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

www.nationallinkcoalition.org

Phil Arkow, Editor

Pet Relief Funds Available for Domestic Violence Survivors, Shelters

Survivors who need to escape intimate partner violence frequently face dual challenges of finding a shelter that has a pet accommodation or foster care program, and then having to pay for pet care. Meanwhile, women’s shelters that want to build kennels to keep families and pets together face the daunting challenge of finding funding to help build these facilities. Fortunately, relief is on the way.

RedRover (formerly United Animal Nations), a Sacramento-based organization with a long history of bringing animals out of crisis and of strengthening the human-animal bond, has initiated two programs to offer financial aid to domestic violence victims and their pets. RedRover Relief provides grants of up to $500 for veterinary care and temporary boarding for pet owners in domestic violence situations. A second initiative, slated to launch later this spring, will offer grants to shelters to help them build pet facilities.

“It can cost a woman escaping domestic violence upwards of $500 to board her pets for a month and be assured that they are in a safe place,” says Nicole Forsyth, President and CEO. Such costs may be an insurmountable barrier for someone whose entire life has been turned upside-down. “There’s a great need for financial assistance.”

The funding was announced last October, during Domestic Violence Awareness Month. By the end of the year, RedRover awarded over $5,500 and found over 30 shelters interested in the program.

While grants to individuals are a big help, Forsyth says, “It’s still just a Band-Aid approach. We need to think of the big picture and help support the start-up costs for shelters that want to provide on-site pet accommodations. That’s the ideal scenario, so that pets can be with their families and provide emotional support, rather than having the animals in a boarding kennel or a foster home miles away. Start-up funding will ensure more sustainability in these new programs.”

A grant application is available on the RedRover website, along with information about other resources, including a start-up guide for shelters and a grants program from the American Kennel Club. For safety reasons, grant requests must be submitted by a caseworker or domestic violence shelter representative. RedRover is a working partner with Sheltering Animals and Families Together®.
**THE LINK IN THE LITERATURE**

*Landmark Study Identifies Motivations for Animal Abuse in Domestic Violence*

The Royal New Zealand SPCA, in conjunction with New Zealand Women’s Refuge, commissioned an extensive study on the co-existence of family violence and cruelty to animals in New Zealand. The 75-page “Pets as Pawns” report not only focused on actual and threatened animal abuse as a barrier to women and children extricating themselves from violent situations, but also broke new ground in identifying how animal cruelty was employed by perpetrators. Animal abuse fell into two primary categories:

A. **Cruelty to animals within and during the relationship:**
   - to normalize violence
   - to gain perverse satisfaction from hurting animals as a way to instil fear
   - as an orchestrated punishment upon a proxy for a family member’s unsatisfactory behavior
   - out of jealousy of a partner’s or child’s pet
   - to demonstrate intolerance for rules being broken, suggesting that similar violence would befall family members should they dissatisfy the perpetrator
   - threats to keep the woman from leaving the relationship
   - as collateral damage, with animals not directly targeted but incidental to the violence
   - to purposefully harm animals, rather than the partner and/or child(ren), to avoid police action, because police were not perceived as taking sufficient action against animal cruelty
   - bestiality, with pets used as sexual objects directly or through animal-related pornography

B. **Cruelty to animals after leaving the relationship**
   - to create anxiety that forces the women and children to return
   - as malicious punishment for her leaving
   - harming animals of friends and extended family as retribution for their helping the partner leave

Among the findings, which paralleled many similar reports in the U.S. and elsewhere:
   - 20% of participants stated that by the time they were about to leave the relationship, they had ceased caring about the welfare of the animal and were solely focused on their own and their children’s wellbeing. What was once a heightened concern for animals was eroded as the women were forced to focus on their own survival.
   - 20% stated that they had remained in the relationship because of their animals. Women without children reported a greater propensity to remain because of the animal. The median amount of time that respondents had remained was two years.
   - Lack of pet-friendly rental accommodations, prohibitive costs of boarding facilities, logistical problems, and misconceptions about SPCA services were barriers to women trying to leave.
   - Children had witnessed someone in their family threaten (32.7%) or actually injure or kill (24.5%) a pet. The majority of these incidents were made by the women’s partner.
   - 85% of the incidents involved pets, with dogs being the most common targets.

The study recommended that SPCA staff and police undergo extensive training on the co-existence of animal abuse and family violence, and that free, temporary accommodations for pets be made available.

Does Neighborhood Context Matter in the Relationship between Animal and Human Maltreatment?

What is believed to be the first effort to correlate incidence of animal cruelty with demographic and neighborhood factors in an urban environment was the subject of Jodi Levinthal’s Ph.D. dissertation at the School of Social Policy and Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. Using a unique dataset of animal maltreatment from the Pennsylvania SPCA, the distribution and prevalence of animal neglect, abuse, and dog fighting in Philadelphia were mapped with Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Statistical analysis of the relationship between animal maltreatment and neighborhood factors, domestic violence, and child maltreatment found a low correlation between animal abuse and neighborhood factors, suggesting that animal abuse may be better explained as an individual phenomenon than a behavior that is a function of neighborhoods. However, animal neglect did correlate with demographic, cultural, and structural aspects of block groups, suggesting social disorganization may lead to animal neglect. The study also suggested that dog fighting is a crime of opportunity, as dog fighting correlates with indicators of abandoned properties. While the study was unable to demonstrate a community link between animal abuse and child maltreatment, it did not preclude such a link among individuals. Better data collection may lead to a more refined understanding of animal maltreatment’s connection to human violence.


SAF-T Shelter Concept Advances in Australia

The movement to enable domestic violence shelters to house pets on-site is going international. Allie Phillips, who pioneered the concept of sheltering animals and families together (SAF-T®) during times of crisis, reports that the first such program is under way in Australia. Jessie Street Domestic Violence Services, covering the western Sydney area in New South Wales, is working on this program. The Jessie Street refuge helps empower women who are escaping domestic violence by helping them to take control of their lives with support and information options, and emergency and crisis accommodations. The facility is one of some 54 members of the New South Wales Women’s Refuge Movement.

Phillips reports that this is the first international SAF-T program, joining 69 domestic violence shelters in 30 U.S. states that have built or are constructing pet housing facilities.

Pam Russell joins NLC Steering Committee

The National Link Coalition is honored to announce the appointment of Pam Russell, policy analyst with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, to our steering committee. Pam replaces Emilie Meyer who recently left the NCJFCJ offices in Reno for a position with the public defender’s office. Pam is the proud parent of two rescued dogs and three cats.
A Tragic Example of Agencies Not Communicating with Each Other

A common premise in The Link is that concerned neighbors are more likely to report animal welfare issues to animal services agencies than they are to report suspected child abuse situations to social services. A tragic example of this was recently reported in South Bend, IN, where several neighbors contacted animal control regarding a heavy stench reeking of dog excrement coming from the backyard of a home on West Washington Street. A gaunt pit bull was seen lying on the grass, tied to a short chain, barely able to stand up. Trash littered the lawn, but no water bowl was in sight. The dog’s nearby cage was filled with his feces and soaked with urine.

Unbeknownst to the neighbors, the brick home beyond the neglected dog held its own terrors: young children were allegedly being tortured by their father, Terry Sturgis. Five months later, 10-year-old Tramelle Sturgis would be found dead inside.

One neighbor said that if he had known there were children in the house, he would have called the Department of Child Services. “Because if they’re keeping a dog like that, I can’t imagine what life was like for the kids there.”

Records show that Animal Control received several calls, sent multiple letters to the family, and threatened penalty fees for failure to license the dog, but it is not clear whether the agency ever removed any animals. Officers reportedly visited the home and threatened Sturgis with a citation. Meanwhile, both South Bend police and DCS had visited the home after receiving complaints.

There is no record that Animal Control notified DCS or police about the dog issues, and there is no requirement that it do so. But because animal abuse and neglect are frequently the earliest warning signs of a family in trouble, the National Link Coalition believes that human services and social services agencies should integrate their work with animal services. Research consistently shows that animal abuse is linked to child abuse and intimate partner violence and is often the “tip of the iceberg.” Procedures should be established so animal control officers can call Child Protective Services to report findings, and vice versa, and then let the other agency take it from there.
Humane and human welfare needs linked
A national report evaluating the state of companion animals and industries working with pets in Canada has noted a philosophical change within the animal welfare community. Citing new programming and strategies from the Calgary Humane Society and Ontario SPCA, the 2010 National Urban Animal Report observes, “The philosophy in the animal welfare community is switching to addressing human problems that underlie crises with animals.” Animal shelters’ service philosophy is evolving to recognize that treating symptoms of animal welfare problems, such as animal homelessness, abuse and neglect, is only a stopgap solution: to be truly effective, underlying causes such as community and family dysfunction, violence and irresponsible pet ownership practices must be addressed. The report, prepared by the market research firm Ipsos-Reid, estimates the Canadian pet population at 8.5 million cats residing in 35% of all households, and 6 million dogs residing in 32% of all households.

Law School Clinic Assists Pet- Owning Survivors of Domestic Violence
The University of Buffalo Law School’s Women, Children and Social Justice Clinic has developed a unique database to help remove one barrier that prevents many survivors of domestic violence from leaving abusive relationships. Animal Shelter Options for Domestic Violence Victims is providing individuals seeking emergency shelter with resources to help protect their pets, and is raising awareness about barriers to escaping domestic violence faced by victims who have animals.

With funding from Verizon, and collaborating with the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services, law school faculty and students created an online database. Organized by county, it provides New York domestic violence victims, domestic violence agencies, law enforcement and advocates with information on programs that can either house victims’ pets or provide direct referral systems to agencies that will accept a victim’s pets.

“We know firsthand from catastrophes like [Hurricane] Katrina that individuals will not seek safety if they have to leave their pets behind,” says Suzanne Tomkins, UB clinical professor of law who directs the clinic. “Our goal is to reduce a very real barrier for abused individuals seeking safety by knowing their pets are cared for and safe.”

The program will have immediate, practical impact. A link will be made available in the “Domestic and Sexual Violence” section of the Law Enforcement Suite of eJusticeNY to aid officers in assisting victims of domestic violence at the scene. With this new database, officers will have viable options for victims and their pets at the time of incidents.

The UB Law School clinic is also bringing awareness of this project and demonstrating ways in which communities in western New York can provide temporary shelter for pets. Clinic faculty and students will give presentations throughout the region on the laws associated with protecting pet victims of domestic violence.
THE LINK IN THE COURTS

10 – 45-year Sentence in Animal Torture/Domestic Violence Case

Rather than go to trial and face the possibility of a life sentence, Jeffrey Nally, Jr., 20, of New Cumberland, WV, accepted a plea bargain on April 4 and will spend 10-45 years in prison for torturing and killing dogs in a domestic violence intimidation scheme.

The Wheeling News-Register reported that Nally pled guilty to nine counts of animal cruelty and one count of unlawful possession of a firearm. A charge of kidnapping, which carries a possible life sentence, was dismissed along with 20 other animal cruelty charges.

Nally was arrested March 9, 2011 after his girlfriend’s mother told police her daughter was being held against her will. The mother reportedly told investigators that Nally said the only way the woman was leaving the house was “in a body bag” and that on the day of the arrest he had forced her to hold a puppy as he bored an electric drill into its head. Police reportedly found 29 dog carcasses on the property, illegal guns, tools covered in blood and hair, and what appeared to be the pelt of a beagle and dogs’ eyes in a jar.

“This is the type of case that hits home with many people,” said Hancock County Prosecutor James Davis, Jr. “Animals rely on us to care for them, and in return they provide unconditional love. To betray that trust, especially in [this] brutal fashion, is inconceivable.”

Youth, Man Charged with YouTube Animal Torture

Chicago police arrested a 22-year-old man and a 13-year-old juvenile after videos on YouTube showed them abusing dogs. Joshua Moore was charged with eight counts of cruelty to animals and four counts of animal torture; the boy was charged with six counts of cruelty to animals and three counts of animal torture, according to police.

The Chicago Police Department Animal Crimes Team and Gang Investigations Division arrested the pair after people reported the videos, which depicted various acts of violence and torture on small puppies and dogs. In one, a suspect allegedly suspended a dog from a harness and leash, and spun it violently in circles in mid-air until the animal’s eyes started to pulsate rapidly. Others allegedly showed the pair violently tossing dogs into the air and letting them drop, said police. In another video, the suspects hid a mother dog’s young puppies from her as a form of psychological torture. Police claim the suspects forced some dogs to eat their own feces.

Tucson Launches Animal Welfare Court

Six legal and animal-related agencies in Tucson, AZ, have collaborated to establish an Animal Welfare Court. The court will hear cases on the second Thursday of each month involving Pima County defendants charged with misdemeanor cases or repeat animal abuse offenses. Offenders must agree to all ordered education, rehabilitation or court-ordered services, including AniCare counseling. NLC steering committee member Chris Risley-Curtiss helped in the formation of the court. San Antonio, TX is also believed to have a similar animal court.
Link Coalition Organizing in Western Massachusetts
The initial meeting of the Franklin County Link Coalition was held on April 5 at Clinical and Support Options in Greenfield, MA, with a multi-disciplinary group of over 30 professionals in attendance. Representation included the Department of Children and Families, the DA’s Domestic Violence Task Force, the NELCWIT agency that serves victims of domestic violence, Elder Protection, Juvenile Court Clinic, the Dakin/Pioneer Valley Humane Society, MSPCA Law Enforcement, veterinarians, dog trainers, schools, Family and Probate Court Probation, and numerous clinicians and supervisors. Lorna Grande, DVM and retired Chief Justice Martha Grace from the HAVEN Link coalition in Berkshire County were guests and will be collaborating with the new group as it develops. For details please contact Amy Olson.

THE LINK IN THE LEGISLATURES

FLORIDA: Sen. Mike Fasano’s SB288 which would have allowed courts to issue a domestic violence protection order to include animals in the household, and making it a first-degree misdemeanor to violate the order, died in the Criminal Justice Committee. The bill would have been particularly significant in including acts or threats of physical injury to an animal, or placing a family member in fear of an animal’s being harmed, within Florida’s definition of domestic violence. Fasano’s other bill, SB618, “Dexter’s Law,” which would have created a state registry of animal abuse offenders, died in the Agriculture Committee.

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

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

OHIO - H25, which would include animals in domestic violence and anti-stalking protection orders, passed the House and has gone to the Senate Judiciary/Criminal Justice Committee. The bill would also increase penalties for animal cruelty, and include provisions for psychological assessment and counseling for animal abusers.

CROSS-REPORTING
KANSAS: HB 2533 would add animal control officers as professionals mandated to report suspected child abuse. The bill cleared the House and is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

OTHER
FEDERAL – H.R. 2492/S. 1947 (Animal Fighting Spectator Prohibition Act of 2011) would amend the Animal Welfare Act to prohibit any person from knowingly attending an animal fighting venture or causing a minor to attend such a venture. Offenders would be subject to a fine and/or imprisonment for up to a year for each violation; and a fine and/or imprisonment for up to three years for causing a minor to attend such venture. The House bill has 187 sponsors and is in the House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security. The Senate bill has seven cosponsors and is in the Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee.
LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Coming Soon to a City Near You...

(Online) – April 12: Franklin D. McMillan, DVM, DACVIM, director of well-being studies at Best Friends Animal Society, will present a free webinar on “The Psychological Aspects of Maltreated Animals” in a webinar series presented by the National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse, a program of the National District Attorneys Association, in partnership with the ASPCA and the Animal Legal Defense Fund.

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

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

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

Gloucester Township, NJ – Apr. 25: Phil Arkow will discuss The Link for the Center for Family Services’ Services Empowering Rights of Victims program.

Harford County, MD – Apr. 27: Allie Phillips will present on “Caught in the Cross-Fire: When the Abuse of Animals Co-Occurs with Family Violence.”

(Online) – April 27: Maya Gupta will conduct a webinar for the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys on creating services for domestic violence victims who have pets.

Decatur, IL – Apr. 27: Barbara Boat will lecture on “The Toxic Triad: Animal Cruelty, Child Abuse and Domestic Violence,” at the Macon County Child Advocacy Center’s Saving Childhood Conference.

Calgary, AB, Canada – May 6-9: Phil Arkow will present a workshop on “Kids, Critters and Sexual Abuse” at the Canadian Society for the Investigation of Child Abuse biennial conference.

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

Las Vegas, NV – May 23: Randy Lockwood will discuss Link topics and the biology of empathy in a humane education track at the Humane Society of the US Animal Care Expo.

(Online) – May 24: Scott Heiser, Esq., of the Animal Legal Defense Fund, will present a free webinar on “Common Issues Law Enforcement and Prosecutors Confront When Investigating and Litigating ‘Puppy Mill’ Cases” in a webinar series presented by the National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse, a program of the National District Attorneys Association, in partnership with the ASPCA and the Animal Legal Defense Fund.
Stockholm, Sweden – May 25: Phil Arkow will conduct a multidisciplinary training on The Link for Swedish authorities, nonprofit organizations and researchers.

Ft. Leavenworth, KS – June 27: Phil Arkow will conduct a training on The Link for the Ft. Leavenworth Army Community Service Family and Morale/Welfare/Recreation program.

(Online) – July 11: Allie Phillips will conduct a webinar on “Children Exposed to Animal Abuse” for the National Children’s Alliance.


Denver, CO – July 23-25: Five Link workshops, strategy sessions, and Institutes will be featured at the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence biennial conference. Speakers will include Phil Arkow, Diane Balkin, Amy Fristoe, Maya Gupta, Jane Hunt, Anna Melbin, Allie Phillips, and Kath Schoen.

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

San Diego, CA – Aug. 4: Randy Lockwood will discuss the role of the veterinarian in recognizing and responding to animal hoarding at the annual conference of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Saskatoon, SK, Canada – Sept. 21: Dr. Robert Reisman of the ASPCA will present on veterinary forensics in the investigation of animal cruelty at the conference of the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association.

Saskatoon, SK, Canada – Sept. 28: Randy Lockwood will discuss “Prosecuting Animal Hoarding: When, Why and How” at the Saskatchewan SPCA Animal Welfare Conference.

Jacksonville, FL – Oct. 14: Phil Arkow will discuss the links between animal cruelty and child maltreatment at Prevent Child Abuse America’s National Conference for America’s Children.

Chicago, IL – Nov. 14-17: Nuria Querol i Vinas will present on “Cruelty to Animals and Antisocial Personality Disorders: Criminological and Forensic Correlations” at the American Society of Criminology conference.
ABOUT THE NATIONAL LINK COALITION

The National Link Coalition is an informal, multi-disciplinary collaborative network of individuals and organizations in human services and animal welfare who address the intersections between animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment and elder abuse through research, public policy, programming and community awareness. We believe that human and animal well-being are inextricably intertwined and that the prevention of family and community violence can best be achieved through partnerships representing multi-species perspectives.

OUR VISION: The Link between violence against humans and violence against animals is widely known and understood. We believe that through the recognition and integration of this understanding into policies and practices nationwide, humans and animals will be measurably safer.

Members of the National Link Coalition Steering Committee:

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