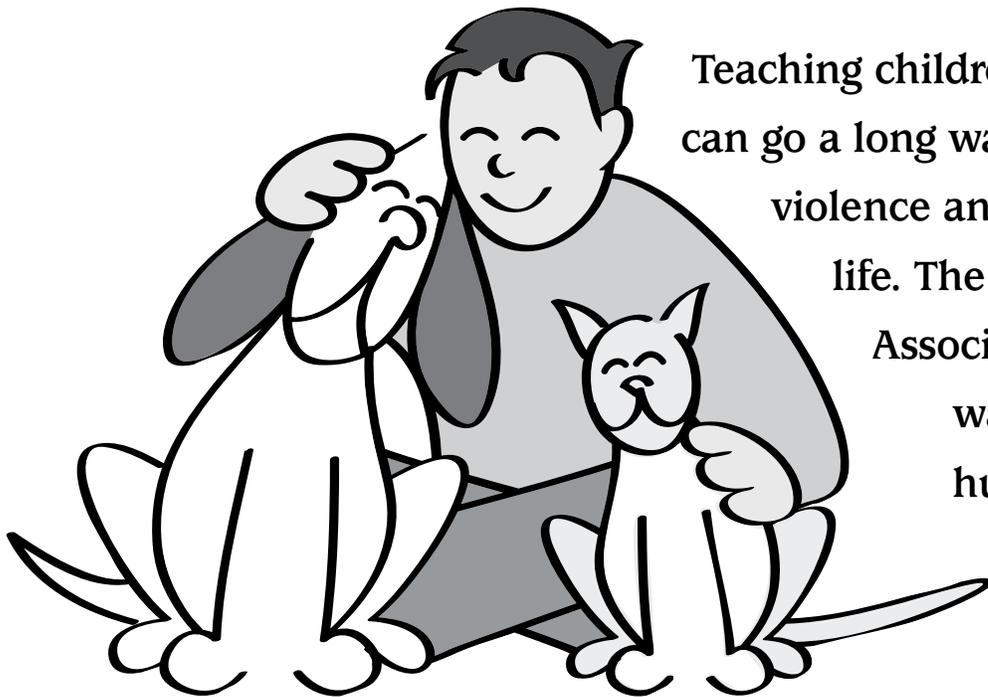


Teaching Children to be Humane



Teaching children to be kind to animals can go a long way towards eliminating violence and aggression later in life. The American Humane Association suggests several ways to communicate humane attitudes to your children.

Be a good role model. Your actions towards animals will help shape your child's attitudes. When you scratch the neighbor's cat under the chin, or gently pet a dog, your children will watch and likely mimic the behavior.

Be clear about your expectations. Children and animals must be taught how to interact or they can hurt each other. You must explain to your child why it's not nice pull on the dog's ears or drag the cat by the tail. Give your children clear guidance on how to treat animals.

Be consistent. Children thrive on consistency and routine. If you tell them not to pull on the dog's tail one day, but don't say anything when they do it the next day, your children will become confused about which behavior is acceptable.

Be reasonable. A child's early, normal interactions with animals may result in unintentional harm. Mistakes made during early development do not mean that a child will grow up to be cruel.

Be realistic. Children do not learn responsibility from pets, so don't get a pet just to help make your child responsible. Children learn responsibility and compassion from parents who demonstrate how to care and relate to others. A child's special relationship with a pet, though, can teach him or her many other things: nonverbal ways to communicate, the pleasure of giving and receiving unconditional love, and why it's important to respect other living creatures.



Being humane at every age and stage

Preschool age children can be taught that animals can be just like children:

- They can get hurt and feel pain.
- They need food, water, and shelter, as well as vaccinations and visits to the doctor to stay healthy.
- Some pets, like dogs and cats, like to play but don't always want to.
- Pets need gentle care and handling and lots of affection. *They aren't toys.*

(like breaking off tree limbs and yanking off leaves), or act loud and obnoxious.

- People and their pets share a special relationship, loving and caring for each other no matter what.

Middle and high school age children should be taught:

- Why we need laws to protect animals from cruelty, even from their owners.
- The difference between fair treatment versus abuse or neglect.

- How society "uses" animals and the difference between humane and inhumane treatment of animals.
- Complex issues, such as euthanasia of unwanted pets, endangered species, use of animals in scientific experimentation.
- The concept of charity, such as donating time or part of the child's allowance to a good cause.

Elementary school age children should be taught:

- Each animal has a special purpose in the web of life, even scary looking animals.
- Inappropriate and aggressive actions towards animals can cause them fear, pain and suffering.
- Nature is the wild animals' home and you are the guests there. Just like any home, guests should not leave garbage behind, break things

