Animal Victims and Restorative Justice

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Disclaimers

There may be some mildly graphic images and/or content

I am not a Restorative Justice Practitioner

Scope

Overview of Restorative Justice
Roadmap

• Define restorative justice
• Discuss the ideas and origins behind restorative justice
• Why intervening in crimes against animals is so important
• What restorative justice could look like in animal crimes
• The potential impact of restorative justice on animal victims
What is Restorative Justice?

- Different definitions, especially based on the context it’s used (ex: how it’s defined/used in a school setting may be different than how it’s defined/used in the criminal justice system)
- Within the same context, definitions may also differ (I know, very confusing!)
- *Restorative justice is a process where offenders take responsibility for their actions, understand the harm they have caused to the victim, repair the damage caused, and—as much as possible—restore the well-being of the victim. This is all done while centering the victim’s experiences and pain.*
Restorative justice isn’t a new concept. It’s been around for many years!

In many cultures, it continues to be the dominant form of conflict resolution

Typically, we see it used in the juvenile court system
Ideas Behind Restorative Justice

- Accountability
- Providing opportunities for dialogue
- Encouraging collaboration
- Addressing harm
- Reducing recidivism
Some Goals of Restorative Justice

- Accountability
- Understanding the harm caused
- Rehabilitation
- Reducing recidivism
Restorative Justice Models

What does it look like?

- Three models are used most frequently (again, there may be other models)
  - Victim-Offender Dialogues
  - Family Group Conferences
  - Talking Circles
- Some restorative justice programs pull different parts from these models
- Whichever model is used, all develop a plan that focuses on ways to repair harm, increase rehabilitation, and prevent recidivism
- Typically, the victim has final say in the plan
Why Intervening in Animal Maltreatment is Important

• Often, underlying issues need to be addressed
• Likely not the only deviant behavior occurring
• Crimes against animals are serious
• Animals deserve to be recognized as victims
DON'T FORGET THE VICTIMS
Important to note:

- Restorative justice may not be appropriate in every case or for every offender
- No two cases are the same
Important to note:

- Restorative justice may not translate perfectly – it won’t be without its challenges

- It’s imperative that the animal victim not be re-victimized
Case Example

What could restorative justice look like in animal crimes?

Not based on an actual case
Potential Impacts for Animals

• Animals = victims
• Their suffering and pain are recognized
Additional Resources

• *Animals as Crime Victims: Development of a New Legal Status*

• *Psychology and Sentencing: Mental Health Evaluations for Animal Cruelty Offenders* (Animal Legal Defense Fund Webinar)

• *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* by Howard Zehr

• *Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times* by Howard Zehr
Thank you!

For more information, please contact info@aldf.org