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Is a Dog *Really* a Man's Best Friend?

It was a warm Saturday evening in Coffee County, Tennessee, when the Animal Rescue Corps (ARC) rescued 90 dogs from a living situation that the ARC described as being in “extremely neglectful conditions.” According to reports from animalrescuecorps.org, the dogs were found barely alive under an elderly woman's “care”, and were taken to a nearby emergency shelter, where they were given necessary medical treatment. Although this is an extremely touching story, not every dog gets this lucky. In fact, dogs are the most common victims of animal cruelty. Around the world, a great amount of our beloved canines are suffering in abusive settings that they have no other choice but to call home. They may suffer some forms of abuse that are intentional, such as harassment and negligence. There are also some unintentional versions of animal abuse, like hoarding, which can be the result of a mental illness existing inside of the owner. Abusive pet owners and people can either deliberately assault their (or other people's) dogs, or simply neglect their needs all together. Many dogs are also being used as test subjects in laboratories and are tormented that way. Countless people are risking their companion's lives by engaging them in activities that take a toll on their bodies, like sled races and dog fights.

In 2007, approximately 64.5% of reported animal cruelty cases in America targeted dogs. However, America isn't the only country that isn't treating them right, dog abuse is a global issue. In India and Eastern Europe (mostly the Czech Republic), dogs are killed so that their fur can be made into coats. Over two million dogs are hunted down and killed each year for this cause. In south-west China, the summer solstice is marked with an annual dog meat festival, where thousands of dogs (both wild and domesticated) are killed, cooked (or cooked alive), and eaten to supposedly “ward off the heat of the summer months”. Many people have taken action to reduce the number of pups victimized in this revolting festival, including some of my friends and I. It wasn't much, but we made posts on social media, informing others about what the dog

meat festival is, and encouraging them to spread the word about how disgusting and disturbing it is.

Feasting on blameless dogs isn't the only way that we humans are killing off this species. Too many dogs die as a result of negligence and careless acts committed by their owners. It's common for people to think that it is okay to leave their dogs inside of a hot car in warm weather, even for just a few minutes. But what they don't know is that dogs can suffer brain damage or death from a heatstroke within 15 minutes of being left in extreme warmth. Unlike humans, dogs don't sweat when they get hot. While we have sweat glands all over our bodies, dogs only have them at the bottom of their paws. They use a breathing method, called panting in order to get rid of the excess heat in their bodies. Unfortunately, this doesn't work as well as sweating does. This means that if the condition of a room is too hot for a person, it's way too hot for a dog! As an attempt to spread the word about this common mistake, I have (again) posted reminders on social media that dogs cannot tolerate the heat as well as we humans can.

A pet owner can kill their dog if they fail to provide them with professional medical treatment, especially after a life threatening incident. A dog can be suffering without showing any signs of it. They try not to show any signs of pain because they don't want their owners to worry. If your canine has been acting strange lately, the best thing to do is to research some of their unusual behavior and carefully decide whether or not you will seek medical attention. Some minor changes in your dog's demeanor can easily be fixed on your own. If they aren't eating as much, it might just be time to try a new brand of dog food. But if they're dragging their rear end all across the floor, you might want to consider scheduling an appointment immediately. The leading form of dog abuse in Canada is neglect and abandonment, so show your dog how much you care by catering to their needs at all times. Aside from ignoring their medical needs, a dog can also suffer if their owner is neglecting their environmental needs. The poor victims of the incident in Tennessee mentioned earlier were living in dirty cages that were rusted shut. There was no room for them to play or even walk around in. There was also no place

for them to use the bathroom, and the ARC found them living inches deep in their own feces. Their skin was also seriously burned from the acid of their own urine and their fur was so matted that some of the dog's species could not be identified right away. Ten dogs were even found dead, piled up in a wheelbarrow. If a dog's medical and environmental needs are ignored, they won't just suffer, they'll die.

Not all abusive pet owners mean to provide inhumane homes for their dogs. Hoarders, for example, think that they are capable of taking care of more and more animals. Hoarding typically comes about if a person has had a bad experience with a person or people they love. It causes them to grow an enormous amount of love and appreciation for animals. So they accumulate more pets, and before they know it, they've got almost a hundred animals in their possession. When hoarding gets to this point, the owner is unable to keep up with the demands of all of their pets. They tend to have a hard time facing this fact, and it usually takes the help of professionals to get them to give up their animals.

Have you ever tasted a "Pringles" potato chip? What do you brush your teeth with? Is it "Crest" toothpaste? Is "Folgers" coffee in your cup the best part of waking up? You might be wondering where I'm getting at with these brand names. One thing that all these companies have in common is that they ALL TEST ON DOGS (and other animals), but mostly dogs. You see, these companies collect stray dogs from shelters, not to cuddle with them, but to test their money makers on them. These aren't the only companies that do this. Brands like "Clorox", "Cover Girl", and "Secret" are all in on the action as well. Over 65,000 dogs are tortured in laboratories each year in the United States alone.

As you can see, there are a variety of forms in which dog abuse occurs. But I'm not finished yet. Another way people put a dog's body in danger is by engaging them in perilous activities. Dog fighting, sled racing, these are just a few. But one thing they both have in common is that they are the cause of many deaths in the canine population. Dog fighting is when two big dogs (usually pit bulls) are placed in a ring or pit and they basically fight to the

death (or near death). The owner of the winning dog is usually paid by his opponent. This recreation is illegal in all fifty of the United States, but that doesn't stop people from practicing it anyway. Dog fighting is legal in most third world countries, though. Sled racing is another legal way to kill your dog. Sled-racing dogs, or "Huskies" suffer from things like pulled muscles, ripped tendons, and hypothermia during races. These aren't the only things they suffer from but they can very well lead to their death either during or after a race.

They say that a dog is man's best friend, but would you put your "best friend" through such hard times? Will we sit and do nothing while our "best friends" are being tortured daily? Everyone of us can help put a stop to dog abuse as well as other kinds of animal cruelty. Of course we don't have the authority to break in and rescue animals from people's homes, but there are little things we can do that will make a huge difference. If you witness any kind of animal abuse, you can call your local police department (or 911). We can set good examples on how to treat pets, support local shelters, and protest animal cruelty whether it's online or in the streets. These actions are so small but can save so many dogs who can't save themselves.

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