

Out of the Best Books

“This stunning new work—the crown jewel in a career Frank Ascione has devoted to demonstrating the importance of understanding animal abuse in a developmental context . . . reveals what interactions between children and animals tell us about ourselves. Its premise is brilliantly direct: we have a window of opportunity—childhood—within which to redirect the production of sociopaths. The antidote is the development of empathy. And observation and analysis of children’s interactions with animals is the key to that door.” *-Andrew Vachss*

When humans’ relationships with animals become distorted, they turn into examples of malevolence and cruelty. The perpetrators of such inhumane treatment are often children and adolescents, but adults sometimes join their ranks. How common are these incidents? What motivates human maltreatment of animals? Are there cultural, societal, neighborhood, and family contexts that contribute to cruelty to animals? How early in a child’s life does cruelty to animals emerge and are these incidents always a sign of future interpersonal violence? Are there ways of preventing such cruelty? Can we intervene effectively with children who already have a history of abuse and violence?

Children and Animals: Exploring the Roots of Kindness and Cruelty presents the current scientific and professional wisdom about the relation between the maltreatment of animals and interpersonal vio-

lence directed toward other human beings. However, the author, Frank R. Ascione, a noted expert in these areas, writes in a style and presents the findings in language that will be understandable to parents, teachers, counselors, clergy, animal welfare professionals, foster parents, mental health professionals, youth workers, law enforcement professionals, and anyone else whose work or interest crosses into the lives of children and adolescents. Although animal abuse has been an acknowledged problem for centuries, it is only within the past few decades that scientific research has provided evidence that the maltreatment of animals often overlaps with violence toward people. The ways that our young people are affected by bullying or assaults in a schoolyard, child abuse in homes, violence between adult intimate partners, community violence in our streets and neighborhoods, and even the context of war are now the subject of concerted re-

search efforts. And very often, the association of these forms of violence with cruelty to animals has been found. This book presents the considerable research that now exists on this topic—most of it published in scientific journals and periodicals—to the adults whose lives touch those of children and adolescents.

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About the author

Frank Ascione is a professor of psychology and adjunct professor of family, consumer and human development in the College of Education and Human Services. In 2001 Frank received the Distinguished Scholar Award from the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction and the International Society for Anthrozoology. He was also selected as Utah State’s College of Education and Human Services Scholar/Researcher of the Year in 2002. Ascione serves on the Child and Animal Abuse Prevention Advisory Council of the Latham Foundation.

