

Pets 'bloodied' and abused as calls increase for more DV crisis centres to accept pets

A vet has revealed he's seen pets "bloodied" in a concerning holiday trend, with calls mounting for urgent help.



Southern Cross Vet founder and owner Dr Sam said he'd seen pets 'bloodied' by domestic violence offenders.

WARNING: Distressing content.

Pets are being left bloodied and abused as calls mount for more hotels and domestic violence crisis centres to accommodate pets.

New research has found rates of domestic violence related assault, and non-DV related assault, spike significantly over the holiday period in NSW.

New Year's Day appeared to have the worst increase, with an average of 157 incidents recorded, 118 per cent higher than usual, according to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

Christmas Day and Boxing Day also recorded significant spikes.

Southern Cross Vet founder and owner Dr Sam Sorauer called for more to be done to allow women to leave DV situations with their pets.

He is calling for more hotels and crisis centres to accommodate the animals.

Dr Sorauer said he'd seen the "extreme lengths" partners go in an attempt to maintain control over victim-survivors.

"I've seen dogs and cats that have been beaten to the point of being bloodied on their nose and eyes," Dr Sorauer said.

"The perpetrator will send pictures to the ex-partner to lure them to go look after their pet because they've just lost power since the persons left.

“If they do take the leap of faith to leave the violent relationship, (sometimes) they have to leave their pets behind to save themselves.”

He also said in some cases perpetrators “won’t feed the animal, won’t give them water, won’t brush them and they come to us in an anorexic state”.



Pets can be a barrier for women leaving domestic violence situations. Picture: Supplied.



Many DV shelters and crisis accommodation centres can't cater to pets. Picture: Supplied.

Need to talk to someone?

Don't go it alone. Please reach out for help.

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or [lifeline.org.au](https://www.lifeline.org.au)

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 or [beyondblue.org.au](https://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or [kidshelpline.com.au](https://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

Headspace: 1800 650 890 or [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)

13YARN: Speak to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crisis supporter on 13 92 76 or visit [13yarn.org.au](https://www.13yarn.org.au)

Are you anxious? Take the [Beyond Blue quiz](#) to see how you're tracking and whether you could benefit from support

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WOMEN LEAVING VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS “MOST IMPORTANT THING”

Southern Cross Vet provides crisis accommodation for the pets of women leaving DV situations across four clinics in NSW and Queensland — including one in Surry Hills — as well as unlimited care for the pets such as vaccinations and anxiety medication.

The initiative is funded through Project HoPe, a program founded by Dr Sorauer in 2013 initially to support the pets of homeless people, however it has since expanded to victim-survivors of DV.

“A lot of these dogs and cats in DV situations have anxiety ... Symptoms of panic disorder and general anxiety because of all the violence around them,” Dr Sorauer said.

He said pets are often scared of loud noises such as shouting after being exposed to DV situations, and he often starts them on anti-anxiety medication when they present to the clinic.

“The biggest thing is just wanting these people to know there is a safe place conveniently located in Sydney where they can take their animals,” he said.

“The most important thing is that that woman gets out of that violent relationship, we’ll take care of the rest.”



Dr Sam emphasised there is no time limit on boarding pets. Picture Supplied.

He also noted people are able to come visit their pets while they board with the clinic.

“We encourage them to come play, feed them, walk them — some people just use us as a place for the dog to sleep at night,” he said.

Dr Sorauer said demand for boarding pets typically increased over holiday periods.

“This time of year is 50/50 — it’s joyous for half the population and sad for the other half,” he said.

“It’s a time of change and flux for these people, so having stability in a companion animal is so important.

He said he hopes to see a lot of animals brought in over the holiday period because it would mean they are “potentially saving the lives of women in DV situations”.

He assured people the entire process is confidential.

“The animal comes in, has a consult with the vet – either with victim-survivor present or not – for a physical exam ...(make sure) routine care is up to date, assess them for any treatments they might need urgently, then really prepare one of the suites for one of them to stay for as long as that person needs,” Dr Sorauer said.

He emphasised there’s “absolutely no time limit” on boarding pets.

“We know how hard it is, even our clients telling us how hard it is to find any rentals at the moment, especially if they’ve got a pet, but we worry if we put a time limit on it then the victim-survivor might ... go back to that relationship,” Dr Sorauer said.

“But there’s no time limit for them to be with us.”



Southern Cross vet nurse Cindy Nguyen caring for a dog while her owner finds accommodation for them both. Picture: Supplied.