

# Top 10 Ways to Prevent Animal Cruelty

If you're a fan of the award-winning reality series *Animal Precinct*, then you've already seen the ASPCA Humane Law Enforcement's Supervisory Special Investigator Annemarie Lucas in action. But did you know that you, too, can help crack down on animal cruelty in your own community? Read on for Officer Lucas's take on making the world a safer place for animals:

**1. Be aware.** Without phone calls from the concerned citizens who report cruelty in their neighborhoods, we wouldn't know about most instances of animal abuse. It all comes from the public, it all starts with YOU—that's why it's so important to keep your eyes and ears open. Get to know and look out for the animals in your neighborhood. By being aware, you're more likely to notice, for example, that the dog next door who was once hefty has lost weight rapidly—a possible indicator of abuse.

**2. Learn to recognize animal cruelty.** Here are some signs and symptoms that we see in many of the cases we investigate:

- Tick or flea infestations. Such a condition, if left untreated by a veterinarian, can lead to an animal's death.
- Wounds on the body.
- Patches of missing hair.
- Extremely thin, starving animals.
- Limping.
- An owner striking or otherwise physically abusing an animal.
- Dogs who are repeatedly left alone without food and water, often chained up in a yard.
- Dogs who have been hit by cars-or are showing any of the signs listed above-and have not been taken to a veterinarian.
- Dogs who are kept outside without shelter in extreme weather conditions.
- Animals who cower in fear or act aggressively when approached by their owners.

**3. Know who to call to report animal cruelty.** We're lucky here at the ASPCA in New York City, because we have Humane Law Enforcement officers who have the power to investigate and arrest perpetrators of animal cruelty in the state of New York. But every state and even every town is different. In some areas, you may have to rely on the police department to investigate animal cruelty; in others, you may have to contact local animal control or another municipal agency.

**4. Provide as much as information as possible when reporting animal cruelty.** The details that you provide can go a long way toward assisting the investigating officer. It helps to write down the type of cruelty that you witnessed, who was involved, the date of the incident and where it took place.

**5. Call or write your local law enforcement department** and let them know that investigating animal cruelty should be a priority. Animal cruelty is a CRIME—and the police MUST investigate these crimes.

**6. Know your state's animal cruelty laws.** These vary from state to state, and even from city to city. You can visit the [ASPCA's online database](#) of more than 550 animal cruelty laws—and their penalties—in all 50 states.

**7. Fight for the passage of strong anti-cruelty laws on federal, state and local levels by joining the [ASPCA Advocacy Brigade](#).** It's frustrating when I have built a strong case against someone who has been arrested for cruelty to animals and the judge treats it like a simple violation. But with stronger laws, they'll be more likely to

receive tougher penalties. As an ASPCA Advocacy Brigade member, you'll receive emails asking you to write letters encouraging your legislators to pass these laws-and you can send them directly from our website.

**8. Set a good example for others.** If you have pets, be sure to always show them the love and good care that they deserve. But it's more than just food, water, and adequate shelter. If you think your animal is sick, bring him to the veterinarian. Be responsible and have your animals spayed or neutered. And I always give my own pets lots of hugs when I get home!

**9. Talk to your kids about how to treat animals with kindness and respect.** I regularly see children in homes where animal abuse has been reported. If a parent isn't treating the family's pets right, I tell kids that their dog or cat would really appreciate fresh water every day, or if they spent some time playing with them. If the animal has been left outside without shelter, I'll say, 'You have a nice house, and if you get cold, you can put a coat on. But your dog can't do that. Don't you think he'd like a nice warm place to go, too?' I know of families who watch Animal Precinct together, and I think this can help children understand that animals are living creatures who have the ability to feel pain, joy and sadness. You can see these emotions on the faces of the animals on the show.

**10. Support your local shelter or animal rescue organization.** Before I even knew that police for animals existed, I was volunteering at an animal shelter. It's a great way to make a difference. Some of our ASPCA volunteers foster animals who have been abused in their former homes, giving these dogs and cats the chance they deserve to have a good life.

