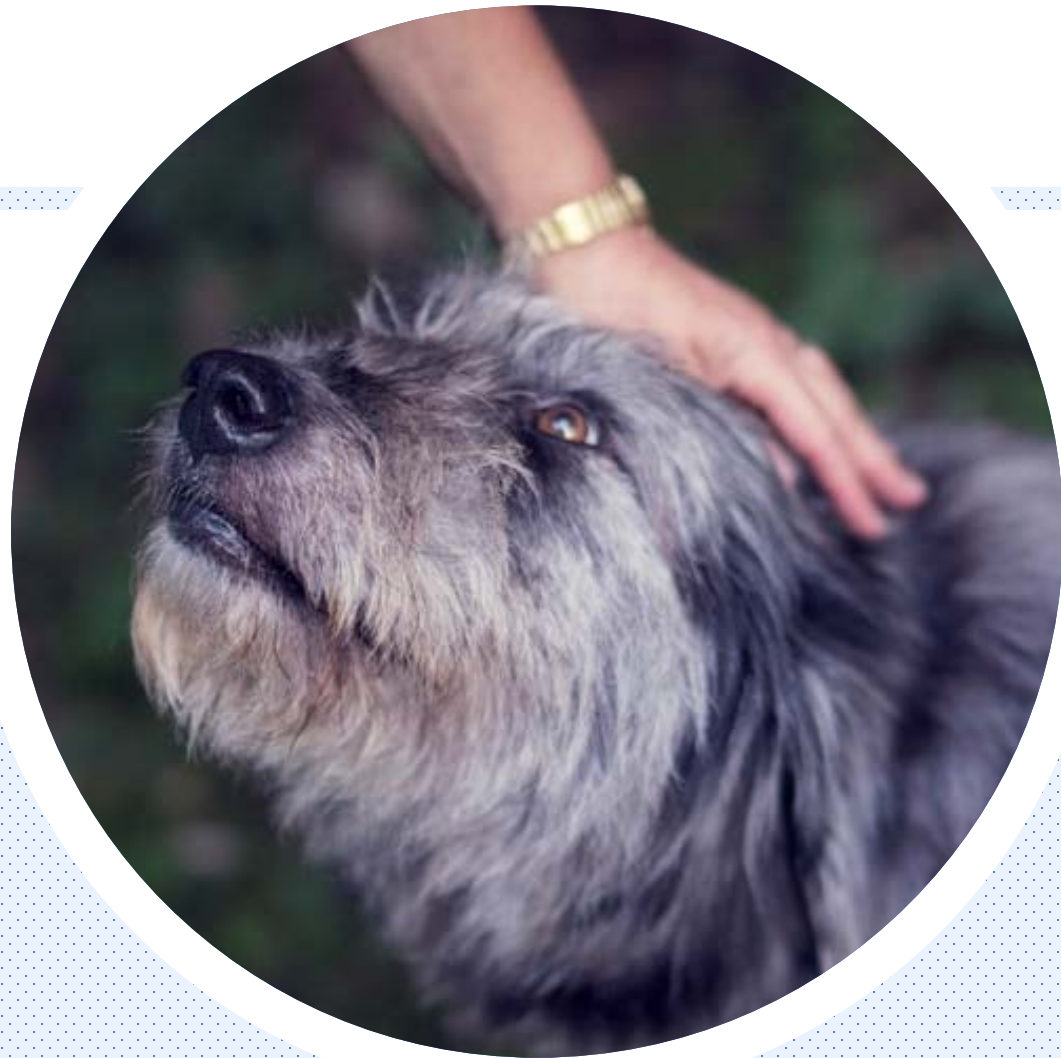




Veterinary Social Work: A Field at the Intersection of Human-Animal Safety

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▶ About Me



Veterinary Emergency Clinic and Referral Centre (VEC)

- Located downtown Toronto and is a 24/7 emergency and referral clinic
- Offers a variety of speciality services including: Internal Medicine, Oncology, Surgery, Neurology/Neurosurgery, Dentistry, Dermatology/Allergy, Ophthalmology, Cardiology, and Anesthesia
- Approx. 150 employees consisting of veterinary technicians, veterinarians, interns, animal care attendants, maintenance and the client services team



Veterinary Social Work (VSW)

- An emerging field that places the human-animal bond at the centre of its teachings.
- The University of Tennessee Knoxville was largely responsible for professionalizing it, and developed the first professional program in the USA.
- As with medical staff in a human hospital, veterinary staff experience excessive workloads, long workhours, complex illnesses, and demanding patients



VSW Scope of Practice

The University of Tennessee Knoxville recognizes social work practitioners in the veterinary setting as having specialty knowledge based within the four following areas:

1. Animal Assisted Interventions
2. Compassion Fatigue & Conflict Management
3. Animal-Related Grief and Bereavement
4. The Link Between Human & Animal violence



THE LINK BETWEEN HUMAN & ANIMAL VIOLENCE



Over 35 years of research has shown there is a link between human and animal violence. Animal cruelty is often an indicator of human violence, as the family pet can be used as a tool of manipulation and intimidation toward the perpetrator's victims.



Veterinarians and the LINK

- Veterinarians are on the front-line in reporting animal abuse, which means they also have an important role in identifying and intervening in cases of interpersonal violence (IPV).
- Veterinarians have been identified as one of the three professions most likely to encounter abused woman (Paterson, 2015).

“The public is more likely to report suspected animal abuse to their veterinarian than to the humane society or law enforcement agency.” (Enns, 2006)

Veterinarians & the Link: Challenges

Fear

Lack of awareness

Personal experience

Discomfort with issue

Frustration

Time able to spend

Misconceptions

Feeling helpless



Social Work

- A profession based in effective communication
- Healthcare professionals
- Holistic in practice



Family Systems



- ❖ A recent survey of pet owners reported that 80% of respondents feel their companion animals are a part of their family, and another 13% liken them to a child (American Pet Products Association, 2017-2018).
- ❖ Increasingly, we see that owners take their pet's health and wellness very seriously.



Collaboration

- ❖ Vet professionals have witnessed the lengths that people will go, to take care of their pets.
- ❖ VSW supports the human component in the veterinary setting
- ❖ Focus on building connections



VSW & The Link

Clients

- Emotional support throughout the treatment process
- Support in decision making/QOL discussions
- Facilitating communication between client and vet professionals
- Pet loss counselling and support
- Connecting clients with community resources

Staff

- Emotional support for both work and personal issues
- Consulting on client cases
- Providing/connecting to resources
- Mental health/wellness education and awareness



VSW & Link Cont.

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