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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 violence 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

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“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 interaction with animals is the key to that door.”—Andrew Vachss

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