While most people treat their pets well, if not like family, some people abuse their pets either through violence or neglect. It is the job of veterinarians and the public at large to report if you think an animal is being abused or neglected. If you suspect animal abuse or neglect, don’t hesitate to report it. Use the tips below to familiarize yourself with some signs of animal cruelty.

**Physical Signs**
- Collar so tight that it has caused a neck wound or has become embedded in the pet’s neck
- Open wounds, signs of multiple healed wounds, or an ongoing injury or illness that isn’t being treated
- Untreated skin conditions that have caused loss of hair, scaly skin, bumps or rashes
- Extreme thinness or emaciation—bones may be visible
- Fur infested with fleas, ticks or other parasites
- Signs of inadequate grooming, such as extreme matting of fur, overgrown nails, and dirty coat
- Weakness, limping, or the inability to stand or walk normally
- Heavy discharge from eyes or nose
- An owner striking or otherwise physically abusing an animal
- Visible signs of confusion or extreme drowsiness

**Environmental Signs**
- Pets are tied up alone outside for long periods of time without adequate food or water, or with food or water that is unsanitary
- Pets are kept outside in inclement weather without access to adequate shelter
- Pets are kept in an area littered with feces, garbage, broken glass, or other objects that could harm them
- Animals are housed in kennels or cages (very often crowded in with other animals) that are too small to allow them to stand, turn around and make normal movements possibly with too many other animals

**Reporting Animal Cruelty**
1. Find out where to report cruelty.
2. When you know who to contact, provide a concise, written, factual statement of what you observed, giving dates and approximate times whenever possible.
3. If at all feasible, try to photograph the abusive situation and date your pictures. It would also be helpful to get short, factual written statements from other witnesses.
4. When you call to report animal cruelty, always make sure to keep a careful record of exactly whom you contact, the date of the contacts and the content and outcome of your discussion.
5. Make it clear to the agent that you are very interested in pursuing the case, and that you are willing to lend whatever assistance you can.
6. Follow up! If you don’t receive a response from the officer assigned to your case within a reasonable length of time, don’t be afraid to present your information to his or her supervisor and, if necessary, to local government officials, such as the county commissioner, and ask them to act.
7. If you have witnessed the cruel act yourself, you can go to your local police commissioner and ask to swear out a warrant to summon the accused person to court.
8. Remember that expert witnesses are sometimes necessary in animal cruelty cases. A veterinarian, for example, can sign a statement that it is his or her “expert opinion” that a dog suffers when hit with a chain, is deprived of food, etc.