



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



Link Activity Advances in The Netherlands



Awareness about the connections between animal abuse and human violence, and programs utilizing this knowledge to better protect animals and people, are moving ahead rapidly in Holland, according to Dr. Marie-José Enders-Slegers, chair of the Dutch Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse Taskforce.

Link work was initiated following a 2009 international conference in Utrecht, where Phil Arkow (U.S.A.), Paula Boyden (U.K.), and several Dutch researchers presented information and the taskforce was founded. "At that time, the relation between animal abuse and domestic violence was unknown in our country," says Enders-Slegers. Since then, Link work has followed several primary directions:

Dr. Marie-José Enders-Slegers
chairs Dutch Link Task Force

First, there is growing public and professional awareness of the Link through press, radio and TV reports and multidisciplinary publications, workshops and lectures. Already, 26 Dutch individuals are receiving *The LINK-Letter*.

Second, "Very promising is the growing number of areas in the country where collaboration is established between animal protection officers, children's protection officers, social workers, veterinarians, council workers and police," she says. These collaborations not only enhance the awareness of The Link but also cross-educate professionals about how to notice the abuse and to learn from each other what steps to follow to end the abuse and to prevent worse.

"The most important thing is that the disciplines get to know each other, learn to work together and report to each other," she writes. Local groups in Amsterdam, Hengelo, Enschede, and Nijmegen have reported several successes using this approach, including children saved thanks to the report of an animal protection officer and vice versa.

Third, a protocol for veterinarians was introduced in 2011. Veterinarians are invited to report cases of animal abuse and other cases of family violence. Veterinarians are guided through this protocol step by step to learn where to report the abuses and how to follow up abuse cases of animals and of other family members.

The Link also has received political attention. “This year, for the first time in our Dutch history, ‘Animal Cops’ were educated and set at work as such. I had the pleasure to teach them about The Link and found a very interested audience. What touched me was that the students recognized The Link from their earlier work as police officers and told many sad stories about this phenomenon. They also noticed that probably many more problems will arise when a case is identified: where to take the animals and the family members to? There is not yet an infrastructure to rescue the animals in an adequate way.”.

The task force has established a working group, “Foster Care for Animals,” with assistance from two U.K. organizations that foster abused pets: Dogs Trust and The Links Group. A research project is also under way with KADERA (foster care for abused women and children) using Frank Ascione’s questionnaires.

“We hope to come out with results at the end of 2012. We still have to solve many problems and have founded ‘The Circle of Violence,’ a not-for-profit corporation, to have the possibility to get funding and thus to be able to continue our work,” she adds.

New Jersey SPCA Adds Forensic Vet to Staff



The growing need for forensic science and crime scene processing techniques that can withstand the rigors of animal cruelty prosecutions has led one of the oldest humane organizations in the U.S to add a new position of “forensic veterinarian” to its staff. The New Jersey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, founded in 1868, has announced that Dr. Ernest Rogers of Maplewood, NJ is joining the law enforcement division to help investigate animal abuses and solve crimes against animals.

Veterinary forensics and animal crime scene investigations are growing specialties in veterinary medicine, due in part to growing public awareness of animal abuse through TV shows like Animal Planet’s “Animal Cops” and media coverage of high profile abuse cases. The [International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association](#) was recently launched to help develop this new profession.

What Should Be the Role of Child Protective Services When Dangerous Animals are Present?

County child protective services caseworkers need to observe the presence of potentially dangerous animals in the home when assessing risks to children. A recent case in Oxford, FL, is a dramatic example:



According to the [Orlando Sentinel](#), the father of a toddler who was bitten and strangled to death in her crib by an undernourished Burmese python has brought a wrongful-death suit against the state Department of Children and Families. The suit alleges that the department should have done more to protect Shaianna Hare. The child’s mother, Jaren Hare, and her boyfriend, Charles “Jason” Darnell, were convicted of manslaughter in the case and sentenced to 12 Years in prison.

The 8’ 6” snake, Gypsy, weighed 13-1/2 pounds and was grossly underweight when it slithered from its aquarium on July 1, 2009. A medical examiner testified the snake was trying to eat the child. It is not known whether animal cruelty charges were also filed in the case.

Animal abuse, domestic violence and children’s antisocial behavior linked in Chicago

An animal cruelty case in Chicago has drawn unusual interest into the potential links between animal abuse, domestic violence and children’s antisocial behavior. On Dec. 10, the [Chicago Tribune](#) published a chilling story about a woman who said she “no longer wanted” her dog after 10 years. She was charged with animal abuse after letting it out in the cold in the East Garfield Park neighborhood where children subsequently beat it with broomsticks and baseball bats, police said.

When the incident resulted in no shortage of people calling Animal Care & Control offering to adopt the dog, [Chicago Magazine](#) columnist Whet Moser was moved by the contrast of kids immediately ready to abuse a dog and people immediately ready to save it. Moser cited a [study](#) from University of Chicago researcher Jean Decety, a [New York Times](#) magazine article, [“The Animal-Cruelty Syndrome,”](#) and noted Link authorities Randall Lockwood and Frank R. Ascione, about neurological studies examining the physical underpinnings of how empathy develops.

Lockwood believes that abusive behavior is not just learned; it has a deeper, more integral connection to child and domestic abuse. Children who have witnessed such abuse or been victimized themselves frequently engage in “abuse reactive” behaviors, Lockwood said, re-enacting what has been done to them either with younger siblings or with pets. Such children often suppress their own feelings of kindness toward a pet because they can’t bear the pain caused by their own empathy for the abused animal. Children have even been known to kill the pet themselves in order to at least have some control over what they see as the animal’s inevitable fate. Those caught in this vicious abuse-reactive cycle will not only continue to expose the animals they love to suffering merely to prove that they themselves can no longer be hurt, but they are also testing the boundaries of their own desensitization. Such children can only achieve a sense of safety and empowerment by inflicting pain and suffering on themselves and others.

Moser took this incident one step further and correlated the cruelty case with domestic violence in Chicago. He wrote that it shouldn’t be surprising that the levels of domestic battery in East Garfield Park, where the dog was found, are the highest in the city. The map (above) depicts all 2011 domestic-battery incidents (simple and aggravated). Over 3,000 incidents were recorded in the Garfield Park section.



Map of the Garfield Park neighborhood. Circles depict number of domestic violence incidents in 2011.

Several recent high profile cases vividly demonstrate the links between animal abuse and other forms of human violence. In the week between Christmas and New Year's alone, humane societies, animal services, law enforcement agencies and courts were involved with:



Animal abuse, domestic violence and child abuse...

SANDY, Utah – Police filed charges against a man accused of holding his girlfriend and their 17-month-old son hostage for five days until rescuers were tipped off by her plea for help on Facebook. Troy Reed Critchfield, 33, was charged with 12 counts of aggravated kidnapping, sodomy, rape, aggravated assault, domestic violence, child abuse and animal cruelty. Prosecutors said Critchfield had taken phones away from his girlfriend and her disabled son and disconnected the house phone to keep her from contacting anyone. Police said the woman hid in a closet and used a laptop to post the Facebook message on Christmas Eve, saying, “I am having a serious problem, and me and [my son] will be dead by morning.” The post prompted police to make a welfare check and found the injured woman. Authorities said that during the ordeal, he strangled her until she lost consciousness, hit the toddler in the head and refused to let her feed her dog.

Animal abuse and domestic violence...



ROSWELL, N.M. – Police called to a home for a violent domestic disturbance on Christmas Eve said Robert Youngblood’s wife called them from a locked bedroom saying her husband was drunk, had a gun and had shot their family dog. She told police he came into her bedroom holding their 2-year-old pit bull, Spike, by his collar, started punching the dog and yelling, “This is what you get,” according to police. [KRQE-TV](#) reported that Youngblood was arrested on an extreme animal cruelty charge, and that Spike survived the shooting.

Spike is recovering from a gunshot wound. Police said it’s unclear if the dog will be given back to the family.

Animal abuse and juvenile crime...

GALION, Ohio — Police told The Bucyrus [Telegraph-Forum](#) that a juvenile has surrendered and admitted shooting a cat that was found with an arrow through its jaw. The juvenile is likely to face misdemeanor charges for animal cruelty and discharging a firearm. Crawford County Humane Society agent Angela Chandler said this was the fifth such incident since July involving cats being shot with arrows. The cat, nicknamed Arrow Eve, had surgery to remove the arrow and appears to be doing well.

Animal abuse and hoarding...

OLALLA, Wash. — A Kitsap County couple accused of neglecting 173 animals that had to be seized from their 5-acre farm were to be charged with second-degree animal cruelty. The [Kitsap Sun](#) reported that Simon and Rosalind Bailey were accused of hoarding animals and not providing enough water or sanitary living conditions for them. An anonymous tip alerted authorities and the Kitsap County Humane Society. The animals included rabbits, chickens, ducks, quail and alpacas. Veterinarians found some animals to have matted hair and open sores from unattended wounds. A dead cow was also found on the property. All the seized animals have been placed in foster care.

Animal abuse, drugs, and child welfare...



Destin Gardner

QUINCY, Ill.— Destin Gardner, who pleaded guilty to felony animal torture and drug offenses, was sentenced to five years and 9 months in prison for videotaping his dogs attacking other animals and posting the videos on YouTube. The Quincy [Herald-Whig](#) reported that Gardner made videos of his Jack Russell terriers attacking raccoons, a rat, a hedgehog, a groundhog, an opossum and a snake. Gardner had been charged with nine counts of felony animal torture, owning an animal for sport fighting, and misdemeanor counts of cruelty to animals, depicting animal cruelty, being a felon in possession of certain dogs, and endangering the life or health of a child. He had been accused of uploading 16 videos showing animal cruelty to YouTube. Prosecutors alleged that Gardner had “actively involved his child and stepchildren involved in the making of animal torture videos,” and had sold a law enforcement informant hydrocodone pills. Gardner has prior burglary, theft and aggravated battery convictions in Missouri and Illinois. His wife, Karen Gardner, faces charges of felony animal torture and misdemeanor child endangerment and cruelty to animals. She is scheduled to have a preliminary hearing Feb. 1.

Animal abuse and bestiality...

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — A parolee convicted of animal abuse has been sentenced to serve 10 years in prison and to register as a sex offender. It is believed to be the first application of Jessica’s Law, approved by California voters in 2006 to lengthen sentences for sex offenders and place restrictions on them, in a case involving sexual abuse of an animal. Robert DeShields was ordered to serve the maximum prison sentence after being convicted of felony animal cruelty for the sexual abuse of a Chihuahua mix named “Shadow.” The [Sacramento Bee](#) reported that Shadow suffered severe injuries that required surgery and now lives in a foster home. DeShields, 55, was described by prosecutors as a chronic methamphetamine user who should be treated as a sexual offender for the rest of his life because he is a danger to society. Superior Court Judge Thadd Blizzard said the nature of the case was “inherently sexual in nature.”

Link Case in Japan

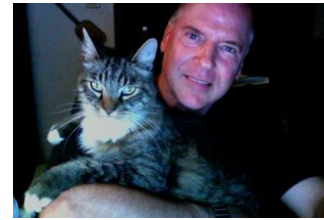
A 16-year-old boy in Saitama, Japan, who was arrested for attempting to kill a teenage girl, had boasted to his classmates of abusing cats.

According to the [Mainichi Daily News](#), the boy showed a cell phone picture of a cat with blood stains around its neck to his classmates in November. He was arrested on Dec. 5 for stabbing and injuring a 15-year-old junior high school girl in Misato. Police have also obtained information that the boy had been abusing animals and are investigating his motives.

Classmates said the boy was not subject to bullying at school and was having normal conversations with other students. However, rumors that he was abusing cats began to spread after the summer break. A student who was shown a cell phone picture of a cat by the boy said, “I thought it was gross as the cat had blood around its neck.” The student also said that the boy later took out a jar, which appeared to contain a cat’s head inside it, from his bag in a classroom, saying, “I pickled it in the water.” The student felt the boy was bragging about what he did.

Link Video Available

Four classic humane education films by animal film maker Erik Friedl – including one directly addressing The Link – have been made universally available free of charge online via [YouTube](#). The films were directed, filmed and edited by Friedl between 1983 – 1999 for the Chicago Anti-Cruelty Society, with assistance from several other animal welfare organizations. Of particular interest regarding The Link is “**Patterns of Abuse: Exploding the Cycle**,” a 23-minute film produced in 1999. Other films available are “Kiss the Animals Goodbye,” about pet overpopulation; “The Power of Compassion,” about life and death in an animal shelter; and “Protecting the Web,” about ecosystems.



National Link Coalition Listed as “One Health” Resource



Various forms of health intertwine in the One Health movement

and transform the way that human, animal, plant and ecosystem health professionals, and their related disciplines, work together.

In recent years, human healthcare, public health and veterinary medicine professionals have activated an integrative approach called “One Health.” This movement, stemming largely from the veterinary community, is a collaborative effort among multiple health science professions to work locally, nationally and globally to attain optimal health for people, domestic animals, wildlife, plants, and the environment. By building closer professional interactions, healthcare can transcend disciplinary and institutional boundaries

As this collaborative approach is similar to the National Link Coalition’s work, and since we see violence prevention as being amenable to public health solutions, the NLC is pleased to announce that we have been listed as a resource by the [One Health Commission](#). The Commission is headquartered at Iowa State University and One-Health centers are being developed across the country. We are also collaborating with the [One Health Initiative](#) organization.

According to Dr. Roger K. Mahr, past president of the AVMA and CEO of the Commission, the interdisciplinary approach is not new. It has long been a key in such fields as comparative medical research, disease surveillance, food safety and the human-animal bond. A description of One Health was published in the [Jan. 15 issue](#) of the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*.

Link Cited in New Mexico Anti-Cruelty Legislative Efforts

Two humane organizations in Las Cruces, N.M. are citing the links between animal abuse and human violence in their efforts to promote a bill amending New Mexico’s animal cruelty statutes. The [Doña Ana County Humane Society](#) and the [Humane Society of Southern New Mexico](#) are urging their members to support State Sen. Mary Jane Garcia’s proposed bill. If her bill is introduced in the 2012 legislature, it would stiffen punishments including creating a felony penalty for offenders convicted of committing cruelty in the presence of a child or who have previously been convicted of domestic violence. “It cannot be stressed enough that animal abuse certainly has far-reaching and strong influence on families affected by it,” wrote Frank Bryce, president of the HSSNM.

Veterinary Care Foundation Helps Link Victims

National Link Coalition steering committee member Lesley Ashworth has co-founded a new national charitable organization, the [Veterinary Care Foundation](#), to help offset the expenses of veterinarians who provide *pro bono* services to animals in need. These services include caring for pets of families in crisis, animals dislocated due to disasters, police/fire and service animals, and other good Samaritan cases.



Donations to the 501c3 can be earmarked to assist a specific participating veterinarian or placed in a general fund to help many clinics. Veterinarians pay dues and enroll as members to qualify for grants.

Based in Columbus, OH, and Tampa, FL, “the foundation was created to provide veterinarians with a simple and effective way to offset their costs of offering low- or no-cost services to clients and to afford the practice the ability to expand its philanthropic role within the community,” she said. Often, this includes caring for animals who are victims of domestic violence.

Ashworth was director of the Columbus Prosecutor’s Office Domestic Violence Unit for 27 years. In 2005 she started Safe Haven for Pets in Franklin County and served as Executive Director for SAFE (Safety for Animals and Families in Emergencies) operating in Northeast Ohio. She was a Consultant-Educator for the American Humane Association and also serves on HAAWC (Human-Animal Advocacy and Wellness Center) and the Ohio Domestic Violence Network Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse sub-committee.

Link Cited in Push for Animal Abuse Offender Registries

Citing Link studies that animal abusers are five times more likely to commit violent crimes against people and four times more likely to commit property crimes, the [Animal Legal Defense Fund](#) (ALDF) has launched an extensive campaign to expose animal cruelty offenders who may pose ongoing threats to animals and humans.



The campaign, “Expose Animal Abusers,” has its own [website](#). It offers model legislation to create animal cruelty offender registries requiring mandatory registration and community notification for convicted abusers. Modeled after “Megan’s Law” statutes for sex offenders, these laws would alert the public to their whereabouts and allow animal shelters to more thoroughly screen potential adopters.

Since 2001, three New York counties – Albany, Rockland and Suffolk – have enacted ordinances. In 2011, bills were introduced in 18 states: Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia and Washington. Previously, bills were also introduced in California, Colorado, Louisiana, and New Jersey. None of these bills is believed to have been enacted as yet.

“In story after heartbreaking story, abusers repeat their violent crimes against helpless animals, and often go on to victimize people as well,” said Stephan Otto, ALDF’s director of legislative affairs. “Animal abuse is not only a danger to our cats, dogs, horses, and other animals, but also to people, said ALDF Executive Director Stephen Wells. “Many animal abusers have a history of domestic violence or other criminal activity, and there is a disturbing trend of animal abuse among our country’s most notorious serial killers.”

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.



MASSACHUSETTS - S682, would include pets in protection orders. 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.

OTHER



FEDERAL – H.R. 2492 (Animal Fighting Spectator Prohibition Act of 2011) would amend the Animal Welfare Act to prohibit any person from knowingly attending an animal fighting venture or causing a minor to attend such a venture. Offenders would be subject to a fine and/or imprisonment for up to a year for each violation; and a fine and/or imprisonment for up to three years for causing a minor to attend such venture. The bill, with 136 sponsors (101 Democrats and 35 Republicans) representing 34 states, is in the House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security.

Link Training Opportunities

Coming Soon to a City Near You...

(Online) – Jan. 17: Ken Shapiro and Bea Friedlander of the [Animals and Society Institute](#) will present a free webinar on “The AniCare Approach for Treating Animal Abuse: What It Is and How You Can Use It” in a [webinar series](#) of 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: Allie Phillips will present on “The Linkages between Violence to People and Animals” at the [Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys’ Advisory Council](#) winter conference.

Denver, CO – Jan. 27: Kath Schoen, [Holly Counter Beaver](#) and Candise Winder of the Colorado Alliance for Cruelty Prevention will train on The Link at the Colorado Adult Protection Supervisors meeting.

Philadelphia, PA – Jan. 27: The [Pennsylvania Bar Institute](#) will conduct a training on “Violence Against Animals/Violence Against Humans: Examining The Link,” with simulcasts in Allentown, Doylestown, West Chester, Mechanicsburg and Pittsburgh.

Research Triangle, NC – Feb. 7: Phil Arkow will speak on “The Impact of The Link for Health Professionals” at the [One Health Intellectual Exchange Group](#).

(Online) –Feb. 9: Denver District Attorney Mitch Morrissey will present a free webinar on “Non-Human DNA in Criminal Cases” in a [webinar series](#) of 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.

(Online) – Feb. 23: Phil Arkow will present a webinar on “Implications of The Link for Child Welfare Practice” for the [Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth & Family Services](#).

Washington, DC – Feb. 28-Mar. 1: 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: Phil Arkow will train volunteers of the Center for Family Services’ [Services Empowering Rights of Victims](#) program on The Link.

Lake Ozark, MO – Mar. 16: Phil Arkow will train the [Missouri Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers](#) on “Women’s Best Friend: Social Work and the Domestic Violence/Animal Abuse Link.”

Austin, TX – Mar. 19: Belinda Smith of the Harris County DA’s Office and Diane Vines of the Children’s Assessment Center will present on The Link at the [Texas Unites for Animals](#) conference.

Gainesville, FL – Mar. 24-25: 16 speakers will discuss psychology, health, animal behavior, investigation, prosecution, and evidence handling issues of animal hoarding at the Maddie’s [Veterinary Forensics Conference](#) at the University of Florida.

(Online) –April 12: [Franklin D. McMillan, DVM, DACVIM](#), director of well-being studies at Best Friends Animal Society, will present a free webinar on “The Psychological Aspects of Maltreated Animals” in a [webinar series](#) of 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.

Erie, PA – Apr. 20: Phil Arkow will conduct a training on The Link for [Gateway Rehabilitation Center](#).

Harford County, MD – Apr. 27: 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: Phil Arkow will present a workshop on “Kids, Critters and Sexual Abuse” at the [Canadian Society for the Investigation of Child Abuse](#) biennial conference.

(Online) – May 9: Allie Phillips will conduct a webinar on “Children Exposed to Animal Abuse” for the [National Children’s Alliance](#).

(Online) – May 24: Scott Heiser, Esq., of the [Animal Legal Defense Fund](#), will present a free webinar on “Common Issues Law Enforcement and Prosecutors Confront When Investigating and Litigating ‘Puppy Mill’ Cases” in a [webinar series](#) of 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.

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:

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