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Humane Canada Welcomes Federal Recommendations Recognizing Animal Mistreatment as a Form of Coercive Control

Ottawa, ON - **December 4, 2025** - Humane Canada is welcoming new federal recommendations that bring long-needed visibility to an often-hidden reality, animals are frequently used as instruments of fear in abusive relationships. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women's final report on coercive control marks a meaningful step toward better protections for victim-survivors and the animals they love.

"These recommendations represent an important step toward ensuring that Canada's legal frameworks fully acknowledge the abuse of animals in coercive control," said Barbara Cartwright, CEO of Humane Canada. "When animals are used as tools of abuse, the safety of victim survivors is also compromised. Recognizing and addressing this reality is essential to protecting animals and supporting victims in their healing, safety and ability to seek help."

Earlier this year, the Committee resumed several studies from the previous Parliamentary session, including its extensive work on coercive control, gender-based violence, and femicides. Humane Canada appeared before the Committee on October 7, 2024, providing evidence on how companion animals are frequently targeted, harmed or threatened by abusers seeking to manipulate, silence or intimidate victim-survivors due to the profound emotional bond they share.

On November 25, Committee Chair MP Marilyn Gladu tabled the final report in Parliament. Among its 16 recommendations, two of them represent major progress in recognizing the Violence Link and better protections for both people and their animals. The Committee urges the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provinces, territories and

Indigenous Peoples, to formally recognize animal mistreatment as a form of coercive behaviour and to ensure justice and law-enforcement personnel receive appropriate training to identify and assess it during intimate partner violence investigations.

The report also calls on the federal government to support initiatives in women's shelters that enable companion animals to be safely accommodated, removing one of the most significant barriers preventing many victim-survivors from leaving dangerous situations. In Canada, nearly 50% of women report delaying leaving a violent situation as they have no solution for their beloved pets. The Committee further emphasizes that dignified emergency, transitional and affordable housing options must allow families to remain with their pets, reflecting long-standing advocacy from Humane Canada for safer, more inclusive pathways for those fleeing violence.

Humane Canada is advocating for a government bill criminalizing coercive control that recognizes animals as victims and tools of coercive control. "Ignoring this important link will bring greater harm to women and animals" concluded Cartwright.

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