



# NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

**The LINK-Letter Vol. 10, No. 7 July 2017**

*A monthly report of news from THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER*



**ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE**



[www.NationalLinkCoalition.org](http://www.NationalLinkCoalition.org)

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## THE LINK AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

### Pennsylvania Cites Link in Enhancing Cruelty Penalties

Pennsylvania legislators cited the National District Attorneys Association's [report on the Link](#) between violence to animals and people in enacting the most sweeping comprehensive overhaul of the state's anti-cruelty statutes in several decades.

"It's become abundantly clear that our current animal abuse statute and penalties are inadequate and must be updated," wrote Rep. Todd Stephens in introducing **HB 1238** last January. "This is especially concerning because of the links between animal abuse and other forms of abuse."

The measure, succeeding where numerous earlier efforts to update the state's archaic Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement provisions had failed, updates and clarifies Pennsylvania's animal cruelty statute and, most significantly, increases the penalties for abusing an animal. It maintains minor crimes against animals as summary offenses but ensures that more serious acts are subject to misdemeanor charges and provides that anyone convicted of the most egregious acts of animal abuse will be subject to felony charges. Previously, only animal fighting, serious abuse of zoo animals and endangered species, and repeated serious abuse of cats or dogs were subject to felony penalties.

The new law provides for escalating penalties for repeat offenders. Officials noted that under the existing system only 60 cases of animal cruelty are reported each year in a state with 12.8 million people. The American Veterinary Medical Association estimates Pennsylvania pet population at more than 2.4 million dogs and 3.5 million cats, plus other species. Officials were unable to estimate how the new statutes might impact the number of future arrests, convictions and sentences.



**Gov. Tom Wolf holds Libre, a Boston terrier that was left for dead at a Lancaster dog-breeding facility last year, as Libre's owner Janine Guido of Monroe Township (left) and Kristen Tullo, Pennsylvania state director of the HSUS, look on.**

The new law will allow courts to order convicted offenders to undergo psychological or psychiatric evaluation and treatment, to order the forfeiture of animals and prohibit future ownership of animals. Penalties range from 90 days in jail and a \$300 fine to seven years in jail and a \$15,000 fine.

The bill was nicknamed Libre's Law, as were similar measures introduced previously that failed. It was named for Libre, a puppy suffering from extreme neglect rescued from a farm near Quarryville, Pa.

The bill passed the House by a vote of 167-20 and the Senate by a unanimous 49-0 vote. Gov. Tom Wolf signed it on June 28 and the new law is slated to take effect 60 days following his signature.

The National District Attorneys Association's [guidebook for criminal justice professionals](#), "*Understanding the Link between Violence to Animals and People*," written by Allie Phillips, detailed how:

- Animal abuse presents a risk of child abuse
- Animal violence may predict future violence against people
- Animal abuse is used to threaten human victims
- Animal abuse is used to prevent families from leaving the abusive home
- The co-occurrence of multiple forms of violence (including violence toward animals) increases future violence.

### **Veterinarians Given Immunity for Reporting Abuse**

Pennsylvania's overhaul of its animal cruelty enforcement statutes includes a new provision, 18 Pa.C.S.A. § 5556, granting immunity from civil liability for veterinarians, and veterinary technicians and assistants who report, in good faith and during the normal conduct of business, suspected violations of the cruelty statutes.

Pennsylvania currently is one of only 15 states that specifically neither mandates nor permits veterinarians and/or their personnel to report suspected animal abuse and neglect. The state is believed to have an unusual provision requiring veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty only if they are aware of repeated abuse or neglect carried out by another veterinarian; there is no similar mandate requiring veterinary personnel to report suspected cruelty committed by a client or anyone other than a practitioner. The issue of immunity from civil liability for good-faith reporting had not been specified previously. In those states, 28 grant veterinary professionals immunity from civil liability; 23 of those states additionally grant immunity from criminal liability.

The immunity provisions shall not apply to an act or omission intentionally designed to harm or an act or omission that constitutes gross negligence or willful, wanton or reckless conduct.

### ***Permission to Reprint***

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## *Two New Laws Enacted in Texas*

### **Link Cited as Rationale for Increased Cruelty Penalties**

A similar Link strategy has succeeded in Texas. Citing what the legislature's analysts called "research [that] has shown that animal cruelty is a precursor to human violence" with "a direct correlation between the two," and an "alarming rate" of violent animal cruelty crimes in Texas, **SB 762** was introduced in February and underwent an extensive series of hearings before finally being signed into law on June 9. Gov. Greg Abbott signed the Violent Animal Cruelty Bill, which takes effect Sept. 1, 2017. The new law increases penalties for the most egregious violent animal cruelty offenses, such as torturing, cruelly killing or causing serious bodily injury to an animal.



**Gov. Greg Abbott**

The measure increases various offenses from a Class A misdemeanor to a state jail felony, or from a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree felony to a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree felony, based upon the offender's previous convictions for similar crimes.

"We are relieved and elated that the Governor finally signed the Violent Animal Cruelty Bill," Linda Yarbrough, Director of Strategic Initiatives for the SPCA of Texas, tells The LINK-Letter.



**Sen. Joan Huffman**

### **Bestiality Outlawed in the Lone Star State**

Following two unanimous votes in the state Senate and House, Texas has banned animal sexual abuse. **SB 1232**, introduced by Sen. Joan Huffman, creates a new section 21.09 of the Penal Code, making it a felony to commit bestiality, obtain an animal for this purpose, or organize, promote, conduct or observe bestiality. The crime is considered a state jail felony unless it is committed in the presence of a child, results in serious bodily injury or death of the animal, or the offender has a prior conviction, in which case it is a 2<sup>nd</sup>-degree felony. Generally accepted veterinary and animal husbandry practices are exempted.

Upon conviction, the court may order the defendant to relinquish custody of any animals and to participate in a psychological treatment or other appropriate program. The measure passed the Senate 31-0 on May 25 and the House 141-0, and was signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott on June 12. It takes effect Sept. 1, 2017.

### **Vermont Bans Bestiality: Total Now 45 States**

Meanwhile, Vermont was busily considering animal sexual abuse as a criminal activity and on June 7 Gov. Phil Scott signed into law **H.62**. The measure adds a new category of sexual conduct to the various conditions defined as cruelty to animals.

The law amends 13 V.S.A. Chapter 8 to define sexual conduct as any act between a person and animal that involves contact or insertion between the mouth, sex organ or anus of a person and an animal without a bona fide veterinary or animal husbandry purpose. The definition extends to anyone possessing, selling, transferring, purchasing or obtaining an animal for sexual



**Gov. Phil Scott**

conduct; or organizing, promoting, aiding, abetting or participating as an observer; or permitting sexual conduct on his or her premises or advertising it.

The bestiality provisions were attached to a larger criminal justice measure affecting the posting of bonds, probation, narcotics, electronic monitoring and home detention programs. The law took effect July 1. With Texas, Vermont and Nevada recently enacting laws, 45 states now have prohibitions against bestiality or animal sexual abuse. Bestiality is still legal in Hawai'i, Kentucky, New Mexico, West Virginia, and Wyoming, plus the District of Columbia.

## Connecticut “CASA for Animals” Advocates Represent First Five Cases



**UConn law professor Jessica Rubin (left) and student Taylor Hansen**

While many states have victim advocates and child advocates, Connecticut has pioneered the concept of ‘CASA for Animals,’ legal advocates who speak on behalf of abused animals ([See the October 2016 LINK-Letter](#)). A recent [Associated Press](#) article gave national exposure to the legal experiment which is being watched across the country for signs of success.

Since Desmond’s Law was enacted last Oct. 1, volunteer advocates have been appointed in five cases. There are eight approved advocates – seven attorneys and University of Connecticut law professor Jessica Rubin working with her students.

In one case, UConn law student Taylor Hansen testified on behalf of three pit bulls involved in a dogfighting charge against Raabbi Ismail, 33, of Bloomfield. One dog had been found emaciated with scars from fighting. The other two were found in a home filled with animal feces, rotting food and evidence of dogfighting. One dog had to be euthanized.

Hansen described the abuse the dogs suffered and studies linking animal and human abuse. On Hansen’s recommendation, Judge Omar Williams imposed a sentence that includes Ismail’s having to perform 200 hours of community service and being barred from owning or breeding dogs for the next two years. Though the sentence was not what the prosecution had hoped for, Hansen said she was not discouraged. “It showed the animals do have a voice. We are able to have an impact on the proceedings.”

Assistant State’s Attorney Thomas O’Brien, the prosecutor in the Ismail case, praised the work done by the animal advocates, who are considered an official party to the case. They can do investigative work that prosecutors do not have time for, such as interviewing veterinarians and other witnesses. They can also make arguments, write briefs and submit recommendations to the judge.

Similar measures that would appoint advocates for abused animals have been introduced in at least one other state. Rhode Island currently allows veterinarians to advocate for animals in court, but a bill to provide legal advocates, **H5061**, was stalled and committee and has been held for further study.

## How Do Prosecutors Determine Which Animal Cruelty Cases to Take?



In an effort to identify training and resource needs for law enforcement, veterinarians and animal care and control officials, the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys is working with the ASPCA to understand how different types of evidence influence prosecutors' decisions to take on animal cruelty cases. They also want to know which types of evidence prosecutors feel are most effective in achieving desired outcomes in these cases.

Interested parties are invited to take a short [survey](#) to help identify evidentiary issues that help or hinder the ability of prosecutors to successfully move a cruelty case forward. The survey is part of a larger effort to identify training and resource needs for law enforcement, veterinarians and animal care and control. The results of the survey will be presented at ALDF/APA's National Animal Cruelty Conference on November 15-17, in Portland, Ore.

### *THE LINK AND... CHILD MALTREATMENT*

#### **Pennsylvania Bill Would Mandate Cross-Reporting**

Human services and animal care and control personnel in Pennsylvania would be required to cross-report suspected animal and human abuse to each other under the terms of a bill that has been introduced into the Pennsylvania Assembly. Sen. Guy Reschenthaler, a Republican from Allegheny and Washington Counties, used the premises of The Link in introducing **SB 176**.



**Sen. Guy Reschenthaler**

“It is widely accepted that a substantial correlation exists between the abuse of humans and animals,” he wrote, citing numerous studies connecting animal abuse and family violence. “For example, a survey of pet-owning families with substantiated child abuse found that animals were abused in 88% of homes where child physical abuse was present. Additionally, a study by the Chicago Police Department revealed a high propensity for offenders charged with crimes against animals to commit other violent offenses toward human victims.

“Humane society police officers (also animal control officers) and social services employees often interact with the public in their homes. Occasionally, they encounter evidence of possible animal or child abuse that may have taken place, but since it does not fall under their jurisdiction to investigate or report, these individuals are not obligated to provide this information to the appropriate officials. As such, some children and animals continue to experience preventable cruelty and suffering,” he added.

“Throughout the country, animal welfare, law enforcement, and child welfare agencies have increasingly recognized the benefit of working cooperatively to stem the tide of abuse.”

The bill has 15 co-sponsors and is in the Senate Judiciary Committee. While numerous states have one-way cross-reporting of suspected child, elder or animal abuse, only Connecticut, Illinois and West Virginia have full two-way cross-reporting between humane and human services.

## Idaho, California Consider Facility Dogs in Child Sexual Abuse Testimony

The increased interest in allowing facility dogs to be present in courtrooms to comfort victims of child sexual abuse while testifying gained additional impetus on March 27 when Idaho Gov. Butch Otter signed into law **SB 1089**. The new law amends Idaho's procedures for witnesses in criminal proceedings to allow facility dogs to remain at the witness stand with a child during testimony.



Idaho Gov. Butch Otter

The Idaho law defines a facility dog as one that is a graduate of an assistance dog organization that is a member of Assistance Dog International or a similarly internationally recognized organization that has standards of excellence in all areas of assistance dog acquisition, training and placement. The law became effective July 1.

A similar bill in the California General Assembly would allow child witnesses in any serious or violent felony cases to have a therapy or facility dog present during court testimony. Under the terms of **AB411**, procedures would be established requiring the party seeking to have the dog present to attest to the training and credentials of the dog and its handler and facts necessitating the need for the dog. The court could reject the request if it finds the dog's presence would cause undue prejudice to the defendant or would be unduly disruptive to the court proceeding. The bill passed the House by a vote of 74-0 and is in the Senate Committee on Public Safety.

## THE LINK AND VETERINARY MEDICINE



Delegate Barbara Frush

### Maryland Enacts Mandatory Reporting

Maryland has become the latest state to mandate that veterinarians who encounter suspected animal abuse must report it to appropriate authorities. Previously, Maryland practitioners were only encouraged to make such reports.

Gov. Larry Hogan signed into law **HB 1463** on May 4. The new law, introduced by Delegate Barbara Frush, requires a veterinary practitioner who has reason to believe that an animal that she or he has treated has been subjected to cruelty or fighting to report the case to the appropriate law enforcement or county animal control agency in a timely manner. Existing law did not include animal fighting among the reporting provisions. Practitioners will continue to have immunity from civil and criminal liability when reporting.

The bill passed the House by a vote of 118-15 and was approved unanimously 47-0 in the Senate. It will take effect Oct. 1. State analysts reported that five persons were convicted of misdemeanor animal abuse, and three of aggravated animal abuse, in 2016. There were also 55 probation intakes in 2016 for animal cruelty violations.

With the new law, 18 states now mandate veterinarians and/or their staffs to report suspected animal abuse; 17 states permit such reporting. California and Colorado include veterinarians specifically among professionals mandated to report suspected child abuse; Illinois does likewise for reporting elder abuse.

## ANIMAL ABUSE AND... DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### WANTED: Survivors Willing to Provide Testimonials

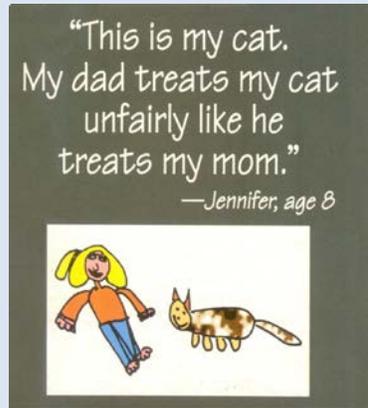
The Pet and Women Safety Act (the PAWS Act) has been re-introduced in the 115th U.S. Congress. The two bills, H.R.909 and S.322, would provide up to \$3 million in federal funding to help domestic violence shelters build animal-housing facilities and would enforce pet protection orders across state lines.

This measure, like its predecessor which died in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, has widespread, bipartisan support with 227 co-sponsors in the House version and 12 in the Senate.

Nothing is more impactful to a government official than a heartfelt, first-person testimonial from a victim. The National Link Coalition is eager to hear from individuals whose animals were killed, threatened or harmed to coerce and control them in domestic violence cases. We want to know whether they were able to find a shelter that could provide for their animals as well and how important that was; or, if not, why they chose to remain in an abusive environment and what a pet-friendly shelter would have meant to them and their animals.

We are reaching out to LINK-Letter readers to gather testimonials for some Congressional representatives who need a bit more encouragement to sign on to these measures and to advance the bills' progress. If you would be willing to share first-person accounts from yourself, your friends or your clients, we'll forward these to legislators to give them additional insights as to the critical need for this law.

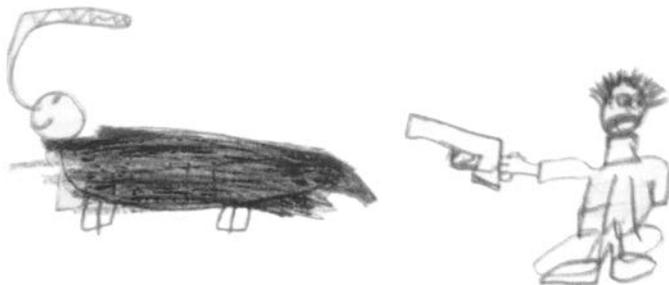
We understand survivors' need for confidentiality but if the testimonials could at least share with us their first name, the state where they were located when this happened, and as many details as they



feel comfortable sharing, it will make a big difference.

Please e-mail these statements to the National Link Coalition at [arkowpets@snip.net](mailto:arkowpets@snip.net) or send them to 37 Hillside Road, Stratford, NJ 08084.

Thanks for all that you are doing to prevent domestic violence, sexual abuse, and all other forms of family violence.



— Chris, Grade 4

## *Life and Death Inside the Cycles of The Link*

As we receive testimonials from survivors whose animals were also affected by violence, we will share some of the most poignant and dramatic stories with our readers to put a face – human, canine, feline, equine – to the Link concept. We thank these survivors for their courage to tell their stories and applaud their will to survive.

### **“He beat the crap out of my dog before he beat the crap out of me...”**

“My boyfriend and I got Jack, who was a Rottweiler/boxer/pit bull mix, toward the end of the first time we dated. Things went bad between us and he kicked me out. He let me have my bull mastiff but he kept Jack. We were apart for a year and during that time I was in touch with his sister and asked her how Jack was doing. She said Jack was dead – he had beat the crap out of him and his intestines were coming out of his butt.

“I then went back to him and brought my dog with me. My dog kept digging a hole in his area and the last time he did it I scolded him. I told him he was bad and I punished him properly. My boyfriend came running down the stairs. I tried to stop him because I had already punished my dog but he ignored me and started kicking and punching my dog. And that’s when my abuse started.

“This was on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016. He beat the living crap out of me. He broke my left hand, broke a rib in two places, and collapsed my lung. I was bruised from head to toe. I spent 10 hours in the ER on the Fourth of July and three days in the hospital with a collapsed lung. I couldn’t walk for the first three days and a year later I still have issues with my legs. I spent three months with a cast on my left hand.

“It was not a good deal. I’m still in a recovery process. The emotional toll he took on me was the biggest, calling me names and just being mean, period. He kept saying I was worthless, and he made me feel that way after awhile. He was very controlling and wouldn’t let me clean – and I’m a caretaker and I clean for a living! – and then he’d bitch at me when the dishes were dirty.

“His plan was to beat me within an inch of my life and then set me on fire. He threatened to firebomb my car. It was only my will to survive that let me escape.

“He was finally convicted just this past April. He got a plea deal and only served two months in jail, plus three months on an ankle monitor, three years on probation, a lifelong no-contact and protection from abuse order, and has to take domestic abuse classes and undergo mental health counseling. He pretty much got off scot-free.

“I’m trying my darnedest to stay here in Duluth but it’s scary – he still lives here. I don’t feel my dog can protect me anymore. He’s a 150-pound bull mastiff but he was traumatized by the attack and he’s scared to protect me now.

“Through my healing group I know a lot of women who have been living in shelters and who had to get rid of their pets because of that. I know one of the women in my group who severed an 18-year relationship and he broke into her house recently and snapped the dog’s neck in front of her. Having a shelter here with kennels would be a huge blessing. I’m just lucky that I have family.”

-- Heidi N. – Duluth, MN

## Excluding Insurance Coverage for Pets Injured in Domestic Violence Seen as Additional Stressor and Risk to Animals' Well-Being

In our [March 2016 LINK-Letter](#), we posed an intriguing question arising from a domestic violence case in Sweden: a pet insurance company denied coverage for veterinary expenses incurred by a woman whose boyfriend had beaten her dog. The company argued that the situation was the same as if the woman had beaten her dog, an act that was not covered by the policy. We asked whether such insurance exclusions were the same in the U.S. or elsewhere.

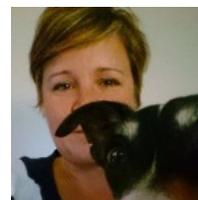


**Tania Signal**

We now know that in Australia, the situation is similar. Writing in a forthcoming issue of *the Violence Against Women* journal, [Tania Signal](#), Nik Taylor, Karena Burke and Luke Brownlow describe what they call “double jeopardy.” The overlap of animal harm and insurance discrimination for victims and survivors of domestic violence results in many adverse implications.

The authors note that the extensive literature to date on how animals are harmed as coercive control in domestic violence has neglected to address the medical costs of such actions and the role that insurance companies play in paying for what are often very costly visits – particularly in areas where veterinarians are mandated to report suspected abuse.

Given that domestic violence survivors may have limited access to financial resources (which may be deliberately withheld by the abuser) this issue becomes highly significant. “Refusal to pay for services accrued, and/or forcing women to pay back insurance money erroneously given, might well lead to both financial and/or emotional stress providing another barrier for disclosure of violence for the women involved,” they write.



**Nik Taylor**

The authors reviewed 32 Australian insurance companies whose policies cover animals (10 offering supplementary companion animal coverage as part of a home and contents policy, and 22 standalone pet insurance providers) and the ways by which injury to pets were defined and covered. All 10 of the supplemental policies, and 21 of the standalone pet insurers, deny coverage for deliberate harm to an insured animal, whether the injury was at the hands of a stranger or a family member.



**Karena Burke**

The authors note that the prevalence and extent of disallowed claims due to non-accidental injury clauses is unknown. While insurance discrimination towards domestic violence victims and survivors has been researched, no one has hitherto extended this to considerations of animal companions and their welfare within the context of domestic violence.

“This has implications for human victims of domestic violence, adding emotional and financial stress to an already difficult and crisis-ridden time in their lives,” they wrote. “Clearly, animal well-being may also be affected if there is an increased likelihood that veterinary treatment will not be sought.” They note the issue extends to animals harmed by children or as coercive control in elder abuse, and suggest one remedy may be to include coverage for harms perpetrated due to family violence, in unambiguous language.

“We believe that current policies regarding companion animal insurance fit into definitions of ‘insurance discrimination’, that is, that insurance companies penalize DV victims precisely because they are victims

of domestic violence, and as a result such policies need to be considered in future research into human-animal abuse links. While the policies considered in the current research offer some ambiguity regarding who is considered a family member, it is worth noting that someone in crisis is unlikely to be in a position to argue their case and establish their fit under insurance policies.”

-- Signal, T., Taylor, N., Burke, K.J., & Brownlow, L. (2017, in press). *Double jeopardy: Insurance, animal harm and domestic violence. Violence Against Women*. doi: 10.1177/1077801217711266

## Ohio Considering Pet Protection Orders in Dating Violence

After the lengthy battles that finally saw Ohio enact pet protection orders for the animals of domestic violence survivors (*See the [January 2015 LINK-Letter](#)*), a new bill would expand the ability of courts to issue these protections in cases of dating violence. **HB1** would allow a court order of protection to require that a respondent not remove, damage, hide, harm, or dispose of any companion animal owned or possessed by the petitioner alleging dating violence.



Ohio Reps. Nathan Manning and Emilia Strong Sykes

It also would allow a court order to authorize the petitioner, alleging dating violence, to remove a companion animal owned by that petitioner from the possession of the respondent. The bill, introduced by Reps. Emilia Strong Sykes (D-34) and Nathan H. Manning (R-55), has passed the House and is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

## Illinois Considers Pets' Welfare in Divorce Proceedings



Sen. Linda Holmes and Rep. Stephanie Kifowit

Following the successful passage last year of pioneering legislation in Alaska that allows courts to award custody of animals in divorce settlements in the animals' best interests (*See the [November 2016 LINK-Letter](#)*), a bill in the Illinois General Assembly would attempt to do much the same. **SB1261** would amend the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act to allow the parties to a dissolution proceeding to file a joint petition for simplified dissolution if they have, among other conditions, executed a written agreement allocating ownership and responsibility for any companion animals that they own.

The bill would also allow the parties to petition or move for the allocation of sole or joint ownership of and responsibility for any of their companion animals. In issuing such an order, the court would have to take into consideration the well-being of the domestic animal.

The bill was sponsored by Sen. Linda Holmes (D-42) and Rep. Stephanie A. Kifowit (D-84). Similar measures were introduced this year in Hawai'i and Rhode Island but died in committees. The Illinois bill passed the Senate 56-0 and the House 109-2 and is awaiting the Governor's signature.

## *THE LINK... IN THE LITERATURE*

### **Adult-Perpetrated Animal Abuse Studies Reviewed**

With the growing body of research now examining animal abuse as a precursor to, or indicator of, other family violence, several clear patterns are emerging. In a new systematic review of the Link literature, Emma Alleyne and Charlotte Parfitt in the forensic psychology program at the University of Kent in the U.K synthesized and evaluated 23 studies on adult-perpetrated animal abuse and attempted to identify the personal characteristics and etiological factors related to this type of offending. Participants were all either the perpetrators of the animal abuse or held offense-supportive attitudes, or victims of intimate partner violence who reported incidents of animal abuse perpetrated by their partner. Among the perpetrators, key developmental (e.g, maladaptive parenting strategies), behavioral (e.g., varied offending behaviors), and psychological (e.g., callousness, empathy deficits) factors were highlighted in the literature. In the context of intimate partner violence, findings indicated that perpetrators abuse animals to control, coerce, intimidate, and/or manipulate their victims. The review underlined treatment targets that could achieve greater clinical gains, and concluded that additional empirical and theoretical work could help to set an agenda that prioritizes future research and effective practice.

-- Alleyne, E., & Parfitt, C. (2017). **Adult-perpetrated animal abuse: A systematic literature review.** *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 1-14.

## *RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT THE LINK*

### **Bringing The Link to the Navajo Nation**

Diana Webster, of the [Native America Humane Society](#), and Christine Schwamberger, Senior Attorney with the Navajo [Nation Department of Justice](#), presented on The Link at the Navajo Bar Conference on June 8. Response to the program, entitled "Protecting All of Our Relatives,"



was "overwhelming," Schwamberger tells *The LINK-Letter*. "People reacted on an emotional level. I have been thanked repeatedly. People (and they are all Native people) said it is time we talked about this." A Navajo Supreme Court Justice, a future Chief Justice of the Navajo Supreme Court, and several prosecutors attended and expressed great support. The meeting was SRO and the fire marshal had to turn people away at the door. The program discussed addressing violence against animals as a means to protect women, children and elders in tribal communities utilizing the principles of Diné Fundamental Law.



### **Link Programs Advance in Colombia**

Link activities are continuing in Colombia. [Sergio Reyes](#) tells *The LINK-Letter* that the 1<sup>st</sup> International Congress on Veterinary and Criminological Forensic Medicine was held June 1-3 in Medellin. Local authorities met in Bogota to develop a Viopet program of whole family sheltering. A humane education initiative in local schools to teach youths aged 7 to 12 about empathy is scheduled to start on July 14<sup>th</sup>.



## Free Webinars Offered to *LINK-Letter* Readers

The Institute for Human-Animal Connection at the University of Denver has received grant funding to initiate a 15-part “Interconnected Webinar Series” dedicated to the human-animal bond and its impact on public health, well-being, and The Link between animal abuse and human violence. Link authority Allie Phillips, who conducted a similar webinar series several years ago under the auspices of the National District Attorneys Association, will host the webinars.

### Allie Phillips

The monthly webinars will include: the status of Link research; responding to animal abuse revealed by domestic violence shelter residents; the SAF-T program for co-sheltering pets and people; pets and the homeless; helping domestic violence shelter personnel understand canine and feline behaviors; animal abuse laws; and changing agency procedures. [Registration](#) is free to LINK-Letter readers by entering the Promo Code COSHELTER. The webinars will be archived.

Phillips is the founder of SAF-T (Sheltering Animals and Families Together)<sup>™</sup> and the co-founder of TASK (Therapy Animals Supporting Kids). A former prosecutor, she serves as an attorney consultant for IHAC. All webinars will begin at 1 p.m. Mountain Time and last for approximately one hour.

The initial slate of programs includes:

**July 13:** “When Animal Abuse is Disclosed: How to Report and What is the Process?” The presenters are Joe Stafford and Diane Balkin

**Aug. 24:** “Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T)<sup>™</sup>: An Innovative Global Initiative for Domestic Violence Shelters.” The host and presenter is Allie Phillips.

**Sept. 21:** “Pets of Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness.” The presenter is Genevieve Frederick.

## *THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES*

### **Bills We’re Watching... and Laws We’re Celebrating**

The National Link Coalition is encouraged by the increase in the number of violence-prevention bills being introduced that are based on Link principles. Join us as we follow these measures and salute our victories that will do a better job of protecting people and animals – and please let us know of new measures that are introduced in your state.

### *Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders*



**H.R. 909 and S.322 – the Pet And Women Safety (PAWS) Act** – was re-introduced and now has 225 bi-partisan co-sponsors in the House and 14 in the Senate. The PAWS Act would prohibit threats or acts of violence against a victim’s pet in interstate stalking and interstate violation of protection orders. It would allocate \$3 million annually through 2021 in grants for shelter and housing assistance for victims with pets, support services to help victims secure safe housing that allows pets, and for pet-related services. Grants could also be used for training on The Link and for identifying best practices. Abusers would be required to make restitution to the victim for costs incurred for veterinary services. **H.R. 909** is in the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and Investigations. **S.322** is in the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.



**Hawai'i HB 155** would have allowed either party to order the other to restrain from transferring, encumbering or disposing of pets during divorce, separation or annulment, particularly if one party poses a threat of physical harm to the animal. Courts could have ordered a party to pay for pet support, and consider the animals' well-being and whether future ownership should be individual or joint. The measure was approved by the House Agriculture Committee and was referred to the Judiciary Committee, **but no action had been taken when the Legislature adjourned on May 4.**



**Illinois SB 1261** would amend the Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act to allow parties filing for divorce to file a joint petition for simplified dissolution if they have executed a written agreement allocating ownership and responsibility for their companion animals. The bill would also allow the parties to petition for sole or joint ownership, contingent upon the court's consideration of what would be in the animals' best interests. The bill passed both houses overwhelmingly and was sent to the Governor.



**Indiana SB 323** allows a court to grant an order of protection to: (1) award possession and care of an animal to a petitioner; (2) prohibit a respondent from taking action against the animal; and (3) direct a law enforcement officer to accompany the petitioner to retrieve the animal. **The bill was signed into law on April 21** by Gov. Eric Holcomb and becomes effective on July 1.



**Michigan HB 4026** would define "causing or attempting to cause physical harm" to a family member's animal as an act of domestic violence in addition to any animal cruelty charges that might pertain. It would allow domestic violence shelters that accept animals to receive state funding and to include veterinary care among the emergency health care services that they provide among the criteria for needing funding. The bill is in the Committee on Law and Justice.



**Nevada** law currently defines harming an animal to harass a spouse or partner as domestic violence. **SB62** would have increased the penalty for this act to a Category B felony if the abuser is convicted of a similar act in Nevada or a similar felony in any other state. The bill was in the Judiciary Committee but **no action was taken before the time limit for legislative action expired.**



**Ohio HB1** would expand the ability of courts to issue protection-from-abuse orders that include the animals of domestic violence survivors to individuals seeking protection orders in cases of dating violence. It would allow a court order of protection to require that a respondent not remove, damage, hide, harm, or dispose of any companion animal owned or possessed by the petitioner alleging dating violence. It also would allow a court order to authorize the petitioner, alleging dating violence, to remove a companion animal owned by that petitioner from the possession of the respondent. The bill has passed the House and is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



**Texas SB 339** and **HB 142** would have created a new offense of illegal sexual contact called "indecent assault" and allowed victims to obtain protective orders. Violations of these protective orders would have included harming, threatening, or interfering with the care, custody or control of a pet, companion animal or assistance animal belonging to the protected party. **SB 339** was in the Senate Criminal Justice Committee, and **HB 142** was reported out favorably by the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee and was sent to Calendars, but **no action was taken on either bill when the Legislature adjourned.**



**Rhode Island H5556** would require courts to consider the best interest of the animal in awarding possession of a domestic animal in a divorce or separation proceeding. The House Judiciary Committee recommended that the bill be held for further study.



**Wyoming HB193** would have allowed courts to grant sole possession of any household pets to the petitioner in a protection order, and to order the respondent no not have any contact with any household pet or abduct, remove, conceal, or dispose of the animal. **The bill died when the legislature adjourned.**

### *Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment*



**California AB411** would allow child witnesses in any serious or violent felony cases to have a therapy or facility dog present during court testimony. Procedures would be established requiring the party seeking to have the dog present to attest to the training and credentials of the dog and its handler and facts necessitating the need for the dog. The court could reject the request if it finds the dog's presence would cause undue prejudice to the defendant or would be unduly disruptive to the court proceeding. The bill passed the House by a vote of 74-0 and is in the Senate Committee on Public Safety.



**Idaho SB 1089** amends Idaho's procedures for witnesses in criminal proceedings to allow facility dogs to remain at the witness stand with a child during testimony. The measure was signed into law by Gov. Butch Otter on March 27 and took effect July 1.



**Michigan HB 4025** would increase the penalties for animal abuse committed in the presence of a child to a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year's imprisonment, \$2,000 fine, and 300 hours of community service. The bill is in the Committee on Law and Justice.



**New York S1432** and **A5048** criminalize knowingly causing a minor to attend a place where exhibition of animal fighting is being conducted. The bills are in the respective Agriculture Committees.



**New York S2470** and companion bill **A2140**, and **S728** and companion bill **A3845**, would increase penalties for aggravated animal cruelty committed in the presence of a child. **S2470** is in the Senate Agriculture Committee; **A2140** is in the Assembly Codes Committee. **S728** passed the Senate and joined and **A3845** in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.



**Texas HB 289** would have made it a violation to harm or threaten a pet or assistance animal belonging to a child under a protection-from-abuse order. The bill was in the House Human Services Committee, but **no action had been taken when the Legislature adjourned.**

### *Animal Abuse and Elder Abuse*



**Washington HB 1153** addresses financial exploitation and physical neglect of seniors and people with disabilities by increasing penalties, reducing barriers to prosecution, and expanding the scope of protection for vulnerable persons. 1<sup>st</sup>-degree animal cruelty, including sexual contact with an animal, is listed as a crime which prosecutors may cite as reasons for filing charges. The measure was approved by both the House and Senate and **was signed into law on May 10** by Gov. Jay Inslee.

## *Animal Sexual Abuse*



**Kentucky HB 143** would have made the sexual assault of a dog or cat a first-offense Class D felony, and a Class C felony if committed in the presence of a minor. Currently, bestiality is illegal in Kentucky only if it occurs in conjunction with prostitution. Offenders would have been barred from owning dogs or cats for 5 years for a first offense, and lifetime for subsequent convictions. **The bill died in the Judiciary Committee.**



**Kentucky HB 480** would have created a new offense of sexual assault against an animal and allowed a peace officer to seize an animal. Accepted animal husbandry and veterinary medical practices would have been exempted. **The bill died in the Judiciary Committee.**



**Massachusetts S.805** would amend Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. Ch. 272, § 34, which currently uses the archaic language prohibiting “the abominable and detestable crime against nature either with mankind or with any animal,” to prohibit “a sexual act on an animal, uses an object to sexually abuse an animal, or knowingly permits a sexual act with an animal on any premises under such person’s control.” The bill is in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary with a hearing scheduled for July 18.



**Missouri HB 431** would allow persons convicted of having sex with an animal to petition to have their names removed from the state sex offenders registry. The bill has passed the House Judiciary Committee and the Rules & Legislative Oversight Committee



**Nevada AB 391** adds a new section to Nevada’s Revised Statutes, Chapter 201 (“Crimes Against Public Decency and Good Morals”) that now defines bestiality as a gross misdemeanor that can be upgraded to a Category D felony if the animal dies or suffers serious bodily injury as a result, or if the offender has a prior conviction for animal cruelty. Offenders will be required to permanently forfeit any animals in the home and can not work with or volunteer where animals are present. Courts can authorize offenders to undergo psychological evaluation and counseling and to pay costs for the care and medical expenses of the animals. The measure will also cover anyone who causes, aids, promotes or observes bestiality. Accepted animal husbandry, veterinary and conformation judging practices are excluded. The bill passed both the Assembly and the Senate unanimously and was **signed into law on May 23** by Gov. Brian Sandoval. Its provisions take effect Oct. 1, 2017.



**Texas SB 1232** creates a new section 21.09 of the Penal Code, making it a felony to commit bestiality, obtain an animal for this purpose, or organize, promote, conduct or observe bestiality. The crime is considered a state jail felony unless it is committed in the presence of a child, results in serious bodily injury or death of the animal, or the offender has a prior conviction, in which case it is a 2<sup>nd</sup>-degree felony. Generally accepted veterinary and animal husbandry practices are exempted. Upon conviction, the court may order the defendant to relinquish custody of any animals and to participate in a psychological treatment or other appropriate program. The measure passed the Senate 31-0 on May 25 and the House 141-0, and **was signed into law** by Gov. Greg Abbott on June 12. It takes effect Sept. 1, 2017.



**Vermont H.62** adds a new category of sexual conduct to the various conditions defined as cruelty to animals. The measure amends 13 V.S.A. Chapter 8 to define sexual conduct as any act between a person and animal that involves contact or insertion between the mouth, sex organ or anus of a person and an animal without a bona fide veterinary or animal husbandry purpose. The definition extends to anyone possessing, selling, transferring, purchasing or obtaining an animal for

sexual conduct; or organizing, promoting, aiding, abetting or participating as an observer; or permitting sexual conduct on his or her premises or advertising it. The bill was signed into law on June 7 by Gov. Phil Scott and took effect July 1.

 **West Virginia HB 2664** would have added bestiality to the code of crimes against chastity, morality and decency. Individuals who engage in, abet, observe, permit, advertise, or promote bestiality, or induce a child to commit bestiality, would have been guilty of a misdemeanor, or a felony upon previous convictions or serious bodily injury or death to the animal. Courts would have been able to order offenders to surrender all their animals, prohibit ownership of animals for five or 15 years, and undergo psychiatric or psychological evaluation or counseling. The bill was in the House Judiciary Committee but **no action had been taken when the Legislature adjourned.**

### *“CASA for Animals”*

 **New Jersey A 2041** and its companion **S 433** would allow courts to issue “animal protection orders” forbidding persons convicted of animal cruelty from having contact with the abused animal or other animals, either permanently or for a specified period of time. **A 2041** passed the Assembly. Both bills are in the Senate Economic Growth Committee.

 **Rhode Island H5061** would require courts to order the appointment of an animal care advocate wherever the custody or well-being of an animal is at issue. The House Judiciary Committee has recommended that the bill be held for further study.

### *Animal Abuse and Other Crimes*

 **California AB 197** would add animal abuse, child abuse, elder and dependent adult abuse, and other crimes to the list of “violent” felonies that could be prosecuted as a 3<sup>rd</sup> strike with additional years of imprisonment under the Three Strikes Law. The bill is in the Committee on Public Safety.

 **Indiana SB 306** would have increased the penalty for attending an animal fighting contest from a Class A misdemeanor to a Level 6 felony. The bill was in the Committee on Corrections and Criminal Law but **no action had been taken when the Legislature adjourned.**

 **Kentucky HB 135** would have redefined animal torture to include deliberate neglect or physical abuse that results in death or serious physical injury to a dog or cat. Offenders would have been barred from owning dogs or cats for 5 years for a first offense, and lifetime for subsequent convictions. **The bill died in the Judiciary Committee.**

 **Massachusetts S.1159** would add the crimes of animal cruelty and fighting as specifically enumerated offenses which would allow the prosecution to ask for pre-trial detention on the grounds of the defendant’s dangerousness. The bill would also mandate *Cross-Training*. The bill is in the Committee on Municipal and Regional Government.

 **New Jersey A 2738** would expand the criminal and civil acts of animal cruelty to include the theft or release of an animal during the commission of a burglary. The bill is in the Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee.

 **New Mexico HJM 6**, a Joint Memorial, requests that the state Departments of Public Safety and Children, Youth & Families consider training on The Link between animal abuse and family violence in their training curricula for field workers and other appropriate staff. The measure passed the House by a vote of 67-0 and has been referred to the Senate Rules Committee.

 **New York S1680** and companion bill **A3038** would expand the definition of aggravated cruelty to animals to include harm to animals during the commission of a felony. **S1680** passed the Senate on Jan. 30 and was referred to the Assembly Agriculture Committee; **A3038** is in the Agriculture Committee.

 **New York S251** would expand animal fighting prohibitions to criminalize promoting, attending, facilitating, training, breeding or selling fighting animals, or selling, manufacturing or owning animal fighting paraphernalia. The bill is in the Agriculture Committee.

 **Oregon HB 2026** would appropriate money from the General Fund to the Department of Justice to fund a position dedicated exclusively to assisting local district attorneys and law enforcement with the prosecution of cases involving the “detriment or risk of detriment” to animals. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee with subsequent referral to the Ways and Means Committee.

 **Rhode Island H5728** would impose further penalties for deliberate or unintentional harming of animals during the commission of any crime. Any sentence imposed would run consecutively to any sentence imposed for the underlying offense. The House Judiciary Committee has recommended the bill be held for further study.

 **Texas HB 1357** would have defined as “family violence” coercive, controlling or punishing acts or threats of abuse directed against an animal owned by a member of the household or someone with whom the abuser has had a dating relationship. The bill also made technical corrections to assist prosecutors in animal cruelty cases. The bill was approved unanimously by the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee on April 21 and had been sent to Calendars, but **no action had been taken when the Legislature adjourned.**

### *Animal Hoarding*

 **New Jersey A3638** would establish animal hoarding as an animal cruelty offense and require mental health evaluation for all animal cruelty offenders. The bill was reported favorably out of the Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee.

 **New York A44** would create the crime of companion animal hoarding, defined as ownership, possession or custody of more than 25 companion animals living in conditions likely to jeopardize the health and well-being of the animals and/or people. Offenders would be required to undergo mental health evaluation and may be required to undergo counseling and be prohibited from owning animals. The bill is in the Agriculture Committee.

 **Rhode Island S390** would define animal hoarding and add it to the list of conduct that is considered cruelty to animals. The Senate Judiciary Committee recommended the bill be held for further study.

## Cross-Reporting

 **Iowa S.F. 129** would have required veterinarians who suspect animal abuse, neglect or torture to report the incident to law enforcement agencies with good-faith immunity from civil and criminal liability. Law enforcement officials would have been required to file a child endangerment alert report with the Department of Human Services if a minor child witnesses suspected animal abuse, neglect or torture. Courts could, and in some cases would have been required to, order psychological or psychiatric evaluation or treatment. The bill would have created seven new criminal offenses describing animal abuse, neglect, torture, abandonment, and endangerment. The bill was in the Senate Agriculture Committee but **no action had been taken when the Legislature adjourned.**

 **Maine LD 157** would have required veterinarians who suspect an animal to be the subject of cruelty or neglect to report the case to the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. Currently, Maine veterinarians are permitted to report cruelty or neglect, and are required to report only “aggravated” animal cruelty. **The bill passed the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee but died in the Senate.**



 Gov. Larry Hogan **signed into law Maryland HB 1463** on May 4. It requires a veterinarian who believes that an animal that she or he has treated has been subjected to cruelty or fighting to report the case to law enforcement or county animal control in a timely manner. Existing law only encouraged reporting and did not include animal fighting among the provisions. Practitioners will continue to have immunity from civil and criminal liability when reporting. The bill passed the House by a vote of 118-15 and was approved unanimously 47-0 in the Senate. It will take effect Oct. 1.

 **Massachusetts S.295** would add domestic violence workers, animal control officers, and humane officers to the list of mandated reporters of suspected child sexual abuse. The bill is in the Education Committee.

 **Massachusetts S.1159** would require employees or contractors of the Department of Children & Families, Department of Elder Affairs investigators, and Disabled Persons Protection Commission investigators to report suspected animal abuse. The bill would add animal control officers as mandatory reporters of child abuse, elder abuse and abuse against disabled persons. The bill would also affect *Animal Abuse and Other Crimes*. The bill is in the Committee on Municipal and Regional Government.

 Three companion measures address cross-reporting in **Michigan. HB 4441** would amend the Child Protection Law to add animal control officers to the list of professions mandated to report suspected child abuse or child neglect. **HB 4442** would amend the Michigan Penal Code to require Child Protective Services employees to report suspected animal abuse or neglect to an animal control or law enforcement officer in the jurisdiction where the animal was found, with anonymity, the presumption of having acted in good faith, and immunity from civil or criminal liability. Failure to report, or making a false report, would be punishable offenses. **HB 4443** would amend the Code of Criminal Procedure to make the intentional false reporting of animal abuse a felony. The bills are in the House Judiciary Committee.

 **Minnesota HF 787** and companion bill **SF1167** would have given immunity from civil liability to veterinarians, who are mandated to report suspected animal cruelty, abuse and neglect to peace officers, humane agents or animal control officers. **The measures died in committee when the Legislature adjourned.**



**New York S621** and companion bill **A4904** would require veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty to police, SPCAs, peace officers, district attorney's offices, animal control officers, the department of agriculture and markets, or other appropriate government agencies and to turn over necessary records. New York veterinarians are currently permitted to report but are not required to do so. The bills, sponsored by Sen. Phil Boyle and Assemblywoman Linda Rosenthal, are in the respective Higher Education Committees.



**Pennsylvania SB 176** would add animal control and humane society police officers to the list of individuals mandated to report possible child abuse, and social services employees to report possible cases of animal cruelty. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



**Pennsylvania HB 1238** ("Libre's Law") used Link premises to overhaul the state's anti-cruelty statutes with enhanced penalties, and grants immunity from civil and criminal liability for veterinarians, technicians and assistants who report suspected animal abuse.



**Rhode Island H5392** would require all child protection and domestic violence caseworkers report suspected animal abuse to animal control and humane agencies, and that animal control and humane officers be mandated to report suspected child abuse and domestic violence to child protection and domestic violence agencies. The House Judiciary Committee has recommended the bill be held for further study.

### *Psychological Evaluation of Offenders*



**Mississippi HB 575** would have defined malicious intent to torture, maim, disfigure, mutilate, burn, suffocate, drown, or starve to death a domesticated dog or cat as felony-level aggravated cruelty and allow up to 10 acts to be considered separate offenses. The bill would have mandated psychological evaluations for offenders. The measure would have mandated police and sheriffs to utilize a form to be devised by the Attorney General, in collaboration with the Mississippi Sheriffs' Association and the Mississippi Association of Police Chiefs, for reporting all investigations of simple or aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat into the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). **The bill died in committee on Jan. 31.**



**New Jersey A2367 and S529**, "Shyanne's Law," would require mental health evaluation for all animal cruelty offenders, and mental health counseling if warranted by the evaluation. Currently, mental health counseling is mandated only for juvenile offenders. The bills are in the Assembly Agriculture & Natural Resources and Senate Economic Growth Committees.



**New Mexico HB 210** would create a new category of "extreme cruelty to animals" and would require persons convicted of this offense to undergo psychological counseling. The bill is in the House Consumer & Public Affairs Committee.

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## ***THE LINK... IN THE NEWS*** ***You Can't Make This Stuff Up!!!***

### **Son Charged with Killing Mother's Dog and Chicken in \$50 Extortion Plot**



**Jimmy Cardona**

Jimmy Cardona, 29, of Miami Gardens, Fla., was charged with two counts of animal cruelty with intent to kill for allegedly killing his mother's dog and chicken and leaving pieces of the bird strewn over her bed. [CBS Miami](#) reported that authorities said Cardona had demanded \$50 from his mother and father via phone calls and text messages "or something bad was going to happen." His father ignored the messages and later showed police what was said to be a video message of the pieces of the dead chicken scattered on the bed. Cardona denied involvement and said his mother had killed the chicken for religious purposes.

### **Dog Pooping and Peeing Nets Boyfriend Cruelty and Domestic Violence Charges**

A DeKalb, Ill. Man is facing felony aggravated animal cruelty and misdemeanor domestic violence charges for allegedly beating his girlfriend's dog to death after it urinated and defecated on the floor of her home. West Dundee Police arrested Nathan Begovich, 20, following a forensic necropsy performed on the dog, named "Bella." The University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Laboratory determined that Bella died from blunt force trauma. The [Elgin Courier-News](#) reported that when Begovich's girlfriend tried to intervene in the beating of the dog, he spit in her face.



**Stephen Saxe**

### **Man Gets 4-1/2 Years for Killing Wife's Dogs in Jealous Rage**

A Pennsylvania man who had admitted shooting and burning his wife's dogs in a jealous rage following a fight with her over another man (*See the [February 2017 LINK-Letter](#)*) was sentenced to 27 to 54 months in state prison. Stephen Saxe, 38, of Fairmount Township, had been charged with two counts of killing and maiming a domestic animal for shooting "Elmo" and "Lucky" and dumping their bodies in a smoldering pit. He had also been charged with assault, reckless endangerment and firearms offenses for threatening his wife and others with a gun. Luzerne County Judge Joseph F. Skalosky, Jr., did not buy the defense's argument that Saxe was remorseful. "It's kind of hard to believe that you loved these animals. It's just senseless cruelty. It's troubling," the judge said. Luzerne County SPCA Humane Officer

Wayne Harvey told the [Wilkes-Barre Citizens Voice](#), "The judges are starting to see animal cruelty for what it is and giving jail time. I'm very pleased with it, because in the past we didn't get much."



**Denzel Brown**

### **Domestic Dispute Leads to 2 Stabbed Dogs and Cruelty Charges**

Delaware State Troopers answering a call regarding a domestic violence incident settled the verbal dispute, but then charged the man with two counts of animal cruelty for allegedly stabbing the woman's two pit bulls to death. [WDEL-AM/FM](#) reported that Denzel Brown, 27, of Milford, was also charged with possession of a deadly weapon during the commission of a felony and criminal mischief. Animal control officers took possession of the two deceased dogs.

## Lawyer Convicted in Beating Death of Girlfriend's Poodle



**Anthony Pastor and "Snoopy"**

A New York City corporate attorney with a history of animal abuse was convicted of beating his ex-girlfriend's pet poodle to death and could face up to two years in jail. The [New York Post](#) reported that two of Anthony Pastor's ex-girlfriends testified that they had each discovered their dogs dead at his brownstone on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Pastor was convicted in the slaying of "Snoopy," who girlfriend Taly Russell said was "a ball of fluffy cuteness." A necropsy determined that the dog suffered nine broken ribs, a pulverized kidney and massive internal bleeding. An ex-fiancee, Monique Olivares, told jurors that her dog named "Molly" had died under similar circumstances in 2013.

## Animal Hoarding Investigation Leads to DUI and Assault Charges

A Greeneville, Tenn. woman being investigated for animal cruelty over 21 mistreated dogs was also charged with aggravated assault, evading and resisting arrest, driving under the influence, and reckless driving for allegedly backing her car into an animal control officer's truck and driving erratically to evade a sheriff's deputy. After Greene County ACO Seth Spradlin investigated the dogs owned by Lisa Jo Crawford, 52, and said he would have to put them in protective custody, Crawford allegedly threw her vehicle in reverse and backed into his truck, forcing him to jump back into the truck to keep from getting hit, according to the [Greeneville Sun](#). A sheriff's deputy following her car was said to see her crossing the center line of the road, weaving back and forth, and repeatedly slamming on her brakes in an attempt to cause the deputy to crash into her car. Eventually, 22 dogs were removed to the Greeneville-Greene County Humane Society and a local veterinarian's clinic.



**Lisa Jo Crawford**

## Mother, Daughter Charged with Animal Hoarding and Child Endangerment



**Linda West and Carol Jean West**

Investigators described having to use gas masks to enter the home.

A mother and her daughter who were each charged with 29 crimes, including child neglect and mistreatment of animals causing death, were re-arrested on charges of felony bail-jumping for violating a provision of their bond prohibiting them from purchasing or keeping animals on their property. Linda West, 74, and Carol Jean West, 37, of Onalaska, Wis. had been arrested last October when La Crosse County sheriff's deputies found nearly 60 animals and Carol Jean's 8- and 11-year-old children living in deplorable conditions with little food or water, [WKBT-TV](#) reported.

## Cock- and Dog-fighting Raid Leads to Drug Charges

A Lake Butler, Fla. Man was charged with five felony counts of illegal drug and alcohol possession with intent to distribute, and faces as many as 80 counts of felony animal fighting, after sheriff's deputies and ASPCA officials seized more than 80 fighting chickens and six pit bulls. Eric S. Cox, 50, was taken into custody, according to [WJXT-TV](#). The ASPCA's Anti-Cruelty Behavior Team was reported to be conducting behavioral assessments on the animals, and its Legal Advocacy department was strategizing the best legal outcome for the birds and dogs.





**Christina Fay**

## **84 Great Danes Seized in \$2,000,000 Mansion; Child Abuse Charges Also Possible**

Authorities in Wolfeboro, N.H., were reportedly considering whether to file charges of child endangerment and reckless conduct in addition to the two charges of animal cruelty filed against a woman who allegedly kept 84 neglected Great Danes in her \$2,000,000, eight-bedroom mansion. [WCSH-TV](#) reported that Christina Fay ran an illegal dog breeding operation out of the mansion, which has since been deemed uninhabitable and may not be salvageable. “I don’t know how you’d clean it. Every surface I saw was absolutely contaminated,” said Wolfeboro Police Chief Dean Rondeau. Despite his team and humane society investigators having to wear hazmat suite, “The ammonia levels were so high it would burn your eyes and burn the nostrils of your nose,” he said. “I was physically ill. I began to dry heave.”



**Aaron Hosman**

## **Man Arrested in Fatal Hit-and-Run Over a Dog Beating**

Salt Lake City, Utah police arrested Aaron Hosman, 40, on suspicion of murder and obstruction of justice for allegedly deliberately running over a man who had accused him of beating a dog. [The Salt Lake Tribune](#) reported that the victim, Jeremy Hardman, 47, and a co-worker were driving on June 7 when they allegedly saw Hosman punching a small dog. Investigators said the two pulled over and confronted Hosman over the animal’s rough treatment, then walked back to their truck. Police said Hosman got into his car, made a U-turn, deliberately hit Hardman, and drove away with the dog. Hardman died at the scene. Following a wide manhunt, Hosman was spotted on June 10 and taken into custody. After members of the public began to inquire about the welfare of the dog, West Valley City Police and Animal Services located “Buddi” the Chihuahua and said he was back home with his owner and doing fine.

## **Tom Cruise Stalker Charged with Cruelty**

A man with a history of mental health and criminal issues including stalking actor Tom Cruise was arrested on felony animal cruelty charges after firefighters rescued his dog from his burning house. Edward Kyle Joseph Fuentes Vantassel, 37, was arrested at the Lompoc, Calif. animal control office following the June 6 house fire. The [Lompoc Record](#) reported that firefighters found “Pooh” trapped and bound with rubber bands inside an overturned weighted-down box on the second floor. Vantassel “Pooh” gained notoriety in 2008 when he waved an unloaded pistol on a highway overpass, resulting in a police standoff and traffic jam. He later was given probation and placed in psychiatric care at a VA hospital when he was accused of stalking Cruise in an effort to get the actor to speak out about veterans’ issues.



## **Man Charged with Killing Boy’s Rabbits During Fight with Mother**

Police in Colorado Springs, Colo., charged Gregory Lopez, 23, with killing a 5-year-old boy’s pet rabbits during a fight with the boy’s mother. Police responding to a domestic disturbance found the boy withdrawn and scared, according to the [Denver Post](#). The woman said that Lopez had been destroying property during the argument and threw two rabbits against a wall, killing them while the boy watched. Lopez was booked on felony animal cruelty charges and other misdemeanor offenses. “Unfortunately we see this stuff over and over,” said Colorado Springs Police Lt. Howard Black, himself an early advocate of Link work in Colorado Springs. The Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region presented the boy with a new rabbit needing a home, which he promptly named “Pookie.”



**Gregory Lopez**

## ***LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES***

**July 13 (online):** The Institute for Human-Animal Connection will offer “When Animal Abuse is Disclosed: How to Report and What is the Process?” in a webinar. The host is Allie Phillips and the presenters are Joe Stafford and Diane Balkin. [Registration](#) is free for *LINK-Letter* readers: use Promo Code COSHELTER.

**July 25 – Grand Rapids, Mich.:** Allie Phillips will co-present on “Compassion Fatigue and Healing” at the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan’s Annual [Child Abuse Training](#).

**July 25 – Orlando, Fla.:** Diane Balkin will present on the Link between animal abuse and interpersonal violence among juveniles for the [Florida Conference of Circuit Judges](#) Annual Education Program.

**July 26 – Durham, N.H.:** Randy Lockwood, Rachel Lakin, and Maureen Prendergast will present on animal hoarding and APS issues at the [New England Animal Control/Humane Academy](#).

**July 28-30 – Ithaca, N.Y.:** Randy Lockwood, Stacy Wolf and Robert Reisman will present multiple workshops and a mock trial at ASPCA/Cornell Maddie’s® Shelter Medicine Program [Conference](#). Lockwood’s keynote address will be “Investigating Animal Cruelty – The Past, Present and Future.”

**Aug. 11 – Rochester, Mich.:** Maya Gupta will present a keynote on “Welfare Intertwined: The Positive and Negative of Human-Animal Connections” at the Animal-Assisted Interventions Conference hosted by Oakland University’s Center for Human-Animal Interventions.

**Aug. 23 – Oakland, Calif.:** The [Alameda County District Attorney](#)’s Animal Cruelty Task Force will meet at the East Bay SPCA.

**Aug. 24 (online):** Allie Phillips will present “Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T)<sup>™</sup>: An Innovative Global Initiative for Domestic Violence Shelters” in an Institute for Human-Animal Connection webinar.. [Registration](#) is free for *LINK-Letter* readers: use Promo Code COSHELTER.

**Sept. 8 – Regina, Sask., Canada:** Phil Arkow will discuss “A Practical Guide for an Effective Response by Veterinary Professionals to Animal Cruelty, Abuse and Neglect” at the [Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association](#)’s 2017 Conference.

**Sept. 9 – Bellevue, Wash.:** Phil Arkow will discuss “The Dark Side of the Human-Animal Bond” at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of [Pet Partners](#).

**Sept. 17-21 – Cairns, Qld., Australia:** Ingrid Reilly will present on The Link between animal abuse and domestic violence at the [International Women & Law Enforcement Conference](#).

**Sept. 18-19: Albuquerque, N. Mex.:** [The New Mexico Conference on The Link](#) will hold its biennial conference featuring many national and regional speakers on a variety of topics. For the first time in 14 years it will be a two-day event to allow more time for training and networking.

**Sept. 21 (online):** The Institute for Human-Animal Connection will offer “Pets of Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness” in a webinar. The host is Allie Phillips and the presenter is Genevieve Frederick. [Registration](#) is free for *LINK-Letter* readers: use Promo Code COSHELTER.

**Sept. 20-22: Columbus, Ohio:** Barbara Boat will present on “Knowing a Child’s Experiences with Animals Can Inform the Advocacy Process” at the [Ohio CASA/GAL 2017 Celebrate Kids! Conference](#).

**Sept. 21-22 – Regina, Sask., Canada:** Randy Lockwood and Erin Wasson are among the speakers at the Saskatchewan SPCA’s [2017 Link Conference](#).

**Sept. 28-29 – Black Hawk, Colo.:** Dan DeSousa will train on the FBI’s Animal Cruelty Reporting Process, and Phil Tedeschi will present on the Animal Abuse Risk Assessment Tool, at [the Colorado Animal Welfare Conference](#).

**Oct. 14 – Redmond, Ore.:** Phil Arkow will present on The Link at the [Pet Evacuation Team’s](#) Animal Welfare Conference.

**Oct. 14 – Portland, Ore.:** Allie Phillips and Diane Balkin will be on a panel regarding “Criminal Cruelty Cases: Integrating Animal Law into the Mainstream” at the [25<sup>th</sup> Annual Animal Law Conference](#).

**Oct. 19 – Virginia Beach, Va.:** Nancy Blaney, Michelle Welch and Glenna Tinney will discuss “Increasing Collaboration Among Animal Welfare and Domestic Violence Agencies” at the National Animal Care & Control Association/Virginia Animal Control Association [Training Conference](#). Also on the agenda: “NIBRS: The Critical Role of Animal Control and Humane Law Enforcement in Reporting Animal Cruelty to the FBI,” presented by Dan DeSousa and Mary Lou Randour.

**Oct. 24 – Battle Creek, Mich.:** Allie Phillips will present on “Working Effectively with Your Prosecutor’s Office” at the [Great Lakes Animal Welfare Conference](#).

**Oct. 26 – Bartlett, N.H.:** Phil Arkow and Jerilee Zezula will present on “The Cruelty Connection” at the [New Hampshire Attorney General’s Annual Conference](#).

**Nov. 6-10 – Sanford, Fla.:** “The Cycle of Violence” will be included in the week-long Module C classes offered in the National Animal Care & Control Association’s NACHO [Training Academy](#).

**Nov. 7 – Oklahoma City, Okla.:** [The Oklahoma Link Coalition](#) will hold its Intersection Conference. Call-in capability will also be available.

**Nov. 15-17 – Portland, Ore.:** The [7<sup>th</sup> National Animal Cruelty Conference](#), sponsored by the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys and the Animal Legal Defense Fund, will be held.

**Dec. 4-6 – Ottawa, Ont., Canada:** The inaugural Canadian Link Conference will be held, under the auspices of the [Canadian Federation of Humane Societies](#).

**July 3-8, 2018 – Vancouver, B.C., Canada:** Phil Arkow will present on The Link, Clinical and Diagnostic Indicators of Animal Abuse, and Addressing Practice Management Concerns in Responding to Suspected Abuse at the [Canadian Veterinary Medical Association](#) Convention.



## 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.

### Members of the National Link Coalition Steering Committee

#### Phil Arkow, Coordinator

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

#### Lesley Ashworth

Founder/President, American Veterinary Charitable Fund  
Consultant, Ohio Domestic Violence Network  
Former Director, Domestic Violence/Stalking Program,  
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#### Diane Balkin, J.D.

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Past President, Int'l. Veterinary Forensic Sciences Assn.  
Denver, Colo.

#### Barbara W. Boat, Ph.D.

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Exec. Director, Childhood Trust, Cincinnati Children's Hospital  
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#### Cym Doggett, LCSW

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#### Maya Gupta, Ph.D.

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#### Mark Kumpf, CAWA

Past President, National Animal Control Association  
Director, Montgomery County Animal Resource Center  
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#### Randall Lockwood, Ph.D.

Senior Vice Pres., Forensic Sciences & Anti-Cruelty Projects,  
ASPCA  
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#### Paul Needham

Chair, Education Committee,  
National Adult Protective Services Association  
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Account Representative, Wages & Investments  
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#### Emily Patterson-Kane, Ph.D.

Animal Welfare Scientist, Animal Welfare Division  
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#### Allie Phillips, J.D.

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#### Gale Rasin, J.D.

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#### Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM

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#### Hugh Tebault III

President,  
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#### John Thompson

Deputy Executive Director/Chief of Staff  
National Sheriffs Association  
Director, National Coalition on Violence Against Animals  
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