

OBSTACLES

ÿ **Abuse of animals** - Pets are beaten or tortured by abusive partners in order to frighten and control them into staying in violent relationships.

ÿ **Fear of Reprisal**-Some women find it easier to live with a violent partner and knowing where he is and what he is up to than not living with him and always wondering what he will do to them next.

ÿ **Professional Responses**– Inappropriate responses by professional workers to women who seek out help also contribute to the reasons why women stay in violent relationships or return to them.

ÿ **Keeping the family together**– women are socialised to feel responsible for the happiness and wellbeing of their families and relationship

ÿ **Children** - many women have said they stayed because they believed the children needed their father no matter what.

ÿ **Low Self-Esteem** - Women in violent relationships frequently have low self-esteem and often find it hard to believe that they are able to leave and cope.

ÿ **Love** Generally women do not want the relationship to end, but they do want the violence to stop.

ÿ **Lack of Financial Resources**– Many women in violent relationships are denied access to financial resources limiting the women's opportunities to leave.

If you are experiencing violence in your relationship, but have not left due to fear that your pets will be harmed by your partner then :-

**Help is available. Call Dvconnect
1800 811 811**

even if your pet is an unusual pet, the RSPCA may be able to care for them.

For More information about the Pets in Crisis Program Visit:

http://www.rspcaqld.org.au/pets_in_crisis



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Against Violence 36

Pets in Crisis Domestic Violence Program



RSPCA

For all creatures great and small.

What is the Pets In Crisis Program?

The Pets in Crisis program is an innovative Partnership between dvconnect and RSPCA Queensland.

No-one should feel like they can't leave a Violent home, which is why RSPCA and dvconnect have joined forces to create a "Pets in Crisis Domestic Violence Program". A major sponsor of this program is CUA—Credit Union Australia.

Dvconnect counsellors and workers in the wider domestic violence sector regularly speak to women whose pets are beaten or tortured by abusive partners in order to frighten and control them into staying in violent relationships.

For others, especially the children, moving into a refuge without their special companion at this time deepens the loss and makes the trauma they are facing in their family life that much more intense.

Until now, as refuges are neither equipped nor approved to house animals, women have been faced with the difficult decision of abandoning their pets to get refuge, or paying prohibitive fees to board pets at a time when they may have nothing but the clothes on their back.



Breaking the Cycle

Women who need to stay in domestic violence refuges but are unable to find alternative care for their pets can contact dvconnect womensline on 1800 811 811 and counselors will liaise with the RSPCA to provide temporary care of companion animals with trained volunteer foster carers.

Prior to fostering, the RSPCA will examine the animal and provide immediate care and assessment for animals needing vaccines and basic assistance.

The animals will be cared for 28 days, or until the woman is able to leave the refuge and re-establish herself in the community.

If young children or the family are missing their special companion arrangements may be able to be made so that they can have a visit with their pet, they might want to take their pet for a walk.

Since its inception in 2005, Pets in Crisis has assisted an average of one family per week. Di Mangan, Managing Director of dvconnect, has indicated that up to 50% of these women would have remained in a violent situation rather than leave their pet behind, exposed to probable harm.



Why Do Women Stay?

It is often hard for anyone who isn't in a domestic violence situation to understand why anybody would stay in a relationship where they are abused. The fact that many women choose to stay or return to a violent relationship leads many people to think that women must be stupid, however; women face many restraints in leaving a violent partner.

Unfortunately, society does not often pose the questions: 'why doesn't he stop being violent?' and 'why doesn't he leave?'

Today it is still up to women to break free from violence and there are many obstacles in their way.

