



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

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A monthly report of news from THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER



ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE



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[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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APRIL IS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

APRIL 8-14 IS NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

ANIMAL ABUSE AND... DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

California Considering Pets' Welfare in Divorce Decrees



California has joined the list of states that have enacted or are considering allowing courts to award custody of pets in divorce or separation agreements based on the animals' best interests (*See the March 2018 LINK-Letter*). **AB 2274**, introduced on Feb. 13 by Assemblyman Bill Quirk (D - Hayward) would define "pet" as "any household animal, including, but not limited to, a cat or dog."



Bill Quirk

Alaska pioneered the avoiding of contentious Solomon-like disputes over who gets to keep the pets in 2016 with the world's first law allowing courts to consider the animals' best interests, paralleling long-standing procedures for child custody. Illinois enacted similar legislation in 2017. Other states considering similar bills are New York **A8663**, Pennsylvania **HB 1652**, Rhode Island **HB 7585**, and West Virginia **HB 2855**. Hawai'i, **HB 155**, died in this year's legislative session.

California Nixes Domestic Violence/Animal Abuse Bill



Provisions to encourage greater cooperation between domestic violence and animal shelters were deleted by the Assembly Public Safety Committee. **AB 1939**, which addresses compensation for crime victims, had also promoted the safety of domestic violence victims and preventing animal abuse when it was introduced by Assemblyman Marc Steinorth (R – Rancho Cucamonga).

The committee deleted a statement declaring the state's intent to:

- (a) Promote the safety of domestic violence victims and prevent animal abuse.
- (b) Create a framework for public domestic violence shelters to provide temporary housing solutions for pets of domestic violence victims at local animal shelters.
- (c) Develop partnerships between public domestic violence shelters and public and nonprofit animal shelters.

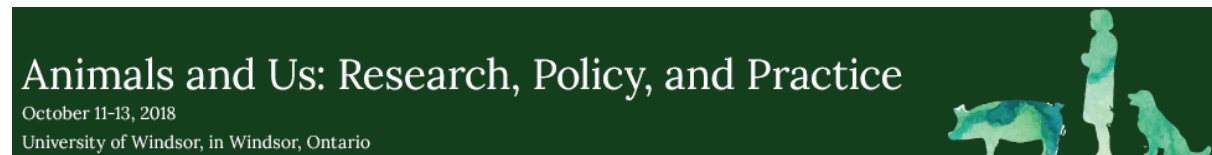


Marc Steinorth

It was not immediately clear why these provisions were deleted by the committee. The National Link Coalition applauds Steinorth for introducing this landmark proposal.

Ontario Research Group, Institute Focus on Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence

The University of Windsor Animal and Interpersonal Abuse Research Group (AIPARG), the Windsor-Essex County Humane Society, and Hiatus House will hold an all-day pre-conference [Institute](#) on research, theory and practice specific to the intersection of violence against animals and women within the context of domestic violence. The Institute, scheduled for Oct. 11, will feature Frank Ascione, Jaki MacKinnon, David Favre, David Nibert, and Charu Chandrasekera as keynote speakers.



The Institute is part of a three-day conference, “Animals and Us: Research, Policy and Practice,” Oct. 11-13. The Institute aims to generate an interdisciplinary conversation on cutting-edge research that documents the scope and complexity of the issue; the development of sound social policy to guide program development; and effective training of frontline workers to identify and intervene in cases in which women and animals are at risk. Researchers, scholars, anti-violence activists, and frontline practitioners working with abused women and/or animals are invited to attend.

AIPARG has issued a call for papers, panels, workshops, and creative performances that address research and theory, policy or practice in the intersection of abuse to women and animals. Abstracts must be submitted by May 15 for peer review to the [University of Windsor](#).

[AIPARG](#) is composed of faculty and graduate students who are conducting research on how intersectional safety is fundamental to imagining Canada’s future and that the promotion of the safety of animals will directly affect the security and well-being of humans. Graduate research assistant Allison Gray has created a [3-minute video](#) summarizing The Link and its importance. The group’s website offers resources and academic research being conducted by its members.

Spanish Guide to the Domestic Violence/Animal Abuse Link Published



Our Link affiliate in Spain, the Observatorio de Violencia Hacia los Animales (*See the [June 2016 LINK-Letter](#)*) has published a [48-page Spanish-language guidebook](#) describing its pioneering VioPet program to care for the human and animal victims of domestic violence.

The attractive booklet contains extensive information on the physical, emotional and financial indicators of domestic violence and animal abuse; summaries of key research studies; legislative strategies; and resources and recommendations to help families escaping domestic abuse.

THE LINK AND... VETERINARY MEDICINE

Manual Will Help Oklahoma DVMs Recognize and Respond to Animal Cruelty

The pioneering manual developed by [Animal Folks](#) to help Minnesota veterinarians recognize and report suspected animal abuse, and resolve contentious practice management issues (*See the [April 2016 LINK-Letter](#)*) has been adapted for use by Oklahoma practitioners.

The Kirkpatrick Foundation has published [The Role of the Veterinarian Reporting Animal Cruelty](#), a 156-page, colorful and illustrated manual to help Oklahoma veterinarians to establish protocols in their practices.



The manual adapts all legal content and contacts in the original Minnesota version to reflect the laws of Oklahoma. It is available as a free pdf download from the Kirkpatrick Foundation website.

The manual includes:

- fundamentals about the nature and origins of animal abuse and its Link to human violence;
- the role and legal responsibilities of veterinarians in including cruelty in the index of suspicion;
- key steps in establishing standard operating procedures for conversation, observation, medical evaluation, treatment, documentation, and reporting suspected animal abuse;
- the legal processes of filing charges, hearings, trials, and testifying; and
- other considerations, such as confidentiality, immunity, liability, compensation, and responding to the media.

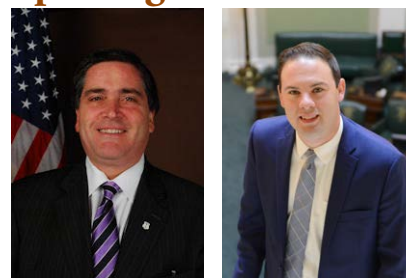
The manual includes extensive lists of resources and references.

“Animal cruelty issues are of great concern for all of us, but especially for veterinarians,” writes Dr. Chris Ross, Interim Dean of the Oklahoma State University for Veterinary Health Sciences. “Our profession is sworn to protect the health and well-being of animals, and we are uniquely positioned by training and intention to ensure that the animals and humans that we serve are as well-treated as possible.”

Publication of the manual, produced in cooperation with Animal Folks Minnesota, is part of the Kirkpatrick Foundation’s 20-year Safe & Humane initiative to make the Sooner State the safest and most humane state in which to be an animal in 2032. A third iteration of the Animal Folks manual is reportedly under way in Massachusetts.

Rhode Island Bill Would Mandate Veterinary Reporting

[Rhode Island SB 2605](#), introduced on March 1 by Senate Deputy Majority Leaders Frank Lombardi (D - Cranston) and Ryan Pearson (D -Cumberland/Lincoln), would require veterinarians, veterinary technicians, animal shelter and kennel employees, and other persons charged with the care or custody of animals to report suspected animal abuse to local law enforcement agencies. Reporters would have immunity for reports made in good faith, and would not be required to investigate such reports further. Failure to report would be punishable by a fine of up to \$500. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Sens. Lombardi and Pearson

THE LINK AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Legislator's Fear of Bestiality Bill's Optics Backfires Badly

A Wisconsin legislator worried more about the optics of having the media report on sex with animals on the last day of the legislative session than about doing the right thing killed debate on two bestiality bills. Senate Majority Chair Scott Fitzgerald defiantly and definitively told animal welfare advocates that he would not allow [Wisconsin SB802](#) and companion measure [AB666](#) to come up for a vote because he “doesn’t want the press to talk about sex with animals on the last day of session.”



Sen. Scott Fitzgerald
feared press coverage

The bills, which had been approved favorably by the full Assembly and the Senate Judiciary & Public Safety Committee and had wide bipartisan support, would have updated the state’s archaic bestiality law. They would have made it a felony, rather than a misdemeanor, to have sexual contact with an animal; to coerce another to have sexual contact with an animal; and to promote, advertise, harbor, transport, or obtain an animal for the purpose of sexual contact. Current Wisconsin law only makes sexual gratification with an animal a misdemeanor and does not include the new provisions. The bill would have also created escalating degrees of felony if the other person is a child.

Fitzgerald’s fear of adverse press coverage backfired, however, when [WBAY-TV](#), Green Bay’s ABC affiliate, publicized his unwillingness to take up the bill, which was filed in response to serial horse molester Sterling Rachwal ([See the November 2017 LINK-Letter](#)) and requests from prosecutors for tougher laws.

He was also skewered by [WFRV-TV](#) which dedicated a three-minute news segment to the “outrage” and “disappointment” being felt statewide that a “gold standard” piece of legislation with broad bipartisan support was taken off the table by one powerful but fearful man. “We’re frustrated that he chose to ignore the voters. Nobody wants to talk about this. I don’t want to talk about this but we have to,” said Susan Marland of Two Rivers. “There are thousands of people soliciting this type of activity on the Internet in Wisconsin and other states, and it’s a precursor to abusing children.”

Fitzgerald was also loudly criticized by several postings on his Facebook page where Wisconsinites expressed their disappointment in his lack of action on the bill. “Would you rather hear [the press] talk about it after people have done terrible things to animals instead?” asked one writer. “Next session consider being a bit more bold and brave and tackle this difficult, yet very real issue!” wrote another.

Fitzgerald’s apparent naiveté about how the media would react for not taking action on the bill is curious, given his background. His official biography notes that he has a B.S. in Journalism from the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh and was formerly a newspaper publisher of the Dodge County *Independent News*.

“As studies have borne out, there’s an extremely high correlation to those who have abused animals who go on to abuse humans as well,” said Rep. Andre Jacque (R – DePere) who introduced the bill. Jacque said he plans to re-introduce the measure in the next legislative session.

Louisiana Seeks to Update Bestiality Law, Separate It from Homosexuality Provisions

A bill introduced on March 12 into the Louisiana State Legislature would significantly update the state's bestiality law, removing it from the archaic category of "crime against nature" (which apparently also includes homosexuality) and replace it with a more modern definition of "sexual abuse of an animal."



Sen. J. P. Morrell

Currently, Louisiana statute R.S. 14:89(a)(1) defines a "crime against nature" as "the unnatural copulation by a human being with another of the same sex or opposite sex or with an animal." The bill would retain the existing "crime against nature" addressing interpersonal sex, but create a new category of "sexual abuse of an animal" to include sexual conduct with an animal for sexual purposes, or procuring animals, observing, coercing, abetting, advertising, or permitting sexual contact with animals. Accepted practices of veterinary medicine, artificial insemination, animal husbandry, and breed conformations would be exempted.

Sexual abuse of an animal would be punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or five years in prison, unless the animal dies or it is a second offense, in which case the fine is \$5,000 - \$25,000 and up to 10 years in prison. Offenders would have to relinquish custody of all animals and be barred from residing, working or volunteering with animals for at least five years.

SB 236 was introduced by Sen. J.P. Morrell (D-New Orleans) and was approved by the Judiciary Committee.

Maximum Sentence Imposed on Man Who Drowned Girlfriend's Dog

A man who stole his then-girlfriend's dog and tied it to a cinder block and threw it in a reservoir in order to send her a hurtful message received a maximum prison sentence and a warning from the prosecutor about how animal abuse is also a concern for human welfare. Anthony Michael Muniz, 37, of Reistertown, Md., was given a three-year prison sentence after a two-day trial for aggravated animal cruelty.



Anthony Muniz

"To treat a dog that way shows an incredible amount of disregard not only for an animal's life, but ultimately at times concerns us about human life," Carroll County State's Attorney Brian Deleonardo said. "My office will aggressively prosecute the abuse or mistreatment of animals. Often people who mistreat and abuse animals pose a much greater risk to the public and are more likely to commit other crimes. I hope this conviction and sentence sends a warning to anyone who would engage in such conduct in the future."

The dog, a pit bull mix named "Roscoe," was found floating in the reservoir, still tied to the cinder block. A microchip linked the dog to Muniz, who had stolen the dog, given it to a humane society as a stray, then re-adopted it as his own, according to the [Carroll County Times](#).

ANIMAL ABUSE AND... ADULT PROTECTION

Indiana Enacts APS and CPS Cross-Reporting of Animal Abuse



Indiana took a major step forward on March 15 when Gov. Eric Holcomb signed into law **SB 431**. (See the [February 2018 LINK-Letter](#)). The new law gives child protection case-workers and adult protection personnel immunity from civil and criminal liability if they report suspected animal cruelty, abandonment or abuse while conducting assessments or investigations. The law specifies procedures and timelines for making such reports to law enforcement or animal control agencies. The law becomes effective July 1, 2018.

Child protection workers are mandated to report animal abuse in Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, Nebraska, Tennessee, and West Virginia. They are permitted to report animal abuse in California, Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, and Oregon. APS investigators are mandated reporters of animal abuse in Louisiana, Nebraska, Tennessee, and West Virginia, and also permitted to report in California.



Sen. Bruce Tarr

Massachusetts Bill Would Mandate Cross-Reporting

A bill in the Massachusetts legislature would mandate employees and contractors of the Department of Elder Affairs and the Disabled Persons Protection Commission to report suspected animal cruelty, abuse or neglect to a police officer or special state police officer. Under the terms of **S.1159**, reporters who act in good faith would be immune from civil and criminal liability and the usual confidentiality restrictions. The elder affairs and disabled persons agencies could receive training in identifying and reporting animal cruelty, abuse and neglect. The bill is sponsored by Sen. Minority Leader Bruce E. Tarr with 34 co-sponsors.

ANIMAL ABUSE AND... CHILD PROTECTION

Study Examines Stress Among Child Sexual Abuse Interviewers

Sexually abused children who testify in forensic interviews, such as in Children's Advocacy Centers, are sometimes provided facility dogs or therapy dogs for comfort. These dogs are extensively trained to work with forensic interviewers. The disturbing nature of interviews can impact child welfare workers' mental health causing secondary traumatic stress.

To investigate this stress, the authors of this study gathered retrospective and secondary traumatic stress scale data comparing job stress among interviewers of children using: a certified, workplace facility dog, a volunteer's trained therapy dog or the interviewer's pet dog, or no dog.

All groups had elevated secondary traumatic stress scores which, compared with other healthcare groups, were especially high for Avoidance, a psychological coping mechanism to avoid dealing with a stressor. Interviewers working with therapy dogs had higher Avoidance scores than those who did not use dogs. Interviewers working with therapy dogs experienced heightened stress when they began their jobs; high stress levels persisted, indicating lower inherent coping skills and greater empathy among interviewers who later self-selected to work with therapy dogs. The results revealed extreme avoidant stress for individuals interviewing children who are suffering and their differing coping approaches.

-- Walsh, D., Yamamoto, M., Willits, N.H., & Hart, L.A. (2018, March 12). [Job-related stress in forensic interviewers of children with use of therapy dogs compared with facility dogs or no dogs. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2018.00046>](#)

THE LINK ... IN THE LITERATURE



Janet Hoy-Gerlach

Study Explores Opportunities for Social Workers in Human-Animal Issues

The first petition in the U.S. for removal of a child due to abuse occurred in 1874 through efforts of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. While child protection services have evolved since then and animal and child protective services have bifurcated into largely separate entities, numerous aspects of human–animal interaction are relevant to social work. These include: social support roles of animals; connections between violence toward animals and violence toward humans; therapeutic benefits of animals; companion animal loss and grief management; and compassion fatigue among animal shelter and veterinary staff.

In this study, the authors describe the development of two internship placements at a humane society. One placement focused on reduction of staff compassion fatigue and the development of an Emotional Support Animal placement program; the other focused on aspects of the connection between violence toward animals and violence toward people.

The authors reported that aspects of these social work placements can be modified and replicated in other humane societies and related settings. Increased awareness of the potential relevance of human–animal interaction across social work practice settings allows for explicit identification of, and response to, clients’ human–animal interaction-related strengths and concerns, ultimately supporting the well-being of both humans and animals.

-- Hoy-Gerlach, J., Delgado, M., Sloane, H., & Arkow, P. (2018). *Rediscovering connections between animal welfare and human welfare: Creating social work internships at a humane society. Journal of Social Work*. DOI: 10.1177/1468017318760775.

Female Cruelty Investigators Seen at Additional Risk



Kendra Coulter & Amy Fitzgerald



While all law enforcement officers face occupational risks, female animal cruelty investigators are subjected to additional physical risks, emotional stressors and public devaluation and denigration based upon what the authors of this study call the feminization of animal cruelty investigations. In contrast to human-focused policing, cruelty investigation is feminized through both its social construction and in the numerical composition of the workforce itself.

The researchers interviewed 92 Ontario SPCA inspectors, 62% of whom are women. They reported that investigators are criticized by those who feel they are too active and interventionist, and by others who feel they are not active enough. These vociferous critiques affect all inspectors, but women face additional disrespect and verbal and physical abuse, including rape threats, death threats, and threats of sexual and other kinds of violence against their families. This problem is exacerbated because a large majority of animal abusers are men. Lower quality working conditions compared to human-focused law enforcement, cultural ambivalence and contradictory ideas about the place of animals in society, and the risks cruelty investigators face conspire to create interwoven and reinforcing risks and a gendered and multispecies cycle of devaluation.

-- Coulter, K., & Fitzgerald, A. (2018). *The compounding feminization of animal cruelty investigation work and its multispecies implications. Gender, Work & Organization, 25*(1), 1-15.

Study Explores Characteristics of Animal Abusers

Criminology researchers in the Netherlands conducted this descriptive study to gain insight into the characteristics of animal abusers and animal abuse. On the basis of registrations by police, animal protection services, and the national reporting center for animal welfare, 90 cases of animal abuse involving 97 offenders were analyzed. The offenders were heterogeneous as to background and characteristics. Many were in debt, and 25% had one or more psychological disorders (e.g., antisocial personality disorders and autism spectrum disorders). Animal abuse often occurred because of frustration, and dogs were the main victims. Most cases of abuse took place in the home of the abuser. By taking the offense of animal abuse as a starting point for studying the offenders' characteristics, insight was gained into a broader spectrum of characteristics and backgrounds than would have been found had the researchers started from a domestic violence perspective or the graduation hypothesis.

-- van Wijk, A., Hardeman, M., & Endenburg, N. (2018). *Animal abuse: Offender and offence characteristics: A descriptive study. Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling, 1-12.*

Animal Cruelty Risk Correlated with Anxiety, Depression and ADHD

The prognosis for Conduct Disorder (CD) is guarded for individuals who develop symptoms of CD at an earlier age, particularly before the age of 10. Animal cruelty has been one of the earliest behaviors identified in the development of CD. In this study, records of male adolescents with CD alone and with other comorbid disorders were examined in relation to histories of animal cruelty. The results indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in adolescent males with comorbid diagnoses of CD and depression or CD and anxiety and a history of animal cruelty, when compared to adolescent males with only a diagnosis of CD. There was a statistically significant difference in adolescent males with comorbid diagnoses of CD and ADHD and a history of animal cruelty, when compared to adolescent males with only a diagnosis of CD. The author believed that depression and anxiety minimize the effects of CD and decrease the risk for animal cruelty, whereas ADHD exacerbates symptoms of CD and increases the risk for animal cruelty.

-- Blalock, A. (2011). *The Relationship between Animal Cruelty and Comorbid Disorders. (Doctoral dissertation, Pacific University).*

Canadian Attitudes, Policies & Practices for Pet Cosheltering Explored

Through surveys with staff from 17 intimate partner violence shelters in Canada, this study captured a snapshot of shelter policies and practices regarding companion animals. The study explored staff's own relationships with pets and exposure to animal abuse, as well as how these experiences relate to support for pet safekeeping programs, and perceived barriers and benefits for the programs. Policy implications for service agencies included: asking clients about concerns about pet safety; clear communication of agency policies regarding services available for pet safekeeping; and starting a conversation at the agency level on how to establish a pet safekeeping program in order to better meet the needs of women seeking refuge.

-- Stevenson, R., Fitzgerald, A., & Barrett, B. (2017). *Sheltering pets from intimate partner violence: Insights from domestic violence shelter staff in Canada. Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work. doi:10.1177/0886109917747613.*

Impacts of Domestic Violence on Pets and Veterinarians Examined

Thirteen women who had lived with companion animals during a domestic violence relationship were interviewed to investigate how animals were affected by the violence, as well as how veterinarians were involved. Most women reported that companion animals had been abused or neglected by their partners, and that they had delayed leaving due to concerns for animals left in the home. Affected animals most commonly demonstrated protection of the woman, and avoidance or aggression towards the partner. Only one woman confided to a veterinarian that she and her animals were living with domestic violence, and in four cases women's partners had prevented them from accessing veterinary care. The authors recommended that veterinarians be educated on issues regarding animal guardianship during domestic violence to enhance their ability to provide knowledgeable and compassionate support when confronted with these cases in practice.

-- Tiplady, C.M., Walsh, D.B., & Phillips, J.C. (2017). "The animals are all I have": Domestic violence, companion animals, and veterinarians. *Society & Animals*, 26(1).

Impact of Animal Abuse on Cognitive and Affective Empathy Studied

This study draws on diverse research results from investigating the relationship between experiences with animal abuse and empathy. The authors examined whether 108 men with histories of animal abuse showed differences between cognitive (perspective-taking) and affective (emotional) empathy. The effects related to three levels (never, once, multiple times) of witnessing the killing of animals and witnessing the torture of animals. Individuals who witnessed abuse were higher in cognitive empathy than affective empathy. Findings support previous findings for a "dissociation hypothesis," which suggests exposure to animal abuse may mediate between emotional and cognitive empathy. The authors suggest it may be beneficial for an individual to have the ability to detach cognitive from emotional empathy—particularly those in careers related to animal welfare and veterinary care. An absence of emotional empathy may also lead to a callous or dismissive attitude to people in need.

-- Daly, B., & Morton, L.L. (2018). Empathic differences in men who witnessed animal abuse: "Dissociation effect" between cognitive and affective empathy. *Society & Animals*, 26(1), 1-12.



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NEWS FROM OTHER LINK COALITIONS

North Texas Link Coalition Holds Inaugural Conference

Almost 200 people representing a wide range of professional interests converged on Richardson, Texas in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex to attend the first conference of the [North Texas Link Coalition](#) on March 9. Sponsored by the SPCA of Texas and the Texas Humane Legislation Network, the conference featured National Link Coalition Coordinator Phil Arkow as the keynote speaker and seven local and regional presenters. We tip our hat to everyone involved who made the Breaking the Cycles of Violence such a resounding success!



Linda Yarbrough (left) and Linda Ross organized the conference, which attracted participants from Texas and Oklahoma.



Kathleen Romero (left) and Manda Shank brought greetings from the Oklahoma Link Coalition and shared their successes and ideas with the group.



Prosecutors Jessica Milligan of Harris County (left) and Felicia Kerney of Dallas County described Texas laws and their innovative anti-cruelty efforts.



"The Link" and the "chain of custody" took on additional meanings with this heavy chain taken from a fighting dog during an investigation by the SPCA of Texas.

Swedish Link Coalition Expands Training to Veterinarians



Our Swedish Link partner, [Se Sambandet](#), tells *The LINK-Letter* that they were fortunate to get funding from Svenska Djurskyddsföreningen and in August, 2017, began a program to expand awareness of The Link. Since 2012, Sweden's 21 County Administrative Boards have introduced The Link to social workers, police, animal welfare inspectors, domestic violence shelter employees, and volunteers, but were unable to reach out to veterinarians and their staffs. "They have a hard time getting time off or being allowed to go as part of their job. We decided to try to take the Link training to them instead," says Nathalie Norden of Se Sambandet.

The group is currently developing training materials which they hope to have completed by June and then begin training for veterinarians in August. The teaching materials have three components:

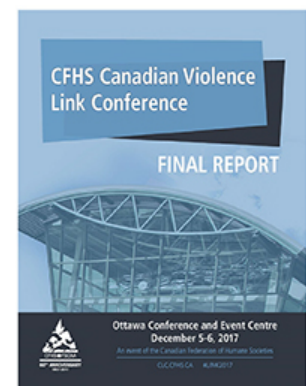
- A guide describing how to find and how to act at the clinic when you suspect NAI and/or domestic violence
- A guide for the clinic's owners regarding how to continually train new employees and other management aspects
- Facts about the link and why it is an important concept for veterinarians.

Meanwhile, Freda Scott-Park from [The Links Group UK](#) is visiting Sweden in April where she will train veterinarians, staff at veterinary clinics, university students, and Swedish animal welfare inspectors. She will also speak at a seminar in the Swedish parliament.

BUILDING LINK AWARENESS

Canadian Link Conference Publishes Report, Plans Future Steps

The groundbreaking 1st Canadian Violence Link Conference, held in Ottawa last Dec. 5-6 (See the [February 2018 LINK-Letter](#)), has published a [final report](#). The 21-page document offers an Executive Summary; a list of the conference's goals and objectives; research from the U.S. and Canada; and a multi-disciplinary and geographic description of the 204 participants.



Attendees identified priority issues and barriers to cross-collaboration. Action steps emerging from the conference included:

- 10 volunteers are starting a Canadian National Link Coalition.
- A working group has been established by police officers to change law enforcement databases that will allow them to capture and report animal abuse information.
- Domestic violence shelters are reviewing shelter intake protocols to determine which shelters accept pets, and list this information on their websites.
- Participants agreed to share what they learned with their organizations and to work with local and provincial governments to elevate the profile of the Link and establish sufficient resources.
- The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association will communicate with its members the professional responsibility to report animal abuse.

An extensive series of recommendations were presented to integrate the Link into response systems, protocols, legislation, training, research, and public outreach campaigns.



Louisa McCune

Op-Ed Builds Link Awareness in Oklahoma

The tragic school massacre in Parkland, Fla., prompted Louisa McCune, Executive Director of the Kirkpatrick Foundation in Oklahoma City, to write an op-ed which was published in the Feb. 25th [Oklahoman](#) newspaper, describing numerous incidents where school shootings were preceded by horrific acts of animal cruelty. The foundation is actively working to educate Oklahomans on the correlation between animal and human violence through its support of the Oklahoma Link Coalition, its Safe & Humane initiative, and the new manual to help veterinarians respond to animal cruelty (*see elsewhere in this LINK-Letter*). Days after the Sutherland Springs, Texas church shooting, the foundation and coalition partnered to host over 100 law enforcement, social services and veterinary professionals in a day-long training to highlight how animal cruelty intersects with human crime and violence.

“Understanding the Link between animal cruelty and human violence is a key component in preventing future acts of violence,” McCune wrote. “But understanding isn’t enough. Action is essential.”

Link Training Offered to Ukraine Law Enforcement Officials

From our counterparts at the European Link Coalition comes word that the first Link training was held in Kiev, Ukraine, on March 14. Mark Randell reports that the training involved a structured program to various animal groups, the municipality and senior Kiev police officers. The training will now be expanded to reach more of the 2,000 police officers in the city.

“It highlighted what we already know and how tackling animal abuse would have a positive impact on their current strategies and priorities as well as positive impact on community relations,” he reports. “With organized animal fighting attracting purses of €50,000 and being intertwined with narcotics, guns and even child pornography, these should be seen as prevention opportunities for the police and not an extra burden.”

The course explained why dealing with animal crimes matters and how it links to other forms of criminality; how it rarely exists in a vacuum; and how to prevent other linked crime. “It also helps install public confidence by dealing with these issues professionally. On a frequent basis there are cases of extreme human violence that could perhaps have been prevented by recognizing ‘red flags’ and doing something about them,” he added. He noted that a group of Ukraine young men tortured and hanged stray animals and then moved on to a killing spree of 21 humans.

Orlando’s Harbor House Holding 8th Annual Paws for Peace Walk



Tails are wagging in Orlando, Fla., in anticipation of Harbor House’s 8th Annual Paws for Peace Walk. This fun- and fund-raising event is a leisurely stroll for pets, their families, and friends to raise awareness about domestic abuse and its effect on pets and their owners. The walk benefits the Paws for Peace Kennel on-site at Harbor House’s emergency shelter.

The [event](#) will be held at Blue Jacket Park on Sat., April 21 at 9 a.m. Walkers will receive a t-shirt and doggie bandana. Kids under 12 are free. Other activities for pets and people include yoga with your pet.

Link Training Comes to the Navajo Nation



What is believed to have been the first major Link conference in Indian Country was held on April 10 at the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, Ariz. Upwards

of 250 Navajo Nation governmental professionals, officials, leadership and employees who work in law enforcement, prosecution, domestic violence situations, the treatment of violent behaviors, and as first responders attended.

“Animal Cruelty Investigation, Prosecution and Treatment of Perpetrators: Preventing the Escalation of Violence to Humans” was sponsored by the [Navajo Nation Animal Control Program](#). The free, groundbreaking conference discussed the tools for early intervention to break the cycle of violence through early investigation of animal cruelty cases in the Navajo Nation.

Speakers included representatives from the Navajo Nation, Native America Humane Society, Animal Protection of New Mexico, the University of California College of Veterinary Medicine, and judges and prosecutors from courts in Albuquerque and Tucson.

Veterinary Social Work Intensive Includes The Link

The [Veterinary Social Work](#) program at the University of Tennessee included the Link between human and animal violence in its five-day Veterinary Social Work Intensive program in March. Participants gained an in-depth overview of the Link including historical background, modern research, and suggestions for micro and macro level interventions. Topics covered included: definitions of animal abuse and the Link; domestic violence and animal abuse; children and animal abuse; elder abuse and animal abuse; animal hoarding; and animal fighting.



The Intensive integrates knowledge obtained in three online modules in the veterinary social work training program: The Link, compassion fatigue, and animal-related grief bereavement. Through observing, reflecting, and experiencing, the intensive guided participants through the process of “putting it all together” and practicing the skills required for veterinary social work.

Experiential learning opportunities embedded in the intensive included visits to an animal shelter and euthanasia room, pet cemetery and crematorium, animal hospital, and equine therapy center. Role play scenarios and discussions considered end-of-life and animal hospice decision-making, animal loss support groups, practice issues in veterinary social work, and difficult animal abuse cases. The next VSW Intensive will be March 19-23, 2019.

Link Awareness Leads to Animal Welfare Enforcement in Norway

The Link between violence against animals and humans was not well known or acknowledged in Norway before 2015, but subsequent awareness has led to increased enforcement of animal cruelty cases. And although there are no formal mechanisms for cross-reporting animal and human abuse in Norway yet, the fledgling Link movement is hopeful that these will emerge.



Siri Martinsen

This is the message from Siri Martinsen, a veterinarian and leader of NOAH. In 2015, politicians launched a pioneer “animal crime unit” with a small group of police in one designated police district. This unit would focus on how to handle animal abuse and violence cases and work with the Food Agency, which is responsible for controlling animal welfare. A nation-wide agreement of cooperation between the Food Agency and the police was to be initiated, and the special police department for environmental crimes would also specialize in animal crime to help improve competence within the police.

This breakthrough was a result of NOAH’s campaign for “animal police,” pointing out that few crimes against animals were followed up by the police, and punishments were minimal. NOAH’s campaign gained public and academic support and attention in Parliament. A political majority finally recognized the need for taking crimes against animals more seriously. “Realizing the link between violence against animals and violence against humans was an important part of this process,” says Martinsen.

Since 2015, the police and the Food Agency have held yearly seminars to improve their work. The number of prosecuted animal abuse cases has increased, as has the level of punishment and public awareness of the importance of filing a complaint to the police in cases of animal abuse.

Politicians realized that more animal crime units were needed, and in 2018 five units are operative or in progress. In February 2018 a new coalition government’s platform promised to establish animal crime units in all police districts in Norway.

“In recent years, researchers in the fields of violence and criminology have gained interest in the link between violence against humans and violence against animals. Also, there is a growing interest in this field from the educational institutions both educating police officers and veterinarians. There is still much work to be done in the area of cooperation between agencies dealing with human victims and the agency dealing with animal abuse,” she adds.

“At the moment, there are no lines of cooperation enabling discovery of human victims in a situation of animal abuse, or animal victims in a situation of domestic violence. However, the first established animal crime unit has reported that their work with animal abuse has enabled them also to discover cases where human victims are in need of help.”

Permission to Reprint

The news items and training opportunities contained in *The LINK-Letter* are intended to disseminate as widely and as freely as possible information about the connections between animal abuse and interpersonal violence. Permission is hereby granted to re-post these articles in other newsletters, websites, magazines, and electronic publications provided that appropriate credit is given to the National Link Coalition and with links to www.nationallinkcoalition.org

THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

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

As the 2018 legislative season opens, we are finding that more and more state legislators are recognizing that animal abuse and interpersonal violence are LINKed. We are encouraged by this progress and hope to see even more LINK legislation passed this year!

Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders



H.R. 909 and S.322 – the Pet And Women Safety (PAWS) Act – was re-introduced and now has 246 bi-partisan co-sponsors in the House and 37 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.



California AB 2274 would allow courts to assign sole or joint ownership of a community property pet in divorce and separation agreements by taking into consideration the well-being of the pet. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.



California AB 1939 would have declared it the intention of the state Legislature to enact laws that promote the safety of domestic violence victims and prevent animal abuse, and create a framework for public domestic violence shelters to provide temporary housing solutions at local animal shelters for the pets of domestic violence survivors. **These provisions were eliminated in the Committee on Public Safety.**



Colorado law had included animals among the various types of property that can be included in a protective order. **Colorado SB 18-060** now will specifically allow courts to issue a protective order prohibiting the taking, transferring, concealing, harming, disposing of, or threatening to harm an animal owned, possessed, leased, kept, or held by the alleged victim or witness. The bill was signed into law by Gov. John Hickenlooper on March 22 and will take effect Nov. 1.



Kentucky HB 447 would prohibit courts from offering probation, early release or a suspended sentence to offenders convicted of torturing a dog or cat with the intent of threatening, intimidating, coercing, harassing, or terrorizing a family member or person in a dating relationship. Kentucky law defines "family members" as current and former spouses, child or stepchild, grandchild, parent or grandparent. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.



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 was passed the House 90-15, approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee and sent to the Senate.



Mississippi SB 2232 would have authorized courts to include the protection of pets in the order and require that the respondent not remove, damage, hide, harm or dispose of any companion animal owned by the person protected by the order. **The bill died in the Senate Judiciary Committee.**



Missouri HB 2374 would add “intimidation,” the coercive, vengeful or punitive injuring, killing or threatening of an animal, as grounds for which a court could issue an order of protection. The bill is in the 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. The measure was approved by the House and two Senate committees.



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 Senate.



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.



Rhode Island H7032 and **S2459** would permit the family court to award custody of household pets to the plaintiff in a domestic abuse complaint. The House and Senate Judiciary Committees recommended the bills be held for further study.



Rhode Island HB 7167 would expand family court jurisdiction to enter protective orders to provide for the safety and welfare of household pets in domestic abuse situations. The House Judiciary Committee recommended the bill be held for further study.



Rhode Island HB 7585 would create a custody procedure for pets in divorce and separation proceedings based on the best interests of the animal. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



West Virginia HB 2855 would allow courts to make provisions within a divorce order for the temporary custody and care of pets, including joint custody, allocation of costs and visitation rights for the noncustodial party, taking into consideration the well-being of the animal. The bill is in the House Judiciary 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 278 co-sponsors.



Existing **Alabama** law prohibits the dissemination, display and possession of obscene material including child pornography and bestiality. **SB 35** would clarify the definition of dissemination by removing the requirement of monetary consideration and would add sharing or trading such visual depictions. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



California AB 3040 would strengthen the state’s bestiality law. Existing law makes it a misdemeanor to sexually assault certain animals to gratify a person’s sexual desires. The bill would instead prohibit sexual contact with any animal and trafficking, observing, participating, or possessing videos of animal sexual abuse, punishable as a misdemeanor or felony; such animals could be seized. The bill would also add animal sexual abuse to the list of animal abuse offenses in current law for which offenders would be barred from owning or volunteering with animals following conviction. Veterinarians would be mandated to report suspected animal sexual abuse with immunity from civil liability, as they currently are for reporting animal abuse. The bill is in the Committee on Public Safety.



Hawai’i SB 2289 would have created a new crime of sexual assault of an animal as a Class C felony, or a Class B felony if committed in the presence of a minor, and order forfeiture of all animals; prohibit living, working or volunteering with animals for five years; and require psychological or psychiatric counseling or treatment. **The bill died in the Senate Judiciary Committee.**




Kentucky SB 239 would establish the crime of sexual activity with animals as a Class A misdemeanor. It is in the Senate Agriculture Committee.





Louisiana SB 236 would amend the current statute replacing the “crime against nature” with the new crime of “sexual abuse of an animal” with enhanced penalties and provisions for removal of the animal, psychological evaluation for sex offenders, and prohibitions from living, working or volunteering with animals for five years or more. The bill was approved by the Judiciary Committee.





Maryland HB 1134 and **SB 800** would replace the more archaic terms “sodomy,” “bestiality” and “unnatural or perverted sexual practices” with the more contemporary “sexual activity with an animal” and prohibit a wide range of activities designed to promote, coerce, observe, or abet such practices. Convicted offenders would be barred from owning, residing with, or coming into contact with an animal for 30 years. The law would take effect Oct. 1, 2018. **HB 1134** passed the House and joined **SB 800** in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

 **Massachusetts S.2332** would prohibit “sexual contact with animals.” Existing statutes prohibit the more archaic terminology of the “abominable and detestable crime against nature.” The bill also affects *Cross-Reporting* and *Animal Abuse and Other Crimes*. The bill was reported out of the Senate Rules 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 was included in a Study Order by the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.


 **Washington SB 6076** would change the definition of illegal animal sexual contact to include sexual penetration or touching of the sexual or other intimate parts of an animal by force, intimidation, coercion, or where motivated by sexual arousal, sexual gratification or financial gain. The bill is in the Law & Justice Committee.

 **West Virginia HB 4455** passed the House on Feb. 28 by a vote of 96-0 and was sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill would prohibit sexual abuse of an animal, either by engaging in, aiding or abetting, organizing or promoting, making animals available, or permitting it to be conducted on one’s premises. Violations would be misdemeanors; however, committing animal sexual abuse in the presence of a child, having prior convictions for sex crimes, or causing serious bodily injury or death to the animal would make offenses a felony. Courts would order offenders to surrender all animals and pay for their care and maintenance and would prohibit ownership or residence with animals for either 5 or 15 years. Offenders would be required to undergo psychiatric or psychological evaluation to be eligible for probation.

 **Wisconsin AB 666** and companion measure **SB 802** would have updated the state’s archaic bestiality law and made it a felony to have sexual contact with an animal, to coerce another to have sexual contact with an animal, or to promote, advertise, harbor, transport, or obtain an animal for the purpose of sexual contact. Current law only makes sexual gratification with an animal a misdemeanor and does not include the other provisions. The bill would have also created escalating degrees of felony if the other person is a child. **AB 666** and **SB 802** were approved by the Assembly and a Senate Committee but **were not allowed to come to a vote in the full Senate**.

Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment

 **Louisiana HB 292** would require courts to allow witnesses who are either under age 17 or developmentally disabled to be accompanied by a facility dog while testifying. Courts would be permitted to allow such facility dogs for any other witnesses. The bill establishes procedures defining facility dogs and their presence in the courtroom. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.

 **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.



Michigan HB 5645 would allow witnesses of child abuse and child sexual abuse to be accompanied by a trained and evaluated “courtroom support dog.” The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.



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 **A3845** in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

“CASA for Animals”



New York A9701 would allow a court to order a separate advocate be appointed to represent the interests of justice in animal welfare proceedings. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.

Animal Hoarding



Florida SB 86 would have defined animal hoarding as keeping a large number of companion animals in overcrowded conditions; failing to provide them with minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation, shelter and medical care; and failure to acknowledge these conditions and the impact on the well-being of the animals or persons. The bill died in the Criminal Justice Committee.



New Jersey S 2242 and **A3762** would define animal hoarding as possessing too many animals with inadequate care which leads to death, bodily injury or other serious adverse health consequences, a 4th-degree crime. Courts would be required to order psychological evaluation and counseling for convicted offenders. The bill is in the Senate Economic Growth 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.


Psychological Evaluation of Offenders





California SB 1024 would amend existing requirements mandating animal cruelty offenders who are granted probation to receive counseling, to requiring offenders to undergo mental health evaluation and subsequent counseling if the mental health professional deems it necessary. Diversion, probation or similar programs would be terminated for failing to complete the requirements. Offenders would also have to complete and pass a 5-hour course on responsible animal owner education. Fines for animal cruelty offenses would be increased. The bill was sent to the Rules Committee.


 **Iowa SF 2181/HF 2468** would allow courts to require adult animal cruelty offenders to undergo psychiatric or psychological evaluation and treatment, and would mandate such provisions for juveniles and individuals convicted of animal torture, abandonment, endangerment, or aggravated cruelty. The bills are in the Senate Judiciary and House Agriculture Committees.

 **Maryland HB 1629** would allow a court to order psychological counseling for a defendant convicted of an animal abuse crime. The bill received an unfavorable report from the Judiciary Committee.


 **Mississippi SB 2172** would have allowed courts to order persons convicted of aggravated cruelty to receive a psychiatric or psychological examination and counseling or treatment. **The bill died in the Senate Agriculture and Judiciary Committees.**


 **Missouri HB 2359** would allow courts to impose psychological or psychiatric evaluation and treatment upon convicted animal cruelty offenders. The bill would also affect [Cross-Reporting](#).


 **New Jersey A3049** and **S 1636** would require a mental health evaluation for juvenile and adult animal cruelty offenders, to be followed by mental health counseling if warranted by the evaluation. The bills are in the Assembly Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Health, Human Services & Senior Citizens Committee.

 Existing [Virginia](#) law permits courts to impose anger management or other appropriate treatment programs, or obtain psychiatric or psychological counseling, upon animal cruelty offenders. **HB 425** would have made such provisions mandatory unless the court finds that the person presents no current or future likelihood of repeating the violation or causing harm to himself or others. **The bill was tabled indefinitely in the Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake & Natural Resources.**

Animal Abuse and Other Crimes

 **California AB 197** would have added 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 died in the Committee on Public Safety.**

 **Hawai'i SB 2014** would create a registry of convicted animal cruelty offenders based upon the premise that “acts of cruelty to one animal has been linked to cruelty to other animals and violence against humans, it is necessary to ensure that persons convicted of cruelty to animals are restricted from interacting with animals.” The bill is in the Senate Judiciary and Ways & Means Committees.

 **Massachusetts S.2332** 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-Reporting](#) and affect [Animal Sexual Abuse](#). The bill was approved by the Committee on Municipal and Regional Government and reported out of 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 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



Indiana SB 332 and companion bill **HB 1261** (“Protecting pets in distressed homes”) would have required Adult Protective Services employees conducting assessments or investigations who have reason to believe an animal is a victim of cruelty, abandonment or neglect to make a report to a law enforcement or animal control agency, with immunity from civil and criminal liability. **The bills died in their respective committees.**



Indiana SB 431 gives APS and CPS workers who observe suspected animal cruelty, abandonment or abuse while conducting an assessment or investigation immunity from civil and criminal liability if they report the situation to law enforcement or animal control. The bill was signed into law on March 15 and becomes effective July 1, 2018.



Iowa HF 2065 and **SF 129** would require veterinarians to report any conclusion of animal cruelty to the local law enforcement agency, with immunity from civil and criminal liability. It would also require law enforcement agencies investigating animal cruelty complaints to file a child endangerment report with the Department of Human Services if a minor child witnessed the abuse. The bill also increases penalties for various animal abuse offenses including committing animal torture in the presence of a child, and would allow courts to ban offenders’ ownership of animals. The measure would also allow courts to impose psychological or psychiatric evaluation and treatment upon convicted offenders; such orders would be mandatory for juvenile offenders. The bills are in their respective Agriculture Committees.



Kansas HB2530 would have added animal control officers to professionals who are mandated to report suspected abuse or neglect of children and vulnerable adults. The bill was approved by the Committee on Children and Seniors and **the provision was deleted by the House.**



Massachusetts S.295 in the Education Committee would make domestic violence workers, animal control officers and humane officers mandated reporters of child sexual abuse. The bill is in the Senate Education Committee where it accompanied a Study Order.



Massachusetts S.1159 would mandate employees and contractors of the Department of Elder Affairs and the Disabled Persons Protection Commission to report suspected animal cruelty, abuse or neglect to a police officer or special state police officer. Reports made in good faith would be immune from civil and criminal liability and usual confidentiality restrictions. These agencies would be permitted to receive training in the identification and reporting of animal cruelty, abuse and neglect.



Massachusetts S.2332 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* and *Animal Sexual Abuse*. The bill was approved by the Committee on Municipal and Regional Government and reported out of the Senate Rules Committee.



Michigan HB 4441 would amend the Child Protection Law to add animal control officers as mandated reporters of 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, 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 intentional false reporting of animal abuse a felony. The bills are in the 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 Policy Committee.



Mississippi SB 2172 would have require law enforcement officers investigating animal abuse cases to utilize a uniform form to conform with the FBI's National Incident Based Reporting System. The bill would also have enhanced penalties for animal cruelty and require youths convicted of aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat to undergo psychiatric or psychological evaluation. **The bill died in committee.**



Missouri HB 2359 would grant veterinarians, teachers and school personnel immunity from civil liability for reporting suspected animal abuse in good faith to law enforcement agencies. The bill also imposes *Psychological Evaluation of Offenders*.



New York S621 and **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 agencies and to turn over necessary records. New York veterinarians are currently permitted but are not required to report. 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.



Ohio HB 523 would mandate: veterinarians and technicians, child protective services, and counselors, social workers and marriage and family therapists to report suspected animal abuse with immunity from liability; dog wardens to report suspected family violence; and military family advocacy programs be notified when military personnel are investigated for child maltreatment or domestic violence. The bill is in the Community & Family Advancement 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 was laid on the table in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Rhode Island SB 2605 would require veterinarians, veterinary technicians, animal shelter and kennel employees, or other persons charged with the care or custody of animals to report suspected animal abuse to the local law enforcement agency with immunity for reports made in good faith. Failure to report would be punishable by a fine of up to \$500. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



West Virginia HB 4014 would have required adult protective services workers to report reasonable suspicions of animal abuse or cruelty to the county humane officer within 24 hours, and humane officers to immediately report suspected abuse, neglect or emergencies affecting an incapacitated adult or facility resident. The provisions were part of a larger reorganization of the Department of Health & Human Resources and **did not survive the committee amendment process.**

THE LINK... IN THE NEWS



Giselle Taylor

Woman Charged with Killing Her Fiancé's Dog

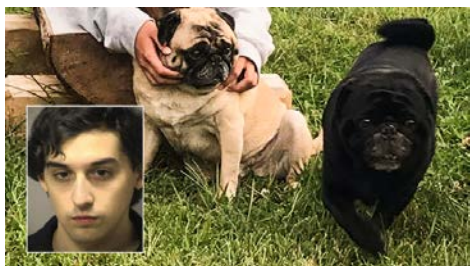
A woman who reportedly got into a fight with her fiancé because he wouldn't crack her back has been charged with aggravated cruelty to animals after Tarpon Springs, Fla., police said she fatally shot his dog. Giselle Taylor, 21, was booked into Pinellas County jail on Feb. 23. [WFLA-TV](#) reported that authorities said Taylor grabbed a loaded pistol from the garage and returned to the home to scare her fiancé; when she couldn't provoke a response she shot the dog, a 2-year-old boxer, who later died.

Pittsburgh Attorney Charged with Animal Sexual Abuse and Narcotics Offenses

A Pittsburgh, Pa. environmental lawyer has been arrested on more than 20 charges of animal sexual abuse, cruelty, and possession of heroin, crack cocaine and marijuana for allegedly having sex with his dog. Police charged Ivan DeVoren, 61, with the multiple counts after a witness reportedly overheard the sexual abuse happening at least 10 times, according to [KDKA-TV](#). DeVoren had spent several months in 2014 as a volunteer dog walker at Humane Animal Rescue, but acquired the dog in question, a 6-month-old yellow lab named "Snoopy," from a breeder later. Humane Animal Rescue officials said DeVoren's work was always supervised and that he never fostered or adopted any animals from the shelter. Snoopy was reportedly being treated for injuries by a local veterinarian.



Ivan DeVoren



Anthony Priestas, Marley & Mugsy

His Advances Rebuffed, Man Charged with Beating Woman's Dogs to Death

An Indiana man whose advances to a woman were reportedly rebuffed allegedly responded by beating her two pugs to death. The [Chicago Tribune](#) reported that Anthony Priestas, 23, with addresses in both Hebron and Hammond, was arrested on two felony counts of animal cruelty to "Marley" and "Mugsy," belonging to Brandy Ortiz. She said she had received the dogs

as a Christmas present from her parents seven years ago and that they were stolen from her home recently. Priestas was arrested while he was at the Porter County Courthouse where he was appearing on a felony charge of residential breaking & entering in an unrelated case.

Parents Charged with Murder, Cruelty in Child's and Dogs' Starvation

The parents of a severely malnourished 5-month-old child who died were charged with murder and child abuse, plus three counts of animal cruelty after their three dogs were also said to be starving. Police in Las Vegas, Nev. Arrested Anthony Oceja, 29, and Loreana Martinez, 24. Their two other children were placed in protective custody and the three dogs were turned over to Clark County Animal Control, according to the [Las Vegas Sun](#).



Anthony Oceja & Loreana Martinez



Guadalupe Sanchez

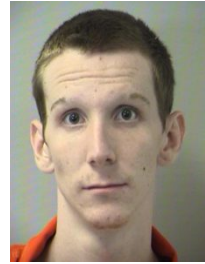
Ex-Con Videotapes Stabbing a Puppy and Threatening Girlfriend with the Same

Police in Balcones Heights, Texas, a suburb of San Antonio, arrested Guadalupe Sanchez, 25, on charges of cruelty to animals, terroristic threats against a family and felony drug possession for allegedly video recording himself choking and stabbing a puppy and threatening to do the same to his family. Police authorities had put out an APB to the public, warning about the disturbing nature of the case. Sanchez

reportedly took out his aggression on the puppy after another man looked at a family member. Sanchez has a history of violence and was twice arrested in 2012 on charges of family violence assault by choking and strangulation and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, and served four years in jail. "We received a call where this man videotaped himself harming a pet and sent it to his girlfriend," Shannon Sims, assistant director at Animal Care Services, told [KSAT-TV](#). "When we got there unfortunately the animal was already deceased, so it looks like an animal cruelty case based on the video we got a copy of. Abuse, dismemberment: if you see someone doing any of that, they need help. We just want to make sure cases like this do not escalate into something like murder."

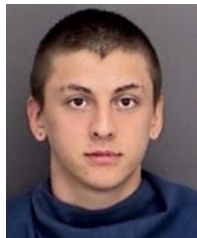
Man Charged with Battering His Father and Mutilating His Father's Dog

Michael Landis Reeves, 22, of Laurel Hill, Fla., was charged with cutting his father with a knife and then, a week later, killing his father's dog, mutilating it and storing its body parts in a refrigerator. Okaloosa County Sheriff's deputies told the [NWF Daily News](#) that Reeves had a 14-inch knife covered with blood and dried blood on his hands and wrists when he was arrested on charges of felony animal cruelty, aggravated battery with a deadly weapon and resisting an officer. Reeves was out on probation after serving seven months in jail on four felony counts of aggravated battery with a deadly weapon, burglary, escape, and attempting to force a young man to have sex with him at knife point.



Michael Landis Reeves

Texas Man Charged With Sex Assault on Infant and Animal Cruelty



Adam Hammond

Adam Matthew Hammond, 18, of Wichita Falls, Texas, was charged with aggravated sexual assault of a child and animal cruelty for allegedly performing sexual acts on an 8-month-old boy and then kicking a dog when the boy's mother threatened to leave. The [Times Record News](#) reported that Hammond allegedly admitted to the act by saying "he couldn't help himself" and had an attraction to the infant. As she started to dress herself and the child to get away from him, Hammond reportedly threatened to attack any police officers who came, smash her head in, destroy her house, and kill her dogs. A friend rescued her and the dogs, including one that was severely injured with bruising consistent with being kicked.

Banker Who Killed Girlfriend's Dog Cuts Sentencing Deal Before Deportation

A former banker who stabbed his girlfriend's dog to death and tossed it in a garbage chute was given a minimal sentence in exchange for agreeing to be deported. The [New York Daily News](#) reported that Zheheng Feng, 25, of New York agreed to a 30-day sentence, of which he will serve about two weeks considering time he has already served, before he is deported to China. He had previously admitted hacking the dog which belonged to his girlfriend, who is now his wife. "It's a sad day for you, sir. But it's a sadder day for the animal," Manhattan Supreme Court Judge Laura A. Ward said at his sentencing.



Zheheng Feng

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

April 10 – Window Rock, Ariz.: The [Navajo Nation Animal Control Program](#) will hold an all-day conference, "Animal Cruelty Investigation, Prosecution and Treatment of Perpetrators: Preventing the Escalation of Violence to Humans."

April 13 – Dallas, Texas: The [North Texas Link Coalition](#) will meet.

April 18 (online): Phil Arkow will conduct a webinar on "The 'Dark Side' of the Human-Animal Bond: Legislative Solutions Addressing the Link between Animal Cruelty and Human Violence." for [Pet Partners](#).

April 18 – St. John, Mo.: J.T. Taylor will present on “The Circle of Violence” at the Missouri Animal Control Association’s Spring 2018 [Mini-MACA Training Program](#).

April 23 – Charlotte, N. Car.: Phil Arkow will present a Link training to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department [Animal Care & Control](#) Division.

April 24 – Oklahoma City, Okla.: The [Oklahoma Link Coalition](#) will meet at the OSBI Forensic Science Center.

April 27 – Austin, Texas: “The Intersection of Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse,” “Understanding Animal Hoarding,” “Blood Sports,” “Preparing and Prosecuting Animal cruelty Cases,” and “Texas Animal Cruelty Laws 101” will be among the presentations at the [Texas Animal Law Institute](#) being held in conjunction with Texas Unites for Animals.

April 28 – Austin, Texas: Phil Arkow will present “Who ‘Ya Gonna Call? Abuse Busters!” at the 10th Annual [Texas Unites for Animals](#) conference.

May 3 – Gladstone, Mo.: J.T. Taylor will present on “The Circle of Violence” at the Missouri Animal Control Association’s Spring 2018 [Mini-MACA Training Program](#).

May 8 – New Brunswick, N.J.: Phil Arkow will provide professional development training on The Link for providers and advocates in the [New Jersey Victim Assistance Academy](#).

May 9 (online): Phil Arkow will conduct a webinar on “Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Violence” for the [National Organization for Victim Assistance Academy](#).

May 9 – Lexington, Ky.: Allie Phillips will speak at the [Health Access Nurturing Development Services](#) program on “When Animal Abuse Links with Family Violence: Strategies for Keeping Families Safe.”

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.

May 24 – Bordentown, N.J.: Phil Arkow will provide professional development training on The Link for providers and advocates in the [New Jersey Victim Assistance Academy](#).

May 30 – (online): Allie Phillips will present a webinar on Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T) for the [National Network to End Domestic Violence](#).

May 30 – Hartford, Conn.: Several speakers will discuss The Link at the University of Connecticut School of Law’s [training seminar](#) for animal control officers, prosecutors, and court-appointed advocates for animals.

May 31 (online) – Allie Phillips will conduct a webinar for [St. Hubert’s Animal Welfare Center](#) and area agencies on Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T)[™].

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

June 18 – New Orleans, La.: “The Link and School Shooters,” and “Animal Crimes: The Hidden Link for Protecting Your Community,” will be discussed at the [National Coalition on Violence Against Animals](#) meeting.

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.

Aug. 6 -9 – Aurora, Colo.: Phil Arkow will speak to the [Metro Denver Animal Welfare Alliance](#) , [Aurora Animal Services](#), and the [Aurora City Attorney’s Office](#) about The Link.

Aug. 15 – Philadelphia, Pa.: Phil Arkow will conduct a Link training for the [Pennsylvania Bar Institute](#) Animal Law Conference.

Sept. 6 – Buffalo, N.Y.: Phil Arkow will present at the [Buffalo Academy of Veterinary Medicine](#)’s lecture series.

Oct. 5 – Madison, Wis.: Phil Arkow will speak at [Sheltering Animals of Abuse Victims](#) (S.A.A.V.)’s conference on “The Link between Family Violence and Animal cruelty: A Community-Wide Approach to Breaking the Cycle of Abuse.”

Oct. 11 – Windsor, Ont., Canada: The University of Windsor Animal and Interpersonal Abuse Research Group, the Windsor-Essex County Humane Society, and Hiatus House will hold an all-day pre-conference [Institute](#) on research, theory and practice specific to the intersection of violence against animals and women within the context of domestic violence.

Oct. 12 – Rochester, N.Y.: Phil Arkow will conduct a multi-disciplinary Link training on behalf of the [Humane Society of Greater Rochester](#).

Oct. 18 – Cambridge/Guelph, Ont., Canada: Phil Arkow will present on “Making the Cruelty Connection: A Species-Spanning Approach to Safer Families and Communities” to the [Association of Animal Shelter Administrators of Ontario](#).

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

Nov. 14-17 – Atlanta, Ga.: Nuria Querol will present on The Link at the [American Society of Criminology](#) conference.

Nov. 15 – Anchorage, Alaska: Allie Phillips will speak at the [Alaska Children’s Alliance](#) conference on “The Co-occurrence of Animal Abuse and Violence to Humans: Investigation and Prosecution Strategies,” “ Detecting and Reporting Animal Abuse for Human Welfare Professionals and Communities,” and “Incorporating Therapy Animals with Crime Victims.”

Nov. 23 – Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Phil Arkow will speak at the [Alberta Veterinary Medical Association](#)’s Veterinary Forensics Workshop.



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.

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