

Kyli Schmitt

Ms. Dasher

British Literature and Composition

8 December 2014

Animal Cruelty is Sadistic

Animal cruelty is not a problem, it's an epidemic. Right now there are countless acts of inhumanity being perpetrated against innocent and defenseless animals. Contrary to popular belief, there are many types of animal cruelty, such as malnourishment, fur farming, animal fighting, animal experimentation, factory farming (also known as "puppy mills,"), and pet abandonment. Despite the range of action, however, all of these senseless acts have the same consequences. The inhumane care of animals causes such physical and emotional trauma to not only the animals but to future owners of the animals, and although the government has some laws against it, they need to better enforce them and create stricter laws.

"'Humane care' of animals means, but is not limited to, the provision of adequate heat, ventilation, sanitary shelter, and wholesome and adequate food and water, consistent with the normal requirements and feeding habits of the animal's size, species, and breed." These are the humane care requirements for animals made by law in Georgia. Anything that does not meet these requirements, varied by each state, is considered animal cruelty. There are shelters that do not have the materials or funds to meet these requirements for all of their animals, but there are animal owners who choose to underachieve when it comes to taking care of their pets. It affects an enormous amount of dogs and other animals in some ways that are completely obvious and in other ways that the instigators may never realize. This

shows that there are laws put into place in most states, but some might not be strict enough or enforced well enough.

Animal fighting is another form of brutality that causes many problems in animals that are put through cockfighting rings, dog fighting clubs, or anything to that effect. Michael Vick was a quarterback for the Atlanta Falcons before he was convicted of animal abuse. As Jim Gorant wrote in his magazine article about Michael Vick:

This was the home of Bad Newz Kennels, the dogfighting operation that Vick and three of his buddies started a year after Vick became the first pick of the 2001 NFL draft. When local and state authorities busted the operation in April 2007, 51 pit bulls were seized, among them was Jasmine. (Gorant 2)

What this article shows about abuse is that obviously laws and procedures are not adequately monitored enough. After all, Vick and his friends were able to have a dogfighting operation for over six years without getting caught. If the laws pertaining to animal care were as strict as they should be or if they were enforced as well as they should be, this operation, like many others, could have been shut down much earlier. “The Humane Society of the U.S., agreeing with PETA, took the position that Michael Vick's pit bulls, like all dogs saved from fight rings, were beyond rehabilitation and that trying to save them was a misappropriation of time and money” (Gorant 3). This shows how obvious and extreme the effects of animal abuse are. The ways that Vick and his friends treated the 51 pit bulls that were found caused extreme physical and psychological damage. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and The Humane Society wanted to put these dogs down for the safety of any future owners because they were left so aggressive and unfriendly that they could not become pets ever

again. Animal abuse, like dogfighting, is not the only type of cruelty that makes dogs unable to become good pets or pets at all.

The overproduction of dogs in circumstances that are unfit for breeding also causes trauma. Dogs from puppy mills are affected their whole life after they are sold to their owners. Puppy mills are defined as, “facilities that breed puppies in inferior conditions and sell them in commercial markets. The breeding dogs and puppies are not provided adequate veterinary care, food, shelter, and socialization. Female dogs are bred too often and destroyed when they quit producing puppies” (“Pets”). The terrible conditions that they are born into and raised in cause significant pain and health issues for the animals. Also, the female dogs that are bred ceaselessly are put in tremendous amounts of pain and sometimes will continue to give birth even after the puppy mill has been stopped. "The dogs from puppy mills showed significantly elevated levels of fears and phobias, compulsive and repetitive behaviors, and heightened sensitivity to being touched"(Sharon). This means that these dogs do not like to be touched, are scared, and perform repeated behaviors such as jumping up on the wall again and again. Sensitivity to touch does not make for a good family pet which is a lot of times what dogs are used for. Puppy mills and overbreeding cause more damage to the dogs' health than it's worth for adorable dogs. There are “10,000 estimated number of puppy mills in the United States” (Milani). This shows that even though they are illegal in most states, people still find ways to have these operations. These dogs are being sold to people around the United States which is endangering their owners as well as any people the dogs come in contact with.

There are also genetic problems with the breeding of dogs close in the family tree with one another, also called inbreeding. Ostrander says, “As a result of this

population structure, genetic diseases are more common in purebred dogs than in mixed-breed dogs” (Ostrander). Breeding dogs from a small founder population will cause genetic diseases and health problems. This kind of breeding is what happens in puppy mills or in breeding labs. Not only is it unfair for the animals to have a life full of debilitating health problems, but it is also unreasonable for the future owners to be responsible for financing the medical bills. According to the article, “Amos notes that common genetic diseases within specific breeds include heart disease in boxers, bleeding problems in Dobermans, lymphomas in pointers, hip dysplasia in Labrador retrievers, and eye problems in Irish setters” (“Pets”). The genetic diseases become more common when people are breeding within a small gene pool because both parents could have the recessive genes for a genetic disease, but not actually have the disease itself, and they would give it to their children. The amount of breeding done in such a small gene pool to create a puppy mill would increase the risk tremendously for genetic diseases. To help with the spread of diseases and health issues, breeding of dogs needs to be more widespread so that there would be no true pure bred species.

Some of the animal cruelty laws that do exist include requirements for the humane care of animals which was used as an example earlier in the paper. Also willful neglect is considered to be abuse and is illegal. Willful neglect is defined as “the intentional withholding of food and water required by an animal to prevent starvation or dehydration” (Animal Protection Laws of Georgia). This law keeps people from purposefully starving their animals and is one of the best animal protection laws that are in place at this moment. The only thing that needs to change about this law is the degree of enforcement. The enforcement of these laws is not strict enough for example: “A person commits the offense

of cruelty to animals when he or she causes death or unjustifiable physical pain or suffering to any animal by an act, an omission, or willful neglect. Any person convicted of a violation of this subsection shall be guilty of a misdemeanor” (Animal Protection Laws of Georgia). This law explains that any person that causes the death of animal or causes an animal unjust suffering will be charged of a misdemeanor. The value of an animal’s life is worth so little to the government of Georgia that the punishment for the murder of an animal is the exact same as the penalty for simple crimes such as a noise violation or shoplifting. People do not take the animal cruelty laws that are already in place seriously because the reprimands are no more than a citation and a fine.

Georgia does have animal cruelty laws that are in place, but they are not actively enforced. The value of an animal’s life should be the same value as that of a human’s. As the nation continues to grow and inhabits more and more families that have pets, there needs to be laws set and enforced to keep the growing population from causing puppy mills, fish farms, and other mass breeding operations to come about. Not only does there need to be stricter laws for mass breeding, but also dog fighting and other types of animal fighting. Kennels and animal shelters need to have specific requirements for the treatment of their animals and exact codes on what to do in each situation with an animal. The abuse, willful neglect, and fighting of animals needs to be stopped immediately as their lives are valued just as much as a human’s.

Works Cited

- Animal Protection Laws of Georgia. Ga. Code Ann. Animal Legal Defense Fund. Animal Legal Defense Fund. Web. 21 Oct. 2014.
- Gorant, Jim. "What Happened to Michael Vick's Dogs." Sports Illustrated 29 Dec. 2008: n. pag. National Canine Research Council. Web. 20 Oct. 2014.
- Milani, Kathy. "Puppy Mills Research." Humane Society. Humane Society of the United States, 14 May 2014. Web. 20 Oct. 2014.
- Ostrander, Elaine A. "Genetics and the Shape of Dogs: Studying the New Sequence of the Canine Genome Shows How Tiny Genetic Changes Can Create Enormous Variation within a Single Species." American Scientist 95.5 (2007): 406+. Opposing Viewpoints in Context. Web. 14 Oct. 2014.
- "Pets." Animal Rights. Kim Masters Evans. 2011 ed. Detroit: Gale, 2011. Information Plus Reference Series. Opposing Viewpoints in Context. Web. 14 Oct. 2014.
- Sharon L., Peters, and TODAY Special for USA. "Puppy Mills Leave Lasting Emotional Scars, Study Finds." USA Today n.d.: Academic Search Complete. Web. 16 Oct. 2014.