



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

The LINK-Letter

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A monthly report of news about the connections between animal abuse and other forms of violence from the National Link Coalition -- www.nationallinkcoalition.org

[Phil Arkow](#), Editor



Scottish Police, Crimestoppers Link Animal Cruelty to Domestic Violence

Scottish police are planning a new way of tackling domestic abuse by targeting people who are violent against animals. [The Herald newspaper](#) reported that detectives and Crimestoppers will encourage the public to come forward with information about animal abuse. The plan is to use suspicious pet injuries as a way to pinpoint previous domestic abuse cases and identify whether violence is likely to escalate.



“When a police officer gets sent to a domestic abuse incident they carry out a risk assessment to identify high risk victims. They look at issues such as separation, pregnancy, child custody disputes, escalation in violence, stalking and finally whether the pet has been abused by the perpetrator,” said Detective Inspector Linda Borland of the Violence Reduction Unit.

“We want to address the prevalence of abuse and the connection to pet abuse. We have already got anecdotal information about this and we’re aware it is an indicator the victim is at higher risk of repeat violence. It is also being looked at as a way of linking previous cases and the abuse of multiple partners.

“It is an issue of control. An abusive partner might abuse the pet if their partner threatens to leave. Interestingly the abusive partner will often still take the pet to the vet to be treated.”

A recent study by the Scottish SPCA said it had dealt with cases where an animal had been beaten, hanged, or even set on fire for revenge when a partner had threatened to leave.

Dr. Freda Scott-Park, past-president of the British Veterinary Association and chair of the UK’s Links group, is working with police on the issue. “There has been a paradigm shift in the way we deal with this and the Crimestoppers campaign is positive evidence of that.”

The [Edinburgh Youth Transitions Study](#) found at least three-quarters of children who were animal abusers had been violent in some other way from age 13 to 15, although this dropped to just over a half at age 16. The proportion of animal abusers who reported involvement in any other form of offending was close to 100% at age 13, 14 and 15, before declining slightly to 88% at age 16.

Teens Establish Link/Animal Abuse Hotline



In the September *LINK-Letter*, we spotlighted students in the Center for Youth Leadership at Brien McMahon High School in Norwalk, CT, who are raising awareness about The Link. The students have gone one step farther and have launched a confidential hotline for Norwalk residents to report incidents of animal cruelty.

The hotline offers a confidential alternative to calling Animal Control, said Emily Todd, 17. “There has been a proven connection that people who are cruel to animals are more likely to abuse another person,” she said. “We hope this will get more people speaking out, and reporting these cases. People may be reluctant to call the police. Maybe they don’t have the best relationship with them, maybe they’re nervous. Maybe having a hotline run by teens will be more welcoming,” she added.

Todd said that she and her classmates will check the hotline’s messages and pass them along to Norwalk Police. The students have established a second hotline to help unpaid laborers collect on wages owed.

“These are great ideas, simply because they provide options that are not currently available,” said Bob Kocienda, the director of the group.

Link Coming to Latin America



Dr. Nuria Querol i Vidas, who heads Spain’s Link programs through [GEVHA](#) (Grupo para el Estudio de la Violencia hacia Humanos y Animales), recently spoke at a forum for legislators and politicians in Mexico City, received an award from the Mexican government, and was [interviewed by CNN Mexico](#). Future Link trainings are being planned in Colombia and possibly other South American nations. The outreach is an initiative by the Swiss-based Franz Weber Foundation to improve animal laws and implement humane education in Latin America.

Alaska Drafting New Animal Care Standards

An ongoing issue for veterinarians, animal control officers, law enforcement and prosecutors is how to determine whether an incident meets acceptable minimal standards of care or whether it constitutes abuse and neglect. The Alaska State Veterinarian has begun drafting care standards for sled dogs, pets, horses, livestock, birds and exotic animals, and is encouraging the public to help shape the standards.

In a state famous for sled dogs and sub-zero temperatures, the revisions will clarify and strengthen the role of state troopers and animal control officers in neglect and abuse cases, said Asst. State Veterinarian Jay Fuller. “We need to develop standards to make it more clear to animal control officers, peace officers, veterinarians and the general public what constitutes proper, lawful and humane care,” he said.

The [preliminary draft of care standards](#) is expected to change as the public shares its input.

Ground Broken for Orlando Domestic Violence Pet Shelter

Ground was broken Nov. 5 in Orlando, where Harbor House is building the Paws for Peace Kennel, the only on-site shelter in central Florida for animal victims of domestic violence. At right, Jada, a canine ambassador from SeaWorld, and Heather Bumgarner, also of SeaWorld, present Harbor House CEO Carol Wick with a check for \$20,000 at a dog walk that raised another \$12,000. “We’re proud to help build Harbor House’s new kennel that will help domestic abuse victims stay with their family pets and provide the animals safe harbor as well,” said Jennifer Dirscherl of SeaWorld. Orange County Animal Services awarded Harbor House a \$50,000 grant and has been instrumental in garnering awareness for the kennel project. “This new facility will be a critical tool in breaking down barriers that keep survivors of domestic abuse trapped. Keeping the entire family together with the kennel will help survivors heal. We are excited to see the community response so we can make this dream a reality for central Florida,” said Wick.



The Link In the Literature

Psychiatric and Demographic Correlates of Childhood Cruelty to Animals



Barbara W. Boat, Ph.D.

In a retrospective study of psychiatric intake assessments for children and adolescents, Barbara W. Boat and other researchers at the University of Cincinnati reported that youths with histories of animal cruelty were 2.45 times more likely to have experienced problems with peers, 5.37 times more likely to have perpetrated bullying, 2.81 times more likely to have experienced sexual abuse, and 2.3 times more likely to have a history of sexually acting out, than a control group of non-animal abusers. Animal-abusing children were found to be at greater risk for conduct-disordered behaviors. As a result of the study, the pediatric hospital modified its intake form to document additional animal abuse characteristics, such as information on pet ownership, types and severity of cruelty, ages when committed, and types of animals harmed, to further delineate high-risk, maladaptive behaviors to better inform targeted interventions and treatments.

Boat, B.W., Pearl, E., Barnes, J.E., Richey, L., et al. (2011). Childhood cruelty to animals: Psychiatric and demographic correlates. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 20(7), 812-819.

An Unusual Follow-Up to Link Training

One goal of Link trainings is to bring together people and agencies that otherwise would not have a chance to share ideas. Sometimes a community training on The Link can lead to pleasant, unexpected developments:

In October, National Link Coalition coordinator Phil Arkow presented a training in South Bend, IN, for St. Joseph County prosecutors and law enforcement agencies. [Linda Myers](#), who helped initiate the event, used her new-found relationships with law enforcement officers to propose a fundraising calendar for the South Bend and Mishawaka Police K-9 Units. Photos and printing will be donated pro bono. The calendar will also honor a K-9 officer and his dog who were killed in a car accident on the way to a speeding motorist incident. Funds raised will help build a new classroom for training.



A lithograph, created of the words “German,” “Shepherd” and “Dog,” will be in the calendar.

News from Local Link Coalitions

Kansas City, MO-KS

The inaugural meeting of the Kansas City Caring Animal Network (KC-CAN) was held on Nov. 5, with National Link Coalition Coordinator Phil Arkow facilitating an energetic nucleus of 10 individuals who want to start a Link network in the two Kansas Cities. The participants came from both Kansas and Missouri, and were equally divided among animal welfare, child welfare and domestic violence agencies. The group identified over 100 local organizations and individuals, representing many professions and specializations, who might be enlisted to work in collaborations. Initial activities include: assisting the Rose Brooks domestic violence shelter to build dog and cat kennels on-site for the animal survivors of family violence; and creating a Facebook page to educate the public and professionals. The coalition is an outgrowth of trainings by the [Animals and Society Institute](#) to build a corps of therapists using AniCare and AniCare Child assessments and interventions for animal cruelty offenders. Local organizer [Heddie Leger](#) is coordinating the next meeting, scheduled for Jan. 12, 2012.



KC-CAN participants brainstorm lists of child welfare, domestic violence, criminal justice, and animal welfare organizations to be contacted about a Link coalition in Kansas City.

Bloomfield, CT

Connecticut Safe Pet, a pilot program to protect pets in domestic violence situations by offering medical, rehabilitative and foster home care, has been suspended due to financial constraints. The program had been operated by Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary. Safe Pet founder [Annie Chittenden](#) sadly reports that she was unable to afford all the out-of-pocket costs involved. “I did all I could to give it life and keep it alive, and am glad that we were able to assist hundreds of pets and their families and save many lives,” she writes. “Unfortunately, the political and economic obstacles ultimately proved to be too great for me to overcome at this stage in my life. I still hope that someday, someone younger with the necessary financial support and the courage to fight all the political battles will be willing to pick up the ball the carry it forward.”

Leavenworth, KS



If you THINK your friend, a child, an elder, or an animal is being abused,

You may be right.

Make a call.

You could save a life.

Leavenworth County Link, a collaboration between the [Leavenworth County Humane Society](#) and the [Alliance Against Family Violence](#), is increasing awareness of The Link by distributing printed materials. Posters, brochures, and four bookmarks teach people how to recognize domestic violence, elder abuse, animal abuse, and child physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. Organizer [Crystal Swann Blackdeer](#) reports that following an initial training session presented by the National Link Coalition’s Phil Arkow, the group held six monthly organizational meetings and currently meets quarterly. The Humane Society is represented at AAFV events, and regularly includes Link materials in its newsletters. An AAFV person is certified to do AniCare assessments and treatments for cruelty offenders. “What we’d like to work on next is getting in to the schools to do in-service training for teachers, and into the police and sheriff’s departments to train their officers and animal control personnel,” says Blackdeer.



Hands are for holding and helping, not for hurting.

Abuse hurts everyone.

Please report suspected abuse.

Link Activity Under Way in Louisiana

[The People's Advocate of Southwest Louisiana](#) is leading an effort to form alliances among agencies and organizations in the Lake Charles area that investigate and prosecute incidents of domestic violence against all vulnerable family members – women, children and animals. Lesley Ashworth, Dr. Barbara Boat, Angela Downes, and Kathryn Destreza kicked off the first of what are planned to be annual conferences entitled “Preventing Family Violence: Make the Link, Break the Cycle.” Executive Director [Beth Zilbert](#) reports the workshop was a great success with productive breakout sessions that identified strategies to be implemented in Lake Charles.

THE LINK IN THE LEGISLATURES:

Link Bills We're Watching

PET PROTECTION ORDERS:



NEW JERSEY – A1633/S540, which would allow judges to include pets in domestic violence protection orders, has passed both the Assembly and Senate Judiciary Committees.



MASSACHUSETTS - S682, which would include pets in protection orders, has been referred to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary. State Rep. Cory Atkins has also introduced **Budget Amendment 753** into debate. The measures would enable judges to order an alleged abuser to “refrain from abusing, threatening, taking, interfering with, transferring, encumbering, concealing, harming, or otherwise disposing of the animal.”



OHIO - H25, which would include animals in domestic violence and anti-stalking protection orders, passed the House on June 21 and has gone to the Senate Judiciary/Criminal Justice Committee. The bill would also increase penalties for animal cruelty, and include provisions for psychological assessment and counseling for animal abusers.

OFFENDER REGISTRIES: Several bills have been introduced that would include individuals convicted of animal cruelty in registries or databases:



PENNSYLVANIA - Two bills address animal abuse offender registries. **H354** would require felony offenders to register with the county sheriff within 10 days of residence and annually thereafter for 15 years. Failure to register would be a Class 3 felony. The sheriff would be responsible for notifying every residence, business, school and animal shelter within a half-mile radius. The State Police would maintain a central registry. **S921** is more comprehensive and also addresses illegal use of registry database information; registration would be required for misdemeanor as well as felony offenders, and be required for 10 years. Registrants would pay a \$50 fee.



NEW YORK - A1766 would create a database of all animal cruelty and fighting crimes to be maintained in “a manner that facilitates analysis.” It would record names of all offenders convicted of cruelty or fighting, who pled guilty to another charge in satisfaction of the animal charge, or whose cruelty or fighting charges were not dismissed on the merits. The database would be available to law enforcement, prosecution, and humane officials. Two other bills – **A299** and **S2015** – would create an animal abuser registry of adults convicted of felony abuse in New York or other states. Abusers would

register with county sheriffs within 10 days of residence and annually for 15 years thereafter. Failure to comply would be a Class E felony. Sheriffs would be responsible for notifying every residence, business, school and animal shelter within a half-mile radius. The state Division of Criminal Justice Services would maintain the central registry.

Link Training Opportunities

Coming Soon to a City Near You...

Washington, DC – Nov. 16-19: Nuria Querol i Vinas will present a paper, “Implementation of the Multidisciplinary Program for Woman Victims of Domestic Violence and Their Companion Animals” at the [American Society of Criminology](#) annual conference.

London, UK – Nov. 23: The Links Group UK will hold a [conference](#), “Joining the Dots: The Link Between the Abuse of Vulnerable People and Animals,” featuring 11 speakers. Topics include: non-accidental injury in people and animals; a critical review of Link evidence; the Link in homicide prevention; confidentiality; pet fostering; and guidance for veterinarians.

(Online) – Dec. 7: Diane Balkin and Dr. Rob Reisman will present a free webinar on “The Veterinarian as Expert Witness in Animal Abuse Cases” in a [webinar series](#) presented by the National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse, a program of the National District Attorneys Association, in partnership with the ASPCA and the Animal Legal Defense Fund.

Phoenix, AZ – Jan. 20, 2012: Allie Phillips will present on “The Linkages between Violence to People and Animals” at the [Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys’ Advisory Council](#) winter conference.

Washington, DC – Feb. 28-Mar. 1, 2012: Allie Phillips will train on “Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T)” at the [2nd World Conference on Women’s Shelters](#).

Camden County, NJ – Mar. 11, 2012: Phil Arkow will train volunteers of the Center for Family Services’ [Services Empowering Rights of Victims](#) program on The Link.

Harford County, MD – Apr. 27, 2012: Allie Phillips will present on “Caught in the Cross-Fire: When the Abuse of Animals Co-Occurs with Family Violence.”

Calgary, AB, Canada – May 6-9, 2012: Phil Arkow will present a workshop on “Kids, Critters and Sexual Abuse” at the [Canadian Society for the Investigation of Child Abuse](#) biennial conference.

About the National Link Coalition

The [National Link Coalition](#) is an informal network of individuals and organizations addressing the intersections between animal abuse and other forms of violence 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:

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