

# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH FOR ANIMALS

**P**EOPLE AROUND THE COUNTRY SHOW THEY CARE ABOUT THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS,

by establishing Neighborhood Crime Watch programs. But what about the animals? Pets and wildlife need care and protection, too, and a Neighborhood Watch for Animals can make a community safer for everyone who lives there. If your neighborhood already has a Watch program, you can share these ideas with other participants. Or, you can start a Neighborhood Watch for Animals program of your own. Here are some suggestions to help protect the animal in your community:

## Know Your Neighborhood's Pets

In a perfect world no pets would be out on their own, roaming the neighborhood. But unfortunately, some dogs and cats escape or are allowed to roam unsupervised. Some have regular routes and know their way home. Others get lost and need help to get back to their families. The more you know about the animals who live in your neighborhood, the more you'll be able to help. It can be as simple as paying attention to the dogs and cats who live around you. That way, when you see an animal out alone, you'll be more likely to know how to contact his or her owner, or how to get him the animal home.

Consider creating a neighborhood roster of pets and pet owners that you and others can use in emergencies, and include pets' names, basic descriptions or photographs, and contact information. Encourage all pet owners to keep collars and identification tags on their pets. And keep the phone number for your local animal shelter or animal control department agency handy in case you see a pet you don't know, or an animal who needs assistance. Or reach out to the organization online or through Facebook.

## Pay Attention to Abuse, Neglect, and Abandonment

A dog left chained or tethered outside, without food, water, or shelter. A sick or injured animal whose condition goes untreated. A house teeming with cats. An animal showing obvious signs of abuse. A neighborhood child who throws rocks at squirrels. Pets left behind in homes or apartments, or on the street, when their owners move. All are cases of neglect and abuse that put animals in danger and may violate the law. You can help first by being observant. Is a situation getting worse? Do you hear barking, whimpering, meowing, or scratching from inside a home after the resident has moved? Do you see an act of overt cruelty? Don't turn your back. But don't put yourself at risk through direct confrontation. Call the police or your local animal shelter immediately. Also be alert to increasing reports of animal abuse—there could be a serial abuser in your area.

## Watch for Pets in Parked Cars

A pet left in a parked car can be in danger, especially in warm weather. On a warm day, the temperature in a parked car can reach more than 100 degrees in a matter of minutes, even with the windows partially open. A pet can easily suffer heatstroke or suffocate and die. If you see a pet in a car who appears to be showing any signs of heat stress, call police or the animal shelter right away. Watch for pets left in cars in cold weather, as well.

## Stranger Danger

If pets start disappearing in your neighborhood or, if you see an increasing number of "lost pet" signs, advise your neighbors to watch for signs indications that a pet thief is at work. Urge pet owners to keep their animals safely confined or appropriately supervised. Be sure to alert a trusted adult if you have serious suspicions.

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### Be on the Lookout for Illegal Animal Fighting

Dogfighting is a brutal and illegal criminal activity. You might suspect that animal fighting activities are going on if you see bully breed dogs with visible injuries or scars and/or staked out on heavy chains. If you suspect that animal fighting is occurring in your neighborhood, alert your local law enforcement agency and also urge them to contact The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) for practical tools, advice, and assistance. The HSUS offers a reward of up to \$2,500 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons who organize, participate in, promote, or officiate at cockfights or dogfights. For more information, or a free brochure, visit [www.AnimalFighting.org](http://www.AnimalFighting.org).

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### Be Aware of Domestic Violence Situations

In homes where there is violence, pets may be are often abused as well. Often, domestic violence victims stay in their homes to protect their pets. If you know of a domestic situation in which someone is in danger, contact the police or your local domestic violence hotline. If you know there are pets in the home, tell the police or also contact your local animal shelter. Make the call, even if you make it anonymously.

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### Help the Elderly

Companion animals can play a very important roles in the lives of an elderly people. But they can also be a hardship for those who love them but have trouble providing essential pet care. Offer to assist by walking their dogs, cleaning the litter boxes, feeding their pets, or taking their pets to their veterinarian. If you notice that an elderly neighbor's pet is suddenly left outside, or appears to be sick, take note. It can be a sign that your neighbor is unable to care for the animal, or even an indication that the older person is being abused by a caretaker. Your local animal shelter or social services department should be advised.

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### Designate a Dog-Friendly Area

A dog park, or an area where dog owners and their pets can gather, can help foster a sense of community, help neighbors get to know one another, and even help prevent owners from letting their pets run at large. Talk to your neighbors, animal care and control agency, and city or county administrators to see if fencing in an area just for dogs and their people is a possibility in your neighborhood.

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### Look Out for Your Wild Neighbors

Birds, squirrels, and other neighborhood wildlife can be victims of cruelty and abuse as well as pets. If children or adults torment or injure any animals, it should be reported. Remember that cruelty to animals is connected to violence toward humans, and all acts of animal abuse should be taken seriously.

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### Start Early

Encourage local schools to teach humane education. You can also provide the award-winning publication for elementary school children, *Kids In Nature's Defense News*™ (*KIND News*), through an our Adopt-a-Classroom program. For more information, go to [www.nahee.org](http://www.nahee.org).

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### Work Together

If you're part of a Neighborhood Watch for Animals, or any community antiviolence program, make sure you're in communication with your local animal shelter and other groups who work to prevent violence. There is strength in numbers, and in recognizing that violence is violence, regardless of the victim. If you produce materials about protecting pets, it's a good idea to also translate also produce them into Spanish or any other language prevalently in prevalent used in your community.

For more information on pet issues such as chained dogs, pets in parked cars, as well as and the connection between animal abuse and human violence, go to [www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org) or contact HSUS at 202-452-1100.