

Betrayal of Trust

Do you know what happens in your vet's back room?

When Jennifer Williams* took Jake, her golden retriever, to her local veterinarian for a routine exam, she never dreamed he would be in danger. Jennifer trusted her vet; he had always been friendly, and he seemed kind. But Jennifer had no idea that behind closed doors, the man charged with keeping animals healthy frequently hurt them instead. Jennifer could not know that Jake would be kicked, stepped on, and choked until he passed out.

"When I discuss moral issues with veterinarians—like ear-cropping or euthanizing a healthy animal for owner convenience—I am often told that these are not ethical issues, they are economic issues."

—Bernard E. Rollin, Ph.D.

A PETA investigator working in a small-animal practice witnessed Jake's terrifying experience. And Jake was not

the only animal to suffer at the hands of the seemingly kindly man so many people trusted. Our investigator documented other violent outbursts. On one occasion, she saw the veterinarian punch and scream at an ailing dog even as he was putting her to sleep, filling the last moments of her life with fear. He once became frustrated while examining a wriggly puppy and struck the young animal on the head with a pair of heavy scissors. When some dogs cowered in fear, the vet punched them in the face. Once, he lifted a small, terrified dog off her feet and shook her repeatedly by the neck.

But this veterinarian's worst wrath was reserved for cats. Said one vet assistant, "He especially hates cats. It's like he enjoys demonstrating his power over them, teaching them a lesson by beating them." Our investigator even saw him perform surgery on cats who were not fully anesthetized—they could feel the cut of the scalpel. Some animals screamed in pain and tried to pull away from the ropes that held them to the

operating table. The smallest "offense"—a cat pulling away from his grasp or crying in pain, could be enough to anger the vet, and he was frequently seen punching sick cats and choking them. During one exam, he was seen shaking and hitting a cat violently, yelling, "He's a stupid cat ... I just want to kill him!"

None of this vet's clients suspected the cruelty that was occurring in the back room even though some of their animal companions urinated on the floor when



they saw the veterinarian. If not for our investigator, he would still be reassuring clients in the waiting room—and abusing their companions in the back. Fortunately, PETA's report led to the prosecution of this veterinarian on cruelty charges, but the case shattered our investigator's trust in the veterinary profession, particularly because the vet seemed like such a nice, friendly man to his clients.

Many U.S. veterinarians still perform painful, unnecessary procedures, such as ear-cropping. Some veterinarians oppose low-cost spay/neuter clinics, fearing loss of profits. And the American Veterinary Medical Association is silent on important issues, such as pound seizure, the sale of animals from shelters to laboratories.

How can you feel confident that your dog or cat is being well treated behind the scenes? You must know your vet, know your animal companion, and know your rights.



**Not her real name. Although this story is true, the names have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.*

A message from Ingrid E. Newkirk

Tal Romera/PETA



My parents had no idea what went on in that “nice” place.

Dear Friends,

I went to an expensive boarding school high up in the Himalayan Mountains. We were given 4 inches of cold water to bathe in twice a week, there were worms in our potatoes, and we were hit if we misbehaved. My parents had no idea what went on in that “nice” place.

What’s that got to do with the cats who “work” in our office? I’ll tell you: Jack is on the left. He’s been with us for about nine years, ever since he was removed from a hoarder’s trailer, where he was found

crammed into a carrier with an old cat, Roxanne. Roxie is still with us, too, and every morning Jack and his pal Eddie, here, go to Roxie to have their heads washed.

Some weeks ago, Jack must have been practicing his leap from the chair to my desk because I found him limping. So, off we went to the emergency room. As I sat in the waiting room, a woman was told to hand her cat to a technician to “take in the back.” I said, “Don’t you go with him?” “They never let me,” she said. Minutes later, the cat screamed. We exchanged glances. She ran to the examining room door and knocked. They wouldn’t let her in!

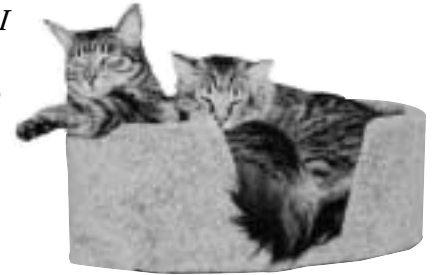
Next up was a man with a frightened Great Dane. He, too, tried to go in. “We don’t allow that,” said the vet tech. In a minute, we heard someone yell, “Sit!” very sternly.

Then my name was called. “We’ll just take him back and examine him,” said the vet. “I always stay with Jack,” I said. “Don’t you trust us?” asked the vet. After five minutes of unsuccessful negotiating, Jack and I left.

Do I trust them? Having watched undercover video footage of “nice,” smiling vets smacking the hell out of animals for “acting up” and having seen what “nice” nuns did to children whose parents weren’t around, I wouldn’t trust the Queen Mother with my cat!

Animals depend on us to relinquish them as reluctantly as we’d relinquish a sack full of gold. They’re worth it.

*Ingrid E. Newkirk
President*



An 8-point plan to protect your animal companion

When choosing a veterinarian, be brave—your animal is depending on it.

Veterinarian Theodore Deppner, with the Washington Humane Society, offers this advice:

- 1** Ask to see a copy of the vet’s license. This should be posted in the public area of the clinic.
- 2** Ask for a tour of the clinic; if you are refused, take your animal elsewhere. The clinic should be clean and orderly. Animals should be comfortably housed in clean cages or kennels.
- 3** Observe your animal. Is your companion handsy around the vet, as though expecting a blow? Does he or she cower or urinate when the vet enters the room?
- 4** Observe the veterinarian. Is he or she nervous or irritable? Does he or she go into the back room for even simple procedures? Are the technicians rough when handling your animal?

5 ALWAYS exercise your right to be with your animal at all times! If the vet or vet tech wants to take your companion to another room, insist on going with him or her. If the vet refuses, don’t hesitate—take your animal and leave.

6 If your animal must stay overnight (and always question this), make sure someone is going to be there to monitor him or her at all times.

7 Ask questions. A good vet should explain what he or she is doing at all times and why.

8 For anything major, seek a second and third opinion. You are entitled to copies of your companion’s medical records and x-rays.

If you believe an animal has been mistreated, take him or her to another vet for a thorough examination. If you have evidence of malpractice, you can file a complaint with the veterinary licensing board in your area. For outright cruelty, contact local law enforcement. Keep records, and take photos.

