



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

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A monthly report of news about the connections between animal abuse, cruelty and neglect and other forms of violence

www.nationallinkcoalition.org

[Phil Arkow](#), Editor



Report Details Domestic Violence/Animal Abuse Links, Triggers Multidisciplinary Alliance in Alberta, Canada

The Alberta SPCA has released a landmark research report, [Inside the Cruelty Connection: The Role of Animals in Decision-Making by Domestic Violence Victims in Rural Alberta](#). The study by Drs. Donna Crawford and Veronika Bohac Clarke, culminates a year-long survey of 296 women residing in five rural and suburban women's shelters in the Canadian province.



The 116-page study addressed three main concerns: (1) how ownership of companion or livestock animals affects the decision-making of domestic violence victims; (2) how children are impacted by animal abuse; and (3) what steps can be taken to address the animal abuse/domestic violence links.

While most of the findings are not dissimilar to studies conducted in other North American jurisdictions, they nonetheless point out the difficulties encountered in such situations. Key findings include:

- **36%** of abused women with animals reported that their abuser threatened and/or harmed animals – and **85%** of such threats were carried out.
- **85%** of women with children whose animals were threatened reported that the children witnessed the incident – and in half of those cases, it was considered to be the child's own pet.
- **27%** of abused women with animals were afraid to seek help out of concern for their animals; more than half of these delayed leaving because of their animal(s).

“As the provincial humane society, the Alberta SPCA has a unique perspective of the multi-faceted relationships between people and animals in all areas of the province. This project harkens back to the birth of the humane movement in Alberta, when in 1904 Louise McKinney encouraged humane education and formation of humane societies as a way to counteract domestic violence. We are proud to continue in that tradition,” said Tim Battle, Director of Education.

To move forward, the SPCA has formed a multi-disciplinary group to examine the obstacles and gaps in service, and to suggest solutions that won't add to the burden of organizations currently helping both human and animal victims of domestic violence. The Alberta Alliance for the Safety of Animals and People (AASAP) is comprised of professionals from the law enforcement, social services, veterinary, health, animal welfare, legal education and other communities.

Therapy Dogs for Child Sexual Assault Victims Promoted

The concept of using therapy dogs to help forensic investigators and law enforcement officials interview children who have been victims of sexual assault or witnesses to crimes got a big boost in the Denver, Colo. area recently, when [Channel 9/KUSA](#) broadcast a 3-minute feature, and the [Denver Post](#) ran an extensive feature article, about “Pella,” a golden lab mix working with the Aurora police department. It took Detective Amber Urban seven years to get the Paws Assisting the Legal System (PALS) program approved by the department. Pella, who was donated by Canine Companions for Independence, is a facility dog working at Sungate Kids. “Pella brings a sense of security for the kids and has a calming effect,” said forensic examiner Lisa Cesario-Scott.



Cross-Reporting Triggers New Veterinary Social Work Opportunity

The new cross-reporting law in Connecticut (*see LINK-Letter July 2011*), in which animal control officers must report suspected child abuse to the Commissioner of Children & Families, and DCF employees must report suspected animal abuse to the Commissioner of Agriculture, has prompted a unique response. As a beginning community-wide effort to actively address the changes initiated by the new law, an MSW social work internship has been instituted at an inner-city 24-hour emergency veterinary hospital. Kate Nicoll, LCSW, founder and CEO of [Soul Friends: The Center for Human-Animal Kindness](#), reports the internship was made possible through the support of Dr. Elizabeth Strand of the [Veterinary Social Work](#) program at the University of Tennessee.

Why Should You Ask About The Link?

Link proponents have long argued that clients – juvenile offenders, child abuse victims, domestic violence survivors – are far more likely to talk about their animals than about their own issues, and that asking questions about their pets opens up channels for an immediately friendly, trusting dialogue. Dr. Kirby Wycoff, a school psychologist and post-doctoral resident/fellow at the Milton Hershey residential school for children living in poverty, recently articulated this concept and we thought it worth sharing with our readers:



“Approximately 70-80% of our population has a significant trauma history (sexual, physical, emotional abuse) and the work that is being done at the National Link Coalition is right in line with my interests and experience.”

Kirby L. Wycoff

“There is something very powerful (and chilling at times) about sitting with a child, who cannot directly articulate that they have been the victim of abuse.... but when you ask about family pets, they share with you that in a drunken rage their uncle threw the kitten out of the fourth floor apartment window... or the teenage boys whose father pulled the toe nails off his dog to get back at the son. The Link is real. I have sat in the room with kids and families where The Link tells you more about the family unit than any individual family member can or will. Just asking about animals in the home has often yielded me much more than many other clinical assessment tools.”

Massachusetts Dog First in State to Gain Domestic Violence PFA Order



“Panzer,” a six-year-old Labrador mix from Marshfield, Mass., became the first animal to be covered by Massachusetts’ new pet protection order law when Plymouth District Court Judge James Menno included the dog in a restraining order issued against a woman’s ex-boyfriend in a domestic violence case. The unnamed 38-year-old woman, who is in an out-of-state shelter, feared that her boyfriend might try to take the dog and said that he had kicked and dragged the dog in the past. Panzer is currently residing with a foster family.

Panzer is now safe

Marshfield Animal Control Officer Deni Michele Goldman told the [Patriot Ledger](#) newspaper that she is giving the woman regular updates about Panzer’s condition. “Once she gets settled into a safe place, she will have her dog again,” Goldman said.

Gov. Deval Patrick signed the pet protection bill into law on Aug. 2, making Massachusetts the 23rd state with such legislation (see [LINK-Letter August 2012](#)). Goldman called the new law “really good timing” for the woman and Panzer.

Veterinary Reporting of Suspected Animal Abuse (continued)



Diane Balkin

In the November *LINK-Letter*, we published several articles regarding new developments in the issue of the veterinarian’s rights and responsibilities to report suspected animal abuse. Diane Balkin, contract attorney for the Animal Legal Defense Fund, has compiled an excellent state-by-state summary of these provisions. The list is available on the [ALDF website](#).

Dallas Joins List of Cities with Animal Cruelty Prosecution Unit

Dallas, Texas has become the newest – and one of the largest – American communities to add a special [animal cruelty prosecution task force](#) thanks to a \$200,000 grant from a local nonprofit. [Safer Dallas/Better Dallas](#) is raising funds to sustain the new Dallas County District Attorney’s office program for its first year of investigating and prosecuting animal abuse cases.



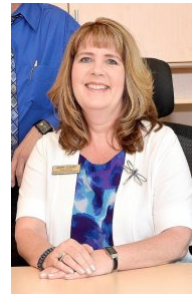
The new unit, the result of a collaboration between the D.A.’s office, the nonprofit and community animal advocates, will have one new assistant district attorney and one new criminal investigator. County Commissioner Elba Garcia cited The Link in announcing the unit which will handle more than 2,500 cases a year. “There is extensive and well-documented research that confirms the strong connection between violence to people and violence to animals,” Garcia said.

“Animal cruelty investigation and prosecution allows law enforcement officials and advocates a unique opportunity to play an integral role in protecting people and animals from violence. Cross-reporting, data-sharing, investigation, evidence collection and increasing public awareness will prove effective in the fight against animal neglect, abuse, and killing.”

News from the Coalitions

Ontario Link Coalition Revitalized

In 2001, the HAV (Human Animal Violence)-Link Coalition of Guelph and Wellington County in Ontario, Canada was organized by Mary Zilney, then a child protection supervisor, and Lorna Ronald from the Guelph Humane Society. Membership included an array of agencies and the coalition focused its efforts on a groundbreaking child protection/humane society cross-reporting protocol, and building Link awareness within social services agencies. When Zilney and Ronald left their respective positions, the coalition folded in 2005.



Mary Zilney

Recently, Zilney – now CEO of [Women’s Crisis Services of Waterloo Region](#) – has been successful in reorganizing the HAV-Link Coalition. Membership includes Women’s Crisis Services, Family & Children’s Services, Kitchener-Waterloo Humane Society, Supportive Housing of Waterloo, the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University, and an attorney and veterinarian. Additional members are being recruited selectively from police, public health, the crown attorney’s office, Ontario Works, counseling agencies, and others. “The composition of the coalition is critical to its long-term success and needs to include committed individuals with decision-making authority,” writes Zilney.

Current and planned activities include three initiatives:

- The **TAILS (Treating Animals Investing in Lives Successfully)** veterinary care program, providing pro bono preventive veterinary health clinics for animals of the homeless, those at high risk of homelessness, and domestic violence survivors.
- **Community Training and Education** program to introduce The Link to caseworkers, enhance their interview and investigative techniques, develop Link research, and explore future community collaborations.
- **Community Fostering** program to provide foster care for the animals of abused women, incarcerated individuals, and hospital patients.

[Speaking to a local forum](#), Zilney advised social workers to consider “the whole family system” – which includes animals – during investigations. She cited a case where a boy she was interviewing for suspected child abuse was asked about suspicious blood stains on a wall. The boy revealed that the father had thrown the family cat against the wall. “Does he hurt anybody else?” she asked. “Yes, he hurts my mom and sometimes me,” he told her.

“Out of the mouths of babes,” Zilney told the group. “Use the subject of animals to engage a child.”

Alison Scott, executive director of Family & Children’s Services, concurred. “When we assess harm to children, we need to include pets on the radar,” she said.

The Link in the Legislatures



OHIO - H25, which would have included animals in domestic violence and anti-stalking protection orders, died in the 2012 legislative session. Proponents how to revive it in 2013.

The Link in the Literature

Court Protections for Domestic Violence Victims and their Animals

Volunteers of Pro Bono Students Canada, in partnership with Student Legal Services at the University of Alberta Faculty of Law, prepared this report for the Alberta SPCA to assess the state of provincial law surrounding court protections for livestock and pets of domestic violence survivors. Emergency protection orders, Queen's Bench protection orders, court restrictions accompanying criminal charges, peace bonds, and restraining orders were reviewed. There appears to be no clear and specific provision for pets to be included in these orders, and no relevant case law, but it is theoretically possible. While animals cannot be considered family members, the court has broad discretion and can take into account any violence toward the animal. The report includes discussion of who can claim ownership of animals under Canadian property law in couples' disputes.

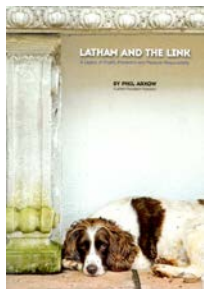
Student Legal Services of Edmonton (2012). [*Court Protections for Domestic Violence Victims and their Animals.*](#) Edmonton: Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Place-Based Differences in the Commission of Recurrent Animal Cruelty

Possible place-based differences in the development of practices of recurrent animal cruelty are suggested in this study of 180 inmates, which explored how demographic characteristics contribute to the frequency of acts of animal cruelty. Inmates from rural environments who engaged in recurrent animal cruelty were more likely than urban residents to have witnessed family members and/or friends abuse animals; respondents from rural backgrounds tended to abuse both pets and stray animals, while urban respondents tended to abuse primarily pets.

Tallichet, S.E., Hensley, C., & Evans, R.A. (2012). *Place-based differences in the commission of recurrent animal cruelty.* *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 56(8), 1286-1301.

The Latham Foundation and The Link



The Latham Foundation for the Promotion of Humane Education has long been a pioneer in Link activity. In this retrospective look at the foundation's involvement, Phil Arkow traces how the history of the humane education movement and Latham's involvement in humane education since the 1920s have continually adapted over the decades to address new issues and technologies. In the late 1980s Latham began to assert that acts of animal abuse can be indicators and predictors of escalating acts of violence against human members of the family – an idea found in Latham publications as early as 1929. The publication of several seminal books and videos, sponsorship of groundbreaking conferences, and a library of 136 articles in the quarterly Latham Letter, have provided researchers and practitioners alike with a rich corpus of invaluable Link literature. A bibliography of these articles and a chronology of the foundation's Link activities round out this rich history.

Arkow, P. (2012). *Latham and The Link: A Legacy of Cruelty Prevention and Personal Responsibility.* Alameda, Calif.: Latham Foundation.

The Link in the News

Attorney Charged with Animal Cruelty in Bitter Divorce Proceedings



James Stuart Robinson and Rufus

A Birmingham, Ala. lawyer who had previously been convicted of harassment for texting his estranged wife a photo of the family's dog with its throat slashed, and leaving a voicemail saying, "Your day is coming, girl," has also been [charged with animal cruelty](#). James Stewart Robinson, 45, surrendered to authorities after the dog was exhumed and forensic examinations were conducted. Robinson, whose earlier conviction is on appeal, had claimed that his ex-wife had killed Rufus, an American Staffordshire terrier, to keep him from gaining custody. However, a five-month forensic analysis at the [University of Florida](#) along with electronic data recovered from e-mails, texts and voicemails led authorities to conclude that Robinson had killed Rufus.

Man Charged with Trying to Shoot Girlfriend Also Charged with Animal Cruelty

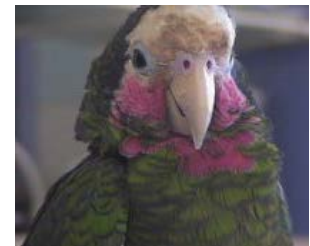
Bloomington, Ill. Judge Michael Stroh set bond at \$50,000 – more than double what prosecutors had requested – for Curtis Cleary, on charges of aggravated assault, illegal possession of a firearm, domestic battery, and animal cruelty. Cleary was accused of firing shots at his girlfriend during a domestic dispute and for starving or mistreating dozens of dead and malnourished dogs and cats.

According to the [Bloomington Pantagraph](#), Cleary's girlfriend called 911 at 1 a.m. as she fled the home amid gunfire. McLean County sheriffs and Illinois state police secured Cleary's surrender at 9 a.m. Witnesses described rooms of decaying animals they saw in the basement of his home and a nearby barn, including 60 dead cats. The girlfriend had been involved with an animal rescue group called Don't Bully My Breed. Cleary was also being held for failing to appear in court following earlier drunken driving charges.

Man Gets Six Months for Stabbing Ex-Girlfriend's Parrot with Fork

A 63-year-old Everett, Wash. man was sentenced to six months in jail for killing "Bailey," a parrot that his ex-girlfriend had had for 18 years, by stabbing it with a serving fork. Richard J. Atkinson pleaded guilty to animal cruelty and domestic violence malicious mischief charges in the Aug. 19 incident.

Snohomish County Superior Court Judge George Appel ordered Atkinson to undergo psychiatric evaluation, to pay the woman for her parrot and destroyed belongings, and to not own any animals for five years. The [Everett](#)



[Daily Herald](#) said Appel called the crime "depraved" and "hideous and barbaric." Deputy Prosecutor Paul Stern asked the court to impose a sentence that would be both punitive and preventative.

Link Cited in Apartment House Bestiality Case

The Westchester County, N.Y., District Attorney cited The Link in charging an apartment complex superintendent with allegedly entering a tenant's apartment and performing sex acts with his Labrador retriever. Kujtim Nicaj, 43, pleaded guilty on Oct. 22 to sexual misconduct and second-degree burglary as a sexually-motivated felony. "This defendant engaged in behavior that is not only reprehensible but also was abusive to someone's pet. Taking advantage of a helpless animal is an act of depravity which has often been a predictor of violence against humans," said D.A. Janet DiFiore. Nicaj faces up to 15 years in prison and must register as a sex offender.

Woman Arrested for Stabbing Boyfriend, Throwing Cat Out Window

Tracy Dimasi, 39, of New Port Richey, Fla., was arrested on charges of stabbing her boyfriend three times in the chest in an argument over his cat, which she then allegedly threw out of an open window. In the domestic dispute, she claimed the boyfriend had beat and choked her following the argument over the cat. Dimasi was being held in jail on a charge of aggravated domestic battery, according to the [Tampa Bay Times](#).



Man Charged with Battering Girlfriend... with a Python!

Police in West Springfield, Mass. charged a 34-year-old man who allegedly battered his girlfriend repeatedly with a four-foot python during a domestic altercation. [Police said](#) the suspect, Keith Paro, then threw the python into a hot tub and eventually fled the scene. The woman suffered minor injuries and the snake did not survive, he said. Paro was charged with animal cruelty, domestic assault, and assault and battery with a dangerous weapon (snake).

The incident was the second recent Link case in West Springfield. Police arrested Vicente Alvarado, 26, on Oct. 20 after he allegedly threw a kitten against a wall during an argument with his girlfriend. The kitten died from its injuries.

Sex Offender Charged in Beating Death of Dog

A Megan's Law offender listed as posing a moderate risk has been charged with animal cruelty in the beating death of a dog. Michael Rosenberg, 30, of Princeton, N.J., advertised himself as a dog trainer, animal control officer Mark Johnson told [The Princeton Packet](#). The dog, a female shepherd mix named Shyanne, suffered internal injuries and died. Rosenberg was charged with six counts of animal cruelty.

Shyanne reportedly belonged to Tracy Stanton, who gave Rosenberg \$100 for food and taking care of her dog. Two days later Rosenberg said Shyanne had collapsed. Shyanne died en route to a 24-hour emergency vet hospital where it was later discovered the dog had suffered four broken ribs.

Rosenberg received a four-year suspended sentence in 2011 on child endangerment and sexual assault charges for having a sexual relationship with a girl who was 14.

Evicted Tenant Charged with Killing Animal Control Officer



Joseph Corey

A Sacramento County, Calif. animal control officer was [shot and killed](#) by a shotgun blast fired through the door of a foreclosed property where the evicted tenant was apparently still residing. Officer Roy Marcum, 45, a 14-year veteran of the sheriff's department, had gone to the home in Galt with a bank employee to serve an eviction notice and to look after the welfare of numerous dogs and cats believed to have been left behind. The tenant, Joseph Corey, 65, surrendered to



Officer Roy Marcum

police after a 17-hour standoff. A [memorial fund](#) has been established for Marcum's children, and the [National Animal Control Association](#) has called for increased safety provisions for animal control officers.

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Coming Soon to a City or Computer Near You...

Dec. 12-13 – Surfers Paradise, Qld., Australia: Catherine Tiplady and two roundtable discussions will consider the Link between domestic violence and animal abuse at the [Australian Veterinary Forensics, Law and Animal Conference](#).

Dec. 13 – (online): Allie Phillips will present a free webinar on “Handling Community Reaction to Animal Abuse” 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.

Jan. 15, 2013 – (online): Allegheny County, Pa. Asst. District Attorney Deborah Jugan will present a free webinar on “Getting Prosecutors and Allied Professionals Involved in the Care of Seized Animal Victims” in a [webinar series](#) presented by the National District Attorneys Association’s National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse, in partnership with the ASPCA and the Animal Legal Defense Fund.

Jan. 28, 2013 – San Diego, CA: Allie Phillips will present on “Caught in the Cross Fire: When the Abuse of Animals Co-occurs with Family-Violence” at the 27th Annual [San Diego International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment](#).

Feb. 3 – Indianapolis, IN: Phil Arkow will present “Practical Guidance for Veterinarians and Their Staffs for an Effective Response to Suspected Animal Cruelty, Abuse and Neglect” at the [Indiana Veterinary Medical Association](#) Annual Meeting.

Feb. 7 – Boise, ID: Allie Phillips will train on “Effectively Handling and Responding to Animal Abuse Cases” at the [Idaho Prosecuting Attorneys Association](#)’s annual winter conference.

Feb. 21-23 – Kansas City, MO: Phil Arkow will present a program on The Link, and Maya Gupta and Nancy Bell will train on AniCare and AniCare Child, for the [KC-CAN Link Coalition](#)’s meeting on “Protecting People – Protecting Pets – Protecting Society.”

April 1-30 – various locations: April is [Child Abuse Prevention Month](#), proclaimed in 1983 and coordinated nationally by the U.S. Children’s Bureau’s Office of Child Abuse and Neglect.

April 4-6 – Virginia Beach, VA: Phil Arkow will conduct Link training at the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies annual conference. For details contact [Virginia Kilmer](#).

April 9-10 – Knoxville, TN: Elizabeth Strand and Nancy Bell will [train](#) on the AniCare Approach of assessment and treatment of animal cruelty offenders to interrupt the cycle of animal abuse and violence towards humans.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL LINK COALITION



The National Link Coalition is an informal, multi-disciplinary collaborative network of individuals and organizations in human services and animal welfare who address the intersections between animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment and elder abuse through research, public policy, programming and community awareness. We believe that human and animal well-being are inextricably intertwined and that the prevention of family and community violence can best be achieved through partnerships representing multi-species perspectives.

OUR VISION: 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.

To subscribe to The Link-Letter (free!) – Just send an e-mail to Coordinator Phil Arkow (arkowpets@snip.net) and tell us what organization you're with and where you're located.

Members of the National Link Coalition Steering Committee:

Phil Arkow

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

Lesley Ashworth

Founder/President, American Veterinary Charitable Fund
Worthington, Ohio

Diane Balkin, J.D.

Contract Attorney, Animal Legal Defense Fund
President, International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Assn.
Denver, Colo.

Barbara W. Boat, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine
Executive Director, Childhood Trust, Cincinnati Children's Hospital
Cincinnati, Ohio

Maya Gupta, Ph.D.

Executive Director, Ahimsa House, Inc.
Atlanta, Ga.

Jane A. Hunt

Violence Prevention Specialist
Loveland, Colo.

Mark Kumpf, CAWA

Past President, National Animal Control Association
Dayton, Ohio

Randall Lockwood, Ph.D.

Senior Vice President, Forensic Sciences and Anti-Cruelty Projects
ASPCA
Falls Church, Va.

Anna Melbin, MSW, MPP

Director of Network Growth & Strategy, The Full Frame Initiative
Founder, Catalyst Consulting & Training
Yarmouth, Maine

Maria Luisa O'Neill

Program Services Coordinator,
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Denver, Colo.

Emily Patterson-Kane, Ph.D.

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

Allie Phillips, J.D.

Director, National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse
Deputy Director, National Center for
Prosecution of Child Abuse
National District Attorneys Association
Alexandria, Va.

Jane A. Raymond

Representative, National Clearinghouse on Abuse
in Later Life
Madison, Wis.

Chris Risley-Curtiss, MSSW, Ph.D.

Associate Professor and
Animal-Human Interactions Coordinator,
School of Social Work, Arizona State University
Phoenix, Ariz.

Kathleen Schoen

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

Barbara Shaffer, MSW, LCSW

Senior Director of Chapter Services
Prevent Child Abuse America
Breckenridge, Colo.

Hugh Tebault III

President, The Latham Foundation
Alameda, Calif.

Philip Tedeschi, MSSW, LCSW

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

Amanda Widup, MSW

Policy Analyst, National Council of
Juvenile & Family Court Judges
Reno, Nev.