

■ PRESS KIT

CRUELTY FOR CLICKS

Social media's animal problem, exposed



4:18 / 9:06



■ LOGLINE

Cruelty has gone viral on social media,
and even animal lovers are fooled.

THIS IS THE FIGHT TO END THE NIGHTMARE.





SYNOPSIS

The images are shocking. From puppies tied up for fake “rescues” to baby monkeys tormented for pleasure, a flood of animal cruelty videos have swept over social media and are being shared across the globe. True crime meets animal advocacy in this documentary from award-winning director Kirk Murray and international nonprofit Lady Freethinker.

Following the efforts of Lady Freethinker founder Nina Jackel and others fighting to rid the internet of this horrific, often well-masked content, *Cruelty for Clicks* reveals the scope of abusive posts as well as the hidden truth behind content that appears “cute” on the surface but involves extreme suffering behind the scenes.

Does Big Tech care? Despite protests, petitions, and even a lawsuit filed by Nina against YouTube, the abuse remains rampant. The most evil of all – “crush videos” – are bought and sold illegally on encrypted chat apps like Telegram.

Along with following Nina's story, the documentary features interviews with citizen investigators; the attorneys who took on YouTube; and leaders of nonprofits across the globe who are joining forces to help hold social media giants accountable.

The truth is dark, but hope shines through. We meet Mini, a young monkey who was once



brutally abused as a YouTube "star" but was rescued and released to freedom in the wild. We visit a big cat sanctuary where once-exploited tigers and other exotics now live in peace. And we see how, following the investigative work of Nina and other advocates, dozens of perpetrators have been apprehended and sent to prison.

Now, it's time for social media companies to stop the cruelty for good.



DIRECTOR ■ Kirk Murray

Animal videos are extraordinarily viral across social media. Many are harmless and fun. But hidden from our feeds lies a deeply disturbing side to the online animal craze that must be exposed. While developing Cruelty for Clicks, I learned the extent that content creators will go to earn views and profit, deceiving caring people and eluding social media companies' moderators.

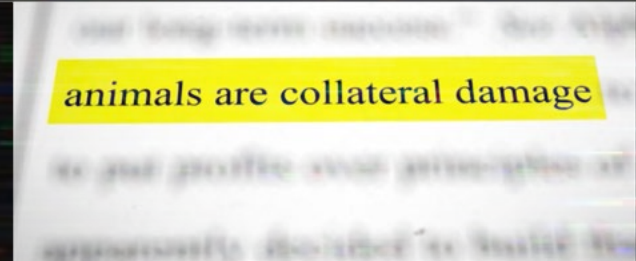
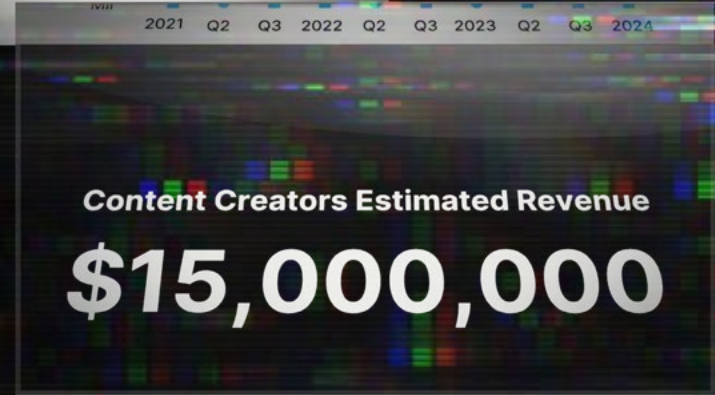
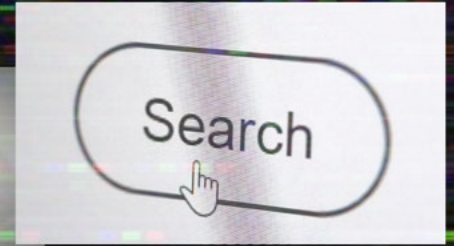
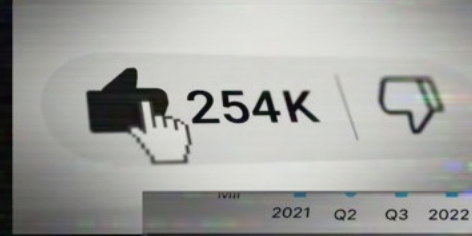
Abusers sometimes prey on our compassion with staged "rescues" — moments of danger followed by relief, designed to tug on our heart strings at the animals' expense. What looks like kindness can in fact be something much more sinister.

As our investigation deepened, the scope extended far beyond fake

Kirk Murray cont.

rescues into a larger ecosystem of abuse created purely for engagement. This content hides in plain sight on mainstream platforms, slipping past moderation and blending into everyday browsing. The normalization is what makes it so insidious: cruelty repackaged as entertainment, sometimes even linked to underground torture rings.

I chose to tell this story with the pacing and tension of a true crime thriller because that's what this is — a form of criminal behavior thriving in digital shadows. Through investigative storytelling, a darker visual language, and reenactments that reflect the concealed nature of online spaces, Cruelty for Clicks exposes the truth hidden behind the camera. The film ultimately asks audiences to look more closely at what they consume and share, and to recognize that until Big Tech takes accountability, the suffering will continue.



■ BIO

Kirk Murray is a filmmaker driven by the belief that emotion is the catalyst for change. Drawn to storytelling as a way to translate complex human experience into something deeply felt, his work centers on perspective — illuminating overlooked subjects and inviting audiences to see the world through a more intimate lens. A visually driven director, Murray approaches each project with cinematic precision, crafting films that are both immersive and emotionally resonant.

His films have been recognized at more than 40 film festivals worldwide, including the Orlando Film Festival (Oscar-qualifying), Las Vegas Film Festival, Utah Film Festival, San Diego International Film Awards, and Atlanta Shorts Fest. He has received top honors at the Palm Springs Movie Awards and won Best Feature at the Miami Science Fiction Film Festival. Across documentary and narrative formats, Murray continues to create stories that leave a lasting emotional imprint.



■ PRODUCER

Nina Jackel

The images will haunt me for the rest of my life. That's why I work every day to save animals – as well as people – from harmful online content and to hold Big Tech accountable. As the founder of Lady Freethinker, I have spent years investigating animal abuse across the globe, and the worst cruelty I've ever seen is taking place on today's biggest social media platforms and in encrypted chats. This documentary was born from a deep urgency to expose the dark reality behind viral animal videos and to confront the systems that allow exploitation to run rampant.

Our team has uncovered networks of content creators who deliberately harm animals for “entertainment” and profit—staging fake dog rescues, using captive exotic cats or monkeys as props, or even creating sadistic torture videos to sell in illegal “crush” video rings. Our most recent report found **more than a billion** views on

A portrait of Nina Jackel, a woman with long dark hair and light-colored eyes, wearing a dark blue V-neck top. She is smiling slightly and looking directly at the camera.The logo for Lady Freethinker, featuring a stylized bird or wing shape in teal and orange.

**LADY
FREETHINKER.**

ENDING CRUELTY FOR ALL BEINGS.

Nina Jackel cont.

videos depicting and promoting horrifying animal cruelty across Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and X. It's happening everywhere, yet the public remains largely uninformed.

Through undercover investigations, expert interviews, and survivor stories, this film reveals not only the suffering of the animals involved but also the regulatory gaps and corporate inaction that perpetuate this cycle. We aim to shine a light on how animal-lovers are being fooled —and how urgently reform is needed. By exposing this hidden cruelty, we hope to inspire accountability, stronger policies, and a global movement to protect vulnerable animals from exploitation in the digital age.

BIO: Nina Jackel is a journalist, activist, and the founder of Lady Freethinker, a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a more compassionate world for all living beings.

Founded in 2013, Lady Freethinker has grown into a global leader in animal advocacy, working to end animal cruelty around the world and providing food, veterinary care, and shelter to rescued animals.

Lady Freethinker is bringing animal issues to a wide audience and enabling people to take simple actions to help animals every day. LFT has published thousands of news articles and petitions against animal cruelty, amassing over 20 million petition signatures calling on policymakers to protect animals.

Nina's work has earned coverage from *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *People*, *Newsweek*, *Salon*, and *Daily Mail*. In October 2021, Lady Freethinker's lawsuit against YouTube for failing to remove animal cruelty videos made headlines around the world. She also worked closely with BBC reporters on their 2023 investigative documentary exposing online baby monkey sadism, titled *The Monkey Haters*.

BIO ■

Emma Alleyne, PhD.

Forensic Psychologist

Emma Alleyne is a Reader in Forensic Psychology at the Centre of Research and Education in Forensic Psychology (CORE-FP), University of Kent, UK. She has produced an extensive body of scholarly and applied work spanning peer-reviewed publications, book chapters, and commissioned reports, addressing areas such as gang-related violence, sexual offending, fire setting, and animal abuse.

She leads a programme of research examining offence-supportive attitudes that predispose individuals to harm nonhuman animals (i.e., animal cruelty). In addition to her research activities, she is a Registered Forensic Psychologist with experience working as a practitioner in secure settings, where she has delivered both individual and group-based offending behaviour programmes.

Emma Alleyne, PhD
Reader in Forensic Psychology
Director of Education
Office: Keynes College E1.13
School of Psychology | University of Kent
Canterbury, CT2 7NP | UK

■ BIO

Sarah Kite

Activitst / Co-Founder - Action for Primates

Sarah Kite has spent over three decades working in the international animal protection and welfare field, focusing on the use of animals in research and toxicity testing. During this time, she has specialised in intelligence, undercover and investigative work, news media and campaigns, especially in relation to the global trade and use of non-human primates. In 1990, she was awarded the Lord Houghton Award for her services to animal welfare. Sarah was Director of Special projects at Cruelty Free International, and has also co-managed a sanctuary for non-human primates focusing on rescue, rehabilitation and providing life-long care for individuals.

She is currently co-founder of Action for Primates, a UK-based project advocating on behalf of non-human primates. Action for Primates has worked closely with Lady Freethinker investigating online monkey torture groups, providing information to law enforcement agencies, and was pivotal in providing evidence in a landmark case involving the prosecution of UK individuals who funded and encouraged the torture of baby monkeys.





BIO ■

Mandala Hunter-Ishikawa

Senior Veterinarian

Dr. Mandala Hunter-Ishikawa has been a veterinarian for two decades, working with companion animals, large animals and wild animals. She was the Centre Director of Born Free Ethiopia's wildlife sanctuary and Senior Vet at the Animals Asia Bear Rescue Centres in Vietnam and China. Mandala is currently the Senior Veterinary Trainer for Animals Asia's Veterinary Welfare Training Program. With the goal of elevating veterinary welfare education in Asia, she lectures at conferences and shares practical information to vet professionals as well as pet guardians. She is a member of the World Small Animal Veterinary Association's Global Pain Committee. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Animal Science, a Master's Degree in Anatomy and Neurobiology, and a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine from Colorado State University. She is currently working towards a specialty from the American College of Animal Welfare.

■ BIO

Edward Casmere

Trial Lawyer | Litigator
Independent Investigator

Edward Casmere is a trial lawyer with decades of experience solving clients' most difficult and sensitive problems. Ed is a true general litigator and courtroom lawyer in every sense, known as much for his grit and grace, as for his sense of humor and professionalism.

Among his numerous professional recognitions, Ed has been named to the *Crain's Chicago Business* Notable Litigators and Trial Attorneys list (multiple times); recognized as one of Chicago's Notable Gen X Leaders in Law; and received an award for Excellence



in Pro Pono Service from the United States District Court, Northern District of Illinois. Ed's experience is vast and varied including complex litigation, contract disputes, antitrust, commercial disputes, RICO, conspiracy, trade secrets, class action, consumer disputes, catastrophic injury and wrongful death, mass tort, toxic tort product liability, environmental and employment discrimination matters.

Clients have looked to Ed to wear many hats in cases across the country – trial lawyer, negotiator, high-level risk manager and strategic advisor. He is often asked to negotiate or try extraordinarily delicate and problematic claims. Ed has regularly led or joined client trial teams comprised of lawyers from law firms across the country, oftentimes joining cases mid-stream.

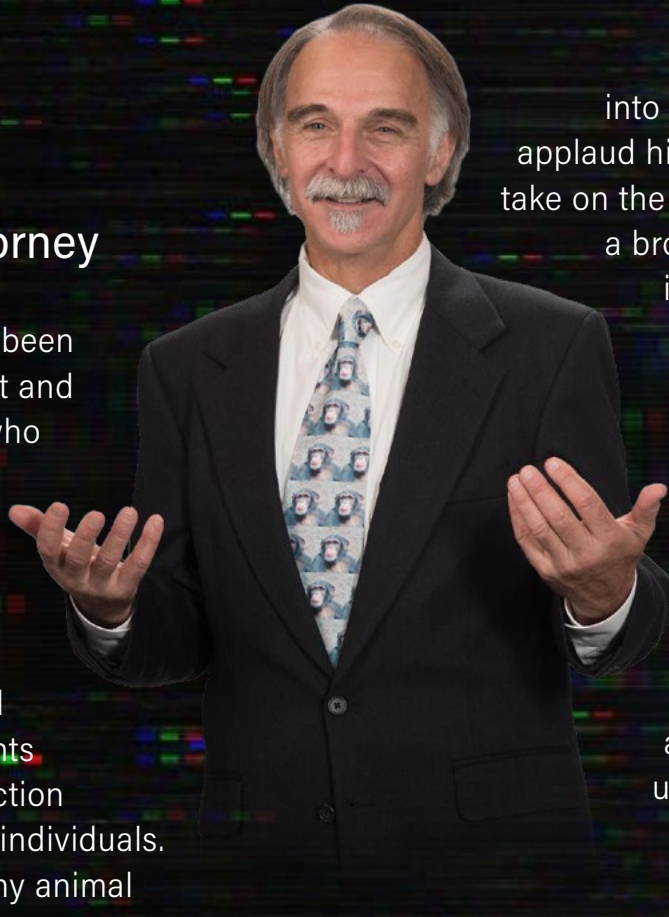
■ BIO

Bruce Wagman

Animal Law Expert Attorney

Since 1992, Bruce Wagman has been using his legal degree to protect and save animals and assist those who care for them — forging a path for improved animal welfare and treatment that considers everyone who is potentially impacted by his work. His experience in the area of animal law is unparalleled. Bruce's clients include numerous animal protection organizations as well as private individuals. He has worked on behalf of many animal species.

Bruce's forte is the kind of creative lawyering it takes to fit animal interests



into the legal world, and his clients regularly applaud his ability to model creative solutions and take on the toughest problems. His practice covers a broad range of animal-related legal issues, including cases involving animal cruelty, animal rescue, wildlife, and the use of animals in entertainment, biomedical research, and animal agriculture/food production. He has a long history of success in a wide range of cases constituting "impact litigation," but he also loves to work with individuals on cases involving dog bites, animal custody disputes, and injuries to, and caused by, animals. Bruce brings an undeniable passion for each of his cases, a dedication to both his human clients and the animals involved, and he has a proven ability to turn that passion into winning arguments both in and out of the courtroom. He takes an "eyes on the prize" approach to all of his matters.



CONTACT

L.A. Media Consultants
13351D Riverside Drive, Suite 621,
Sherman Oaks, CA 91423, USA

deborah@lamediaconsultants.com

(818) 648-9513

Copyright © 2026 L.A. Media Consultants - All Rights Reserved.