

## Cat Cruelty Is No Joke

### Scenes of animal cruelty are passing as humor on TV.

*By Robin Rockey, CatChannel.com assistant editor*

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Joel McHale cracks a CAT FANCY joke on The Soup on E! Entertainment Television. Recently, three of my favorite TV comedies featured jokes about torturing or killing cats.

First, a real cat was featured in a scene of "Reno 911!" in which police officers responded to a report of teenagers torturing cats with fireworks. The cops tossed a cat into a barrel of water in an attempt to extinguish fireworks tied to the animal. There was an explosion, and the water in the barrel turned red, implying that the cat was killed.

Next, an episode of the animated series "Aqua Teen Hunger Force" revolved around one of the characters placing cats in a microwave.

Finally, on pop culture comedy show, "The Soup" on E! Entertainment Television, host Joel McHale pretended to shoot a cat stuffed animal with a handgun.

Yes, I understand that no actual cats were injured during the taping of these programs. Obviously, the scenes involving cats (real, plush or cartoon) were intended to be silly. However, countless numbers of cats and other animals are abused in the United States every day. That is no laughing matter.

Each day, when I search for cat-related news to post in the CatChannel Newswire, I am shocked and sickened by the reports of animal cruelty that scream at me from the headlines -- many almost too disturbing to post on our website. Cats frequently are beaten, poisoned, shot and trapped in deplorable living conditions. This week alone, 15 cats were massacred in Acampo, Calif., and a cat was forced to inhale methamphetamine in Detroit.

Violence against animals on TV undoubtedly helps to normalize animal cruelty, but this behavior is far from normal. Plus, numerous organizations, including the U.S. Department of Justice, the FBI, Scotland Yard and Canadian Federation of Humane Societies cite statistics linking animal abuse to violence against people. This means that everyone should be concerned about animal cruelty, regardless of whether or not you are an animal lover.

Cat owners often are accused of having a lousy sense of humor. In fact, the opposite is true. CAT FANCY and CatChannel readers relish cat jokes. CatChannel's Cat Humor and Games section is one of the most popular places on our website. We editors even have been caught chuckling when The Soup pokes fun at CAT FANCY. (Best abs? Really, McHale?)

We can take a joke, but violence against animals is never funny.

Especially because the trend in animal cruelty jokes echoes the anti-cat sentiment voiced by civic leaders, government officials and the public in recent days.

Some examples:

The town of Randolph, Iowa, offered a \$5 bounty for each cat without identification that was trapped and brought to the mayor's office for possible euthanization. The policy was reversed only after outcry from animal welfare groups across the country.

In Cape May, New Jersey, federal environment officials threatened to withhold funds for beach replenishment if the town failed to relocate feral cats.

Management at a Virginia trailer park plans to trap and remove (and most likely euthanize) more than 200 feral cats, although residents say they have cared for the cats for years.

News organizations like the Detroit Free Press, The Washington Post and The Associated Press deserve kudos for



reporting on issues involving cats. It's up to readers to let media outlets know that stories about the animals that share our world are appreciated, and that raising awareness about the plight of cats and other animals is necessary to end animal cruelty. Two simple ways to do this are to write a letter to the editor or to simply post a comment after reading an online article about animals.

My challenge to the world of television comedy? Come up with original jokes that don't involve killing or torturing cats or other animals. C'mon writers — you're better than that.

To find out how you can help prevent animal cruelty, [click here](#).

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