal hoarder. I don't believe animal hoarding is resolvable by simply giving someone medication, like Prozac for obsessive-compulsive disorder. When you're talking about the fundamental magnetic attraction, the compelling desire that that person has for animals, are you talking about, "Just give me another animal, I can't get enough," or are you also talking about this person's ethical and moral belief system that killing animals is wrong? When they say, "These animals are homeless, if I don't take them, who is?", is that resolvable by drugs? One may have delusions telling him or her to take these animals in, or compelling desires to continually add to one's flock, but what about the person with the altruistic orientation to this, whereby he or she feels that it is the moral and ethical thing to do? How can you medicate that away?

Because there is so much interaction [between animals and humans] that is so intensely pleasurable, sometimes people have to make the distinction between whether they are doing it for the animals or doing it for themselves. It's important for people, if they have the capacity for it, to see that they're serving themselves, possibly, at the price of the animals' well being.

I have this client who has hoarded cats for 20 years now. I bring the whole bailiwick of approaches to her: what's good for you, what's good for the animals, what'll keep you out of trouble. I told her, "What about if the animals created their own colony? There would be a certain point at which the animals 'refuse'

*(Continued on page 15)*

... *Nathanson interview (cont.)*

*(Continued from page 14)*

to accept any more into the fold: they'd run them off or kill them, because there's competition for food and what have you." This client said to me, "I would think they would love the extra company, the new face, someone new to interact with." This woman is completely isolated from humans, and this expressed perspective was most illuminating about her own needs. It was one of the most extraordinary discussions I've had with her.

I'm not trying to show people they're being narcissistic, but rather trying to acquaint them with the idea that the animals may be serving the person more than they are being served. Did she accept the piece of humane education about how animals would create their own colony in the wild? I don't know. She is so impaired in so many, many ways: cognitively, with impaired judgment, poor abstract reasoning and capacity for insight, she has significant deficits that affect problem-solving and troubleshooting. She has a lot of these things going on. Sometimes she'll just be contrary to be contrary. You can't take anything for granted, whether it is trust between the two of you or whether some idea will be able to grow in one's mind or instead get bogged down by all the other undermining factors.

**AAR: Can the interventions you're piloting here be used by agencies such as adult protective services?**

Nathanson: We live in an exceedingly inhumane social service kind of bind right now. These are times of managed care not just in medicine, but in all of human services. The services are so grossly under-funded and the pressures on the workers are terrible. Some of the best workers just leave. Why should they stay when their caseloads get higher and higher, working with fewer and fewer resources? How much do we say the onus is on them to do things differently? I'm not going to be complacent about the horrific cutbacks. This happens in the field of education, too: we blame the teacher. We have a system that is failing. What do we do on that front? That's really

what's going on here. Social service workers don't have the time to even *learn* the skills, develop and practice the expertise, that would ultimately be profitable and that would make their work easier. How do we get people who demonstrate a level of expertise or a special type of empathy to stay and thrive -- and consequently have their clients thrive -- when the emphasis is on the paperwork more than the outcome?

When I was working in the adults-at-risk system and we were being audited, we were told what the auditors would be looking at: how many days were there between the report and the contact with the referral or attempt to intervene? Was the paperwork completed within 24-48 hours of a visit? It's those kind of criteria that the human service auditors may be more focused on, rather than looking at what are the goals, what are the methods of intervention, were the goals reached, and if not, why not?

It is very stressful to work with such a difficult, difficult population, and I feel more workers are crumbling under the pressure of the paperwork and limited time for supervision and on-going training. I think what's also important is: are they getting positive feedback about their efforts? Do they receive some acknowledgement for having gotten in the door? Is there acknowledgement and praise for the little things that may be preliminary to bigger things potentially coming along the way as a result? Or are they raked over the coals because their paperwork wasn't completed within 24 or 48 hours? I don't know that you can have it both ways. And you can't look at serving these hoarders without looking at the system.

So these workers are all too often too busy to undertake some of these extremely complicated, complex cases with the amount of collaborative efforts that are called for. They just don't have the necessary time to spend.

*(Continued on page 16)*

# INTERVENTION

... *Nathanson interview (cont.)*

*(Continued from page 15)*

**AAR: Are these cases worth the cost and amount of time you are putting into them?**

Nathanson: I think we need to ask what our moral obligation to the harder cases is. We tend to cream our caseloads, tending first to the compliant, pleasant ones. But what does that mean about our moral obligation to be of service to people?

In the long run, though, what would probably cut more ice with policymakers is, "What do these cases cost if untreated?" Let's say you've got a private home where this is going on. There is huge financial debt and they stop paying their bills or taxes. If utilities are shut off at an elder's residence due to non-payment of bills, the companies continue to provide the services -- these are all costs to businesses, to communities, and to consumers. Someone (or many people) will be paying here. Furthermore, animal hoarding is a public health problem as well, and again there is a hefty price associated with the potential risks of safety, sanitation, and health. Consequently such situations become a drain on various public and private services. This is not an intervention and cost for animal organizations alone -- effective means of resolving these cases must be pursued by way of a collaborative effort of community resources, or the price of "turning the other way" will be all that much greater.

Do I make progress? Yes, I do; I couldn't live without it. Even if it only comes slowly, sporadically, or in very small steps, I really appreciate the glimmers of change I see. These changes are so hard to make. These systems of behaving and living have been hard in place for so long...why should they change, especially when it's so hard and hurtful to do so?

Let me give you an example that may sound absurd: it took over a year before someone I was working with referred to themselves as an animal hoarder. That insight alone was progress! Any chipping away

of the over-the-top denial that goes on in these situations is progress. When I hear, "I need help with that," or when a client says "thank you" to me, I find it so gratifying...especially when you're dealing with such hard core, resistant, sometimes intensely angry people, to have them genuinely say thank you. These things mean a lot to me; they keep me going.

I started out as a teacher, an educator. That orientation has never left me. It's my style of counseling, of doing interventions: to educate. I generally feel if a person has learned something, a tidbit -- even if it is just that animals don't want to have urine and feces in their cage -- it's a step. When individuals learn what an animal might need, they may be able to go on to figure out what they themselves might need or want...and proceed to fulfill that.

These cases just draw on every single ounce of personal as well as professional interest and commitment on my part. I *love* this work. I find these people so scintillating, so demanding of every bit of creative thought that I can exercise.

It's kind of like the thrill one feels when a hungry feral cat actually approaches to take offered food. I find that working with reclusive, resisting, hurting people has a similar dimension to it. When they are able to allow you into their world, you feel you've been given a privilege and a gift. People jokingly ask me, "Is it a privilege to walk knee-high into feces?" I say, "It's all in the way you look at it!"

Are these cases hopeless? No, they are not.

# Transgender Aging Intensive

## Transgender Aging Intensive

Friday, February 14, 2003

Washington DC: Holiday Inn on the Hill

You're probably already working with them, and more are coming. They're older transsexuals, cross-dressers, intersexuals, and other gender variant people, and all of their significant others, friends, family, and allies (SOFFAs).

This first-ever, all-day Transgender Aging Intensive is designed specifically for service providers and advocates to give you the tools you need to appropriately and sensitively serve and advocate for this group of elders.

Friday, February 14, 2003  
8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Holiday Inn on the Hill  
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For more information, contact the Transgender Aging Network (TAN) / Loree Cook-Daniels at [LoreeCD@aol.com](mailto:LoreeCD@aol.com) or by phone at 414-540-6456.

Registration is \$95 and **pre-registration is required**. More information and the pre-registration form is available at [www.forge-forward.org/TAN](http://www.forge-forward.org/TAN) or by emailing [LoreeCD@aol.com](mailto:LoreeCD@aol.com).

This Intensive is sponsored by Transgender Aging Network, since 1998 the only organization in the world devoted to transgender aging issues. Loree Cook-Daniels, an aging policy analyst, advocate, and trainer with 30 years of professional experience, is the lead trainer.

## ... Animal Hoarding Review (cont.)

(Continued from page 4)

Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium, *Psychiatric Times*, April 2000. Available at [www.psychiatristimes.com/p000425.html](http://www.psychiatristimes.com/p000425.html)

Written for mental health professionals, this article emphasizes causal theories (delusional disorder, early dementia, addiction, zoophilia, attachment disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder). It also compares inanimate object hoarding with animal hoarding, pointing out overlaps and similarities.

- "Killing with Kindness?" by Randall Lockwood, Ph.D. and Barbara Cassidy, reprinted from *HSUS News*, Summer 1988, available at [www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding\\_pubs/kindness.pdf](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding_pubs/kindness.pdf)

An early review of the animal hoarding phenomenon, this article includes a summary of a 1981 study of 34 New York cases of hoarding. It also posits that hoarders become isolated *after* they obtain too many animals, and that a common hoarder trait "is a powerful fear of death and unwillingness to accept its inevitability."

## Research

- "Hoarding of Animals: An Under-Recognized Public Health Problem in a Difficult-to-Study Population," by Gary J. Patronek, *Public Health Reports*, January/February 1999, pp. 81-87.

Patronek, the Director of the Center for Animals and Public Policy at Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine, analyzed 54 case reports of animal hoarders from eight states. This article reports on the demographics of the hoarders and their households, what kinds of and how many

animals were involved, how the hoarders obtained the animals, the physical conditions of the homes, and case outcomes.

## Prevention

- "Knowing When to Say *When*," by Tracy Vogel, *VetCentric*, October 7, 2002. Available at [www.vetcentric.com/magazine/magazineArticle.cfm?ArticleID=1878](http://www.vetcentric.com/magazine/magazineArticle.cfm?ArticleID=1878)

How do you tell the difference between a legitimate animal rescuer or foster home and a hoarder? This article explores the vague line between them. Most importantly, the article includes advice on how shelters and other agencies that are overseeing animal foster homes can help prevent loving foster parents from becoming neglectful hoarders.

## Interventions/Model Programs

- "Animal Hoarding: Recommendations for Intervention by Family and Friends," by Jane

(Continued on page 19)

## Coming Up in Future Editions:

Watch AAR for:

- What's next for the Elder Justice Act
- Report on elder abuse efforts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- News of the national financial exploitation study
- Elder abuse batterers' programs

... *Animal Hoarding Review (cont.)*

(Continued from page 18)

N. Nathanson and the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium, June 6, 2002. Available at [www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding\\_pubs/Intervention%20Guidelines.pdf](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding_pubs/Intervention%20Guidelines.pdf)

This is an excellent document for anyone who knows an animal hoarder, and may be helpful to professional interveners (who will, however, likely be frustrated that their workloads preclude following its time-intensive advice). After a brief discussion about animal hoarding behavior, the article covers: how to assess and accommodate or modify the intervener's hot spots and expectations; how to listen to the hoarder and communicate in ways designed to lower resistance; how to recruit help; how to build a "positive alliance" with the hoarder and what specific assistance to offer once the alliance is in place; how to set limits; and what community resources might be available. Contains a particularly good paragraph on the limits of what authorities can do, including confidentiality and competency limitations.

- "Handling Animal Collectors, Part 1: Interventions That Work," by Geoffrey L. Handy, first published in *Shelter Sense*, a publication of the Humane Society of the United States, in May-June 1994. Available at [www.hsus2.org/sheltering/library/animal\\_collectors.html](http://www.hsus2.org/sheltering/library/animal_collectors.html)

Highly recommended for those called to intervene in animal hoarding cases, this comprehensive article reviews the pros and cons of prosecution and other types of interventions. It includes advice from humane society professionals who have successfully resolved cases. One section goes over the components of effective court

orders. Another briefly explores interventions such as eviction, 72-hour evaluations, and guardianship.

- "Handling Animal Collectors, Part 2: Managing a Large-scale Rescue Operation," by Geoffrey L. Handy, first published in *Shelter Sense*, a publication of the Humane Society of the United States, in July 1994. Available at [www.hsus2.org/sheltering/library/animal\\_collectors2.html](http://www.hsus2.org/sheltering/library/animal_collectors2.html)

Humane societies are usually the ones charged with removing animals from a hoarder's home. Although they are certainly equipped for the job, they may be overwhelmed by the sheer number of animals and the need to document the animals' condition in case of future litigation. This comprehensive article explains how to create a multidisciplinary rescue team and organize the actual rescue effort. It includes lists of needed supplies and forms and other essentials. Detailed advice on photographing the animals is also given. The article also includes discussions of how to pay for the cost of sheltering the removed animals, how to manage a high number of adoptions, and how to work with the media (with a particular focus on how hoarders may use the media to tell a story quite different from the one found by the rescuers). A final box covers legal justifications and procedural considerations for removing animals from hoarders.

- "Animal Hoarding: Intervention and Management Suggestions for Agencies," by the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium. No date. Available at [www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding\\_pubs/treatmentrec.html](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding_pubs/treatmentrec.html)

(Continued on page 20)

## ... Animal Hoarding Review (cont.)

(Continued from page 19)

A short (two page) list of statements about typical hoarders and possible interventions, this fact sheet is useful as an introduction to someone who is peripherally involved with an animal hoarder. In this reviewer's opinion, it is not sufficient for a direct intervener.

- "Police Now See Cruelty as an Indicator of Domestic Violence, Other Crimes," by Monica Rhor, *The Miami Herald*, December 8, 2002. Available at [www.broward.com/mld/browardherald/news/local/4685131.htm](http://www.broward.com/mld/browardherald/news/local/4685131.htm)

Although not specifically about animal hoarders, this newspaper article reports on the Special Victims and Family Crimes Section of the Broward (Florida) Sheriff's Office, which cross-trains its investigators in "all types of family crime, including animal, child and elder abuse, and domestic violence."

### Media Coverage

- "Press Reports of Animal Hoarding," by Arnold Arluke, et. al., *Society and Animals*, 10, 2, 2002. Available at [www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding\\_pubs/press%20reports.pdf](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/hoarding_pubs/press%20reports.pdf)

This somewhat academic study is based on the premise that "the power of the news media derives from its ability to elicit emotions in readers," and that these emotions can in turn "promote action on certain issues by helping 'new' social problems gain support and momentum." The researchers looked at 100 articles about animal hoarders published from 1995 to 2001 in the United States and Great Britain and found five primary emotional themes in the articles: drama, revulsion, sympathy, indignation, and humor. The authors conclude that "[w]hile these themes draw readers' attention and make

disparate facts behind cases understandable by packaging them in familiar formats, they also present an inconsistent picture of animal hoarding that can confuse readers about the nature and significance of this behavior as well as animal abuse, more generally."

- "Sample of Recent Newspaper Coverage," by the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium, available at [www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/newspaper.html](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/newspaper.html)

This is a bibliography of 44 newspaper articles published in the United States from 1997 to 1999. It may help you locate a local story for use in media or lobbying efforts.

### Other Resources

- Animal hoarding legislation across the U.S. Available at [www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/legislat.html](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/legislat.html)

This webpage links to five pieces of legislation: two bills that were offered in New Mexico and Vermont, the Illinois hoarding law, the Illinois law mandating that veterinarians report elder abuse, and a Colorado law that governs animal facilities.

- On-line consultation. Available at [www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/consult\\_ed.html](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/consult_ed.html)

A psychiatrist working with the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium at Tufts University, Edward Messner, M.D., is available for consultation. "Physicians and patients, nationwide, may arrange remote specialty consultations to support their care by accessing the expertise of physicians at Massachusetts General Hospital, Brigham and Women's Hospital

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## Coming in January's Issue

- The Clearinghouse on Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly goes online
- Male victims of elder abuse
- Successful prosecutions
- More upcoming conferences and training opportunities

### ... *Animal Hoarding Review (cont.)*

*(Continued from page 20)*

and Dana-Farber/Partners CancerCare."

- Online self-help group for hoarders. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/H-C>

This group is for hoarders and/or clutterers with obsessive-compulsive disorder (one theory of the cause of hoarding) who have "a strong desire to improve their living or work spaces.... This is a working list, so be prepared to [make] goals and report back to the group."

- Pictures of animal hoarders' homes. Available at [www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/photo.html](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/photo.html)

Available at this website are seven copyrighted pictures showing interiors of the homes of animal hoarders. None of the pictures shows animals, and could be from the homes of those who hoard only inanimate objects.

### ... *Current DV Thinking Challenged (cont.)*

*(Continued from page 5)*

than does a simple warning by the police. The low-income men in Milwaukee, most of who happened to be black, were three times as likely to be arrested than employed white men were. Therefore, by his study's oddly precise calculations, mandatory arrest in Milwaukee prevented 2,504 acts of violence against primarily white women at the price of 5,409 additional acts of violence against primarily black women. Although the results were expressed in racial terms, Sherman said the men's status in society was the determining factor. Arrests generally deterred employed offenders, the studies showed, but provoked unemployed offenders to commit up to twice as many more assaults.

Another long section of the article explores the effectiveness of batterers' programs. A judge says, "The jury is still out on whether they do any good." A psychotherapist believes that abusers can change but notes that the programs that are based on didactic lectures on feminist theory ("domestic violence results not from individual personal or moral deficits but from an abuser's belief that he has the right to inflict his will on his partner") don't work.

After discussing Michael's history of batterers' treatment -- paid for by his employer after Michael was arrested for punching a co-worker -- Sontag concludes, "Whether his motivation [to no longer hurt people] will be sufficiently powerful to overcome a lifelong pattern remains to be seen. For the moment, Michael and Sylvia are setting their sights on a more concrete goal: a vacation in the Poconos."

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## ... Current DV Thinking Challenged (cont.)

(Continued from page 21)

Three weeks after "Fierce Entanglements" was published, the *New York Times* ran an article on 13,000 subway and bus ads and storefront posters issued by the mayor's Office to Combat Family Violence. The ads, printed in eight languages, featured black-and-white photographs of clean-shaven, well-dressed men behind bars with headlines like "Successful Executive. Devoted Churchgoer. Abusive Husband." And, "Employee of the Month. Soccer Coach. Wife Beater."

Although the ads were meant to dispel the myth that "most big-city batterers are poor, uneducated and live in troubled neighborhoods," they did not, as did the previous four years' campaigns, lead to increases in calls to a domestic violence hotline. A psychologist who has counseled battered women for 19 years, Frederic Reichman, said the reason the ads didn't work is that, "Domestic violence can happen in any family, but when you start putting up pictures of men in prison, you scare the women. Many of them still love their batterers and are afraid to put their men in jail. These ads reinforce that fear."

### Related Links:

- "Fierce Entanglements" (available for a fee only)  
<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F3091EF838550C748DDDA80994DA404482>
- "Posters of Upscale Batterers Show that Class Offers No Immunity" (available for a fee only)  
<http://query.nytimes.com/search/article-page.html?res=9502E2DD103BF93BA35751C1A9649C8B63>

## ... KY Nursing Home Scandal (cont.)

(Continued from page 6)

- Dan Dabney, widely characterized in media reports as Birchtree's "acting administrator" or "manager," turned out to be a state employee who was on paid leave during an investigation of allegations concerning vulnerable adult abuse and managerial sexual harassment.

In late October, Dabney disputed an Executive Branch Ethics Commission opinion that it was a potential conflict of interest for Dabney to run Birchtree before he had resigned from state employment, which he did on June 17<sup>th</sup> (although accrued vacation and compensatory time kept him on the state payroll until September 15<sup>th</sup>). Although the *Courier-Journal* alleged that Dabney had become "associated" with Birchtree in April when Conner was looking for an administrator, Dabney said that he had been retained only as a consultant and been paid only for expenses. "The only conflict would be if I had gainful, paid employment," he said. As of late October, he continued, he had still not collected a salary.

Dabney had had a 16-year career in state government that included working as a nursing home inspector. At the time of his resignation, he was director of a group home for mentally retarded adults. The allegations against him were of verbally abusing a resident and sexually harassing staff. Although Dabney denied the allegations and passed a polygraph test, a private investigator hired by the state said Dabney had "created a very tense, stressful and hostile work environment." The day before his preliminary termination hearing, Dabney resigned, stating in his

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*... KY Nursing Home Scandal (cont.)*

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letter to Mary Morgan (the Health Services Secretary who, among other things, oversees nursing home inspections), "You know as well as I do that the allegations that have been brought against me for misconduct are totally false."

- Conner has been involved in other sexual harassment and political controversies.

In 1998, Conner sought assistance from a "constituent director" in Governor Patton's office for help filing a complaint about a state trooper, who she alleged had made sexual comments to her while investigating a complaint at the nursing home in 1996, and again in front of her family at a restaurant in 1998. The trooper was suspended. The incident was apparently reported by the Courier-Journal because of the unorthodox -- but not illegal -- way in which the complaint was registered.

The Courier-Journal also separately reported that Conner, at the request of a Democratic candidate for office, "wrote a letter two years ago accusing his Republican opponent in Western Kentucky of sexually molesting her more than 10 years earlier -- although she never formally filed a complaint about the alleged molestation at the time she said it occurred."

- Governor Patton, Conner alleges, arranged three menage a trois sexual encounters with a female state employee, who has denied the charges.

Although Conner admitted to the paper that those were not her first experiences with a menage a trois, she maintained that "I didn't feel like I had

much of a choice" about going along with the Governor's suggestion.

- Conner says she received calls between 1998 and 2001 tipping her off to annual inspections by the Cabinet for Health Services and the state fire marshal's office.

Dabney confirmed that he was present when one of the warning calls came from an aide to Patton's chief of staff. The staff member alleged to have made this particular call denied the charge. Although Dabney said, "There will be some evidence coming forward on that," both he and Conner refused comment when asked if the telephone calls had been taped.

- State auditors reacted in outrage when they learned from media interviews Conner had given -- rather than from the Cabinet for Health Services, the focus of a recently-completed year-long audit of Medicaid finances -- that the cabinet alleges Birchtree was overpaid by \$242,911.

Auditors claimed the sum should have shown up in the cabinet's books and also should have been disclosed to them as an unpaid debt. A cabinet spokesperson admitted the payments were not properly recorded, but said the error wasn't discovered until October 10, after the audit period. The cabinet did file a claim for the funds with the bankruptcy court. Meanwhile, it is challenging

most of the audit's findings, including charges that the cabinet's Department of Medicaid Services has not effectively managed "accounts receivable."

## Related Links:

"Kentucky Scandal Raises Questions About Integrity Of Nursing Home Inspection Process," *Adult Abuse Review*, October 2002.  
[www.WordBridges.net/elderabuse/aar/vol1issue1/KY-scandal.html](http://www.WordBridges.net/elderabuse/aar/vol1issue1/KY-scandal.html)

Collection of *Louisville Courier-Journal* articles on "Patton Controversy"  
[www.courier-journal.com/localnews/patton\\_stories.html](http://www.courier-journal.com/localnews/patton_stories.html)

"State overpaid nursing home; Auditor's office was not told of mistake," *The Kentucky Post*, November 20, 2002.  
[www.kypost.com/2002/11/20/birch112002.html](http://www.kypost.com/2002/11/20/birch112002.html)

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