



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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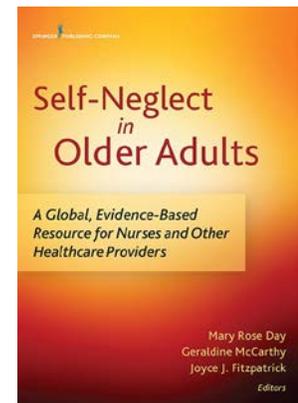


ANIMAL ABUSE AND... ELDER ABUSE

Elders' Self Neglect and Farmers' Animal Abuse Featured in New Book

Self-neglect among elders is increasingly recognized as a global phenomenon and a serious public health issue that often coincides with animal neglect and hoarding. A new book purports to be the first to deal exclusively with the subject of self-neglect, and two chapters address issues involving animal welfare.

Authors from six countries deal with practical and theoretical perspectives, service responses, research evidence, assessment issues, and ethical and educational concerns. Bronwen Williams, a mental health training leader in the U.K., examines animal hoarding as a poorly understood phenomenon that creates a risk to adults and animals as well as to the multidisciplinary teams who try to deal with the issue.



Catherine Devitt, a researcher in the University College Dublin's School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy, and Alison Hanlon, Associate Professor in the University College Dublin's School of Veterinary Medicine, describe neglect issues found in farm animals and farmers and the relationships between human problems and farm animal neglect.

The book's 25 chapters have been called a road map for clinicians and healthcare providers in many nations contending with the complex and often heartbreaking phenomenon of self-neglect, an issue certain to increase in scope and magnitude with an ever-aging population.

-- Williams, B. (2018). Animal hoarding. In M.R. Day, G. McCarthy, & J.J. Fitzpatrick (Eds.). *Self-Neglect in Older Adults: A Global, Evidence-Based Resource for Nurses and Other Health Care Providers*. New York: Springer, pp. 57-68.

-- Devitt, C., & Hanlon, A. (2018). Farm animals and farmers: Neglect issues. In M.R. Day, G. McCarthy, & J.J. Fitzpatrick (Eds.). *Self-Neglect in Older Adults: A Global, Evidence-Based Resource for Nurses and Other Health Care Providers*. New York: Springer, pp. 69-80.

ANIMAL ABUSE AND... DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Pennsylvania Bill Addresses Division of Pets as Special Property; Illinois Measure Becomes Law

Following the lead of legislatures in Alaska, Hawai'i, Illinois, and Rhode Island where bills were introduced that would allow courts to award custody of pets in divorce cases in what the court determines to be the animals' best interest (*See the November 2016, and February, March and August 2017 LINK-Letters*), the Pennsylvania General Assembly is currently mulling a somewhat different version of this pioneering concept. **HB1652**, introduced on July 8 by eight Representatives, would allow divorcing parties to enter into a custody agreement regarding the possession and/or care of a companion animal.



Such agreements may specify the periods of time during which each party will possess the pet and each party's financial responsibility regarding its care. Where the other state bills largely left it up to the court to determine what would be in the animals' best interests, the Pennsylvania bill defines relevant factors which the court may consider:

- Whether the animal was acquired prior to or during the marriage
- The animal's basic daily needs
- Which party generally provides the animal with veterinary care, social interaction and compliance with state and local regulations
- Which party has the greater ability to financially support the animal.

Of particular interest in the bill is a preamble in which the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania "recognizes that companion animals are living beings that are generally regarded as cherished family members that offer their owners companionship, security and assistance. Companion animals occupy a special category of personal property which does not include inanimate personal property.

"Therefore, it is the policy of the Commonwealth that special consideration be extended to companion animals when the division of personal property is planned or determined."

The Pennsylvania bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.

Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner signed **SB 1261** into law on Aug. 25, to become effective Jan. 1, 2018. It amends the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act to allow parties filing for divorce to file a joint petition for simplified dissolution if they have executed a written agreement allocating ownership and responsibility for their companion animals. The Illinois measure also allows the parties to petition for sole or joint ownership, contingent upon the court's consideration of what would be in the animals' best interests.



Alaska's measure was enacted into law in 2016. The Hawai'i and Rhode Island bills were defeated

“Special Bailments” Proposed to Protect Pets of Returning Survivors

The proliferation of Safe Haven programs – whereby domestic violence shelters partner with animal shelters to provide foster care for the pets of survivors – amplified by co-sheltering programs such as SAF-T™ (Sheltering Animals and Families Together) where animals accompany their humans into safehouses, has demonstrably helped battered women and their entire families to escape abuse. However, challenges still remain: foster care is only short-term, relatively few shelters accept pets, and a victim may decide to return to the abusive household and take the animal with her, subjecting the animal, as well as herself, to renewed abuse.



Joan MacLeod Heminway

Writing in the current issue of the [*Tennessee Journal of Law and Policy*](#), Joan MacLeod Heminway and Patricia Graves Lenaghan address what they call the “safe haven conundrum” and suggest that this latter challenge might be resolved through a traditional option common in property and contract law called a “special bailment.”

Despite overwhelming evidence that many people consider their pets as family members and have deep emotional attachments to them, the law considers animals to be property. Consequently, “property ownership conventions must be observed and may collide with public policy considerations at several decision-making junctures,” they write. Such a conundrum occurs when a survivor decides to return to her abuser and takes her animals with her, in effect re-victimizing them.

Recent advances in public policy – such as including pets in protection-from-abuse orders, registries of convicted animal cruelty offenders, increased penalties for animal cruelty, mandatory cross-reporting among professions, welfare-based determinations to award custody of pets in divorce settlements, and court-appointed special advocates for animal victims – have drawn attention to Link issues. But these do not resolve the question of the woman’s right, under property law, to return her animals to an abusive situation.



Patricia Graves Lenaghan

Heminway and Graves observe that although the law deems animals to be property, states can enact laws requiring offenders to forfeit custody of the animals that were the subject of their conviction, as well as future ownership of animals. When offenders claim that law enforcement made illegal searches and seizures of their property, prosecutors have argued that the property seizures were legitimate because the animals have evidentiary value or exigent circumstances necessitated saving the animals’ lives.

Given these dynamics, they suggest the concept of a “bailment” may be applicable to protect property in a Safe Haven context. A bailment is the delivery of personal property from one person to another to hold that property for a certain purpose, usually under an expressed or implied contract. A bailment is neither a gift nor a conveyance of title: title and rights to recover possession remain with the bailor. Pet owners regularly use bailments when they leave a pet at a veterinary clinic, boarding kennel or Safe Haven. However, establishing ownership of this property may be difficult if feuding spouses or partners each claim ownership.

They contend that this issue may be resolved through creating a “special bailment,” in which the return of the property to the owner is conditional based upon some term or stipulation affecting the redelivery. The domestic violence survivor and the shelter could sign an agreement stating that the animal may be returned to her only upon the fulfillment of certain conditions, such as a guarantee that the animal’s physical, mental or emotional welfare will not be compromised, similar to existing provisions in child welfare cases. Independent reviewers, similar to guardians *ad litem*, could make such determinations.

This procedure could work if the victim has the legal capacity to sign such an agreement and is not being threatened or intimidated into doing so. The history of violence directed to the pet should be discussed and documented, and a written protocol should be in place.

The authors note that other issues affect this. The pet may be the woman’s only source of emotional comfort; denying her access to it may deprive her of support she needs in what is frequently a protracted process before she finally leaves. Special bailments may put additional pressures on social workers.

However, removing the animal from the cycle of violence may, in fact, relieve the client of additional stress and give the social worker additional leverage in communicating with her and “hastens the human victim along the path of emotional evolution” that compels her to ultimately leave the abusive situation.

-- Heminway, J.M., & and Lenaghan, P.G. (2017). *Safe haven conundrum: The use of special bailments to keep pets out of violent households. Tennessee Journal of Law and Policy, 12(1), 79-150*

Puppy Brings Comfort, Stress Relief and Motivation to Safe House

What can a one-year-old Chinese crested powderpuff do in a domestic violence organization? Plenty! That’s the word from the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Warren County, N.J., where Sexual Assault Counselor Olivia Hunter introduced *The LINK-Letter* to “Rudy.” The pooch was rescued from a puppy mill and adopted last year by Executive Director Jill Zinckgraf.



“Rudy comes to the office every day with Jill and runs around to each office to greet every staff member with squeals and kisses,” writes Hunter. “While Rudy truly brings so much brightness and love to the DASACC staff, he also touches the lives of every single client that comes to our agency.”

Rudy will begin training to become a therapy dog this year and will eventually become part of the modality of therapy for women and children to process their trauma. “But even without this training we have seen Rudy comfort our clients, many of whom have not felt comfort or safety in some time. We have seen clients lay down on the floor with Rudy, play with him, hug him, and laugh with him, all while processing some of their pain and replacing it with joy. We often say that Rudy knows who needs him the most and he always has a bit more love to share.”

Hunter reports that Rudy and the National Link Coalition have motivated the Center to continue to raise community awareness and understanding of the connection between interpersonal violence and animal abuse. “It is essential to us to keep every living being safe in the families we work with, and your

resources have helped expand our work to ensure that we are doing our best to do so.” The Center recently added questions which assess for animal abuse in the intake procedure.

DASACC will also be offering a free training, open to all professionals in the community, on domestic violence and animal abuse in October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Additionally, this year the Center’s grant writer will be focusing on applying for grants that will allow the safe house to appropriately accommodate women and their pets by building heated/air conditioned kennels.

“Thank you for all of the vital and compassionate work that you do,” she adds.

Saskatchewan Launching Province-Wide Pet Safekeeping Program



Citing a growing body of research demonstrating that animal abuse and interpersonal violence are closely linked and their recent survey that concern for the safety of family pets and livestock impacts the decision-making of individuals leaving domestic violence, the Saskatchewan SPCA is developing an [Animal Safekeeping Program](#) to launch in 2017 and hiring a new full-time staff person to focus on this program.

The Animal Safekeeping Coordinator will:

- raise awareness of the link between interpersonal violence and animal abuse;
- create a database of available animal safekeeping resources; and
- promote collaboration between the human services and animal welfare sectors.

The program builds on data collected in the 2016 report *on The Link: Interpersonal Violence and Abuse and Animal Safekeeping* ([See the July-August 2016 LINK-Letter](#)), produced by the SSPCA, Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnership Solutions (STOPS) to Violence and the Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services (PATHS). Over 77% of respondents reported knowing at least one individual who did not leave an abusive relationship due to concern for the care and safekeeping of their animals.



The Link:
Interpersonal Violence and
Abuse and Animal Safekeeping

The goal of the Animal Safekeeping Program is to improve access to the resources that will help improve the safety of persons and animals fleeing domestic violence. STOPS, PATHS, the Ministry of Justice, Victims Services, the public and the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association have been invited to participate in a steering committee to oversee the development and operation of this program.



Funding for the Animal Safekeeping Program has been provided by the Community Initiatives Fund, which invests in the quality of life of Saskatchewan residents by offering grants for community projects that help support community development, inclusion, leadership and vitality.

THE LINK AND... CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

New Alabama Law Allows Facility Dogs in Courtrooms



Sen. Jimmy Holley

Alabama has become the latest state to allow facility dogs to accompany victims and witnesses into courtrooms, a practice of particular significance for the victims of child sexual abuse. Alabama **HB393/SB273** was signed into law on May 19.

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

The measure was introduced by Sen. Jimmy Holley. The new law instructs courts that all precautions should be taken to obscure the presence of therapy dogs from the jury, so as to not add any prejudicial elements to the case.

Subject to the Alabama Rules of Criminal Procedure, either party in the proceedings may also ask to examine and confirm the credentials of the certified facility dog and certified handler. The law establishes criteria for the qualifications of such dogs and their handlers.

Webinar to Study Courthouse Facility Dogs

Professionally trained courthouse facility dogs are working throughout the country in prosecutors' offices and child advocacy centers to assist children while they participate in stressful criminal justice proceedings. As legally neutral companions for child witnesses and victims during the investigation and prosecution of crimes, the dogs have a dramatic impact on the ability and willingness of children to describe what happened.

On Sept. 13, the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys will conduct a [webinar](#) on "Courthouse Facility Dogs: Assisting in the Investigation and Prosecution of Crimes Against Children." The webinar is designed to instruct prosecuting attorneys about best practices in the use of courthouse facility dogs so that the use of these dogs can facilitate the fact-finding mission of courtroom proceedings.

Ohio Bill Would Update Cross-Reporting Provisions

An archaic provision in Ohio, dating back over 100 years when many animal protection organizations not only investigated child abuse but also had the power to remove abused children from their homes, is under review in a bill in the legislature. **Ohio HB147** would add agents of the Ohio Humane Society to the list of professionals who have a duty to report suspected child abuse to a public children's services agency or peace officer. But the measure 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, but not agents of the Ohio Humane Society, as mandated reporters. 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.

THE LINK AND... VETERINARY MEDICINE

Saskatchewan Veterinary Association Endorses Reporting of Abuse

The Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association has added its voice to the growing call across Canada for veterinarians to serve as the first line of defense for abused and neglected animals and to report suspected animal maltreatment to appropriate authorities. In an [article](#) in the February 2017 issue of the *SVMA News*, the association's Animal Welfare Committee wrote that when there is reason to believe that an animal is being abused or neglected, veterinarians have a duty to report their concerns that overrides the professional confidentiality code. "Failure to report or reluctance to share appropriate information can contribute to the continued abuse or even death of animals," they wrote.



Saskatchewan law provides immunity from prosecution to veterinarians who report suspicion of abuse in good faith. Similar permissive reporting and immunity provisions have existed for several years in Ontario and Nova Scotia. British Columbia, Manitoba and Quebec laws mandate that veterinarians report suspected abuse; large-animal practitioners in Newfoundland and Labrador are mandated to report suspected abuse of livestock.



CANADIAN VETERINARY
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DES MÉDECINS VÉTÉRINAIRES

The [Canadian Veterinary Medical Association](#) was one of the first veterinary groups to recognize that veterinarians are in a position to observe incidents of animal abuse and, in unique language, stated that practitioners have a "moral obligation" to report suspected cases. "That obligation has increased with the recognized link

between abuse in animals and abuse in people. In return, society has an obligation to support those veterinarians who report in good faith, using their professional judgement," reads the CVMA Position on Animal Abuse.

While not calling for a national policy, the CVMA policy defers to provincial veterinary medical associations and encourages them to lobby their provincial governments to develop legislation to make the reporting of animal abuse by veterinarians mandatory, and to provide immunity to those who do so using their professional judgement and in good faith. Saskatchewan is the most recent province to weigh in on the issue; Saskatchewan veterinarians currently have no legal obligation to report under the Animal Protection Act, but they do have an ethical and professional obligation to do so, according to the SVMA, to protect animal welfare and alleviate animal suffering.

The Saskatchewan government published a [Veterinarians' Animal Welfare Handbook](#) in 2016 to support veterinarians in their decision to raise welfare concerns with their clients and provide guidance for them in their leadership role as animal welfare advocates. The Ministry of Agriculture approved a provincial-wide Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan (APSS) in 2015 as a nonprofit corporation to investigate complaints of animal cruelty, abuse and neglect. Local humane societies in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw and Prince Albert maintain their own animal protection enforcement officers.



Veterinarians in the province, as elsewhere, have raised concerns about whether reporting suspected abuse would violate doctor-patient-client confidentiality restrictions. SVMA has countered this objection with a bylaw which reads, "Each member shall respect the client's right to confidentiality, except when this right conflicts with the member's responsibility to the law, or when the maintenance of confidentiality has resulted or would result in a significant risk of substantial harm to other humans or animals."

In the U.S., veterinarians in 35 states are now either mandated or permitted to report suspected animal abuse, usually with immunity from civil and criminal liability. Veterinarians are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse in 20 states and of elder abuse in one state.

saskatchewan.ca/livestock



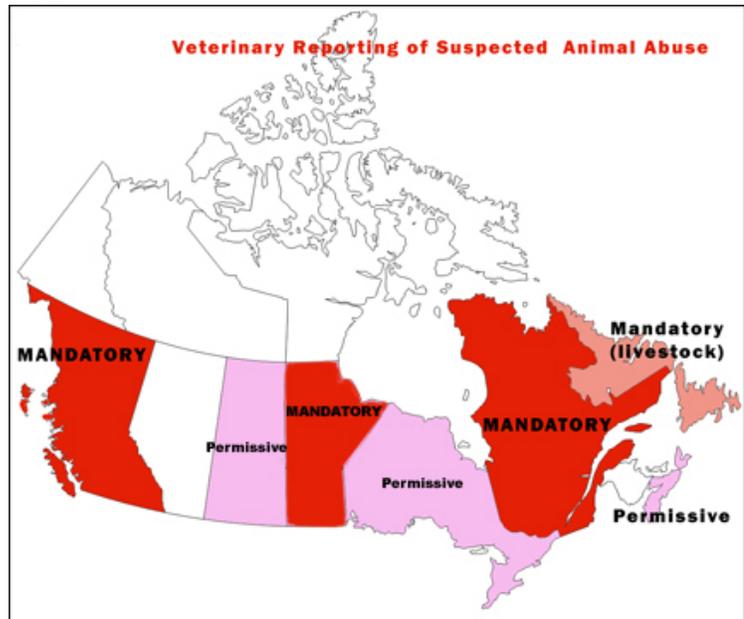
"Clients expect vets to make recommendations about animal care. It is appropriate that members of the veterinary profession provide guidance and resources and educate them about animal welfare standards to support their clients as they strive to do the best for their animals. Often potential issues can be prevented if clients are made aware and provided support," reads the SVMA article. "If potential animal abuse or neglect issues do not resolve after you have taken measures to educate the owner, it may be time to notify the applicable animal protection agency."



The article includes: summaries of Link research identifying typical signs of animal abuse or neglect; red flags that should raise the index of suspicion; compassionate steps to help clients resolve animal welfare issues; strategies to record and document evidence; and a list of who to call in the province to report abuse and what can be expected to happen following a report.

The article clarifies a contentious point for many veterinarians by emphasizing that practitioners do not have to be able to prove their suspicions in order to report. "Anyone with a reasonable suspicion that an animal's physical welfare is impacted by abuse or neglect can report it to Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan, their local enforcement office or the local police. The report will be followed up. A report is the first step to making sure that people and animals that are in need will get the help they need."

The article clarifies a contentious point for many veterinarians by emphasizing that practitioners do not have to be able to prove their suspicions in order to report.



Portuguese Dissertation Explores Veterinary Responses to The Link

Interest in The Link and its implications for veterinary professionals in Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) nations has been increased through the publication of a dissertation at the University of Lisbon that describes veterinarians' perceptions and recognitions of animal maltreatment and factors impeding more widespread response. Anabela de Sousa Santos da Silva Moreira wrote *Crimes Contra Animais de Companhia: Perceção, Tipificação e Relação com outros Ilícitos Penais em Medicina Veterinária Forense* (Crimes Against Companion Animals: Perceptions, Typification and Relationship with Other Illegal Crimes in Forensic Veterinary Medicine). The paper was written as a requirement for obtaining a master's degree in Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences in the School of Medicine.



Anabela Moreira

The purpose of her study was to survey how mistreatment of companion animals is perceived and recognized by Portuguese veterinarians, as well as their attitudes and beliefs concerning animal maltreatment's link with human abuse. She found that the majority of respondents have witnessed cases of mistreatment of animals and, although they felt a strong ethical duty to intervene actively, they considered their knowledge and skills in this area as not yet adequate. While recognizing the existence of a link between animal and human abuse, responding practitioners felt less comfortable about issues of human abuse, often due to their lack of knowledge of how to offer help.

Her findings mirror earlier reports from the U.S. and other Western nations in which practitioners were initially reluctant to get involved in the recognition and reporting of animal abuse and other forms of family violence for similar reasons. Additional training in recent years, combined with legislation and professional policies mandating or permitting reporting of suspected abuse without fear of criminal or civil liability, have dramatically helped to reduce these barriers.

The study is especially significant in that Portuguese law was amended in 2014 to criminalize in the Penal Code the mistreatment and abandonment of companion animals. In view of this new legal paradigm, veterinarians in Portugal need to find a "harmonized language" about animal abuse and a summary knowledge about aspects of the new law. The result should contribute to more effective action by veterinarians in the forensic branch of veterinary legal medicine.

The study recognized the link between animal and human abuse, particularly in the context of domestic violence, and that an overall view of mistreatment and violence that includes animals can benefit all potential victims. She noted that many families have experienced a "migration," both physical and affective, of their pets from a "peripheral zone" to the center of the family. This migration implies that companion animals can also be victims of domestic violence, and that addressing this phenomenon can be seen as another step in building a more just and protective society for its vulnerable members.

THE LINK AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Canadian Animal Cruelty and Bestiality Bill Defeated – Again

Canada's fourth attempt in recent years to modernize its century-old animal cruelty laws, including a provision to expand the definition of bestiality, has been defeated. Bill **C-246** would have amended the Criminal Code to close several loopholes in a law which has remained virtually unchanged since 1892, including to expand the definition of bestiality to include any sort of sexual activity between people and animals. Currently, Canadian law requires penetration in the definition of bestiality.

Expressing her disappointment at Parliament's failure, once again, to modernize animal protection, Barbara Cartwright, CEO of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, invoked Link language to chide legislators for defeating the bill by a 198-84 vote.

"There are people watching that, people who want to abuse animals as much as they want to abuse children. The direct links between child pornography and animal pornography are coming out more and more. This is not an issue the government can hide from," said Cartwright. "Animals are going to continue to be open to sexual abuse."



Barbara Cartwright

C-146 would have also banned importing cat and dog fur and shark fins and imposed tougher restrictions on animal fighting and puppy mills. It would have also addressed offenses regarding gross negligence, animal fighting, and brutal and vicious killing of animals, and instituted a lifetime ban on animal ownership upon a second conviction for animal cruelty. Three efforts between 1999 and 2005 to update the Criminal Code went down to defeat.

Connecticut "CASA for Animals" Featured in N.Y. Times

The August 28 [New York Times](#) prominently featured Connecticut's pioneering criminal justice procedure whereby courts can appoint pro bono attorneys and law school students to represent the interests of animals in cruelty cases (*See the [October 2016 LINK-Letter](#)*) in an effort to deliver better justice for the animals and prevent future crimes against persons.

The article profiled Jessica Rubin, Assistant Clinical Professor of Law at the University of Connecticut, as she testified in Superior Court in Manchester in a case involving eight pit bulls. Also present were several members of "Desmond's Army," purple-shirted volunteers who assist with the legal defenses. The volunteers, and the law creating the legal defense process, were named for a dog that was brutally beaten, starved and strangled; the owner served no jail time and received only accelerated rehabilitation.



Assistant Professor Jessica Rubin

"This is not just about animals," said Christine Kiernan, founder of Desmond's Army. "It's about stopping the cycle of violence, but it usually starts with animals."

The law was the brainchild of State Rep. Diana Urban who argued that violence against animals often has close ties with violence against people, either as a precursor to escalating crimes or as an indicator of a home environment where other crimes, such as domestic violence, may be occurring.

While advocates may appear in court, much of their work is behind-the-scenes, assisting with investigations, the gathering of evidence and procedural matters. Connecticut state crime data reported that in the 2005-2015 decade more than 3,500 animal abuse cases were reported; 47% were not prosecuted, 33% were dismissed and 18% received guilty verdicts.

“My job is to get the judiciary to treat animal cruelty as a serious crime,” said attorney Thompson G. Page, another lawyer serving as an animal’s advocate. Representing a Middletown dog believed to have been shot with a BB gun by a neighbor, Page said the phrase that irritates him continually is when he hears people say, “It’s only a dog.’ That’s the mentality we have to change,” he said.

RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT THE LINK

Link Cited as Rationale for Stronger Cat Protection Laws

National Link Coalition steering committee member John Thompson was among several Link authorities cited in an August 9 letter to the editor of the [New York Daily News](#) – with over 500,000 readers the 8th most widely-read newspaper in the U.S. – from the President of [Allie Cat Allies](#), who argued that evidence of The Link should prompt legislators to enact tougher anti-cruelty laws addressing cats.



Becky Robinson, who founded Allie Cat Allies in 1990, attended a bail request hearing in New York for Tyrike Richardson, 21, of Staten Island ([See the August LINK-Letter](#)), accused of brutally torturing a cat and broadcasting it in a sickening 32-minute Facebook video. Arguing for stronger enforcement procedures and additional training for police officers and prosecutors to identify and investigate animal abuse, she cited The Link as making such improvements imperative.

Becky Robinson

“Animal abusers aren’t just harming animals. They’re a threat to the health and safety of all members of our communities. Years of research reveal the link between violence toward animals and violence toward partners, children, and the elderly,” Robinson wrote.

“Violence against animals is abhorrent in and of itself, and the link between violence against animals and violence against people is well understood. It’s unacceptable, deviant behavior. That’s why we must demand that our legislative and justice systems address animal cruelty in a way that reflects the severity of the crime,” she added. “Seeking harsher penalties today for animal cruelty offenders may prevent violence against people tomorrow.”

“If somebody is harming an animal, there is a good chance they also are hurting a human,” said Thompson, deputy executive director of the National Sheriffs’ Association. “If we see patterns of animal abuse, the odds are that something else is going on. A crime against animals is a crime against society. By paying attention, we are benefiting all of society.”



John Thompson & “Mr. Po”

Robinson also cited research by Frank R. Ascione and others describing co-occurrence of animal abuse and domestic violence; violent adult offenders who have histories of abusing animals during childhood;

and how adults with childhood experiences of corporal punishment, physical abuse, sexual abuse and domestic violence have an increased propensity to abuse animals.

“Cats are especially vulnerable to abuse because of their biology and behavior, their small size and social independence,” she wrote.

Buy a T-Shirt and Help the Cause!

Our sister organization, the National Coalition on Violence Against Animals ([NCOVAA](#)), which focuses on Link issues particularly as they affect the law enforcement community, is selling T-shirts as a fundraiser. An assortment of basic and premium men’s, ladies’ and children’s T-shirts and sweatshirts are being made available. All funds raised will go to NCOVAA to support its work of reducing violence against animals and increasing awareness of its link to violence against people. [Click here to order](#) and help support the cause!



Canada to Hold First Nationwide Conference on The Link



Canada’s first-ever [National Conference on The Link](#) has been scheduled for Dec. 4-6 in Ottawa, Ont., bringing together for the first time leaders from across North America to examine the Link between violence against humans and animals, vulnerabilities in both populations, and how various sectors can learn from each other and gain the necessary tools to stop the cycle of violence.

More than 200 participants representing law enforcement, social services, community organizations, government and policy makers, animal welfare organizations, and veterinarians are expected to attend. “When we pool together this expertise, it’s sure to lead to powerful insights and more effective strategies to end violence against people and animals,” says the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, organizer of the event. Continuing education credits for some professional designations will be available.

Keynoting the conference will be Dr. Frank R. Ascione, who will deliver a plenary presentation on “The Roots of Animal Abuse and Neglect and the Connection of Such Crimes to Interpersonal and Societal Violence.” Other speakers will discuss: recognizing animal abuse; understanding lethal risks associated with domestic violence; child maltreatment; investigating and prosecuting animal abuse and neglect; animal abuse in the criminal mind; safe housing networks for pets; the veterinarian’s role in preventing violence; and tools for supporting sexual assault survivors.

Facilitated discussions will consider “Silo Busting: Reaching Across Sectoral Divides to Activate Our Work” and “Catalyzing Action from Problems to Solutions.” A networking social bringing participants together and solidifying their connections is being called “The Strongest Link.”

THE LINK... IN THE LITERATURE

Animal Abuse Links with Other Crimes Explored in Chicago

A new study is contributing to our sociological understanding of animal crime and its interface with other crimes. Using Chicago Police Department data that include primary and secondary charges of all animal crimes between 2009 and 2012, research findings indicate that most animal crime offenders were male, African American or Hispanic, and under 35 years of age. When other crimes were committed with animal crime, they were likely drug or weapons offenses. Juveniles arrested for animal crimes tended to commit more severe animal crimes than did adult offenders. Regression results indicated that race was positively related to animal crime severity, while concurrent drug offenses were inversely related to animal crime severity. The author presents implications for theory, research, and policy.

-- Burchfield, K.B. (2017). *The nature of animal crime: Scope and severity in Chicago. Crime & Delinquency*. Article first published online: July 13, 2017 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128717719515>

Effects of Exposure to Animal Abuse and Intimate Partner Violence On Children's Socioemotional Adjustment Studied

Continuing the research from a five-year study of Colorado children exposed to both animal abuse and domestic violence (*See the [May 2017 LINK-Letter](#)*), this study used a mixed-methods approach to examine how patterns of exposure to animal maltreatment are related to socioemotional adjustment among 291 children who experienced intimate partner violence. Latent profile analysis was used to identify subgroups of children with similar patterns of socioemotional functioning. Qualitative data from mothers and children were analyzed to identify thematic patterns in animal abuse exposure among asymptomatic children and those with emotional and behavioral difficulties. The latter group were more likely to: have been exposed to severe violence against animals; have experienced direct victimization by an IPV perpetrator following an effort to protect a pet; and express justification and normalization of violence against pets. Implications for research and clinical practice are discussed.

- McDonald S.E., Cody, A.M., Collins, E.A., Stim, H.T., & Nicotera, N., et al. (2017). *Concomitant exposure to animal maltreatment and socioemotional adjustment among children exposed to intimate partner violence: A mixed methods study. Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma, 1-13.*

Recurring Childhood Animal Cruelty Linked to Adult Interpersonal Violence

Findings that examine the potential link between childhood animal cruelty and future interpersonal violence have been inconsistent in establishing a relationship between the two. This may be due to researchers failing to measure the recurrency of childhood animal abuse and the recurrency of later violent acts committed in adulthood. The current study, using data from 257 inmates at a medium-security prison in a Southern state, replicates research conducted by Tallichet and Hensley, and Hensley, Tallichet, and Dutkiewicz, which examined this recurrency issue (*See the [June 2012 LINK-Letter](#)*). The only statistically significant predictor of recurrent adult interpersonal violence in this study was recurrent childhood animal cruelty. Inmates who engaged in recurrent childhood animal cruelty were more likely to commit recurrent adult interpersonal violence. Respondents' race, education, and childhood residence were not significant predictors of the outcome variable.

-- Trentham, C. E., Hensley, C., & Policastro, C. (2017). *Recurrent childhood animal cruelty and its link to recurrent adult interpersonal violence. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology. Published online July 14.*

NEWS FROM LOCAL LINK COALITIONS



South Florida Coalition Publishes Newsletter

Congratulations are in order for the [South Florida Link Coalition](#) upon the publication of its first newsletter to spread the word about its hotline that helps domestic violence survivors find foster care for their animals and to further its efforts to effect social and community change. The inaugural five-page issue includes a summary of national Link news, descriptions of local Link activities, and a calendar of events.

The coalition, serving Palm Beach County and surrounding areas, is working to bring members of the community, government, criminal justice system, health care system, animal welfare agencies, and human services together to foster healthy relationships between people and animals that positively impact public health and safety.

Oklahoma Link Coalition Plans Major Conference

The Oklahoma Link Coalition will hold a conference called “Intersection” on Tuesday, Nov. 7, bringing together professionals in social services, law enforcement, animal wellbeing, children’s services and advocacy, elder care, the legal field, and others. Participants will learn about The Link between animal abuse and human violence and how they can improve life for people and animals in Oklahoma communities.



The conference, to be held at the Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City, will feature an array of notable national and local speakers:

- Dr. Randall Lockwood, Senior Vice President for Forensic Sciences and Anti-Cruelty Projects of the ASPCA
- William City, Oklahoma City Chief of Police
- Dr. Melinda Merck, Forensic Veterinarian
- Dr. Mary Anne McCaffree, neonatologist and member of the National Health Collaborative on Violence and Abuse
- Chris Brosnan, The Humane Society of the United States

[Registration for the conference](#) is \$15 and scholarships are available.

Brazil Research Leads to Results in Social Work and Homeless Shelters

Ongoing work by Link advocates and researchers in Brazil is bearing fruit. [Rita de Cassia Maria Garcia](#), who heads the Lar em Paz Link group, tells *The LINK-Letter* that as a result of research about animal abuse and vulnerable families, social workers in the city of Pinhais, in the state of Paraná, are now including evaluations of the welfare of animals in vulnerable families and families experiencing domestic violence. This may be the first city in Latin America to take this progressive step. Another outcome of this research is that shelters for the homeless in the city are now allowing these individuals’ animals to accompany them.

THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

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

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

Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders



H.R. 909 and **S.322 – the Pet And Women Safety (PAWS) Act** – was re-introduced and now has 230 bi-partisan co-sponsors in the House and 17 in the Senate. The PAWS Act would prohibit threats or acts of violence against a victim's pet in interstate stalking and interstate violation of protection orders. It would allocate \$3 million annually through 2021 in grants for shelter and housing assistance for victims with pets, support services to help victims secure safe housing that allows pets, and for pet-related services. Grants could also be used for training on The Link and for identifying best practices. Abusers would be required to make restitution to the victim for costs incurred for veterinary services. **H.R. 909** is in the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and Investigations. **S.322** is in the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.



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



Illinois SB 1261 amends the Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act to allow parties filing for divorce to file a joint petition for simplified dissolution if they have executed a written agreement allocating ownership and responsibility for their companion animals. The measure also allows the parties to petition for sole or joint ownership, contingent upon the court's consideration of what would be in the animals' best interests. **The bill was approved by Gov. Bruce Rauner** on Aug. 25 and becomes effective Jan. 1, 2018.



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



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



Nevada law defines harming an animal to harass a spouse or partner as domestic violence. **SB62** would have increased the penalty for this act to a Category B felony if the abuser is convicted of a similar act. **No action was taken before the time limit for legislative action expired.**



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



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.



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



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



Wyoming HB193 would have allowed courts to grant sole possession of any household pets to the petitioner in a protection order, and to order the respondent not have any contact with any household pet or abduct, remove, conceal, or dispose of the animal. **The bill died when the legislature adjourned.**

Animal Abuse and Elder Abuse



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

“CASA for Animals”



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



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

Animal Hoarding



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



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



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



Rhode Island HB5882 adds the hoarding of animals to the list of offenses defined as cruelty to animals and requires a mental health evaluation for a person convicted of animal cruelty involving hoarding. The bill cleared the House and is in the Senate.

Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment



Alabama HB393/SB273 was signed into law on May 19. This new law allows for the use of a registered therapy dog in legal proceedings, when permitted by the judge, to assist a victim or witness in order to reduce unnecessary emotional distress and allow full and factual testimony. It authorizes a judge to use discretionary funds to offset the costs for a registered handler of a registered therapy dog used in a legal proceeding.



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



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



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



New York S1432 and **A5048** criminalize knowingly causing a minor to attend a place where exhibition of animal fighting is being conducted. **S1432** passed the Senate and both bills are in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

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

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

Psychological Evaluation of Offenders

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

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

 **New Mexico HB 210** would have created a new category of "extreme cruelty to animals" and would have required persons convicted of this offense to undergo psychological counseling. **The bill was in the House Consumer & Public Affairs Committee when the regular Legislature session ended.**

Animal Sexual Abuse

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

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

 **Massachusetts S.805** would amend Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. Ch. 272, § 34, which currently uses the archaic language prohibiting "the abominable and detestable crime against nature either

with mankind or with any animal,” to prohibit “a sexual act on an animal, uses an object to sexually abuse an animal, or knowingly permits a sexual act with an animal on any premises under such person’s control.” The bill is in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary; a hearing was scheduled for July 18.

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



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



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



 **Vermont H.62** adds a new category of sexual conduct to the various conditions defined as cruelty to animals. The measure amends 13 V.S.A. Chapter 8 to define sexual conduct as any act between a person and animal that involves contact or insertion between the mouth, sex organ or anus of a person and an animal without a bona fide veterinary or animal husbandry purpose. The definition extends to anyone possessing, selling, transferring, purchasing or obtaining an animal for sexual conduct; or organizing, promoting, aiding, abetting or participating as an observer; or permitting sexual conduct on his or her premises or advertising it. **The bill was signed into law on June 7 by Gov. Phil Scott and took effect July 1.**

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

Animal Abuse and Other Crimes



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



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



Kentucky HB 135 would have redefined animal torture to include deliberate neglect or physical abuse that results in death or serious physical injury to a dog or cat, and barred offenders from owning dogs or cats. **The bill died in the Judiciary Committee.**



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



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



New Mexico HJM 6, a Joint Memorial, requested that the state Departments of Public Safety and Children, Youth & Families consider training on The Link between animal abuse and family violence in their training curricula for field workers and other appropriate staff. The measure passed the House by a vote of 67-0 and was referred to the Senate Rules Committee, **but no action had been taken when the regular Legislative session ended.**



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.



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



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



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

Cross-Reporting



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



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



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



Massachusetts S.295 would add domestic violence workers, animal control officers, and humane officers to the list of mandated reporters of suspected child sexual abuse. The bill is in the Education Committee; a hearing was scheduled for July 18.



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



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

Procedure to make the intentional false reporting of animal abuse a felony. The bills are in the House Judiciary Committee.



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



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



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



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



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



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

THE LINK... IN THE NEWS

Man Charged with Attempting to Cut Off His Mother's Head with a Chainsaw and Killing Her Dog with a Pickaxe

A man who is accused of trying to cut off his mother's head with a chainsaw and then killing her dog with a pickaxe because it had killed a neighbor's chicken has been charged with assault and animal cruelty. Jonathan P. Rasmussen, 36, of Coupeville, Wash., made a preliminary appearance in Island County Superior Court on Aug. 28, the [Whidbey News-Times](#) reported. Police alleged that Rasmussen tried to start the chainsaw several times, but it ran out of gas. Later, he became enraged at his mother's Bernese mountain dog and tried choking it before beating it with a pickaxe and then shooting it, police said. Three children at home at the time hid with their parents, the newspaper reported.



Jonathan Rasmussen

Animal Abuse Animal Sexual Abuse Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Other Crimes
Child Abuse and Neglect Child Sexual Abuse



Stephen Taylor

Child Pornography Investigation Leads to Conviction for Bestiality

A search warrant executed in Henrico County, Va. looking for evidence of child pornography and animal sexual abuse has resulted in two roommates being charged in an alleged Pennsylvania child sexual abuse ring ([See the June 2017 LINK-Letter](#)) and one of the two pleading guilty to Virginia charges of animal cruelty. Stephen Matthew Taylor, 31, entered "Alford" pleas to felony and misdemeanor animal cruelty charges for performing oral sex on one of his eight Rottweilers. The [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#) reported that a hard drive found at Taylor's home contained 171 images of bestiality, 10 of which featured him and the Rottweiler. The eight dogs were seized; two of them had to be euthanized. In an Alford plea a defendant does not admit guilt but acknowledges that prosecutors have enough evidence for a conviction. Taylor faces up to five years in prison and will be sentenced on Nov. 14; Henrico Circuit Court Judge James Stephen Yoffy already ordered Taylor to undergo a psychological evaluation and to have no contact with companion animals. It was not clear whether Taylor still faces charges in the Pennsylvania case in which his roommate, Craig Michael Knox, was one of several participants in a "furry" party were arraigned on various sex charges including the alleged rape of a 9-year-old boy.

Animal Abuse Animal Sexual Abuse Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Other Crimes
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Starving Boy, 17 Animals Rescued from California Couple



Benjamin Whitten & Jeryn Johnson

Prosecutors in Riverside County, Calif., filed charges of torture and child abuse – and may have to file a charge of homicide – after police, medics and animal control officers rescued a severely malnourished and injured 5-year-old boy from a home filled with animal feces and urine. Benjamin Whitten, 33, and Jeryn Johnson, 25, of Murrieta face life in prison if convicted, and may face murder charges if the child, who was listed in grave condition, dies. The [San Diego Union-Tribune](#) reported that animal control officers also rescued 11 dogs, four cats and two fish. The boy was airlifted to a San Diego hospital.

Animal Abuse Animal Sexual Abuse Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Other Crimes
Child Abuse and Neglect Child Sexual Abuse

Child Endangerment Investigation Leads to Bestiality Charges



Shane Ogden & Karlee Jordan

Police in Macedon, N.Y. arrested Shane Ogden, 38, on charges of endangering the welfare of a child for allegedly sending a sexually explicit video of himself to a female acquaintance; his toddler daughter could be seen in the background watching Ogden, the [Times of Wayne County](#) reported. But that apparently wasn't the end of the story. When police confiscated his cell phone they reportedly uncovered disturbing text messages between him and

Karlee Jordan, 18, describing having sexual contact with a dog. Ogden and Jordan were each charged with sexual misconduct; if convicted they would each have to register as sex offenders and could face up to one year in jail.

Animal Abuse Animal Sexual Abuse Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Other Crimes
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Woman Resentenced in Child Abuse/Animal Cruelty Case

A woman who was originally given nine years' probation after being convicted of child abuse and animal cruelty was resentenced to six months in jail for violating the terms of her probation. Brandi Lyn Davis, 35, of Warren, Ohio, received the stiffer sentence in Warren Municipal Court. Police called to her home to investigate a report of a child left alone found no food in the house and three children, ages 4, 8 and 10, who had been bitten from head to toe by fleas; they were turned over to Children Services. The dog warden removed three dogs, two of which appeared to be malnourished, [WFMJ-TV](#) reported. Court records did not specify how she violated her probation, which included prohibitions from unsupervised visits with her children and from having contact with any animal, but police also said Davis was a heroin addict.



Brandi Lyn Davis

Animal Abuse Animal Sexual Abuse Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Other Crimes
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Pair Given Probation for Torturing Turtle and Assaulting Veteran



Garry Blough was injured while trying to save the turtle

Two Florida men who beat up a wounded Navy veteran who tried to intervene while they were torturing a turtle were sentenced to probation by a Volusia County court. Ryan Ponder, 23, of Daytona Beach, and Johnnie Beveritt, 18, of DeLand, pleaded no contest to charges of felony animal cruelty and misdemeanor battery for attacking Garry Blough, 45. The pair were sentenced to 18 months of probation but have already served several months in jail awaiting trial, the [Daytona Beach News-Journal](#) reported. Blough, who was seriously wounded in an explosion during the first Gulf War, said that despite his fragile condition he felt obligated to try to stop the two from abusing the turtle. Blough wound up with a battered face and hairline fractures. Ponder and Beveritt were also ordered to make \$16,500 in restitution payments to Blough. The court ordered the pair to have no unnecessary interaction with wild animals; Blough had hoped the court would order them to stay away from animals entirely.

Animal Abuse Animal Sexual Abuse Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Other Crimes
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Alleged Home Invader Had Been Convicted of Animal Cruelty

A man charged with breaking into a woman's home with the intent of committing sexual assault has an extensive history of crimes that includes animal cruelty. Mark Meech, 48, of Dexter, Maine was arrested after allegedly asking a woman to use her phone because his truck had broken down. He then allegedly forced his way into her home and dragged her across the kitchen before suddenly changing his mind and letting her go. Meech was sentenced in 2002 to four years in prison on four counts of burglary and one count of animal cruelty for burglarizing homes and shooting two dogs at one of the houses. While on probation from that case he was sentenced in 2007 to 364 days in jail for attempting to commandeer the vehicle of a woman he met on a hiking trail. Meech also spent 18 months in prison for a 2001 burglary, the [Kennebec Journal](#) reported.



Mark Meech

Animal Abuse Animal Sexual Abuse Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Other Crimes
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Dogfighting Suspected in Stolen Credit Card Crime Ring

FBI agents raided two homes in Fort Washington and Temple Hills, Md. as part of an investigation into a bank and wire fraud crime ring and wound up also seizing numerous dogs suspected of being involved in dogfighting. [Fox5-TV](#) in Washington, D.C. reported that 12 individuals were arrested. The crime ring was believed to have stolen thousands of credit card numbers and sold them online. The FBI also accused the suspects of using the stolen numbers to make forged credit cards that were used to buy cartons of cigarettes which were then sold for cash.

One of several dogs seized in the raid

Animal Abuse Animal Sexual Abuse Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Other Crimes
Child Abuse and Neglect Child Sexual Abuse



David Herbert

Neighbors' Dispute Said to Involve Poisoned and Burned Dogs

The Link between animal abuse and interpersonal violence is often found in disputes between neighbors, and prosecutors in Oceanside, Calif. are contending with such a case. A preliminary hearing was held on Aug. 23 to determine whether there was enough evidence to send David Herbert, 36, to trial on six felony counts of animal cruelty, burglary and vandalism. Herbert allegedly broke into the house of his neighbors, fed toxic substances to their dogs and burned them with acid, plus slashed their tires on several occasions since last February. Maria Morales Juarez told the court that she, her husband, three young children, and two dogs were forced to move out of their home, according to the [San Diego Union-Tribune](#). Other neighbors and video surveillance reported a bizarre series of missing and dead dogs in the neighborhood. Herbert was subsequently ordered to stand trial on Oct. 11 and faces up to 16 years in prison if convicted.

Animal Abuse Animal Sexual Abuse Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Other Crimes
Child Abuse and Neglect Child Sexual Abuse

Cruelty Charges Nab Man with Outstanding Warrants

A man with outstanding warrants for operating a clandestine drugs lab and aggravated battery with a dangerous weapon was arrested by Slidell, La. police on charges of cruelty to animals for allegedly kicking and beating a pit bull puppy and stuffing it in the trunk of his car while he went shopping. Police told the [New Orleans Advocate](#) that witnesses heard a dog “screaming bloody murder” in the parking lot of a Wal-Mart. Louis Ladner, 39, of Kiln, Miss., was charged in the incident. After his arrest, investigators reportedly found meth in his home.

Animal Abuse Animal Sexual Abuse Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Other Crimes
Child Abuse and Neglect Child Sexual Abuse



Louis Ladner

Man Awaiting Trial for Cruelty and Battery Charged Again with Cruelty

A West Virginia man who was awaiting trial on charges of domestic battery, illegal weapons possession and animal cruelty was re-arrested on Aug. 11 after Fayette County sheriff’s deputies and animal control officers reportedly found 10 dogs suffering from malnutrition, including one that had starved to death. Thomas Seth Sedlock, 35, of Fayetteville, was charged with one count of felony animal cruelty and nine counts of misdemeanor animal cruelty, according to [WOWK-TV](#). Authorities said the dead dog was found chained inside a metal cage, and the other dogs were chained on short tethers with inadequate shelter, and infested with fleas. He was arraigned and released on a \$10,000 bond posted by his mother. Sedlock was previously arrested on March 7 when deputies allegedly found the remains of rabbit and a small black bear at his residence. He was awaiting a hearing regarding those charges when the second incident occurred.



Thomas Sedlock

Police said that if it wasn’t for the Fayette County resident who informed them, there may not have been any dogs to rescue.

“At the Sheriff’s office, we have a lot of things that we deal with. From being criminals, dealing with abuse to adults, elders, and we take it serious when they abuse animals too. Our fur babies, everybody calls them. I have animals. I love them. I care for them. They’re just like our children, so if you’re doing something wrong to a person or to an animal, we’re going to find you, we’re going to charge you, and you’re going to have your date in court,” Sheriff Mike Fridley told [WOAY-TV](#).

Animal Abuse Animal Sexual Abuse Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Other Crimes
Child Abuse and Neglect Child Sexual Abuse



Boyfriend Charged with Rape and Aggravated Cruelty

Police in Kensington, Md., charged Anthony Russell, Jr., 38, with multiple counts of rape, sexual assault and aggravated animal cruelty for allegedly raping his girlfriend and stabbing her dog to death. [WJLA-TV](#) reported that court documents allege that Russell, a personal fitness trainer and ex-Marine who is 5’11” and weighs 248 pounds, had made a habit of battering and sexually assaulting his girlfriend. Investigators said the victim was walking her Cane Corso puppy named “Primo” on July 12 when Russell threatened to kill it if it would not come to him. He was said to then grab a knife and stab the dog, who was later euthanized at an animal hospital.

Animal Abuse Animal Sexual Abuse Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Other Crimes
Child Abuse and Neglect Child Sexual Abuse

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

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Sept. 13 (online): The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys will conduct a [webinar](#) on “Courthouse Facility Dogs: Assisting in the Investigation and Prosecution of Crimes Against Children.”

Sept. 14 – Norman, Okla.: Jennifer Thomas, Mary Jo Kinzie, and Kathleen Romero will present on “The LINK Between Animal and Human Abuse” at the Oklahoma [Partners for Change](#) Domestic & Sexual Violence and Stalking Partnership Conference.

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

Sept. 18-19: Albuquerque, N. Mex.: “Positive Links,” [The New Mexico Conference on The Link](#), will hold its biennial conference featuring many national and regional speakers on a variety of Link-related topics. Speakers will include Shana Aldahl, Phil Arkow, Frank Ascione, Diane Balkin, Tammy Fiebelkorn, Robyn Gojkovich, Patricia Norris, Nuria Querol, Norajean Salazar, Helga Schimkat, Andi Taylor, and Tamara Ward. For the first time since the conference started in 2003 it will be a two-day event to allow more time for training and networking.

Sept. 21 (online): Allie Phillips and the presenter is Genevieve Frederick will present “Pets of Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness” as part of the Institute for Human-Animal Connection’s Interconnected Webinar Series. [Registration](#) is free for *LINK-Letter* readers: use Promo Code COSHELTER.

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

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

Sept. 27 – Oakland, Calif.: The [Alameda County Animal Cruelty Taskforce](#) will hold a strategic planning session.

Sept. 28 – Copenhagen, Denmark: Emily Patterson-Kane will present on “The Link: Correlations Between Animal Abuse and Other Behaviors,” “Predisposed to Cruelty,” “Creating Communities That are Safe to Animals,” and a panel discussion on “One Health and Animal Abuse” at the World Small Animal Veterinary Association [Congress](#) and FECAVA Eurocongress.

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

OCTOBER 1 – 31 (NATIONWIDE): DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

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

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

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

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

Oct. 25 – West Palm Beach, Fla.: The [South Florida Link Coalition](#) will hold its quarterly meeting.

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

Oct. 27 (online): The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys will conduct a [webinar](#) on “Unusual Victims,” offering prosecutors legal frameworks for bringing charges of cruelty and neglect when the victims are unusual species such as birds, reptiles, rabbits, and small “pocket pets.”

NOVEMBER 3 – ONE HEALTH DAY. [National and global events](#) are planned to celebrate the links between human and veterinary medicine and collaborative protection of people, animals and the environment.

Nov. 3 – Phoenix, Md.: Link topics will be featured prominently at the [Animal Abuse Leadership Summit](#), sponsored by the Baltimore County State’s Attorney’s Office’s Animal Abuse Unit and the Maryland State’s Attorneys’ Association.

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

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

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

Nov. 24 – Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Allie Phillips will present on Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T)[™] at the [International Fund for Animal Welfare](#) convention.

Dec. 4 – Ottawa, Ont., Canada: An Animal [Cruelty Pre-Conference for Crown Prosecutors](#) and allied professionals will be held by the National Centre for the Prosecution of Animal Cruelty, as the opening day for the Canadian Link Conference.

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

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

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

July 3-8 – 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.

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



ABOUT THE NATIONAL LINK COALITION



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

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