



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

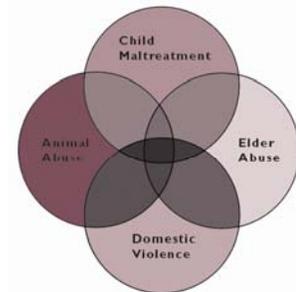
Working together to stop violence against people and animals

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***A monthly report of news about the connections between
animal abuse and other forms of violence***

www.nationallinkcoalition.org

[Phil Arkow](#), Editor



Including Pet Abuse Histories in Domestic Violence Fatality Reviews

According to the [National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative](#), a clearinghouse and resource center, domestic violence fatality reviews are a deliberative process for: identifying homicides and suicides caused by domestic violence; examining systemic interventions in the family of the deceased; considering altered systemic response to avert future domestic violence deaths; and developing coordinated community prevention and intervention initiatives to eradicate domestic violence.

With research showing that actual or threatened harm to animals is a significant risk factor that a batterer will kill his/her partner and is a barrier that keeps victims from leaving abusive situations, a few Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams are including histories of animal abuse in their data collection forms. Whether these data have ever been compiled, or if animal care/control agencies are regularly included in these review teams, is unclear.

Fatality Review questionnaires in California (Contra Costa and Solano Counties) and Florida (Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, and Pinellas Counties) include questions about the perpetrator's history of animal abuse or threats to the animal among lists of many potential risk factors.

In Knox County, TN, team members inquire about the presence of animals in the home, whether any animals were abused, and whether cruelty charges were filed. Animal Control is listed among the community systems that might have been involved with the decedent.

The Virginia Department of Health's Fatality and Review Team protocol lists pet abuse among 24 primary risk and lethality indicators in evaluating whether a batterer will kill his/her partner, other family members, or him/herself.

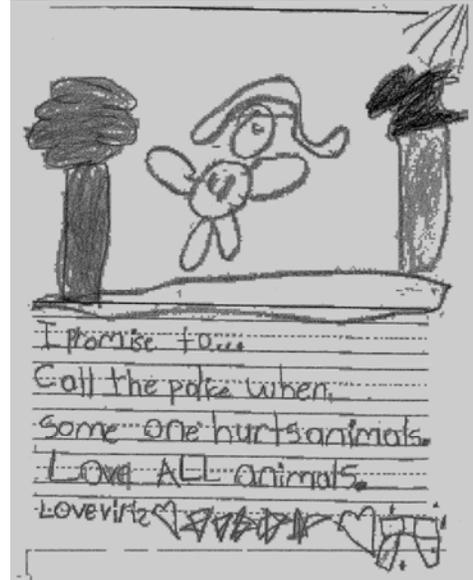
The Seattle, WA Police Department's list of risk factors for domestic violence homicides lists "threats to kill, or actually killing or injuring pet," among 17 risk factors.

The LINK-Letter invites input from our readers to identify other Fatality Review Teams where questions about pet abuse are routinely included, and whether these histories have been tabulated to help establish the incidence of animal abuse in domestic violence homicides.

Can Animals Teach Children Empathy?

Humane educators have long attempted to teach children to treat all living creatures with respect as the first step in inhibiting violent tendencies. But they have long been stymied by trying to convey the concept of empathy and by a lack of evaluations to determine whether such programs are successful.

[Dr. Julie Sprinkle \(Hill\)](#), in the Social Work department at Appalachian State University, evaluated the effectiveness of [Healing Species](#), a series of eleven 45-minute weekly sessions using a rescued shelter animal as the teacher. Healing Species was founded by a criminal attorney who noticed two common traits in many of the violent offenders she defended: lack of empathy and childhood histories of animal abuse. Children connect the animal's story to human experience and learn grieving, empathy, self-responsibility, sharing, cooperating, and service to others.



A teacher taking Chris Risley-Curtiss' class on Assessment & Treatment of Animal Abuse at Arizona State University conducted a humane education program to teach her 1st-grade pupils to report animal cruelty to authorities.

The [study](#) measured the effect of Healing Species on 310 4th-, 5th- and 6th-graders' beliefs about aggression, empathy, aggression and violence. The curriculum was found to reduce violent behaviors (through a 55% decrease in suspensions and a 66% decrease in teachers' perceptions of students' aggressive behaviors). Teachers and guidance counselors reported an 80% - 100% improvement in students' being able to walk away from fights, concentrate in class, learn appropriate ways of reacting to a bully, and take responsibility. The largest improvements in empathy came among girls (who were said to receive gender role socialization that discourages acceptance of aggression), younger children (said to be more receptive to empathy promotion programs), and non-minority students (said to come from higher socio-economic groups and experience fewer stressors and more protective mechanisms in their environments).

Sprinkle theorized that the dogs overcame one of the largest barriers to successful violence prevention programs – participant apathy – through a unique form of hands-on, experiential education. The dogs helped students to consider the thoughts and feelings of others as a way to identify and practice prosocial behaviors, modeling of which is often absent in their homes.

Sprinkle, J. (2008). Animals, empathy, and violence: Can animals be used to convey principles of prosocial behavior to children? *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 6(1), 47-58.

Link Coalition Forming in Austin

Deep in the heart of Texas, a group of concerned individuals is attempting to start a Link coalition. The Austin Coalition Against Family and Animal Abuse will hold its organizational meeting on March 27. Contact [Georganne Duron](#) for details.

Veterinary Forensics Getting Increasing Recognition

Further testimony to the growing acceptance of veterinary forensics as a recognized specialty in the prosecution of animal cruelty crimes has come from the [American Academy of Forensic Sciences](#), the largest professional forensic sciences organization with 7,000 members worldwide. [Randy Lockwood](#), Senior Vice President for Forensic Sciences and Anti-Cruelty Projects at the ASPCA, reports that the General Section of AAFS voted unanimously to accept veterinarians into the section. Previously, veterinarians were welcome into the Pathology/Biology Section of AAFS, but some veterinarians are not able to meet that section's more demanding research, publication and teaching requirements. The action was taken at the Academy's recent annual conference in Atlanta, which had 4,300 attendees.

Forensic Veterinarian Recognized

Patricia Norris, DVM, was recently profiled in the Las Cruces, NM [Sun-News](#) for her unique work as a veterinarian for the Doña Ana County Sheriff's Department. Norris is believed to be the only veterinary forensic specialist in the U.S. working for a law enforcement agency. A Link proponent, Norris serves with the county's animal cruelty task force and is a consultant to the firm producing A&E's "Hoarders" TV program. She has filmed six episodes in Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, and New Jersey.



Baltimore Cat Killer Sentenced

A cruelty case that stretched from Baltimore to New York ended with Ethan Weibman, 20, being sentenced to 3 years in jail (with all but 90 days suspended), 3 years probation, no contact with animals, psychiatric assessment, and a \$5,000 fine.

The case began in March, 2011 when Weibman adopted a cat named Lucy from the Maryland SPCA. He returned with the dead cat, seeking to adopt another. A necropsy confirmed that the cat had been shot with a pellet gun. Two weeks later he adopted another cat from a Maryland PetSmart and hours later took it to a Fels Point clinic with injuries the veterinarians suspected were due to blunt-force trauma.

Clinic staff notified police and animal control. A police investigation was begun and it was believed that Weibman may have killed five more cats obtained from as far away as New York. A "Do Not Adopt" message was spread nationwide.

Weibman was arrested and charged with two counts of felony animal mutilation and one count of discharge of a pellet gun. In October, 2010 he pled guilty to these counts, while continuing to deny wrongdoing. The ASPCA worked with Baltimore States Attorney Jennifer Etheridge in drafting sentencing recommendations, seeking the maximum 3-year sentence. The successful resolution of this case shows how concerned shelter staff and veterinarians, responsive police and dedicated prosecutors can work together to achieve justice in a cruelty case.

Update: Link Case in Japan

In January, we reported on a 17-year-old boy in Saitama, Japan, who was arrested for attempting to stab and kill two teenage girls, and who had boasted to his classmates of abusing cats. The Saitama District Public Prosecutor's Office has announced that [the boy will undergo a psychiatric examination](#) after telling police he wanted to kill a person because killing animals was no longer satisfying. The boy was arrested following the stabbing of two girls, aged 8 and 15. Police and prosecutors are also concerned because in addition to killing two cats, he was also charged with setting fire to a motorcycle.

THE LINK IN THE LITERATURE

Necropsies Describe Non-Accidental Injuries in Cats

A Brazilian study of 644 cats submitted for necropsies to the Department of Pathology at the University of São Paulo School of Veterinary Medicine reported that 191 (29.7%) presented lesions highly suspect of animal cruelty, particularly poisoning (75.4%) and blunt force trauma (22%). Juvenile cats were most likely to be affected. With community and domestic violence levels high in Brazil, the authors recommend that cruelty to animals should be considered as an important parameter and that non-accidental lesions should be considered as evidence of malicious actions. They suggested the role of the veterinary clinician and pathologist should be re-evaluated, as their work may be decisive to elucidate cruelty to animals and provide evidence for criminal investigations.

-- de Siqueira, A., Cassiano, F.C., Landi, M. F., Marlet, E.F., & Maiorka, P.C. (2011, May 2-4). Non-accidental injuries found in necropsies of domestic cats: A review of 191 cases. Presentation at 4th Annual Veterinary Forensic Sciences Conference, Orlando, FL.

THE LINK IN THE LEGISLATURES

Kansas Considers Animal Control Officers as Mandated Reporters

In the wake of the child sex abuse allegations emerging out of Pennsylvania State University, several states have introduced bills to add academic, nonprofit and religious figures to the lists of those required to report suspected child abuse. Kansas Rep. Melanie Meier (D – Leavenworth) has added a progressive amendment to HB 2533 which would include animal control officers among Kansas' mandated reporters. If enacted, Kansas would join California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia as jurisdictions where animal control officers and humane investigators are mandated reporters.

PET PROTECTION ORDERS:



FLORIDA: Sen. Mike Fasano has introduced **SB288** which would allow courts to issue a domestic violence protection-from-abuse order to include any animals in the household, and making it a first-degree misdemeanor to violate the order. The bill would include acts or threats of physical injury to an animal, or placing a family member in fear of an animal's being harmed, within Florida's definition of domestic violence. Fasano has also introduced **SB618, "Dexter's Law,"** which would create a state registry of animal abuse offenders within the Department of Law Enforcement.



KENTUCKY: Reps. Joni Jenkins and Kelly Flood have introduced **HB 233** which would allow the court to direct the care, custody or control of any pet belonging to either party or a minor child in the household. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



MASSACHUSETTS - S682, which would include pets in protection orders, has been referred to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.



OHIO - H25, which would include animals in domestic violence and anti-stalking protection orders, passed the House 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.

CROSS-REPORTING



KANSAS: HB 2533 would add animal control officers to the list of professionals mandated to report suspected child abuse.

OTHER



FEDERAL – H.R. 2492/S. 1947 (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 House bill has 187 sponsors and is in the House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security. The Senate bill has seven cosponsors and is in the Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee.

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Coming Soon to a City Near You...

(Online) – Mar. 14: Allie Phillips, J.D., Director of the National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse, will present a free webinar on “Foreclosure Pets: Investigating and Prosecuting the Abandonment of Pets” in a [webinar series](#) presented by the NCPAA, a program of the National District Attorneys Association, in partnership with the ASPCA and the Animal Legal Defense Fund.

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.”

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.

Lawrence, KS – Mar. 27: Midge Grinstead will discuss the links between child abuse and animal abuse at the McKinney-Vento Summit for Homeless Liaisons at the University of Kansas. Contact [Tabor Medill](#) for details.

(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](#) 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.

York, PA – April 17: Phil Arkow will conduct a training on The Link for community human services leaders under the auspices of the [York County SPCA](#).

Erie, PA – April 20: Phil Arkow will conduct a training on The Link for community human services leaders under the auspices of [Gateway Rehab – Erie](#).

Kansas City, MO – April 20: Kansas City’s Link network, KC-CAN (Caring for All Network) will meet. Contact [Heddie Leger](#) for details.

Edmonton, AB, Canada – Apr. 24: Tim Battle of the [Alberta SPCA](#) will present a session at the *Moving Forward On Domestic Violence* conference on “Helping Human and Animal Victims of Domestic Violence” which will incorporate results from the Alberta SPCA’s research at women’s shelters across Alberta and a progress report from the provincial task force looking into establishing a pet-safekeeping network and legal safeguards for animal-owning victims of domestic violence.

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](#).

Raleigh, NC – May 22-24: Lesley Ashworth will present a workshop on Domestic Violence and Pet Abuse at the [North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)’s biennial conference.

(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](#) 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.

Orlando, FL – Aug. 2: Allie Phillips will present on “Caught in the Cross Fire: When the Abuse of Animals Co-Occurs with Family Violence” at the [Florida Crimes Against Kids](#) conference.

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.

Members of the National Link Coalition Steering Committee:

<u>Phil Arkow</u>	Consultant, ASPCA; Animals and Society Institute; Chair, Animal Abuse & Family Violence Prevention Project, The Latham Foundation, Stratford, N.J.
<u>Lesley Ashworth</u>	Founder/President, American Veterinary Charitable Fund, Worthington, Ohio
<u>Barbara W. Boat, Ph.D.</u>	Associate Professor, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine Executive Director, Childhood Trust, Cincinnati Children's Hospital
<u>Maya Gupta, Ph.D.</u>	Executive Director, Ahimsa House, Inc., Atlanta, Ga.
<u>Jane A. Hunt</u>	Violence Prevention Specialist, St Paul, Minn.
<u>Mark Kumpf, CAWA</u>	Past President, National Animal Control Association, Dayton, Ohio
<u>Randall Lockwood, Ph.D.</u>	Senior Vice President, Forensic Sciences and Anti-Cruelty Projects, ASPCA, Falls Church, Va.
<u>Anna Melbin, MSW, MPP</u>	Founder, Catalyst Consulting & Training, Yarmouth, Maine
<u>Emilie Meyer, J.D.</u>	Associate Attorney, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Reno, Nev.
<u>Maria Luisa O'Neil</u>	Program Services Coordinator, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Denver, Colo.
<u>Emily Patterson-Kane, Ph.D.</u>	Animal Welfare Scientist, Animal Welfare Division, American Veterinary Medical Association, Schaumburg, Ill.
<u>Allie Phillips, J.D.</u>	Director, National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse Deputy Director, National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse National District Attorneys Association, Alexandria, Va.
<u>Chris Risley-Curtiss, MSSW, Ph.D.</u>	Associate Professor and Animal-Human Interactions Coordinator, School of Social Work, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ
<u>Barbara Shaffer, MSW, LCSW</u>	Senior Director of Chapter Services, Prevent Child Abuse America, Breckenridge, Colo.
<u>Kathleen Schoen</u>	Director, Family Violence Program, Colorado Bar Association Colorado Alliance for Cruelty Prevention, Denver, Colo.
<u>Hugh Tebault III</u>	President, The Latham Foundation, Alameda, Calif.
<u>Philip Tedeschi, MSSW, LCSW</u>	Clinical Director, Institute for Human-Animal Connection, University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work, Denver, Colo.