



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

The LinkLetter

January 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>

[Phil Arkow](#), Editor

National Link Coalition Announces e-Newsletter

Many of you are accustomed to receiving a monthly newsletter from the American Humane Association regarding The Link – the connections between animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment, elder abuse, and other forms of family and community violence. American Humane Association discontinued its formal Link program in September, and the National Link Coalition has assumed responsibility for keeping the field informed of the many new developments, research, legislation and training opportunities.

This is our inaugural issue and we welcome your input! Please [share with us](#) your thoughts, suggestions, announcements, and news that you'd like the field to know about. By working together we can all make a difference and help stop the cycles of violence.

Visit the New and Improved National Link Coalition Website!

Information about the National Link Coalition and news from the world of The Link are being posted regularly on our new and improved website. Please visit www.nationallinkcoalition.org. We welcome your suggestions for features to include on the site. We extend our heartiest appreciation to The Latham Foundation, which helped us launch the original site, the American Humane Association, which is hosting the current site and providing valuable tech support, and the ASPCA, which is providing financial assistance.

New York County to Register Animal Abusers

Suffolk County, NY officials cited the link between animal abuse and domestic violence in unanimously enacting the nation's first animal abuse registry in October, requiring people convicted of animal cruelty to register or face up to a year in jail and up to \$1,000 in fines.

"We know there is a very strong correlation between animal abuse and domestic violence," said Suffolk County legislator Jon Cooper, the bill's sponsor. "Almost every serial killer starts out by torturing animals, so in a strange sense we could end up protecting the lives of people."

The registry, similar to Megan's Laws designed to keep sex offenders from striking again, will be administered by the Suffolk County SPCA. The database is to be funded by a \$50 fee paid by convicted abusers 18 or older who must supply authorities with their address, a head-and-shoulders photograph and any aliases. Convicted abusers will remain on the registry for five years. The online list will be open to the public.

The law was prompted by several recent animal abuse cases in the county on the eastern half of Long Island, including that of a Selden woman accused of forcing her children to watch her torture and kill kittens and dozens of dogs, then burying the pets in her backyard.

News of Link Coalitions

Leavenworth, KS

The newly-organized Leavenworth County Link Coalition is holding its third meeting on January 19 and is preparing to conduct a large mailing to invite community agencies to participate. Organizer [Crystal Swann Blackdeer](#) of the Leavenworth County Humane Society reports that active participants already include the humane society, the Alliance Against Family Violence, the Council on Aging, Leavenworth Animal Control, and motivated community volunteers. The coalition was organized as a result of a day-long seminar on Oct. 29 in which participants committed to working cooperatively to help make all Leavenworth County families safer for the most vulnerable populations. Dozens of attendees, representing social service providers, medical professionals, veterinarians, elected officials, law enforcement and the clergy attended. The coalition is the first in Kansas.

Baltimore Enacts Anti-Animal Cruelty Commission

The Mayor of Baltimore, MD on Nov. 4, 2010 signed into law the Anti-Animal Abuse Commission, the first such free-standing commission of its kind. The Commission, which started out as a task force in 2009 in response to the fatal burning of a dog, thrust animal cruelty into the city's limelight. Chaired by Caroline Griffin, the Commission wrote a 64-page report with recommendations for investigating cruelty cases, training law enforcement and other professionals, and drafting anti-cruelty legislation. Representatives include the State Attorney's office, City Council, the Mayor's office, BARCS (Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter), the MD SPCA, and the ASPCA. The Commission has already resulted in a significant increase in cruelty cases being reported, leading to further publicity and awareness about animal cruelty cases in Baltimore.

Humane Research Council Looks at The Link

The Humane Research Council, an independent research and analysis organization that conducts studies related to animal welfare issues, is reportedly compiling research data about the connections between violence toward animals and violence toward people. A recent HRC posting, "[Understanding Violence Against Pets and People](#)," offers a brief summary of some recent significant findings.

National Link Coalition Steering Committee Member Honored



The American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Domestic Violence has named **Kathleen M. Schoen** the 2010 recipient of the Sharon Corbitt Award. Schoen received her award on August 6 during the ABA's Annual Meeting in San Francisco. The award recognizes contributions by large-firm lawyers, solo practitioners, corporate counsel, nonprofit attorneys, and judges who demonstrate exemplary service to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Schoen has worked in the area of family violence prevention and intervention since 1985. She is the Director of the [Colorado Bar Association's](#) Local Bar Relations and Access to Justice Department, and has served as the association's Family Violence Program Director since 1997. In that capacity, she coordinates several programs, including the Domestic Violence: Make It Your Business Project, which provides training for employers on the impact of domestic violence in the workplace; the Colorado Alliance for Cruelty Prevention, a multidisciplinary group of professionals working on the link between domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and animal abuse; and the Domestic Violence and Legal Issues Committee, which brings together lawyers and domestic violence advocates who take on projects on an as-needed basis. She serves on the National Link Coalition's Steering Committee. Congratulations, Kath!

In the Literature:

Childhood Animal Cruelty Linked to Domestic Violence and Guns in The Bahamas

The first known study on childhood cruelty towards animals in The Bahamas has reported that homes with children who harmed animals were more violent than homes with children who did not harm animals. The study, by [William Fielding](#) and colleagues, reported that childhood acts of cruelty to animals were higher in homes with domestic violence and the presence of guns.

An internet survey of 1,558 respondents investigated childhood cruelty in the context of other violent behaviors. Consistent with other studies, males were more abusive than females towards animals. While the use of violence to train children was not associated with higher childhood cruelty, domestic violence and the presence of a gun in the home were associated with a higher Children and Animal Inventory score. This indicates that in an Afro-Caribbean society where corporal punishment on children is common (but not illegal), domestic violence and gun ownership are associated with higher childhood animal cruelty.

Fielding, W.J., Brennen, S., Carole, M., Bethel, N. & Minnis, J. (2011, in press). A first look at cruelty towards animals by Bahamian children. *International Journal of Bahamian Studies*.

First Baseline Survey Taken of Human-Animal Awareness and Programs in Child Welfare

The first national survey of its kind has identified a baseline of data describing the number of state public child welfare agencies that incorporate awareness of animal issues in their child protective services practice, assessment tools, and cross-reporting policies. The survey examined the extent to which human-animal relationships are included in training, tools and policies in: inquiries about the home environment; assessment for animal abuse; knowledge of co-occurrence of animal abuse, child maltreatment and intimate partner violence; cross-reporting of abuse; and animal-assisted interventions.

The survey results from 46 states showed some promising results with a number of states including this information in core training and programming. It appears that more states that do not have cross-reporting laws may conduct cross-reporting than states that do have such laws. With only five states reportedly asking questions about animal abuse in their safety and risk assessment protocols, the authors suggest that most CPS workers who discover animal abuse do so by chance rather than through formal intake or assessment protocols.

-- Riskey-Curtiss, C., Zilney, L.A., & Hornung, R. (2010). Animal-human relationships in child protective services: Getting a baseline. *Child Welfare, 89*, 67-82.

Veterinary Responsibilities in Animal Cruelty Cases Described

A Commentary in the Jan. 1, 2011 issue of the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* offers an excellent review of the complex issues confronting veterinarians when diagnosing and reporting suspected animal cruelty. Professor Emily McCobb and student Melanie Benetato of the Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine, and Rob Reisman of the ASPCA, outlined the archaic laws, lack of databases of cruelty cases, the growth of animal law courses and Link-related state legislation, and barriers to bringing cruelty cases to court. Noting that the role of veterinarians in animal abuse cases closely parallels the 50-year-old debate over the role of physicians in child abuse cases, the authors described veterinarians' apprehensions to reporting incidents. This reluctance can be overcome, in part, by providing veterinary students with training that will make practitioners more capable and confident in their abilities to recognize and report animal cruelty. Veterinary involvement, they concluded, can aid in the collection of medically relevant and objective evidence during an investigation and trial.

Benetato, M.A., Reisman, R., & McCobb, E. (2011). The veterinarian's role in animal cruelty cases. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, 238*(1), 31-34.

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](#).

Stamford, CT – Jan. 19, 2011 – Phil Arkow and a representative of the Stamford Animal Shelter Domestic Violence Victims Foster Program will conduct a Grand Rounds training on Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse at Stamford Hospital. For details contact [Kathie Nurena](#), MD.

Pittsburgh, PA – April 29, 2011 – 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 6th 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.

Members of the National Link Coalition Steering Committee:

Phil Arkow arkowpets@snip.net

Consultant, ASPCA and Animals and Society Institute
Chair, Animal Abuse & Family Violence Prevention Project, The Latham Foundation
Stratford, N.J.

Lesley Ashworth lashworth@columbus.rr.com

Consultant, The Link
Worthington, Ohio

Maya Gupta, Ph.D. director@ahimsahouse.org

Executive Director
Ahimsa House, Inc.
Atlanta, Ga.

Jane A. Hunt janneanhunt@comcast.net

Violence Prevention Specialist
St Paul, Minn.

Mark Kumpf, CAWA kumpfm@mcoho.org

Past President
National Animal Control Association
Dayton, Ohio

Randall Lockwood, Ph.D. randall@aspca.org

Senior Vice President,
Forensic Sciences and Anti-Cruelty Projects
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Falls Church, Va.

Emily Patterson-Kane, Ph.D. ekane@avma.org

Animal Welfare Scientist, Animal Welfare Division
American Veterinary Medical Association
Schaumburg, Ill.

Kathleen Schoen kschoen@cobar.org

Director, Family Violence Program
Colorado Bar Association
Colorado Alliance for Cruelty Prevention
Denver, Colo.

Hugh Tebault III htebault@latham.org

President
The Latham Foundation
Alameda, Calif.

Philip Tedeschi, MSSW, LCSW philip.tedeschi@du.edu

Clinical Director, Institute for Human-Animal Connection
University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work
Denver, Colo.