



# NATIONAL LINK COALITION

*Working together to stop violence against people and animals*

## The LinkLetter

February 2011

A monthly report of news about the connections between animal abuse and other forms of violence from the National Link Coalition. <http://www.nationallinkcoalition.org>

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## News from Link Coalitions

### *Boston, MA*



The [LINK-UP Education Network](#) has hired an Executive Director and is in the process of changing its name. [Carol Yelverton](#) comes to the Link coalition with extensive experience in the education, nonprofit and human services sectors, having served as public affairs director for the Massachusetts child welfare system. She has also been the communications, government relations and marketing director for the American Red Cross' northeast region, communications director for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation, and executive director of the Mary Magdalene Project. A former TV reporter, she teaches at several colleges and edits several online publications.

### *Denver, CO*

The [Colorado Alliance for Cruelty Prevention](#) has published its inaugural Link newsletter. Here's what the premier issue of *Colorado Link Prints* is reporting:

- The [Animal Assistance Foundation](#) awarded a \$5,000 grant to CACP to work with Wheat Ridge police to develop protocols when encountering animal abuse in felony domestic violence cases.
- Denver City Attorney's Victim Resource Program Manager, Ginger Sherlock, convened a multidisciplinary team to discuss the response to family violence cases involving animals. The

committee is exploring first responder protocols and how to prevent re-victimization of victims during investigations.

- The Veterinary Issues Committee is meeting with the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association to determine practitioners' awareness of mandated animal cruelty reporting requirements. The traditional veterinarian-patient-client privilege is waived in these instances.
- The [Colorado Domestic Violence Offender Management Board](#) 's new treatment standards require that treatment providers conduct an assessment that includes animal abuse by offenders. Funding is being sought to create treatment guidelines for domestic violence offenders with histories of animal abuse.
- The Colorado legislature in 2010 not only enacted pet protection orders, but also redefined domestic abuse, domestic violence and abuse of the elderly or at-risk adults to include acts of animal abuse intended to coerce, control, punish, exact revenge or intimidate.
- Frank Ascione, Ph.D., is conducting a five-year research project on children exposed to intimate partner violence and animal abuse. The project is funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Institute of Child and Human Development.

### ***Klamath Falls, OR***

Klamath Falls, OR has organized a Link coalition called Be Kind To Animals under the auspices of [Klamath Child Abuse Prevention](#). BK2A uses animal welfare incidents for early identification and protection of children and families at-risk. Violence Prevention Coordinator [Michael Kaibel](#) reports that investigation of animal abuse is often the first point of social services intervention for a family at-risk, and that BK2A provides public education on The Link and empathy skill-building materials to parents and caregivers. BK2A received a "Train-the-Trainer presentation from Maine's Linkage Project: [Tonya DiMillo](#) presented to a SRO audience of 40 participants from 13 different organizations. The coalition is featured article in the Winter issue of the [Latham Letter](#).

### ***Hillsboro, OR***

The [Washington County, Ore. District Attorney's Office](#) and the [Bonnie L. Hays Small Animal Shelter](#) are co-chairing the new Washington County Animal Protection Multi-Disciplinary Team of social service agencies, law enforcement and animal advocates in the Portland suburbs. The team investigates the link between domestic violence and animal abuse and identifies tangible ways to protect victims and animals.

The team was organized by Whitney Zeigler, a victim assistance specialist for the DA's office. District Attorney Bob Hermann offered to approve the concept if other community partners agreed there was a need. Zeigler pitched her idea about a joint task force fighting domestic violence on multiple levels to the county's Domestic Violence Intervention Council. The group liked the idea and made the team an official subcommittee.

The team is collaborating with [Fences for Fido](#) and the Humane Society of the U.S. and is building five fenced kennels and a place for cats and other small animals to enable victims to bring pets to [Monika's House](#), the county's only domestic violence shelter.

The group is also part of a statewide task force hoping to legislate pets in restraining orders. They're planning a comprehensive program to care for animals in protective custody and victims' animals. Bimonthly meetings also train law enforcement officers to identify animal abuse.

Other goals include: developing a coordinated response to hoarding situations; cross-training county agencies to identify animal cruelty, domestic violence and child abuse; educating the community about The Link; providing therapeutic interventions to children who witness animal cruelty or domestic violence; advocating for stricter sentencing guidelines in felony animal abuse cases; and creating a program for trained service dogs to accompany domestic violence victims in court.

“We’ve had many cases in our office where there has been overlap between animal abuse, child abuse, and domestic violence,” Zeigler said. “It’s another way of controlling the victim. The abuser will hurt the pets, and threaten: ‘If I can do this to the dog, I can do this to you, too.’ Or they will say: ‘I’ll kill them if you don’t come back.’”

## Statewide Safe Havens Network Established in Nevada

The [Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence \(NNADV\)](#), working with the Humane Society of the U.S., has established a statewide listing of safe havens available for domestic violence victims who need temporary housing or foster care for their pets. HSUS state representative Beverlee McGrath identified 33 humane societies, rescue groups and animal control agencies that could offer foster care and worked with NNADV to implement the program of referrals.

## Veterinarian’s Oath Revised

The [American Veterinary Medical Association](#) has approved a recommendation from the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee to amend the Veterinarian’s Oath to clearly identify animal welfare as a priority of the veterinary profession.



Photo Courtesy of AVMA

The revised section of the oath (revisions appear in italics) now reads: “Being admitted to the profession of veterinary medicine, I solemnly swear to use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal health *and welfare*, the *prevention and* relief of animal suffering, the conservation of animal resources, the promotion of public health, and the advancement of medical knowledge.”

“From today forward, every graduate entering our profession will swear an oath not only to protect animal health but also welfare; to not only relieve animal suffering but to prevent it. That’s a powerful statement defining ourselves and our responsibilities,” said Dr. J. Bruce Nixon, committee chair-elect.

The committee recommended the changes as a proactive approach to make it clear that veterinarians have responsibilities not only for animals’ health, but also for their welfare. The changes extend the veterinarian’s approach toward animal welfare from one of treatment only to one of prevention. No mention had been made previously in the oath of a responsibility to promote good animal welfare. The Veterinarian’s Oath was first adopted in 1954 and revised in 1969 and 1999.

## The Link in the News

**BALTIMORE, MD** – A teenager has been charged with trying to kill a man and his sister after earlier having been accused of setting a dog on fire. Police say Travers Johnson, 18, tried to shoot Terrell Harris and his sister, Brittany Harris, after she intervened in a fight between the two men. Johnson had previously been charged, along with his twin brother Tremayne Johnson, of setting fire to Phoenix, a pit bull puppy. The animal cruelty case ended in a mistrial with an 11-1 hung jury shortly before Johnson was scheduled to be arraigned on the more recent charges of attempted murder, assault, reckless endangerment and illegal possession and discharge of a handgun. The animal cruelty case will be re-tried May 4.

**HOPKINSVILLE, KY** – A Fort Campbell soldier was charged with cruelty to animals for allegedly skinning his wife's dog Jack Russell terrier, "Baxter," then giving her the remains in a garbage bag. Marc Staley, 42, a 19-year Army veteran, was arrested on Dec. 28, hours after Ismelda Staley, 22, called police. Ismelda Staley also filed for an emergency protective order, saying her husband had threatened to commit suicide, had threatened to kill her, and ordered most of her daily activities. She later asked the court to dismiss the protective order.

Maureen Leamy, the Christian County assistant DA prosecuting the case, told the [Kentucky New Era](#) newspaper that Ismelda Staley blamed herself for the incident and said that her husband was suffering psychological trauma from having been deployed and that he killed the dog as a cry for help. "Instead of calling the police, she wishes she had done something else. It's a pretty classic situation for a victim to blame themselves... to internalize it and say it really is all their fault. And she's classically gone there," said Leamy. Leamy asked the court to upgrade the original misdemeanor charge to animal torture, which is a felony under Kentucky statutes. A grand jury is reviewing the request.

**SAN ANTONIO, TX** – TV station KENS (channel 5) [aired an interview with Sallie Scott](#), coordinator of San Antonio's Link Committee, about The Link and a bill in the Texas legislature that would allow judges to include pets in protective orders. The interview also described the case of Gerald Davison, who was arrested Jan. 27 and charged with allegedly smashing his wife's dog against a wall and a bathtub. Friends intervened and rushed the 5-year-old schnauzer to a hospital, but the dog was paralyzed.

## The Link in the Legislatures

**MISSISSIPPI**, one of only four states to not have a felony provision for animal cruelty, has had SB 2127 introduced that would create a crime of aggravated animal cruelty, a felony to torture, mutilate, maim, burn, starve, disfigure or kill any dog or cat "with malice." Penalties would include prison terms of one to five years, up to \$10,000 in fines, and the court may require psychiatric or psychological evaluation.

**OHIO**'s HB 25 would amend the state cruelty code to include provisions for psychological assessment and counseling for animal abusers. Assessment would be mandatory for juvenile offenders and discretionary for adults whom the court believes suffer from a mental or emotional disorder that contributed to the violation. HB 25 would also include animals in domestic violence protection orders.

**CONNECTICUT's** HB 6226 would mandate animal control officers to report suspected animal cruelty or neglect to the state Commissioner of Agriculture who would then forward that report to the Commissioner of Children and Families for inclusion in any open investigations at that address. DCF employees would be mandated to report suspected animal cruelty or neglect to the Commissioner of Agriculture (unless such report would interfere with the employee's child welfare duties). The two commissioners would develop and implement training for child welfare workers on the identification of animal cruelty and neglect and its relationship to child welfare practice, and training for animal control officers on the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

It sometimes takes awhile for news from the 49<sup>th</sup> state to filter down to the Lower 48, but in 2009 **ALASKA** enacted a new law that expands the definition of animal cruelty to include knowingly killing or injuring an animal with the intent to intimidate, threaten or terrorize another person. The new section applies to situations where the offender "with criminal negligence fails to care for an animal and, as a result, causes the death of the animal or causes severe physical pain or prolonged suffering to the animal," or "intentionally kills or injures a pet or livestock by the use of poison."

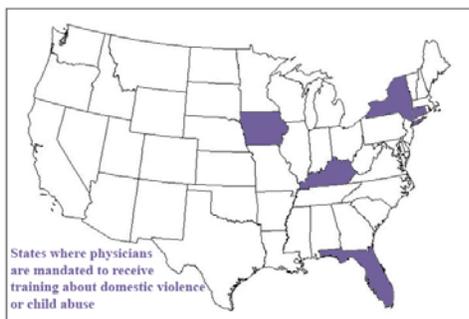
## In the Link Literature:

### *Animal Abuse One of Four Risk Factors for Becoming a Batterer*

Actual or threatened abuse of a pet has been found to be one of the four significant indicators of who is at highest risk of becoming a batterer in cases of intimate partner violence. The other three factors are: to not have graduated from high school; problems with alcohol or substance abuse; and being in fair or poor mental health.

-- Walton-Moss, B.J., Manganello, J., Frye, V., & Campbell, J.C. (2005): Risk factors for IPV and associated injury among urban women. *Journal of Community Health, 30*(5), 377-389.

## Link Training Opportunities for Physicians



Looking for an innovative way to introduce The Link to new interdisciplinary professional audiences? How about... physicians! The States of Connecticut, Florida and Kentucky require physicians (and osteopaths in Florida) to receive Continuing Medical Education (CME) on the topic of domestic violence for their licensure re-registration. A training program on the connections between animal abuse and domestic violence can be included to meet this need.

Physicians in New York State are required to receive similar CME on the subject of child abuse. Iowa doctors must receive training on identifying and reporting abuse of children and dependent adults. These are other opportunities for Link cross-training.

## Survivors Stories Sought on Domestic Violence Link

The Alliance for the Safety of Animals and People (ASAP) in New York City is trying to document the connections between the abuse of animals, domestic violence and child abuse, and the need for options for battered women who don't want to leave their pets behind when they escape abusive relationships.

ASAP would like to hear directly from survivors or their advocates/counselors about actual stories of battered women's experiences, how they coped, and what services could better meet their needs. Information will be kept confidential and will be used to advocate for pet-friendly shelters and foster care programs for the pets of domestic violence victims. Please contact [Elaine Wolff](#) or [Susan Urban](#).

## **International Link News**

### ***British Pathologists Learn of The Link***

A symposium at the Royal College of Pathologists on January 13 introduced The Link to British medical and veterinary pathologists, pediatricians and clinicians. The symposium discussed trauma in animals and humans with special reference to non-accidental injuries. British Link authorities presenting at the symposium included Paula Boyden, John Cooper, Margaret Cooper, Fiona McEwen, Heather Piper, and Freda Scott-Park.

### ***Animal Hoarding Survey in Japan***

[Keiko Yamazaki](#), who recently helped create a Veterinary Social Work Information Center in Japan, reports that a major newspaper has conducted a survey about the prevalence of animal hoarding. During the past two years there have been over 2,000 cases of hoarding in Japan. As a result, 15 of Japan's 47 prefectures have enacted laws limiting the number of animals an individual may keep. One prefecture has started to formulate a plan in which mental health authorities would cooperate with animal control in such cases.

### ***Link Underlies Spanish Bullfighting Ban***

One of the underlying premises of The Link is that violence against animals not only harms the animals but also has negative effects on humans. This was the rationale behind a decision by the Spanish national broadcasting agency, Corporacion de Radio y Television Espanola (RTVE) in January to no longer televise bullfights. "Violence Against Animals," a chapter in RTVE's 2011 stylebook, says RTVE has ceased broadcasting bullfights in part because "children can view violence against animals with anxiety and we must therefore avoid it at all means," the Associated Press reported.

## **Coming Soon to a Venue Near You: Link Training**

*Got a training program or good news to add to the list? Please let us know. Contact [Phil Arkow](#).*

**Portland, OR – March 3** – The Oregon Humane Society is hosting an "Animal Crimes Summit" featuring Dr. Randall Lockwood and Dr. Melinda Merck speaking on Link issues and Veterinary Forensics. For details contact [Oregon Humane Society](#).

**Corvallis, OR – March 5** –The Oregon Veterinary Medical Association annual conference will feature a day-long workshop on Veterinary Forensics featuring Dr. Melinda Merck and Dr. Randall Lockwood. For details go to [www.oregonvma.org](http://www.oregonvma.org)

**Madrid, Spain – March 11** -- [Nuria Querol i Vinas](#) and two veterinarians will present on The Link to the Board of Small Animal Veterinarians of Madrid.

**Mantua, Italy – March 13** – Frank R. Ascione, Nuria Querol i Vinas, Camilla Pagani, and Francesco Robustelli will present on the role of animal abuse in domestic violence at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Congress of the Advanced High School of Criminological Sciences ([CRINVE](#)).

**Columbus, OH – March 25** – Lesley Ashworth will speak about “Barriers to Safety: The Role of Pets in Family Violence” at the [Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services’](#) 26<sup>th</sup> annual conference.

**Seattle, WA – April 17** – The Seattle King County Veterinary Medical Association will sponsor a workshop on "Animal Cruelty: How Do You Know?" featuring Dr. Randall Lockwood and Dr. Bonnie Yoffe-Sharp. For details go to [www.skcvma.org](http://www.skcvma.org).

**Denver, CO – April 27-28** – The Institute for Human-Animal Connection, University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work, will hold an advanced training on assessment for animal abuse for Colorado certified domestic violence and/or sexual assault treatment providers and other mental health forensic evaluators. For details contact [Philip Tedeschi](#).

**Pittsburgh, PA – April 29** – Phil Arkow will present a program on “Kids, Critters and Sexual Abuse: Implications for Prevention, Assessment, Treatment and Intervention” at the Child Advocacy Center at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh’s 6<sup>th</sup> annual Pittsburgh Conference on Child Maltreatment. For details contact [Rob Wittman](#).

## About the National Link Coalition

The [National Link Coalition](#) is an informal network of individuals and organizations working cooperatively on the intersections between animal abuse and other forms of violence and to address these concerns through research, legislation, program implementation, and public awareness. Organized in 2008 at a historic summit in Portland, ME, the National Link Coalition’s vision is:

The Link between violence against humans and violence against animals is widely known and understood. We believe that through the recognition and integration of this understanding into policies and practices nationwide, humans and animals will be measurably safer.



**Join the Link Linked-In Group!**

Stay linked to The Link through our Linked-In group. Click on the logo for the link -

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