



Animal Abuse in Coercive Control & Domestic Violence



ANIMAL ABUSE

Domestic violence is often hidden behind closed doors, and coercive control is one of its most insidious forms. A less visible but devastating tactic is the use of animals as tools of manipulation. Abusers frequently harm, threaten, or withhold care from pets to maintain power over their partners, trapping victims in dangerous situations.

It is important to recognise the role that animal abuse plays in these abusive dynamics. Understanding this link is vital for educators, professionals, and young people who may encounter such behaviours in their communities.



COERCIVE CONTROL

Coercive control is more than a single incident of abuse, it is a pattern of intimidation, manipulation, and control aimed to restrict a person's freedom. Behaviours of coercive control builds up gradually, making the victim feel trapped and powerless over time.

Behaviours of coercive control can include:

- ✓ Isolation from family & friends
- ✓ Monitoring communications
- ✓ Threats & Intimidation
- ✓ Emotional blackmail
- ✓ Controlling daily decisions

When pets are involved, abusers have another way to control victims and make them feel trapped.





HOW ABUSERS USE ANIMALS TO MANIPULATE VICTIMS

Research has consistently shown that animal abuse is closely linked to domestic violence. Abusers know the strong emotional connection between people and their pets, and they exploit this bond to create fear and compliance.



Tactics used by abusers:

- ✓ **Threats of harm:** Victims may be told that if they leave, the pet will be injured or killed.
- ✓ **Withholding care:** Denying food, medical treatment, or basic needs as a means of punishment.
- ✓ **Creating barriers to escape:** Many victims delay leaving abusive situations because they fear for the safety of their pets.

THE LAW IN IRELAND



In Ireland today, coercive control is recognised under Section 39 of the Domestic Violence Act 2018, while animal abuse is addressed separately under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013, which makes cruelty and neglect illegal.

Cases of animal abuse are not always seen as part of a bigger picture of coercive control or domestic violence, even though they often go hand in hand. When a pet is harmed, neglected, or threatened, it may signal that other forms of abuse are happening behind closed doors. Recognising this connection can help identify victims earlier and provide protection for both people and pets. Animal abuse is often not just an isolated act, but a possible sign that other forms of abuse are occurring.

COERCIVE CONTROL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WORKSHOPS

At LawEd, we believe prevention begins with education. Teaching empathy, respect, and awareness of the law from a young age is vital in shaping safer communities.

Our new Coercive Control & Domestic Violence Workshop equips students with the knowledge and understanding to recognise and challenge abusive behaviours.

STUDENTS WILL LEARN TO:

- ✓ Recognise signs of Coercive Control
- ✓ Understand healthy vs. unhealthy relationships
- ✓ Identify different forms of domestic abuse
- ✓ Recognise legal protections
- ✓ Know where to turn for support

This workshop helps students navigate real-life scenarios and build confidence to speak up, seek support, and recognise red flags early



WORKSHOP TOPICS:

- Consent
- Sexual offences & sexual violence
- Sextortion
- Pornography
- Revenge porn
- Domestic violence
- Animal abuse within domestic abuse
- Where to seek help



CONTACT US:

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