



UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Animals Forward: Risk, Resilience, and Remediation in Animal Maltreatment

Professor Philip Tedeschi, MSSW

Katia Nikitina, MSW





Consilience of Knowledge

- Interdisciplinary efforts have been undertaken to improve response to animal maltreatment at the University of Denver
- Departmental Focus:
 - **Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW):** Professional Development Coursework, Field Placements, Research
 - **Graduate School of Professional Psychology (GSPP):** Advocacy, Community Engagement, Clinics
 - **Animal Law Program | Sturm College of Law:** Applied Research
- Primary Partnerships: Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF), Kirkpatrick Foundation



Getting the Framework Right

- Whenever possible, Prevention Science should be prioritized and supported by Evidence-Informed Interventions
- Intervention strategies must be individualized to match the unique circumstances, underlying causes, and needs involved in each case
- A One Health approach should be used to investigate the contextual, sociological, and environmental issues that an individual may be experiencing in addition to possible mental health concerns
- Strengths-based, culturally responsive approaches are most effective at building resilience and reducing overall risk





Individualized Assessment & Differential Response: Connection to Restorative Justice

- Individualized Assessment can be used to identify cases in which Restorative Justice is an effective intervention strategy
- Individualized Assessment can also suggest intervention strategies that may be effective to use alongside Restorative Justice





Defining an Animals Forward Approach



An "Animals Forward" approach centers the importance of the cognitive, emotional, and physical lived experiences of animals with emphasis on fostering positive outcomes.

Through this approach, we confront the false dilemma that one must choose animals or people as in a zero-sum scenario.



Animals Forward: Risk, Resilience, and Remediation in Animal Maltreatment

Animals Forward: Foundations

- *Orientation*
- *Animal Cruelty in the Context of Human-Animal Interactions*
- *Animal Cruelty Laws*
- *Frameworks for Responding to Animal Cruelty*
- *Best Practice Model: Using an Evidence-Informed Approach*
- *Critical Issues in Responding to Animal Cruelty*

Animals Forward: Effective Responses through Individualized Assessment

- *Systems*
- *Prevention Science Orientation*
- *Individualized Assessments: How and Why?*
- *Causative Factors, Typologies, and Diagnostic Categories*
- *Risk Assessment*
- *Intended Outcomes*
- *Humane Communities*

Animals Forward: Applied Knowledge and Practice

- *Professional Ethics*
- *Developing and Implementing Accurate Intervention Plans*
- *Case Management/Consultation*
- *Integration: Professional Resource Guide and Feedback*





Animal Cruelty Typologies, Diagnostic Categories, and other Underlying Causes

- Cases may be classified using **typologies**, such as animal collecting, sex offense, or neglect
- Cases can be classified into three major **diagnostic categories**: Psychogenic, traumagenic, and criminogenic
- It is also important to understand other **underlying causes** such as lack of education, developmental considerations, and socio-economic contributors
- It is critical to identify individual and community **risk and resiliency factors**





Forensic Animal Maltreatment Evaluation (FAME)

- Per the Colorado Revised Statute: Cruelty to Animals (§ 18-9-202 C.R.S.), (2)(a)(III): "The court shall order an evaluation to be conducted prior to sentencing to assist the court in determining an appropriate sentence"
- Primary purposes of an animal abuse-specific evaluation:
 - Identify factors relevant to the emergence of animal cruelty behavior
 - Estimate likelihood for continued abuse and community endangerment
 - Provide appropriate recommendations for response
- Sensitive, comprehensive, and standardized methods of assessment must be used





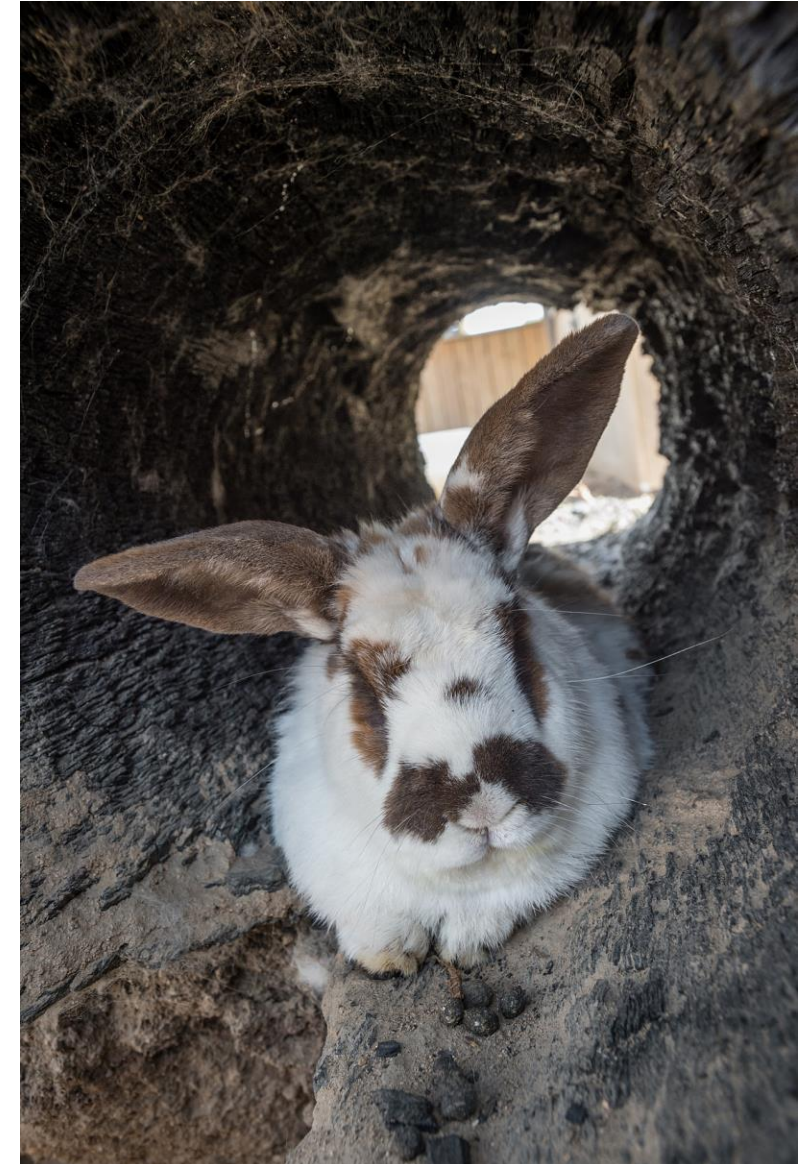
In Colorado, a FAME includes...

- Case file review
- Client interview/observation
- Clinical mental status exam
- Collateral contact family members, and other relevant persons
- Collateral review of criminal history
- Review of Academic Functioning
- Neurobehavioral Cognitive Status Exam
- Intelligence Testing
- Diagnostic Symptom Assessment
- Trauma Assessment
- Psychological Testing
- Clinical Assessment of Family
- Animal Abuse Typology Consideration
- **Animal Abuse Risk Assessment Tool**
- Review of veterinary and forensic veterinary reports



Animal Abuse Risk Assessment Tool (AARAT)

- The original version of the AARAT was created in consultation with Dr. Lockwood, inspired by his Dangerousness Factors
- The AARAT has undergone two phases of psychometric development since its inception
- The current version of the AARAT includes 73 items divided into 9 subscales. This expanded version emphasizes dynamic and protective factors
- Accuracy within risk assessment can inform differential response





Denver FIRST (Forensic Institute for Research, Service, and Training)

- Operate out of the Graduate School of Professional Psychology (GSPP)
- Support adults and juveniles involved with the criminal justice system
- Conduct animal maltreatment evaluations
- Train the next generation of specialized evaluators and treatment providers for responding to Animal Abuse
- DenverFIRST@du.edu





Summary of Current Research

Goal: Research to inform Practice, and Practice to inform Research

- Colorado Judicial Data Analysis on Animal Cruelty Cases
- Animal Protection Officers: Professional Stressors, Mental Health Service Access, and Training Needs
- Human Services Professionals Experience with Animal Maltreatment
- Continued research on the efficacy of the Forensic Animal Maltreatment Evaluation (FAME) and the Animal Abuse Risk Assessment Tool (AARAT)





Sociocultural Conundrums and Interspecies Justice

- Certain animals are valued over others in our culture
- We live in a society in where large-scale, systemic forms of abuse towards animals are legal
- Systemic forms of animal cruelty intersect with systemic forms of oppression towards humans





Improving outcomes through building Humane Communities

- Improve outcomes for animals and people, and prevent future cruelty
- A Humane Community is defined by the presence of leaders, institutions, and policies working collaboratively across social and political systems to create and implement sustainable human, animal, and environmental welfare
- Addressing social injustices is a prerequisite for building a Humane Community

The One Health Triad





UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Questions for Reflection

- How does prevention and intervention science inform opportunities for innovation in responding to animal maltreatment?
- How can we equip decision-makers with evidence-supported strategies for responding to animal cruelty cases?
- How might you incorporate individualized assessment and differential response into your restorative justice practice?





UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



Thank you!

- Presentation images were sourced from We Animals Media, an organization dedicating to "telling the stories of animals in the human environment" through photojournalism
- Special thanks to Courtney Brown, MSW



UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Contact us!

*Do the best you can until you know better...
Then do better.*

- Maya Angelou

Philip.Tedeschi@du.edu

Katia.Nikitina@du.edu

