



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

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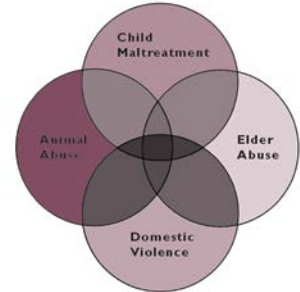
ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE



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[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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THE LINK AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

U.S. Senate Passes PACT Act

The U.S. came one step closer to having a nationwide anti-cruelty statute that would allow the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies to crack down on malicious cruelty and animal sexual abuse when the Senate on Dec. 14 unanimously passed the Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture (PACT) Act, **S. 654** (See the [November 2017 LINK-Letter](#)). The measure was sent to the House where 262 Representatives – almost two-thirds of the legislature – have signed on as co-sponsors to the identical companion **H.R. 1494**. More than 200 law enforcement agencies have indicated their support.

As the first-ever general federal animal cruelty bill, the PACT Act would expand the 2010 federal animal crush video law which banned the creation, sale, and distribution of obscene videos that show animals being subjected to cruelty. The PACT Act would prohibit such acts when they occur in interstate or foreign commerce, regardless of whether a video is produced. Convicted offenders would face federal felony charges, fines, and up to seven years in prison.

The PACT Act would not only enable the federal government to prosecute malicious acts of animal cruelty on federal property such as military bases, federal prisons, airports, and national parks, it would also crack down on bestiality, which frequently involves interstate transfer of animals and internet dissemination of information. There are still five states that do not prohibit bestiality – Hawaii, Kentucky, New Mexico, West Virginia, and Wyoming.



Bestiality is often associated with child pornography and other sexual crimes against humans. Sexual predators move their animal victims across state lines to abuse them and there is a predictive association of this behavior with human sexual abuse.

“This bipartisan measure finally prohibits a heinous, inhumane practice **Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Connecticut)** – stating emphatically once and for all that there is no place in a civilized society for the maiming and torturing of animals. Thanks to the long overdue action of the Senate, the barbaric individuals who commit these crimes will no longer walk free. I call on the House to pass this important legislation immediately,” said the bill’s co-sponsor Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.).

First Year’s NIBRS Data of Animal Cruelty Crimes Released

The FBI has released statistics from the first year’s worth of data since four types of animal abuse were added to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The data, expected to increase as the program is rolled out to cover more states in future years, will help develop more accurate depictions of the prevalence of different types of animal cruelty, and their interface with other crimes, across the U.S.

The data cover the year 2016. Law enforcement agencies in 13 states reported 599 incidents of simple or gross (animal hoarding) neglect, 523 incidents of intentional abuse and torture, 12 cases of organized animal abuse (animal fighting), and 9 cases of animal sexual abuse. Analysts caution the data are not yet developed enough to identify any trends because: animal crimes were added to NIBRS only in 2016; not all states participate in NIBRS; and many humane and animal control agencies are not part of police or sheriff’s offices and have not yet established procedures with local law enforcement to share their case information for uploading into the NIBRS system.

Not surprisingly, more than half of the cases – 53% -- were simple or gross neglect. However, 42% of individuals arrested for these crimes were women, who are generally under-represented in animal cruelty cases but over-represented in animal hoarding.

Overall, NIBRS logged over 6.1 million crime incidents in 2016, so the animal crimes represent only a minuscule number of cases investigated by law enforcement agencies. Nearly 75% of the cruelty incidents came from only three states – Delaware, Tennessee and Michigan. Historically, law enforcement has not always considered animal cruelty cases to be as much of a priority as crimes perceived to affect people, but growing awareness of The Link between animal and human abuse is training officers to recognize animal abuse’s impact on public safety.

Animal Cruelty Offenses

Distribution by Type of Criminal Activity, 2016*

State	Total Offenses	Simple/ Gross Neglect	Intentional Abuse and Torture	Organized Abuse	Animal Sexual Abuse
TOTAL	1,126	599	523	12	9
Colorado	8	7	1	0	0
Delaware	494	214	289	3	0
Massachusetts	2	1	1	0	0
Michigan	130	91	38	1	1
Minnesota	1	0	1	0	0
Missouri	15	8	6	1	0
North Dakota	7	5	3	0	0
Oregon	105	45	58	1	1
South Dakota	10	5	5	0	0
Tennessee	219	143	69	4	5
Washington	85	50	34	0	2
West Virginia	13	8	4	1	0
Wisconsin	37	22	14	1	0

New York City D.A. Cites Link in Announcing Animal Cruelty Unit



Cyrus R. Vance, Jr.

Citing Link research, Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., has [announced](#) the formation of the Big Apple’s latest animal cruelty investigation and prosecution unit. The unit streamlines procedures that have been in place for years and ensures that each case will be overseen by an expert in the field.

“The successful prosecution of crimes against animals goes beyond protecting four-legged or feathered New Yorkers,” said Vance. “Study after study has found a strong correlation between animal abuse and other crimes, including domestic violence. We are committed to aggressively prosecuting these cases to better protect the animals – and people – of our city.”

Assistant D.A. Tanisha Palvia was named Attorney-in-Charge of the unit. Palvia is also the office’s liaison to the NYPD’s Animal Cruelty Investigation Squad and the ASPCA. The ASPCA turned over cruelty investigations to the NYPD in 2013, dramatically increasing the number of cases being investigated (*See the [August 2014 LINK-Letter](#)*).



Tanisha Palvia

Stacy Wolf, Esq., Senior Vice President of the ASPCA Anti-Cruelty Group, commended Vance for continuing his office’s commitment to animal welfare through the creation of the program. “Dedicated prosecution of animal crimes is critical to the successful fight against animal cruelty in New York City,” she said.

In addition to the Manhattan program, dedicated animal cruelty prosecutors are in Queens and Staten Island, and across New York State in Albany, Nassau, Onondaga, Westchester and Wayne Counties.

Vance has served as Manhattan’s D.A. since 2010. Since taking office, he has created other specialized prosecution units addressing such issues as hate crimes, identity theft, cybercrime, major economic crimes, special victims, and public corruption.

El Paso, Texas Creates Animal Cruelty Unit

The El Paso, Texas Police Department has assigned four detectives, a sergeant and an officer to staff its first Animal Cruelty Investigative Unit, taking aim at people who hurt animals and striving to prevent future violence in the community.



“Animal cruelty leads to bigger things,” Det. Vanessa Acosta told [KVIA-TV](#). “A lot of these people who hurt animals, it’s linked to violent offenders. They start out hurting animals and then move up to hurting humans.”

The Unit was created to increase the number of cases that should be investigated. “We started realizing that there are a lot of cases that go unreported or that would never make it to a detective, or they are not followed up correctly,” said Sgt. Sandra Zamudio. Acosta, who also founded a nonprofit called Law n’ Paws, added that people who witness animal abuse “need to be their voice and be a good witness.”

The need for the Unit also follows new laws in Texas that increase incarceration time for animal cruelty offenders and that outlaw animal sexual abuse (*See the [July 2017 LINK-Letter](#)*).

Mass. Supreme Court Frees Youth Charged with Bestiality and Cruelty



The Massachusetts Supreme Court has ruled that a 14-year-old juvenile charged with animal cruelty and bestiality for shoving a soap dispenser up a dog's vagina cannot be convicted because the state's "youthful offender" statute requiring that an offense involving the infliction of "serious bodily injury" does not apply to an animal as well as to a human being.

The Nov. 20, 2017 ruling, [SJC-12277](#), declared the Juvenile Court's decision to dismiss the indictments against the youth, identified only as J.A., was correct. The Supreme Court noted, however, that the Commonwealth may still take action against the youth by charging him with delinquency.

The incident occurred in August, 2015, involving a friend's dog. The Supreme Court noted that "whether the scope of the phrase 'serious bodily harm' encompasses harm to animals is a question of statutory interpretation requiring de novo review," i.e., a new trial. The state's juvenile offender statute neither expressly includes nor excludes serious bodily harm to animals, while the state's animal protection statutes are direct and unambiguous.

THE LINK AND... VETERINARY MEDICINE

Injuries Suggestive of Illegal Dogfighting Identified

A recent article in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* is believed to be the first to describe the distinctions between non-accidental injuries sustained during "organized" dogfighting and "accidental" injuries that occur when two dogs not trained for the fighting ring interact. Organized dogfighting is also often marked by illegal gambling, organized crime, racketeering, illicit drugs, illegal firearms, and other forms of violence as well as animal abuse. But because veterinarians have not been widely trained to recognize such non-accidental injuries, many injuries that are suggestive of organized dogfights may not be reported to authorities if the dogs' owners allege the animal was involved in a spontaneous, backyard fight.

The study establishes evidence-based patterns of injury as a means to help clinicians identify signs of organized dogfighting and aid in the prosecution of this crime. Dogs involved in spontaneous fights had different patterns of injury than dogs that were seized from illegal dogfighting operations, the latter of which more commonly had injuries to multiple locations as well as a higher prevalence of injuries, particularly to thoracic limbs, head, neck, and thorax.

-- [Intarapanich, N.P., Touroo, R.M., Rozanski, E.A., Reisman, R.W., Intarapanich, P.P., & McCobb, E.C. \(2017\). Characterization and comparison of injuries caused by spontaneous versus organized dogfighting. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 251\(12\), 1424-1431.](#)

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ANIMAL ABUSE AND... CHILD PROTECTION **Study Reports Animal Protection Cross-Reporting of Child Abuse in the UK**



In May 2013, the United Kingdom's National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) formed a working relationship with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) due to acknowledgement of the links between abuse of children and animals. This resulted in the creation of an established Helpline number for RSPCA inspectors to report child protection concerns and for RSPCA staff to provide the Helpline number to the public.

The NSPCC has released statistics detailing 51 referrals from the RSPCA to NSPCC from April 2016 – March 2017. Key findings include:

- Of the 51 referrals, 38 resulted in response from local authorities. 86% of the referrals concerned families not previously known to these agencies. "These were children who therefore would not have received services or protective action had the RSPCA referral not been made," the report noted.
- Concerns were so significant in 9 referrals that the NSPCC contacted police for a welfare check or to share intelligence of domestic violence co-occurring within the home.
- Consistent with numerous other findings, neglect was the most prevalent form of abuse reported by RSPCA inspectors. Types of abuse reported included: inadequate home environment; failure to meet children's basic care needs; adult mental health issues; substance misuse; domestic violence; verbal abuse; and inadequate supervision.
- Parents were the individuals most likely named as alleged perpetrators with mothers (50%) and fathers (21%) so cited. It was unclear why mothers were so over-represented as research consistently finds that with the exception of sexual abuse both mothers and fathers are equally likely to be involved in the maltreatment of their children.
- In 21% of referrals where agency feedback was received, the concerns did not meet Local Authority thresholds for intervention, however safeguarding actions and inter-agency sharing of information were still taken to enable support and monitoring of the children's welfare.
- RSPCA referrals were more likely to be made when the child involved was under 5 years of age.

The RSPCA initiated awareness raising about child abuse and cross-reporting in new staff orientations and refresher trainings in 2015 to identify more children at risk so that safeguarding action can be taken.

The NSPCC report identified several areas for future analysis and research, including:

- Whether the type of child abuse correlates with the abuse directed toward the animals.
- Whether more than one type of child abuse occurs when both children and animals are victims.
- The decision-making process employed by outside professionals in relation to the type of abuse alleged, including the age of the children involved.

"The report outlines the value of the partnership in the safeguarding of children across England and Wales and the key role that non-child safeguarding agencies can play in identifying and reporting abuse and neglect," the report concluded. "It is hoped that this relationship continues in the future with an opportunity to develop and grow, thus allowing more children to be protected from harm when concerns are noted."

Study Describes Behavioral Profiles of Italian Link Offenders

A study of animal abuse among a population of 682 prison inmates has proven the Link between animal and human abuse for the first time in Italy and sheds new light on the criminal and behavioral profiles of animal abusers and killers in a branch of criminology its authors are calling the “Zooanthropology of Deviance.”

The report, authored by Francesca Sorcinelli, head of our Italian affiliate [Link-Italia](#), and Rossano Tozzi, of the State Forestry Corps’ Investigative Unit for Crimes Against Animals (N.I.R.D.A.), has been [translated into English](#). The authors suggest a zooanthropological diagnosis of human-animal relationships should serve as a supplement to traditional multidisciplinary crime assessment techniques.

Describing the Link as a symptom of a potentially pathological state of mind and as a predictor of current and/or future deviant, antisocial or criminal behaviors of escalating violence, the study reported:

- **28%** of the inmates had witnessed animal abuse and/or killing in childhood or adolescence. **16%** had perpetrated it. **45%** reported being both a witness and a perpetrator.
- **64%** of the inmates abused animals in their adulthood and **96%** had already abused animals when they were children.
- The mean age of children starting animal cruelty was **4 to 5 years**.
- **3%** reported having sex with animals in their childhood. **13%** reported adult acts of bestiality.
- **62%** of the animal abusers and/or killers reported starting a fire at least once in their lifetime.
- **10%** attributed the animal abuse to Mafia initiation.

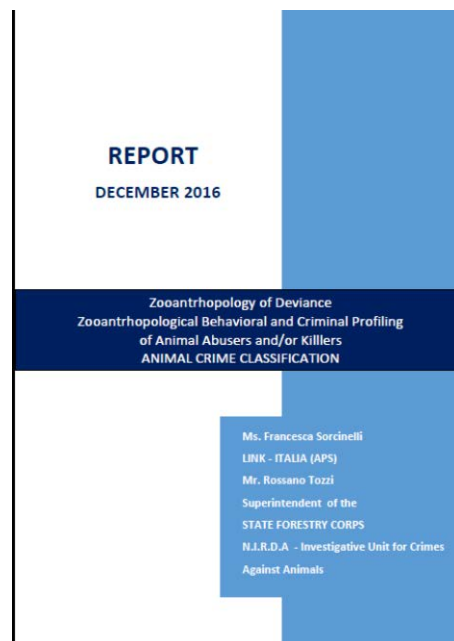
Many inmates reported having been exposed in childhood to socially sanctioned violence against animals. **9%** had observed killing livestock on farms, **6%** had experienced hunting, and **11%** had killed fish. However, **12%** reported having experienced dogfighting.

Animal abuse was closely linked with histories of turbulent families:

- **41%** of the animal abusers and/or killers reported venting their rage and frustration with a family environment characterized by violence and carelessness.
- **19%** reported having a difficult relationship with their mother, which negatively affected later relationships with other women.
- **23%** reported a difficult relationship with their father.

Many animal crimes were linked to other criminal and behavioral issues:

- **35%** said the animal cruelty was an integral part of another crime, such as using animals as drug carriers, intimidations, domestic violence against partners, or stalking,
- **27%** reported they had committed the animal crime for money – poaching, illegal breeding, or animal fighting.
- **22%** said they had committed the animal crime under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.



- **17%** said their adult crimes against animals were the expression of a psychological condition – rage, loneliness, sense of helplessness and emptiness, boredom, difficult relationships, or a need to exert power and control over the others.

The study also described criminal profiles based upon the offenders' empathy, or lack thereof, regarding animals. "Zoo-empathy" was described as the tendency to approach the animal being fully aware of its otherness and accepting it as a fundamental feature of the relationship without any fear, intolerance or rejection. The types of "zoo-empathy" included:

- **"Zoo-apathy"** (a complete lack of interest in animals).
- **"Zoo-poiesis"** (the disregard for the animal's real nature through a complex process of denial and psychological projection).
- **"Zoo-mania"** (an intense and sometimes exclusive attachment to animals rather than to people).
- **"Zoo-phobia"** (ranging from a mere dislike to an uncontrolled and irrational fear of animals which are perceived as an imminent threat).
- **"Zoo-intolerance"** (animals are seen as so repulsive and potentially dangerous that one's psychological balance may be disrupted).
- **"Zoo-sadism"** (occasional or frequent intentional acts of torture, pain and/or killing of animals).

In 1,087 Link-related cases where animal crimes intersected offenses against persons:

- **96%** of the abusers were men.
- **56%** of the victims were women, 28% children, 3% elderly.
- **65%** reported their spouses or partners refused to leave because they could not take their pets with them.
- **16%** reported the human victims died

These offenders were found to display several consistent traits:

- The animal abuse may have been a **distorted attempt to restore one's dignity** for individuals who have suffered severe and prolonged humiliation, especially in their childhood.
- Abuse occurs when the abuser perceives **the animal's body-size** as small enough to guarantee a successful assault but also large enough to satisfy his sadistic impulse.
- The most heinous crimes against animals are committed when **the relationship with another person is very intimate** and involves partners, parents or children.
- **Violence to animals perpetrated does not disappear spontaneously** but tends to escalate over the years due to a growing expertise and the onset of other forms of aggressiveness and/or antisocial behaviors. A history of animal cruelty increases significantly the abuser's social dangerousness.

"Being the expression of violence inflicted by the strong against the weak, cruelty to animals and wildlife in general should never be considered as an isolated episode but as an integral, pathological and predictive part of a whole cycle of violence," the report concludes. "As such, it requires effective measures of crime prevention and fighting."

-- Sorcinelli, F., & Tozzi, R. (2016, December). *Zoantropologia della Devianza. Profilo Zoantropologico Comportamentale e Criminale del Maltrattatore e/o Uccisore di Animali. Classificazione del Crimine su Animali (Zooanthropology of Deviance: Zooanthropological Behavioral and Criminal Profiling of Animal Abusers and/or Killers: Animal Crime Classification. Modena, Italy: Link-Italia and Corpo Forestale dello Stato (State Forestry Corps – N.I.R.D.A.).*

ANIMAL ABUSE AND... DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Robin Brock of NCADV Named to National Link Coalition

The National Link Coalition is proud to announce the appointment of Robin Brock, Advocacy Programs Manager for the [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#), to our steering committee.

Robin began working in the domestic violence arena in 2000, shortly after completing her practicum, at a local shelter in Lexington, Ky. Working as a crisis counselor, outreach coordinator, bilingual counselor, and legal advocate for women ever since, her commitment to putting victims first has never wavered.



Robin Brock

In 2009, she and her husband moved to Denver, Colo., where she became certified as a psychotherapist and began practicing trauma-informed therapy, serving survivors and their dependent children. She later assumed a new role at another domestic violence agency where she developed and practiced a unique and progressive model of victim advocacy, for which she won the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence's prestigious 2016 Outrageous Advocate of the Year award.

Since August 2017, she has been at NCADV, where she manages several programs including the Cosmetic and Reconstructive Support Program (CRS™) and the National Speakers Bureau. Her familiarity with the Link between domestic violence and animal abuse includes having served as a facilitator for the Project Connections Program with Frank Ascione and Tina Hageman at the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work.

Women for a Humane Canada Address Link Issues

A women's group in Canada is citing the Link between animal abuse and domestic violence in a campaign to improve the welfare of women and animals. Women for a Humane Canada is operated under the aegis of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies. It was founded by women who believe in the power of making change. Members are thought leaders from across the country who will work together to improve laws, enforcement, and public thinking about animals in society.



The group's [website](#) notes that the welfare of animals has a direct link to the welfare of women and children, and that violence against animals is a societal issue linked to violence against women and children. "Animal abuse is an early indicator of potential child and woman abuse. If we can effectively prosecute animal cruelty and neglect, we may also prevent future human tragedies," they write.

They also point out that women comprise more than 70% of leadership positions among Canadian animal welfare organizations and represent animal protection's largest group of donors.



Animal Safehouse Protects Pets of Abuse Survivors

Since 1997, the Rancho Coastal Humane Society in Encinitas, Calif., has been tossing a lifeline to the animal victims of domestic violence through its [Animal Safehouse](#) program – the third oldest such program in the U.S. The award-winning program is breaking the cycle of violence by removing one of the many barriers that keep people in abusive, potentially deadly situations.

The program partners with San Diego area domestic violence shelters, the Domestic Violence Council, the County Board of Supervisors, the Department of Animal Services, municipal animal shelters, the Family Justice Center, Domestic Violence Response Teams, and a variety of social services, mental health, law enforcement, educational, and military organizations. Pets are held for safekeeping and later returned to their owners or adopted into new loving homes.

Program Coordinator Carly Doyle says that about 150 animals each year enter the temporary crisis boarding program, and the support hotline works with 100 individuals each month, providing referrals to social services agencies and offering support and guidance through the domestic violence cycle. The support line also guides pet owners through the maze of resources available to them in the pet sector. The program recently expanded its services to include veterans receiving services through the VA.

The society's website features a 3-minute video describing the program. "The Animal Safehouse program can literally save lives, of humans and animals" says former program director Amy Heflin on the video. "When a domestic violence victim enters a safehouse, they take comfort in the fact that their animals are cared for by certified staff and foster families. It's a lifeline, a safety net for them.

"Animals are innocent victims," she adds. "When we take them into our homes we agree to protect them. Domestic violence threatens that protection."

BUILDING LINK AWARENESS

Program Introduces The Link to Social Workers

A new program in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary, Alberta, is introducing social workers and students to both the positive and negative interactions between people and animals, including various forms of abuse. [AeHAB](#) – Academic Explorations of the Human Animal Bond – is a community of social work practice that focuses on human-animal interactions.



"Research has shown that practitioners who have a working knowledge of the human animal bond are more likely to incorporate it into their work in some way, from its use as a gateway discussion to talk about abuse in the home to utilizing their own bond with an animal partner in practice," says AeHAB founder and coordinator Abigail Barth.

AeHAB has organized a monthly speaker series which is including such topics as cruelty investigations, veterinary social work, victim support dogs, and mental health issues.



Rep. Jim Dines

New Mexico Proposal Would Authorize Link Training

A bill in the **New Mexico** House of Representatives would request that the Department of Children, Youth and Families and the Department of Public Safety consider providing training on the Link between animal abuse and family violence in training curricula delivered to appropriate personnel. **HJM3** was introduced by Rep. Jim Dines of Bernalillo County, is based on the premise that many studies have shown strong correlations between animal, child, domestic, and elder abuse. The bill cites several key Link studies' statistics and notes that animal abuse is often the most publicly visible sign of family violence.

THE LINK... IN THE LITERATURE

Thesis Explores Links between Childhood Animal Cruelty and Adult Violence

How predictive of adult interpersonal violence is a history of childhood animal cruelty? Joseph Ketron, a master's student in Criminal Justice & Legal Assistant Studies at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, set out to explore this question in his thesis. He interviewed 257 male inmates to examine the relationship between four retrospectively identified motives for childhood animal cruelty and later adult interpersonal violence.

Almost half of the inmates reported engaging in childhood animal cruelty for fun. Over one-third reported committing acts of childhood animal cruelty out of anger. Approximately 20% of the inmates reported that they carried out acts of cruelty because of hate for the animal, whereas just over 40% cited imitation as their primary motive for animal abuse. Regression analyses revealed that recurrent childhood animal cruelty was the only statistically significant variable for predicting later adult interpersonal violence.

-- Ketron, J. (2017). "Childhood animal cruelty motives and their relationship to recurrent adult interpersonal crimes." *Masters Theses and Doctoral Dissertations*. <https://scholar.utc.edu/theses/531>

NEWS FROM OTHER LINK COALITIONS

European Link Coalition Launches New Website

Our European affiliate, the European Link Coalition, has resuscitated its online presence with an extensive [Facebook](#) presence and a [new website](#). Coordinator Malcolm Plant tells The LINK-Letter that the website is still embryonic but eventually hopes to have a page for each represented group to provide updates about news in their own country.



THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

Victories We're Celebrating... and Bills We're Watching

As 2018 opens, let's take a look back at the astounding number of Link-related bills that were enacted in 2017 as more and more legislators come to recognize that animal abuse and interpersonal violence are LINKed. We are encouraged by this progress and hope to see even more legislation passed moving forward!

VICTORIES IN 2017:

Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders



Illinois SB 1261 amends 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 measure also allows 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 law became effective Jan. 1, 2018.**



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 law became effective July 1, 2017.**

Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment



Alabama HB393/SB273 allows registered therapy dogs in legal proceedings, when permitted by the judge, to assist a victim or witness in order to reduce unnecessary emotional distress and allow full and factual testimony. It authorizes a judge to use discretionary funds to offset the costs for a registered handler of a registered therapy dog used in a legal proceeding.



California AB411 allows child witnesses in any serious or violent felony cases to have a therapy or facility dog present during court testimony. Procedures will 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.



Idaho SB 1089 amended 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 took effect July 1, 2017.**

Animal Abuse and Elder Abuse



Washington HB 1153 addressed 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. 1st-degree animal cruelty, including sexual contact with an animal, is listed as a crime which prosecutors may cite as reasons for filing charges.

Animal Sexual Abuse



Nevada AB 391 added a new section to N.R.S., 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 cannot 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 also covers anyone who causes, aids, promotes or observes bestiality. Accepted animal husbandry, veterinary and conformation judging practices are excluded. **The law took effect Oct. 1, 2017.**



Texas SB 1232 created 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 2nd-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 psychological treatment or similar program. **The law took effect Sept. 1, 2017.**



Vermont H.62 added a new category of sexual conduct to the various conditions defined as cruelty to animals. The measure amended 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 law took effect July 1, 2017.**

Animal Hoarding



Rhode Island S390/HB 5882 defined animal hoarding (“hazardous accumulation of animals”) and added it to the list of conduct that is considered cruelty to animals. The new law also requires any sentencing judge to consider whether such conduct is the result of a mental health disorder. **The bills became law on Oct. 6, 2017.**

Cross-Reporting



Maryland HB 1463 requires a veterinarian who believes that an animal 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. Practitioners continue to have immunity from civil and criminal liability when reporting. **The law took effect Oct. 1.**



Pennsylvania HB 1238 (“Libre’s Law”) was signed into law on June 28. It used Link premises to overhaul the state’s anti-cruelty statutes with enhanced penalties, and grants immunity from liability for veterinarians, technicians and assistants who report suspected animal abuse.

BILLS IN THE PIPELINE FOR 2018:

As state legislatures begin to convene, many measures are still awaiting introduction, but here are some that have already been introduced:

Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders



H.R. 909 and **S.322 – the Pet And Women Safety (PAWS) Act** – was re-introduced and now has 244 bi-partisan co-sponsors in the House and 35 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.



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.



Michigan HB 4332 would make it a 1st, 2nd or 3rd-degree offense, depending on severity, to knowingly torture or kill an animal with the intent to cause mental distress or exert control over a person. The bill passed the House on Nov. 29 by a vote of 90-15 and was sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee.



New Mexico HJM 3 would request that the Department of Children, Youth and Families and the Department of Public Safety consider providing training on the Link between animal abuse and family violence in training delivered to appropriate personnel.



New York A8663 would amend §23 of the state’s Domestic Relations Law to require the court to consider the best interest of a companion animal when awarding possession in a divorce or separation proceeding. The bill is in the Assembly Judiciary Committee.



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.



Pennsylvania HB1652 would allow divorcing parties to enter into a custody agreement for the possession and/or care of a companion animal. Such agreements may specify the time during which each party will possess the pet and each party’s financial responsibility regarding its care. The bill defines relevant factors which the court may consider. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.

“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.

Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment



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. **S1432** passed the Senate and both bills are now in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.



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.

Animal Sexual Abuse



H.R. 1494/S.654 -- the PACT (Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture) Act – would amend and update 18 U.S. Code § 48 to expand the definition of “animal crushing,” as pertains to “crush videos,” to include any act in which animals are subjected to serious bodily injury or conduct that, if committed against a person, would be defined as sexual abuse or aggravated sexual abuse. The Senate version passed unanimously on Dec. 14 and heads to the Judiciary Committee in the House, where it has 265 co-sponsors.



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.

Psychological Evaluation of Offenders



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.

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.

Animal Abuse and Other Crimes



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



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 was approved by the Committee on Municipal and Regional Government and sent to the Senate Rules Committee.



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 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 Codes 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.

Cross-Reporting



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 was approved by the Committee on Municipal and Regional Government and sent to the Senate Rules Committee.



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 veterinarians are mandated to report suspected animal cruelty, abuse and neglect to peace officers, humane agents or animal control officers. **HF 787** and **SF1167** would give them immunity from civil liability. **HF 787** is in the Agriculture Policy Committee and **SF1167** is in the Agriculture, Rural Development & Housing Police Committee.



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.



Ohio **HB147** would add agents of the Ohio Humane Society to professionals mandated to report child abuse. It also would repeal a provision of the Humane Society Law that specifically requires humane society agents to remove a child from his or her parents when the agent deems it to be in the child's best interest. Current law designates agents of county humane societies as mandated reporters, but not agents of the Ohio Humane Society. Current law also requires public children's services agencies to prepare a memorandum of understanding to be signed by specified law enforcement and judicial officers in their jurisdiction, including the county humane society; the bill would allow the Ohio Humane Society to be a signatory as well. The bill is in the Civil Justice Committee.



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

THE LINK... IN THE NEWS



Fernando Morgan

Disgruntled Boyfriend Charged With Tossing Pets Out a Window

A disgruntled boyfriend in San Antonio, Texas was arrested after stunned witnesses allegedly saw him toss his girlfriend's dog and cat out of a second-story apartment window after she reportedly told him to leave and never return. [San Antonio Animal Care Services](#) said Fernando Morgan, 46, was charged in the incident which caused a 6-year-old rat terrier named "Ruby" to suffer a cracked pelvis, ribs and two broken legs. The cat, named "Midnight," suffered only minor injuries. Midnight was adopted into a new home and Ruby is expected to be adopted following recovery.

Woman Charged with Child Neglect after Three Dogs Found in Freezer

A Pierson, Fla. Woman was charged with child neglect after Volusia County sheriff's deputies who were checking her home found a 5-year-old girl sitting on a couch covered with roaches, and three dead dogs in the freezer. Victoria Kanger, 35, told authorities that she froze the dogs because she didn't have a shovel and she did not think it was odd because there was no food stored there. Deputies reported that their lower pant legs were covered in fleas when they entered the home, which was infested with insects and reeked of feces and urine, according to the [Daytona Beach News-Journal](#). There were also two dogs and numerous cats in the home, although the lone litter box was so dirty it was impossible for the cats to use it. The girl and a 14-year-old teenager were removed by DCF and are living with relatives.



Victoria Kanger

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Jan. 10, 2018 – Pittsfield, Mass.: The [HAVEN](#) (Human/Animal Violence Education Network) Network will meet at the Berkshire Humane Society.

Jan. 11, 2018 – (Online): Phil Arkow and Amber Ahern will lead a webinar on "How to Build a Successful and Sustainable Link Coalition" as part of the Institute for Human-Animal Connection's Interconnected Webinar Series. [Registration](#) is free for *LINK-Letter* readers: use Promo Code COSHELTER.

Jan. 18 – Philadelphia, Pa.: Phil Arkow will present on The Link to the Pennsylvania Bar Association's [Animal Law Committee](#).

Jan. 23 – Oklahoma City, Okla.: The [Oklahoma Link Coalition](#) will meet at the Regional Food Bank.

Feb. 2 – (online): John Thompson will present a [webinar](#) on "Partners in Crime: The Link Between Animal Abuse and Human Abuse" for the Justice Clearinghouse.

Feb. 11 – Washington, D.C.: The National Coalition on Violence Against Animals ([NCOVAA](#)) will meet.

Feb. 14-15 – Altoona, Iowa: Randy Lockwood will present at the Iowa Veterinary Medical Association's [Winter Conference](#).

Feb. 15 – (Online): Allie Phillips will lead a [webinar](#) for the Institute for Human-Animal Connection on "Linked-Informed Response: Changing Agency Procedures" about how human and animal welfare agencies, prosecutors, law enforcement, and allied professionals are changing their policies and procedures. LINK-Letter readers can use the code CHANGE for one-time free access.

Feb. 19 – Seattle, Wash.: Randy Lockwood, Rachel Touroo and other ASPCA staff will present a day-long workshop on "A Multidisciplinary Approach to Dogfighting Cases" at the [American Academy of Forensic Sciences](#) Annual Scientific Meeting.

Feb. 24 (online): [Allie Phillips](#) will conduct a webinar for the University of Leicester (UK) Student Animal Legal Defense Fund chapter about co-sheltering people and pets of domestic violence.

March 9 – Dallas, Texas: Phil Arkow will speak at the [North Texas Link Coalition](#)'s CEU Conference.

March 21 – Philadelphia, Pa.: Phil Arkow will speak to the Animals and Social Work class at the University of Pennsylvania [School of Social Policy & Practice](#).

April 26-18 – Austin, Texas: Phil Arkow will present "Who 'Ya Gonna Call? Abuse Busters!" at the 10th Annual [Texas Unites for Animals](#) conference.

May 11 – Richmond, Va.: Phil Arkow will present on "Species-Spanning Medicine: The Link between Animal Abuse and Other Forms of Family Violence" at the Virginia Commonwealth University [Department of Psychiatry](#)'s Grand Rounds.

June 5 – Bloomington, Ill.: Phil Arkow will present at the [Prairie States Animal Welfare Conference](#).

July 6 – 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.

Oct. 22-23 – Oklahoma City, Okla.: The Kirkpatrick Foundation will sponsor the [Oklahoma Animal Conference](#) as part of its Safe & Humane initiative.

Nov. 22-24 – Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Phil Arkow will speak at the [Alberta Veterinary Medical Association](#)'s Veterinary Forensics Workshop.

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



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

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

[Lesley Ashworth](#)

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Consultant, Ohio Domestic Violence Network
Former Director, Domestic Violence/Stalking Program,
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