Including Animal Abuse in the 8 Stages to Domestic Homicide Timeline

STAGE 1

Pre-relationship History

Criminal record or allegations from former partners of domestic abuse, stalking, criminality or violence. Victims often aware but do not always believe reports.

May have a history of animal abuse, neglect, torture or killing, including threats towards animals belonging to previous partners. Animal cruelty may not feature in a formal conviction or may have been unreported.

STAGE 2

Early Relationship

Relationship tends to develop quickly with early declarations of love, possessiveness and jealousy. May move in together quickly.

Copyright Maya Badham, 2026

May use animals to accelerate attachment, establish trust or create shared responsibilities. May become jealous of the victim's bond with animals or seek to establish control over their care and ownership.

STAGE 3

Relationship

Relationship dominated by coercive control, patterns of abuse, usually with some of the high risk markers present.

May use animals as a tactic of coercive control. Potential physical, emotional, psychological and sexual harm of animals. May use animals within monitoring /stalking behaviours & economic abuse. Animal abuse as a high-risk marker of serious harm.

STAGE 4

Trigger(s)

An event occurs which threatens the control of the perpetrator. Usually separation: actual, threatened or imagined. Life change event.

Separation (or threatened) can increase risks to animals. The perpetrator may threaten or harm animals to prevent the victim leaving, punish them or maintain contact. Concerns about animals & lack of animal-inclusive housing options create additional barriers to leaving. Animal care may be an additional financial burden.

Badham, M (2024). Including Animal Abuse in the Eight Stages to Domestic Homicide, Loop Centre for Animal Inclusive Safeguarding
Monckton Smith, J. (2020). Intimate Partner Femicide: Using Foucauldian Analysis to Track an Eight Stage Progression to Homicide.

Including Animal Abuse in the 8 Stages to Domestic Homicide Timeline

STAGE 5

Escalation

An increase in frequency or severity of control tactics, such as threats of harm and/or suicide, grand gestures, stalking and breach of orders/bail conditions.

Attempts to reinstate control.

Escalation in threats, abuse or neglect of animals. May use animals in stalking, intimidation or attempts to reinstate control. Threats or harm towards animals may increase alongside threats towards the victim, children or others.

STAGE 6

Change in Thinking

Behavioural change, feelings of revenge, injustice, or humiliation may drive a decision to resolve issues, through either moving on, stalking or a decision to kill.

Escalation in animal abuse may start or continue. Animals may become targets of revenge, punishment or retaliation against the victim. May threaten to harm, kill or abandon animals as a means of exerting control, causing distress and/or expressing intent. Animals may be incorporated into the perpetrator's thinking about future harm.

STAGE 7

Planning

May involve web searches about homicide or covering up murder, gathering weapons, comments about plans, threats, seeking opportunities to get victim alone, stalking.

May test their resolve to kill by killing animals, and/or test chosen murder methods on animals. May leave dead animals for the victim to find as a warning or message, may rehome or dump (disappear) animals. May use animals to locate, approach or contact the victim. May incorporate animals into their wider plans.

STAGE 8

Homicide

Homicide, staged suicide, missing persons, suspicious death, could involve suicide or death of children.

Animals may be killed, harmed, abandoned or go missing before, during or following the homicide. Where the perpetrator intends to kill the whole family, including children, animals may also be deliberately killed as part of the wider homicide. Where the perpetrator completes suicide, they may also kill animals

Copyright Maya Badham, 2026

Badham, M (2024). Including Animal Abuse in the Eight Stages to Domestic Homicide, Loop Centre for Animal Inclusive Safeguarding
Monckton Smith, J. (2020). Intimate Partner Femicide: Using Foucauldian Analysis to Track an Eight Stage Progression to Homicide.