



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



www.NationalLinkCoalition.org

[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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THE LINK AND... CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Link, Law Enforcement Officials Learn About New FBI Animal Cruelty Data-Collection System

Starting January 1, the FBI began tracking four types of animal cruelty crimes alongside other serious felonies – such as murder, arson, and rape – as Group A Offenses within its National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Delineating the four types of animal abuse – simple or gross neglect (e.g., animal hoarding), intentional abuse and torture, organized abuse (e.g., dog- and cock-fighting), and animal sexual abuse – will allow better analysis of these crimes and their connection to violent crimes against humans. Previously, animal cruelty charges were lumped into an “other” category in the NIBRS Uniform Crime Reporting program (UCR): in a classic case of “out of sight, out of mind,” many animal cruelty charges were not filed and data about these incidents went unrecorded.



NCOVAA committee members discuss the new FBI system

NIBRS requires a more detailed look into circumstances surrounding the crime, and can log as many as 10 separate incidents. For example, officers will now be able to log a case as involving gross animal neglect and child abuse, allowing researchers the first definitive data on the co-occurrence of multiple forms of family violence.

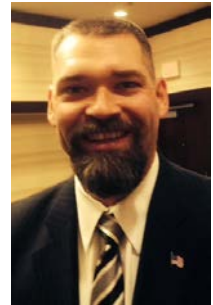
Link and law enforcement officials convened in Washington, DC on Super Bowl Sunday, Feb. 7 (*how's THAT for dedication!*) to learn more about the rollout of the new NIBRS system. Nelson Ferry, with the FBI's Criminal Statistics Management Unit, told the [National Coalition on Violence Against Animals](#) that the inclusion of animal cruelty crimes is part of a bigger push by the FBI to phase out the summary-based UCR – in which multiple co-occurring crimes are logged as one crime – in favor of the incident-based NIBRS. The

“With summary data, all I can tell you is a crime occurred,” said Amy Blasher, who is leading the broader transition to NIBRS at the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services Division. “With the incident-based, it's more granular. It tells the story.”

The Bureau plans to phase out summary-based UCR statistics—which have been collected roughly the same way since 1930—in favor of NIBRS by 2021. NIBRS captures data from all incidents – even if the incident does not result in charges being filed by prosecutors.

Correcting Public Misunderstandings

Contrary to misunderstandings inadvertently perpetrated by huge worldwide media interest in the new system, the FBI is not investigating animal cruelty cases, nor is it making animal abuse a federal felony. Rather, the changes mean that the 18,000 city, county, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies subscribing to the UCR system will now be able to reveal a more complete picture of the nature of cruelty to animals. There are felony animal abuse crimes in all 50 states, and with this change there is a push to ensure their enforcement across the board.



Nelson Ferry

Challenges Ahead

But plenty of challenges lie ahead. Only 37% of the nation’s law enforcement agencies participate in NIBRS, and those agencies will have to be trained and modify their manual and electronic data-collection systems to incorporate the new changes. The Bureau expects more law enforcement agencies to opt-in over the coming years.

Another issue is that many cruelty cases are investigated by animal control and humane officers who are not included among the certified law enforcement officers allowed to submit data. These agencies will have to develop cross-reporting protocols to share their investigations with law enforcement officials.

The new system will not capture the number of animals involved, because the victim in these cases will be defined as “society”. Researchers will be able to go through filed case reports to tease out such data as number or species of animals involved, but these data will not be captured in the initial reports.

The FBI emphasized that the new procedure is a work-in-progress, and will be so for some time to come. A tool kit is being developed for animal control officers to help get them plugged into the new system.

A first look at NIBRS animal cruelty statistics will be available next year, but it will take at least three to five years for the data to begin showing helpful patterns. Groups that advocated for the new animal cruelty data hope that by adding it to NIBRS they will get a much richer data set from which to mine.

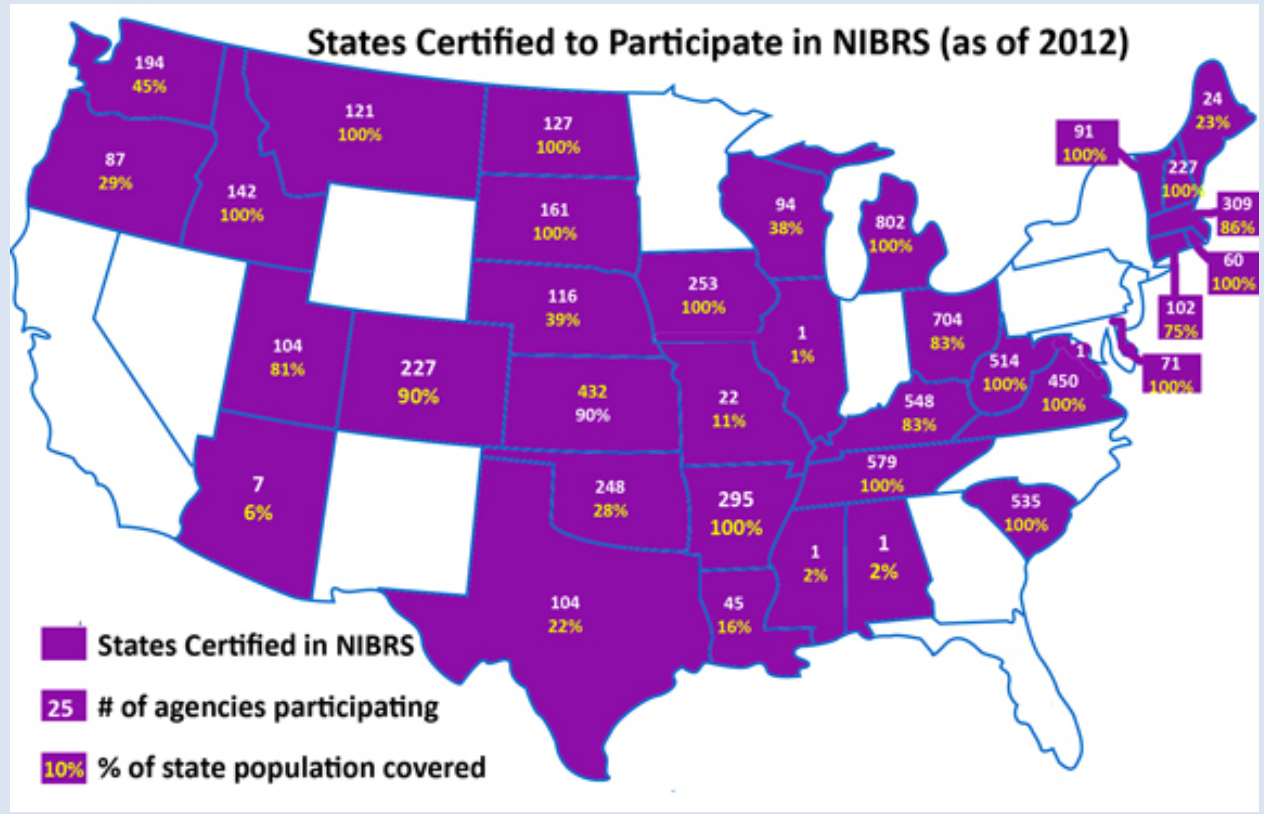
John Thompson, Deputy Executive Director of the National Sheriffs’ Association and a member of the National Link Coalition’s Steering Committee, was one of the leading advocates for this change. “If somebody is harming an animal, there is a good chance they also are hurting a human. If we see patterns of animal abuse, the odds are that something else is going on,” said Thompson.

Dr. Mary Lou Randour, with the Animal Welfare Institute, added, “With this information, law enforcement and victim services would be able to better target their intervention efforts with respect to both animal cruelty and those crimes for which animal cruelty serves as a marker.”

“Some studies say that cruelty to animals is a precursor to larger crime,” said Ferry. “That’s one of the items that we’re looking at.”

Click here to [watch a video](#) featuring Randy Lockwood explaining the NIBRS system and status.

The inclusion of four types of animal abuse -- simple or gross neglect, intentional abuse and torture, organized abuse, and animal sexual abuse – as Group A crimes against society in the NIBRS system is part of a much broader program aimed at replacing the 80-year-old “summary”-based reporting used in only some states with a more extensive “incident”-based platform in all 50 states by 2021. The map below reveals the degree of compliance with NIBRS in these states, ranging from 1% to 100% of the state’s population covered.



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.

Connecticut Re-Introduces “CASA for Animals” Legislation

The Connecticut General Assembly has re-introduced a bill originally submitted in 2013 by State Rep. Diana Urban (D-Stonington) that would allow courts to appoint attorneys or law school students as advocates for animals involved in cruelty prosecutions or custody disputes ([See LINK-Letter March 2013](#)). **HB 5344** provides measures similar to the CASA program (Court-Appointed Special Advocates) which offers support to children in child maltreatment cases, divorce proceedings and custody disputes.



Diana Urban

The bill would permit courts addressing animal cruelty cases or proceedings to resolve seizure and custody of victims of animal abuse to appoint an advocate to represent the interests of the animals. Appointees would be selected from an approved list of volunteer attorneys and law school students with knowledge of animal issues and the judicial system. The earlier measure would have appointed veterinarians rather than attorneys to serve as the animals’ victim advocates.

Advocates will monitor cases; consult with veterinarians, animal control officers, police and others who could review court records to aid the judge; attend hearings; and present pertinent information and recommendations to the court that serve the interests of the animal and of justice.

Rhode Island enacted similar legislation several years ago. Bills pending in New York and Massachusetts would authorize a guardian ad litem to be appointed by a court in tort causes of action for wrongful injury or death of a companion animal. A bill in Alaska would allow courts in divorce cases and domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders to consider the animals’ best interests in awarding custody.

The National Link Coalition has submitted a letter of support to the Joint Judiciary Committee.

Virginia Animal Law Unit Honored

Mark R. Herring, the Virginia Attorney General who established in January 2015 the nation’s first statewide Animal Law Unit ([See the February 2015 LINK-Letter](#)), has been honored by the Animal Legal Defense Fund during ALDF’s National Justice for Animals Week. Since its inception, the Virginia unit, led by Senior Assistant Attorney General Michelle Welch, has worked on more than 200 matters including trainings, investigations, and animal cruelty and fighting prosecutions.



Michelle Welch and Mark R. Herring

“We formalized our work to prevent animal fighting and animal cruelty because we wanted state agencies and local law enforcement to know where they could turn for these kinds of cases,” said Herring. “Based on the response we’ve gotten this year it’s clear there was a real need.

“Laws related to animal welfare and animal fighting should be strictly enforced for the sake of animals themselves and for the strength and safety of our communities since animal fighting often reveals other associated crimes like illegal gambling, illegal drugs or alcohol, assaults, domestic abuse, or illegal weapons.”

Welch noted that the unit is making a real difference. “In combating animal cruelty, we have prevented further violence against humans,” she said. “This next year, we hope to do even more good work providing aid to localities and trainings on the link between animal abuse and domestic violence, animal fighting and hoarding issues.”

ANIMAL ABUSE AND... DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Wisconsin Pet Protection Order Law Affects Animals in Domestic Violence, Child Abuse, and Harassment Court Proceedings

Wisconsin's long progress toward enacting Pet Protection Orders became final on March 1 when **SB97** was signed into law by Gov. Scott Walker. Wisconsin becomes the 29th state, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, to offer this critical protection to survivors of intimate partner violence and their pets.

Rep. Jacque Frank (R- DePere), the state assemblyman who co-authored the bill with Sen. Tim Carpenter (D -Milwaukee), shared his reaction: "I am elated that the protections for victims and companion animals within this legislation will remove one more element of manipulation, intimidation and retaliation that abusers wield over their victims. This very meaningful change is long overdue, and vital to implement."



Supporters gathered around Gov. Scott Walker as he signed the historic bill

Under the new provisions, judges or circuit court commissioners issuing temporary restraining orders or injunctions not only in domestic violence cases but also in child abuse, individual-at-risk and harassment situations may order the respondent not to remove, hide, damage, harm, mistreat, or dispose of a household pet. Petitioners or family members acting on their behalf may retrieve a household pet.

Not only is it common for victims to be afraid to leave their abusers for fear their animals will be harmed in retaliation, pets are often the only lifelines for domestic violence victims who are socially isolated, Tony Gibart, public policy director for [End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin](#), told the [Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel](#).



Robbyn Bowman testified at the Pet Protection Order bill hearings

The newspaper described one Wisconsin Link case in which Robbyn Bowman was granted a restraining order a decade ago from her husband – who had previously killed and abused their pets. The couple were going through a contentious divorce that included physical abuse.

The restraining order protected her and the couple's daughter but not their two dogs. In the divorce decree, the judge determined the dogs were property to be divided like other assets and Bowman had to surrender one of the dogs to her ex-husband. Shortly thereafter, the dog's carcass was left in front of her property for her to see.

In Green Bay, [WBAY-TV](#) reported that 85% of the women in the community's Golden House domestic violence shelter had had pets that were abused. Golden House Executive Director Karen Michaels said that having the pet-protection option for a domestic violence victim can save a life.

"Our thanks to all who worked so hard to see this pass," exclaimed Denice Ryan Martin of the advocacy group [Wisconsin Voters for Companion Animals](#). Added Megan Santori, president of [SAAV](#) (Sheltering Animals of Abuse Victims): "This legislation is truly life-saving for victims and their beloved pets."

Domestic Violence Animal Abuse: A Pet Insurance Issue?

An unexpected twist in the link between domestic violence and animal abuse – and yet another barrier for families affected by this Link – comes to us from Sweden, where our affiliate [Se Sambandet](#) is dealing with a peculiar case.



Carin Holmberg tells *The LINK-Letter* about a woman whose dog was beaten to death by her boyfriend. The dog had been treated by a veterinarian three times for its injuries before it died. The woman filed a claim with her pet insurance company – but did not report the cause of the dog’s injuries – and the carrier paid 42,000 Swedish krona (about \$5,000 US) to the clinic.



The insurance company subsequently learned that the dog had been abused by a member of the family, went to court, and ordered the woman to pay all the money back. In this case the boyfriend was convicted of domestic violence and ordered to pay the woman back. “But far from every man gets convicted for beating his wife or girlfriend, and without that conviction I doubt that the court would have acted this way,” Holmberg reports.

The insurance company apparently determined that abuse by a member of the family constitutes the same situation as if the owner of the dog beat it, which is not covered by its policies. However, if a stranger had beaten the dog the veterinary expenses would have been covered. “Is this a discrimination against family animals?” asks Holmberg.

It is not known whether similar exclusions are in place in other countries. *LINK-Letter* readers are invited to [share their experience](#) with such issues with us!

ANIMAL ABUSE AND... CHILD MALTREATMENT

Bill Addresses Therapy Dogs for Abused Children in Court

A bill in the Connecticut General Assembly would allow therapy dogs to be present when children testify in court in assault, sexual assault or child abuse cases. Currently, Connecticut attorneys can request that children’s testimony be taken under the supervision of the trial judge in a room other than the court; in such circumstances, only the judge, defendant, defendant’s attorneys, persons recording the session, and persons who might contribute to the child’s welfare and well-being may be present. The court may order the defendant excluded if his or her presence would intimidate or inhibit the child’s testimony.



Raised Bill No. 5140 would allow volunteer teams of therapy animals and their registered handlers, with whom the child feels comfortable, to also be present. Therapy animals can comfort abused children and calm their anxieties during forensic interviews in children’s advocacy centers. With judicial permission, therapy teams may also accompany children during courtroom testimony, where their abuser may be present and intimidate them from testifying. An extensive, free manual describing these procedures, entitled TASK (Therapy Animals Supporting Kids), is [available online](#).

The bill is in the Joint Committee on Children and a public hearing was held on Feb. 16.

THE LINK AND... VETERINARY MEDICINE

Seven States Consider Bills for Veterinary Reporting of Animal Abuse

In the wake of new policies by the American Animal Hospital Association ([See the December 2015 LINK-Letter](#)) and the American Veterinary Medical Association supporting the mandatory reporting of suspected animal abuse, several states have introduced bills in the current legislative season to make it easier for veterinarians to report suspected cases of animal cruelty.



Georgia's HB 892 would clarify that a veterinarian can report suspect animal cruelty without violating confidentiality requirements. In **Kentucky** – the only state which currently specifically prohibits practitioners from such reports on grounds that it would violate veterinary-patient-client confidentiality – **HB 269** would clarify the definition this relationship to allow veterinarians to release animal welfare information to government authorities.

Maryland's SB 722 would require a veterinarian who has reason to believe that an animal has been subjected to abuse or neglect to make a specified report. **New York's SB 6659** would change language regarding reporting of suspected animal abuse from “the veterinarian may report” to the appropriate law-enforcement agency to “shall report.” In **Pennsylvania, HB 760** would grant civil immunity to licensed veterinarians, as well as technicians and assistants, who report in good faith suspected instances of animal cruelty. Currently, practitioners in Pennsylvania report animal abuse only when it is committed by another veterinarian.

In **Wisconsin, SB 727** expands the reporting requirement to apply to mistreatment of an animal in violation of any of the animal cruelty laws; a veterinarian who makes a report of animal mistreatment in good faith would be immune from civil liability. (Current Wisconsin law requires a veterinarian to report to a humane officer or law enforcement officer only when the veterinarian has reason to believe that an animal has been in a fight in violation of the law relating to animal fighting.)

Meanwhile, **Tennessee** is reportedly considering an amendment to its **Veterinary Practice Act** to include protection from liability for veterinarians who report suspected cases of abuse.

Resources for Veterinary Response to Animal Abuse Offered

A recent article in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* ([See the January 2016 LINK-Letter](#)) raised the question of how veterinarians can realistically be expected to respond to suspected animal abuse if they have not received training on this subject. Lila Miller, vice President for Shelter Medicine for the ASPCA, and Phil Arkow, Coordinator of the National Link Coalition, responded with a Letter to the Editor which was published in the March 1 edition of *JAVMA*. The letter noted the increasing resources for veterinarians to learn about the topic, including several training manuals and textbooks; veterinary forensics programs at the University of Florida and the International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association; and guidances published by veterinary associations in the U.S., U.K. and New Zealand. Miller and Arkow emphasized the need for ongoing training programs at veterinary conferences utilizing the growing cadre of authorities qualified to address forensics and Link issues.



Lila Miller

-- Miller, L., & Arkow, P. (2016). Efforts to eliminate animal abuse. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 248(5), 485.

BUILDING AWARENESS ABOUT THE LINK

AAHA Report Alerts Veterinarians to Pet Safe-Housing Options in Domestic Violence

The National Link Coalition was featured in an extensive article on the impact of domestic violence on survivors and their animals in the American Animal Hospital Association's online news service, "[PetsMatter](#)." The Feb. 11 article, written by Maureen Blaney Flietner, addressed how the provision of safe havens for pets in domestic abuse cases fills a desperate need. The article described how threats to pets serve to terrorize, manipulate and intimidate human victims and keep them trapped in abusive situations.



The article detailed available resources from the National Link Coalition, RedRover's Safe Escape grants, the Animal Welfare Institute's Safe Mapping Project of pet-friendly shelters, the Safe Place for Pets online database of safe pet housing options, and the Animal Safehouse Project at the Rancho Coastal Humane Society in Encinitas, Calif.

Introducing The Link to the One Health Movement



The Links between animal abuse and interpersonal violence can be seen within a broader context of what has come to be known as the One Health movement – a worldwide interdisciplinary collaboration between human and veterinary medicine

to expand communications in all aspects of health care for humans, animals and the environment. The [One Health Initiative](#) has been active in introducing The Link to its constituencies and offered the National Link Coalition the opportunity to update material we had provided to their website four years ago. A new article has been published reflecting the monumental sea changes which have occurred in the past few years. You can [read the article here](#) and join us in thanking the One Health Initiative for helping to spread the Link word!

New Spanish-Language Link Resources Available

Spain's Link coalition GEVHA (Grupo para el Estudio de la Violencia Hacia Humanos y Animales) has added several additional Spanish-language informational resources to its growing collection of Link materials.

[Indicadores de Maltrato a Animales](#) is a brochure designed to help law enforcement personnel recognize signs of animal abuse. [Posters Investigaciones](#) is a collection of pdfs of eight posters presented by GEVHA's Dr. Nuria Querol and her colleagues at criminology and other academic conferences. [Análisis y caracterización del sector de los animales de compañía. Informe de Resultados.](#) is a study of animal cruelty in Spain, published Nov. 30, 2015 by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment (MAGRAMA).

The materials are also available as free downloads on the [National Link Coalition's web page](#) collection of Link materials available in Spanish, French, Dutch, Swedish, Portuguese, Bulgarian, and Turkish.

THE LINK IN THE LITERATURE

Veterinary Pathologists' Roles in Animal Abuse Cases Explored

As veterinary pathologists become increasingly called upon to identify clinical and post-mortem signs of animal cruelty and neglect, it is also becoming increasingly important for them to understand the medico-legal frameworks of animal abuse and the motivations of animal abusers in order to put their investigatory findings into context. This article, which will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Veterinary Pathology* and currently [available online](#), helps pathologists to ask appropriate questions and enhances their response by recognizing that crimes against animals can be both indicators and predictors of potential interpersonal violence. The article also covers such specialized forms of animal cruelty as dogfighting, animal hoarding, neglect, thermal and chemical burns, sharp-force injuries, blunt-force trauma, gunshot wounds, asphyxia and drowning, poisoning, and animal sexual abuse.

“Veterinary forensic pathology can often reveal information beyond the physical condition of the victim,” the authors conclude. “It can also help provide insights into the methods, motives, and state of mind behind such cruelty and thus give the courts and mental health professionals additional tools for the assessment of the significance of these crimes and the potential risks offenders may pose to other animals and society as a whole.”

-- Lockwood, R., & Arkow, P. (2016). *Animal abuse and interpersonal violence: The cruelty connection and its implications for veterinary pathology*. *Veterinary Pathology*. DOI: 10.1177/0300985815626575



Lydia Tong

Identifying Non-Accidental Injury in Veterinary Practice

Lydia Tong's article on how veterinarians can identify and respond to non-accidental injury (NAI) is an excellent Link overview from a veterinary/ clinical perspective. She describes why animal abuse cases are diagnostic challenges and why cruelty is under-reported. She reviews veterinary medicine's potential to improve the identification of animal abuse injuries and thus contribute to a holistic management of the broader public health issue of violence within families. Tong reports incidence of NAI in the U.S., U.K., Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, and Canada. She notes that the medical profession's fears that mandatory reporting of child abuse would result in fewer children being presented for treatment did not materialize, once structured protocols for response were introduced. “The medical profession has benefited from considerable clinical, pathological, epidemiological and sociological research into the features of child and interpersonal violence,” she concludes. “The veterinary profession would do well to seek to align its progression in this field with that of the medical profession.”

-- Tong, L. (2016). *Identifying non-accidental injury cases in veterinary practice*. *In Practice* 38(2), 59-68.

Assessing the Ongoing Impact of Domestic Violence on Pets

While much has been written about how fear of animal abuse is a barrier preventing battered women from escaping, little has been written on the animal behavioral and veterinary aspects of domestic violence. An Australian study of five women who had left violent relationships elicited information on the importance of companion animals during and subsequent to the violence. The researchers found that: (1) companion animal behavioral changes persisted after the violent relationship; (2) perpetrators selectively controlled their violent behavior; and (3) veterinarians were not considered useful sources of support by all women interviewed. The authors recommend that veterinarians be educated in the best ways to offer support in cases of domestic violence co-occurring with companion animals.

-- Tiplady, C.M., Walsh, D.B., & Phillips, J.C. (2015). *The ongoing impact of domestic violence on animal welfare*. *Animal Studies Journal*, 4(2), 116-139.

NEWS from LOCAL LINK COALITIONS

Link Coalition Organizing in Alamosa, Colo.

A group of Link enthusiasts is attempting to organize a coalition in the San Luis Valley of Colorado. Laura Bruneau, an Associate Professor of Counselor Education at Adams State University in Alamosa, will introduce the concept and begin the process of generating local support on April 6. She will present a program at 7 p.m., “The Link Between Human Violence and Animal Abuse: Creating Public Safety Through Community Partnerships,” as part of the university’s Faculty & Staff Lecture Series. The program is open to the general public and a variety of stakeholders have been invited.



Laura Bruneau

THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

Bills We’re Watching... and Laws We’re Celebrating:

Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders



H.R. 1258 – the Pet And Women Safety (PAWS) Act – was re-introduced with a new number and 190 bi-partisan co-sponsors. The bill would expand existing federal domestic violence protections to include pets of domestic violence victims. It would prohibit crossing state lines to harm a domestic partner’s pet, and establish a federal grant program to provide assistance and housing to victims’ pets in need of emergency shelter. The bill has been assigned to the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and Investigations. A companion measure in the Senate – **S. 1559** – with 26 co-sponsors has been referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.



Alaska HB 147 would allow victims to petition the court for a protective order that the abuser may not remove, harm or dispose of any animals in the household, and to grant her exclusive care and custody of them. Peace officers investigating domestic violence cases must inform victims of this provision. The bill would also declare pets to be marital property and give courts authority to decide individual or joint custody when people divorce, with consideration of what would be best for the animal. The bill was held over in the House Judiciary Committee when the Legislature adjourned and a hearing was scheduled for Feb. 10.



Indiana SB 343 would allow a court to grant an order of protection to: (1) grant possession and care of an animal to a petitioner; (2) prohibit a respondent from taking action against the animal; and (3) direct a law enforcement officer to accompany the petitioner to retrieve the animal. The bill has been referred to the Judiciary Committee.



Michigan SB 28 would make it a crime to knowingly kill, torture, mutilate, maim, disfigure, or poison an animal, or threaten to do so, with the intent of causing mental suffering or distress to a person or to exert control over a person. The bill passed the Judiciary Committee and is in the Committee of the Whole.



Michigan HB 4478 would allow courts to issue protection-from-abuse orders preventing respondents from injuring, torturing, neglecting, threatening, or removing the petitioner’s animals. It would apply to current or former spouses; individuals with whom the petitioner has a child in common or where there has been a dating relationship; or an individual presently or formerly residing in the same household. The bill passed the full House on Oct. 15 by a vote of 96-9 and the Senate Judiciary Committee and was referred to the Committee of the Whole.



New Mexico S 55 would appropriate \$500,000 to the Children, Youth & Families Department to enhance the system of providing temporary care and housing for animals belonging to victims of family violence. In 2015 the Legislature enacted a statute appropriating \$300,000, to be paid in six annual installments of \$50,000 each. The bill was approved by the Public Affairs Committee and has been sent to the Finance Committee.



Pennsylvania SB 594 would make it a first-degree misdemeanor (\$2,000 - \$15,000 fine and/or two years’ imprisonment) to kill, torture, maim or poison an animal belonging to someone who is protected by a protection-from-abuse order. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



Wisconsin SB 97 was signed into law on March 1 by Gov. Scott Walker. Judges or circuit court commissioners issuing temporary restraining orders or injunctions not only in domestic violence cases but also in child abuse, individual-at-risk and harassment situations may order the respondent not to remove, hide, damage, harm, mistreat, or dispose of a household pet. Petitioners or family members acting on their behalf may retrieve a household pet.

Animal Abuse in the Presence of a Child



Idaho HB399 would make the torture of a companion animal in the presence of a minor a felony. The bill is in the House Ways & Means Committee.



Massachusetts H3446 would criminalize animal abuse in the presence of a child under age 14 and would increase penalties for such cruelty to up to 10 years in prison and/or a \$10,000 fine. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.



New York A534 defines “aggravated” animal cruelty as causing extreme physical pain or done in an especially depraved or sadistic manner, a Class E felony. It would make the commission of aggravated cruelty in the presence of a child a Class D felony. The bill is in the Codes Committee.



New York A944 and **S1795** would criminalize knowingly causing a minor to attend a place where exhibition of animal fighting is being conducted. **A944** is in the Agriculture Committee. **S1795** passed the Senate, died in the Assembly, and is in the Senate Agriculture Committee.

“CASA for Animals”



Connecticut HB 5344 would allow courts to appoint attorneys or law school students as advocates for any animals involved in prosecutions concerning custody of the animals or their welfare. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.



Massachusetts SB 851 would authorize actions to recover non-economic damages for the injury or death of companion animals and authorize a guardian ad litem to recover damages. The bill is in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.



New York AB 3443 would authorize a guardian ad litem to be appointed by a court in tort causes of action for wrongful injury or death of a companion animal. It would also allow restraining orders and other injunctive relief for the wrongful injury or killing of a companion animal. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.

Animal-Assisted Therapeutic Interventions for Abuse Victims



Connecticut Raised Bill No. 5140 would allow volunteer teams of therapy animals and their registered handlers, with whom a child victim of assault, sexual assault or child abuse feels comfortable, to be present during courtroom testimony. The bill is in the Joint Committee on Children and a public hearing was held on Feb. 16.

Interventions for Animal Abuse Offenders



New York A1445 and **S1174** would increase penalties for animal fighting and aggravated cruelty to animals and would require a psychiatric evaluation for defendants convicted of aggravated cruelty. The bills are in the Agriculture Committees.



New York A1673 and **S814** would require unsealing of court records that juvenile offenders convicted of animal cruelty offenses and require them to undergo psychiatric evaluation and treatment where necessary. The bills are in the Agriculture Committees.

Animal Abuse and Other Crimes



Michigan HB 4353 would allow animal shelters to consider an individual's criminal history when determining whether or not to allow that individual to adopt an animal. Convicted animal abusers could not adopt for at least 5 years following conviction. The bill was approved by the House and the Senate Judiciary Committee and is in the Committee of the Whole. **Senate Bill 219** would prohibit offenders convicted of animal fighting or bestiality from owning animals other than livestock for 5 years. The bill cleared the Senate by a 37-1 vote on Jan. 28 and is now in the House Judiciary Committee.



New York A346 would create a statewide task force to study how to improve investigations of animal abuse and enforcement of anti-cruelty laws. The bill is in the Agriculture Committee.



New York A1596 and **S2936** would expand the definition of aggravated cruelty to animals to include harm to animals during the commission of a felony. **A1596** is in the Agriculture Committee. **S2936** passed the Senate, died in the Assembly and was referred back to the Senate Agriculture Committee.

Cross Reporting



Georgia HB 892 would clarify that a veterinarian can report suspect animal cruelty without violating confidentiality requirements.



Kansas – HB 2451 would add animal control officers to the list of other professionals who are mandated reporters of child abuse, with immunity from civil liability for good-faith reporting. The bill is in the House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice.



Kentucky HB 269 would amend the veterinarian-client-patient relationship provisions to allow veterinarians to provide information without the owner's consent to public health, animal welfare, wildlife, or agriculture authorities employed by federal, state or local government agencies who have a legal or regulatory interest in the protection of animal or public health, with immunity from liability. The measure is in the House Agriculture & Small Business Committee.



Maryland SB 722 would require a veterinarian who believes that an animal has been subjected to abuse or neglect to make a report. A Senate hearing has been scheduled for March 10.



Massachusetts S863 and **H132** would add domestic violence workers, animal control officers and humane officers to the list of mandated reporters of child abuse. **H132** was referred to the Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities, where a hearing was scheduled for Feb. 9, and **S863** is in the Judiciary Committee



New York A5082 would require anyone mandated to report suspected child abuse who also encounters suspected animal abuse in the course of their duties to make an immediate report to local police or SPCA agencies. Failure to report would be a Class A misdemeanor and civilly liable. The bill is in the Social Services Committee.



New York's S6659 and **A9346** would change language regarding reporting of suspected animal abuse from "the veterinarian may report" to the appropriate law-enforcement agency to "shall report." The bill is in the Higher Education Committee.



Pennsylvania HB 760 would protect veterinarians, certified veterinary technicians and assistants from civil liability if they report suspected cases of animal abuse in good faith to law enforcement authorities. The bill passed the House on Sept. 29 and is currently in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Tennessee is reportedly considering an amendment to its **Veterinary Practice Act** to include protection from liability for veterinarians who report suspected cases of abuse.



Wisconsin SB 727 expands the reporting requirement to apply to mistreatment of an animal in violation of any animal cruelty law; a veterinarian who makes a report of animal mistreatment in good faith would be immune from civil liability. (Current Wisconsin law requires a veterinarian to report to a humane officer or law enforcement officer only when the veterinarian has reason to believe that an animal has been in a fight in violation of the law relating to animal fighting.) The bill is in the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety.

Animal Hoarding



New York A1265 would create the crime of companion animal hoarding. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

Animal Sexual Abuse



Michigan SB 219, which amends several sections of the state penal code regarding animal cruelty crimes, adds a provision that anyone convicted of animal sexual abuse (called “the abominable and detestable crime against nature” in the bill) is not only guilty of a felony but shall be prohibited from owning or possessing an animal for five years. The prohibition appears to also apply to persons convicted of anal sex with a human being. The bill has passed the Senate and is in the House Judiciary Committee.



New Hampshire HB 1547 would establish the crime of bestiality as a Class B felony. Convicted offenders would be required to submit to psychological assessment and counseling at their own expense, and could be barred from residing with any animals for a time period deemed appropriate by the court. The bill was approved by the House and is scheduled to go to the Senate in April.



Ohio SB 195 would prohibit a person from engaging in sexual conduct with an animal, and related acts. It would provide for the seizure of the animals involved and authorize the sentencing court to require offenders to undergo psychological evaluation or counseling. The bill is in the Criminal Justice Committee.

THE LINK... IN THE NEWS

Couple Receive Suspended Sentences in Child Neglect/Chinchilla Hoarding Case



The last of the chinchillas sheltered by the humane society left the facility in February

classes, and have to perform 100 hours of community service that benefits animals, the [Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel](#) reported.

A Muskego, Wis. couple received suspended sentences and probation for charges of child and animal neglect after humane officials confiscated 348 living and dead chinchillas from their residence. Garrett R. Rees, 51, and Tricia L. Rees, 39, pleaded no contest to misdemeanor child neglect and animal sheltering charges; several other misdemeanor charges were dismissed. They received stayed jail terms of nine months and six months, respectively, two years probation, and had to pay \$243 in court costs. They were allowed to keep their two cats, required to attend parenting

Authorities were alerted last March to an overwhelming smell of ammonia from chinchilla urine at the home, which was declared uninhabitable. Twenty-nine dead chinchillas were found in the garage and a freezer. The Humane Animal Welfare Society of Waukesha County took custody of 319 chinchillas, 270 of which were adopted out; 49 were determined through [lengthy legal proceedings](#) to be the Rees’ property and were ordered to be sold. Three children were removed from the home when fire officials determined the air was unsafe to breathe.

Assisted Living Facility Closed Amid Animal Welfare, Elder Abuse Complaints



Authorities responding to reports of an elderly woman, starving and reeking of urine, fleeing from an assisted living facility in Homestead, Fla., were appalled about her claims that she was unable to breathe due to the thick stench of animals on the property. When officers arrived they found not only another woman lying on a urine-soaked mattress but also mounds of animal feces on the floors, 48 cats, 16 dogs, and the remains of a dozen cat carcasses in a freezer. Officials quickly condemned the house as unfit for human habitation and charged the owner, Eileen “Chea” Haran, 73, with four counts of elder neglect, the [Miami Herald](#) reported. Haran, said to be “the cat lady” of the neighborhood, was released on \$20,000 bond. More than three dozen 911 complaints have been lodged against the property since at least 2007 when state agencies found the home filthy and unsafe for frail elders but allowed it to remain open.

Man with Domestic Violence History Gets Two Years for Animal Cruelty



A man with a history of domestic assault, robberies, and assault with a weapon got two years in a Canadian federal penitentiary for taping a dog’s muzzle shut, binding its legs, and leaving it to die in a field. Michael Earl Hill, 32, of Amherstburg, Ont. entered a surprise guilty plea in Ontario Provincial Court to charges that prosecutors called “a despicable act of depravity.” Justice Micheline Rawlins also imposed a 25-year ban from owning animals and ordered Hill to get psychological counseling because “People who become serial killers begin with small animals.” [The Western Sentinel](#) reported that Hill had been given the dog and \$60 by a couple whose daughter was allergic to it; Hill was to use the money to pay the surrender fees at a local shelter, but instead dumped the dog and pocketed the cash. The dog was renamed “Justice” by the humane society and an intense social media campaign called “Justice for Justice” triggered a massive search for the dog’s owners and led to a petition with 65,000 signatures calling for the maximum penalties for Hill. Hill has been kept in solitary confinement for his own protection.

Dog Takes Beatings Meant for Family; Abuser Gets Two Years in Jail

A man who repeatedly broke the ribs of his then-girlfriend’s dog was sentenced to two years in prison for what a Bucks County, Pa. judge called “unconscionable” abuse. Christopher George, 44, of Bensalem, was sentenced after pleading no-contest in the Christmas Eve, 2014 attack on “Rocky,” a boxer.

The woman, who has since broken up with George, had lived with him for three months before she realized the dog was being abused while she and her children weren’t home, the District Attorney’s office said. When she found Rocky “soaking wet and covered in blood,” she took him to a veterinarian who found more than 20 rib fractures in various stages of healing, indicating ongoing physical abuse. A month previously, Rocky had disappeared and was found five miles from home: George told her that the dog had escaped but the veterinarian found a puncture wound on the dog’s head but no abrasions that would be consistent with a five-mile run.

George had previously been convicted of animal cruelty for fatally kicking another girlfriend’s three puppies. The [Levittown Patch](#) reported that Rocky has largely recovered from his injuries. “I guess in the end Rocky saved us,” the woman testified. “He took the beatings that were meant for us.”

Florida Man Charged with Assault with Deadly Weapon – an Alligator



Joshua James

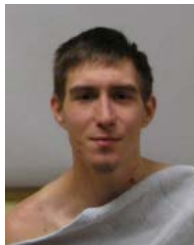
Joshua James, 24, of Jupiter, Fla., was charged with assault with a deadly weapon, theft and illegal possession of wildlife for allegedly throwing a 3¹/₂-foot-long alligator through the drive-through window of a Wendy's restaurant. An officer responding to the incident later released it into a nearby canal. James was taken into custody on Feb. 8 in connection with the incident which occurred at 1:30 a.m. last Oct. 11. His parents told [WPTV](#) that James had idolized Australian crocodile hunter Steve Irwin but the incident was a harmless "stupid prank" addressed to a Wendy's employee whom he knew. A judge released James on \$6,000 bail and admonished him to stay away from all Wendy's restaurants, avoid possessing any weapons, to get a mental health evaluation, and to limit his contact with animals to his mother's dog.

Sex Offender Charged with Using "Therapy Dog" to Gain Access to Kids

A convicted serious sex offender was arrested in Kokomo, Ind. on Feb. 4 on charges of allegedly using his "therapy dog" as a way to enter a local elementary school and interact with children on four occasions. Randall H. King, 51, faces four felony counts of unlawful entry by a serious sex offender, the [Kokomo Tribune](#) reported. Police said King would stand by a door at the school and use his dog to attract children, but had no documentation verifying the animal's status as either a service dog or therapy dog. School officials rejected his offer to volunteer at the school with the dog. King was convicted of felony child molestation in Marion County, Ind. in 2001 and pled guilty to a misdemeanor charge of internet sex offense in Howard County in 2011.



Randall H. King



Patrick O'Connor

Veterinarians Alert Police; Suspect Charged with Domestic Violence and Animal Torture

Veterinarians treating a dog whose owner said it had been stabbed nine times by her ex-boyfriend alerted police in Chesterfield Township, Mich., who charged Patrick O'Connor, 24, with misdemeanor domestic violence and felony animal torture. The dog is recovering and a veterinarian plans to adopt it, [Deadline Detroit](#) reported. When police questioned him about the dog, O'Connor reportedly said he had anger management and alcohol problems and did what he did because the dog had defecated on the floor. The woman did not identify her boyfriend because she was afraid of retaliation.

Cockfight Raid Nets Heroin, Cash, and Animal Cruelty and Child Abuse Charges



Carlos Talavera

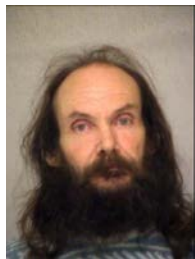
Ten adults and one teenager were arrested on charges of animal cruelty and risk of injury to children when police in New Britain, Conn. responded to a noise-disturbance call on Feb. 6 and found a cockfight in progress. Multiple roosters were squawking in duress and people were cheering in the basement of the home of Carlos Talavera, the [New Britain Herald](#) reported. Police seized 26 roosters, two hens, \$7,000 in cash and more than 80 bags of heroin. The basement was apparently set up for organized fighting with a blood-stained pit and cages for the birds built into the walls. Talavera has a previous conviction for illegal gambling. The 15-year-old was referred to juvenile authorities. The birds were reportedly being tested for bird flu.

Couple Charged with Child Abuse After Son Inappropriately Touches Dog

A Kaufman County, Texas woman and her boyfriend have been charged with child abuse for allegedly tying a rope around her 13-year-old son's genitals, beating him and subjecting him to



waterboarding for having had improper sexual contact with their dog. **Casey Shackleford and Christi Howell** Casey Shackleford, 45, who has a prior conviction for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and whose probation has been revoked because of the new allegations, and Christi Howell, 40, are being held on the charges. The boy, who is reportedly mentally disabled, told investigators that he had been punished on Jan. 29 for telling Shackleford that he had “put his finger inside the family dog’s butt,” the [Dallas Morning News](#) reported. Authorities said Shackleford grabbed the boy by his hair, pinned him down and held a towel over his face as Howell poured water over his head and nose. The boy is now in foster care.



Timothy Dunn

Welfare Check Leads to Elder Abuse, 16 Animal Cruelty Charges

A welfare check on a 71-year-old woman in Macon, Ga. resulted in police charging her son, Timothy Dunn, 50, with elder abuse and 16 counts of animal cruelty. When Bibb County sheriff’s deputies stopped at the home, the woman said she was fine and didn’t need medical help, the [Macon Telegraph](#) reported. But the deputies saw a large number of malnourished dogs and feces on the floor, returned with a warrant, and confiscated the animals who were living in what they said were “extremely dangerous and deplorable living conditions.” Sixteen animals were turned over to the county’s veterinarian and the mother was relocated with another family member.

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

March 16 – (online): Phil Arkow will present a webinar on Interpersonal Violence and Animal Cruelty for the National Organization for Victim Assistance’s [Victim Assistance Academy](#).

April 6 – Alamosa, Colo.: Laura Bruneau will discuss “The Link between Human Violence and Animal Abuse: Creating Public Safety Through Community Partnerships” as part of Adams State University’s [Faculty & Staff Lecture Series](#).

April 7 – (online): Allie Phillips will present on “The Connection of Animal Abuse to Family Violence” for the [Battered Women’s Justice Project](#).

April 7-10 – Birmingham, UK: Scottish actress Naomi Breeze will perform a one-woman mini-play on domestic violence at the press conference at the [British Small Animal Veterinary Association](#)’s Congress.

April 14 – Atlantic City, NJ: Staff from the New Jersey Department of Child Placement & Permanency and the New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence will present on “Domestic Violence and Child Abuse” at the [International Child Assault Prevention Conference](#).

April 18 – Dayton, Ohio: Phil Arkow will present on The Link at a community program sponsored by [Montgomery County Animal Services](#).

April 18-19 – Toronto, Ont., Canada: Tim Battle will discuss “Pet Safekeeping for Domestic Violence Victims: Starting, Operating and Sustaining a Program,” and several presenters will discuss Animal Hoarding at the [National Animal Welfare Conference](#).

April 20 – Niceville, FL: Allie Phillips will present on “The Danger of When Animal Abuse Co-Occurs with Family Violence: Strategies and Policies for Keeping Children Safe” at the 2016 Annual Child Abuse Conference.

April 22 – Denver, Colo.: Laura Bruneau will present on “‘Fur Babies’ and Bettered Women: The Link between Animal Abuse and Intimate Partner Violence” at the [Colorado Mental Health Professionals Conference](#).

April 28 – Fresno, Calif.: Phil Arkow, Madeline Bernstein and Claudia Swing will conduct Link trainings at a community event hosted by the [Central California Animal Disaster Team](#).

May 2-3 – Spokane, WA: Barbara Boat will present on “A New Advocacy Tool: Connecting the Links between “Toxic Stress” and “The Toxic Triad” (Animal Cruelty, Child Abuse and Domestic Violence) at the [Children’s Justice Conference](#).

May 4 – Virginia Beach, Va.: Phil Arkow will discuss “Practical Guidance for the Effective Response by Veterinarians to Suspected Animal Cruelty, Abuse and Neglect” with the [Virginia Beach Veterinary Association](#).

May 6 – Manahawkin, N.J.: Phil Arkow will train New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency staff on the implications of animal abuse in child welfare through the [Child Welfare Training Partnership](#).

May 11-13 – St. Petersburg Beach, Fla.: Several Link programs will be offered at the 9th Annual [Veterinary Forensic Sciences conference](#).

May 12-13 – Denver, Colo.: Frank Ascione will present on “Implications of Animal Cruelty on Child Psychosocial Development” at the Denver University Institute for Human-Animal Connection’s [Animals on the Mind conference](#) on the social neurobiology of human-animal interactions.

May 14-15 – Prague, Czech Republic: Allie Phillips and Chuck Mitchell of the Florida Courthouse Therapy Dogs Program will give a presentation on “Therapy Animals in the Judicial System: How You Can Help Maltreated Child Witnesses” at the 2016 Animal Assisted Intervention International Conference.

May 16 – New Brunswick, N.J.: Phil Arkow will train New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency staff on the implications of animal abuse in child welfare through the [Child Welfare Training Partnership](#).

May 24 – Newtown, Penna.: Phil Arkow will present on “Animal Abuse, Animal Hoarding and Elder Abuse: Challenges and Strategies for Adult Protective Services” at the [Neff Symposium](#) on the Prevention of Crimes Against Older Adults.

June 2-3 – Boise, ID: Allie Phillips will present at the [Idaho Council on Domestic Violence and Victim Assistance](#) on The Danger of When Animal Abuse Occurs with Family Violence, Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T), and Therapy Animals Supporting Kids in the Judicial Process.

June 25 – San Francisco, Calif.: Jennifer Woolf, DVM will present on “The Veterinarian’s Role in Animal Abuse Cases” at the [Pacific Veterinary Conference](#).

July 11-13 – Paris, France: Phil Arkow will participate in a global exchange examining research and practice aspects of animal abuse and domestic violence at the [International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations’](#) Triennial conference.

Aug. 3 – Baton Rouge, La.: Phil Arkow will present at the [Louisiana Animal Control Association](#) conference.

Sept. 15 – Mashantucket, Conn.: Phil Arkow will train on the domestic violence/animal abuse Link at the [Connecticut State Animal Control Officers’](#) conference.

Sept. 29 – Black Hawk, Colo.: Phil Arkow will present on how The Link can shift the paradigm of animal shelters at the [Colorado Animal Welfare Conference](#).

Oct. 6 – Seattle, Wash.: Phil Arkow will deliver the keynote presentation at the [National Animal Care & Control Association](#) conference.

Oct. 17-21 – Keene, Plymouth, Rochester, Manchester, & Concord, N.H.: Phil Arkow will present Link training to the New Hampshire Division of Children, Youth & Families, and other government, domestic violence and animal care and control [agencies](#).

Nov. 4 -- Phoenix, Md.: Nancy Blaney will present at the Baltimore County State’s Attorney’s Office Animal Abuse Unit [Animal Abuse Leadership Summit](#).

Nov. 5-6 – Sydney, Australia: [Lucy’s Project](#) will hold its 2nd annual conference on Perspectives of Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse. Speakers will include Lydia Tong, Catherine Tiplady, representatives from RSPCA offices, academia, and domestic violence programs.

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



ABOUT THE NATIONAL LINK COALITION



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

Members of the National Link Coalition Steering Committee

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

Lesley Ashworth

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

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