



# NATIONAL LINK COALITION

*Working together to stop violence against people and animals*

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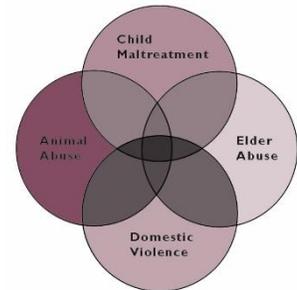
**ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE**



[www.NationalLinkCoalition.org](http://www.NationalLinkCoalition.org)

[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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## **Special Focus Issue: The Link in Canada**

Our Canadian counterpart, the [Canadian Violence Link Coalition](#), brought together over 200 professionals for its 2<sup>nd</sup> biennial Canadian Violence Link Conference in Toronto on Nov. 20-22. Representatives came from 10 sectors across provinces from Prince Edward Island to British Columbia, plus the U.S. and U.K., to the event which was hosted by Humane Canada. The conference was one of several key outgrowths of the historic 2017 conference when 10 volunteers came together to build the Coalition.

“Interest in The Link is growing in Canada,” said Barbara Cartwright, Humane Canada CEO, noting the Coalition’s progress over its first two years have included:

- Passage of C-84, a national law that adds animal sexual abusers to the sex offenders’ registry.
- Domestic violence shelters reviewing their protocols to identify which shelters are pet-friendly.
- Creation of a working group for law enforcement officers to get statistics on animal cruelty cases nationwide.

Pre-conference workshops for prosecutors and for law enforcement officers helped build bridges between these two sectors in recognizing the significance of animal cruelty cases. Extensive opportunities for cross-sector networking were provided to help participants make new connections, think about how The Link is impacting them, what they can commit to in order to increase cross-sectoral collaboration, and identify the needs that need to be addressed over the next two years. Throughout the conference, participants for whom the difficult topics might have been too close for comfort were aided by trigger warnings, on-site trauma counselors and strolling therapy dogs.

In this issue of *The LINK-Letter* we spotlight some of the many informative presentations that addressed the many multi-disciplinary aspects of how animal abuse is linked with interpersonal violence and that have global applicability.

## ***ANIMAL ABUSE AND... DOMESTIC VIOLENCE***



**Amy Fitzgerald and Nicole Forsyth**

### **The State of Housing Pets of Intimate Partner Violence in the U.S. and Canada**

Preliminary findings from a collaborative research project undertaken by the Animal and Interpersonal Abuse Research Group ([AIPARG](#)) at the University of Windsor, Ont., and [RedRover](#) in the U.S., is shedding additional light on how animals are abused to coerce and control families in domestic violence and how American and Canadian shelters are responding. The findings were offered at the Canadian Violence Link Conference.



“We didn't have a national picture in Canada,” said Amy Fitzgerald, criminology professor and leader of AIPARG. It was believed that only six domestic violence shelters in Canada accepted pets as well. “If you have to leave an abusive partner and don't have a shelter that can care for your pets, it's a very difficult decision. I've had shelter executives tell me that they have women in the shelter who leave daily to go home and check on their pets while their abuser is at work. There are a significant number of women who aren't accessing resources because of this barrier. The IPV literature for years has referred to animal abuse as property abuse. It's extremely troubling.”

To gather more definitive data, AIPARG received a grant to contact all shelters in the country and identify the nature of their pet support programs. The overall findings were highly enlightening:

- 760,000 Canadians reported having experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence over the past five years.
- 64% of women in shelters report they have pets.
- 89% report their pets were mistreated.
- 56% said they delayed leaving their abuser, causing serious safety concerns for vulnerable women, children and animals.
- 60% reported leaving their pets behind with the abuser.
- One-third considered returning to the abuser.

Researchers contacted all 2,262 shelters in the U.S. and Canada and inquired whether they had pet safekeeping programs, what barriers were preventing them from establishing such programs, and whether pets are included in safety planning materials and intake interviews. 44% of Canadian shelters and 41% of U.S. shelters responded. Key findings from the respondents included:

- 80% of requests to shelters for information about their pet programs come from survivors, but inquiries are also made by families, friends and social services agencies.
- 38% of shelters said intake staff are not asking about pets. 26% are always asking about pets.
- 22% do not include pets in safety planning assessments and intake. 33% include questions about pets in both intake and safety plans. Some ask on case-by-case basis, probably only because client brings it up. 25% of respondents reported having some type of on-site program. Many can accommodate only certain numbers or type of animals. Some programs are informal rather

than having established protocols. “It would be helpful if shelters could formalize these relationships and publicize them,” Fitzgerald said.

Research collaborator Nicole Forsyth, RedRover President and CEO, reported that pet-friendly shelters are now in place in 45 U.S. states. RedRover is encouraging shelter directors that they can start small with just a few pet-friendly rooms and that pet facilities do not need to be elaborate. In places where on-site facilities are plainly not feasible, RedRover is assisting in helping shelters to develop off-site foster care programs in their community. “The ideal situation, of course, is to have a larger facility where people and their pets can interact with each other,” she said.

Forsyth reviewed the most common barriers to establishing pet safekeeping facilities: allergies, liability and insurance concerns, survivors leaving their pets behind, having the time and resources to manage the programs, and obtaining funding to start something new. “These are just excuses,” she said. “It’s just pure fear,” noting that allergies can be mitigated by removing carpeting and keeping pets’ rooms clean. “You don’t need a new HVAC system. There’s no more risk of allergies than if you were out in the general public. We need to validate their feelings and give them information that helps them to not feel scared.”

100% of survey respondents reported their experiences with pet sheltering had turned out to be extremely positive; the biggest problem reported was finding pet-friendly transitional housing after survivors left the shelters. Managing the initial construction and finding suitable insurance carriers were challenges but the overall successes far outweighed these barriers.

RedRover’s online searchable database of pet programs at [SafePlaceForPets.org](https://SafePlaceForPets.org) now lists 220 U.S. shelters and 29 Canadian shelters that offer on-site housing. “Most of the programs are in higher population areas. There are desperate needs and huge geographic gaps in rural areas,” she said.

New directions for pet co-sheltering include:

- Making grants for kennel construction available to Canadian shelters, as RedRover is currently doing in the U.S., if funders can be located.
- Providing wallet cards with information about [SafePlaceForPets.org](https://SafePlaceForPets.org) to hair stylists.
- Offering behavioral support for the traumatized animal survivors of intimate partner violence.

“The funding agencies are starting to catch on and see the merits of this kind of work,” noted Fitzgerald. An upcoming study will assess: the efficacy of pet co-sheltering; how on- and off-site housing impacts women, children and pets; what happens if no pet programs are available; the impact on residents who don’t have pets; animal-assisted therapy programs that offer emotional support to survivors; and statistics on the number of nights of pet stays in Canadian shelters. “There are definitely reasons to be optimistic,” she said.

### *Permission to Reprint*

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## Solutions Offered to Pet Safekeeping Challenges in Situations of Domestic and Interpersonal Violence



The Canadian Violence Link Conference convened a panel discussion featuring social work, veterinary and animal shelter experts in Canada who described their programs that shelter the pet survivors of domestic violence.

**Sammy Cisek, Dayna Desmaraias, Doug Raven, Hayley Glaholt, and Leanne Sllers described their experiences with pet co-sheltering resources,**” she said. She identified the successes and challenges Interval House has experienced in its first year in hopes that their experiences may serve as a workable model for similar programs across the country.

Sammy Cisek described how [Interval House of Ottawa](#) has already sheltered 18 families with 10 dogs and 17 cats since launching a co-sheltering program last year “and that number continues to grow every day. We knew there is a gap in

The successes include raising 97% of operational costs and creating an Escaping Violence Together start-up guide that will soon be translated into French for use in neighboring Quebec. Their obstacles have included:

- Having to hire a part-time staff person to manage the pet area.
- Recognizing that due to their traumas, clients sometimes cannot give their pets the care and attention that are needed, so the shelter has had to step in with additional support services, similar to what are often needed for children.
- Having to make appointments with veterinarians and provide pet transportation for medical treatments.

Dayna Desmaraias, President of [SafePet Ottawa](#), described their extensive work with 26 collaborative partners to provide offsite foster care and support for the animal survivors of intimate partner violence. The group provides extensive training to foster families, meets with them to offer best practices, and makes canine behavioral support available for the dogs that have undergone trauma. There is no time limit as to how long animals can stay in foster care, and these stays range from two weeks to two years. SafePet Ottawa sends regular updates and videos of pets in foster care to clients “who want to make sure their babies are happy and healthy.” Pets are given routine vaccinations and heartworm medication. Referrals come from social workers. The organization is also translating its materials into French.

Doug Raven, CEO of the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, described OVMA’s [SafePet Ontario](#) program that provides temporary accommodation for pet survivors in shelters and with foster families. The program has evolved from its initial days when the idea of housing animals in veterinary clinics long-term was found to be impractical. Veterinary practices are now lining up foster families across the vast province. A new website – [www.safepet.ca](http://www.safepet.ca) -- contains extensive information for at-risk individuals about where they can find facilities for their animals. There are also extensive informational sections for veterinarians, humane societies, foster parents, volunteers, women’s shelters, and corporate partners. An interactive database with extensive search functionality helps those seeking offsite housing to narrow their search down based on the type and numbers of animals that can be sheltered.

Hayley Glaholt, Executive Director of [Link Coalition Toronto](#), described how their pet fostering program follows the OVMA model but was expanded to include referrals from mental health, social work, paramedic, law enforcement, and caseworker sources. She noted the need for cultural relevance in areas where residents' views of animals may be widely different. "Ontario is gigantic and very diverse: there is a ton of diversity and we have to be flexible to apply our work in First Nations and more isolated, rural communities. We know there will be some challenges in this regard. But collaboration is really important to us and we're here to help anyone who wants to start a program of their own."

Leanne Sillers, animal safekeeping coordinator at the [Saskatchewan SPCA](#), noted that although the incidence for domestic violence is twice as high in Saskatchewan compared to the rest of Canada, no women's shelters in the province provide co-sheltering for pets yet. The SPCA is training foster care families on issues of confidentiality and establishing boundaries with the families of pets they care for, and is working to create the first pet-friendly shelter in Saskatchewan.

Sillers addressed two ongoing concerns for domestic violence pet foster care programs. Finding liability insurance that will cover dog bites is difficult and extremely expensive, but this can be mediated if you have a related professional business liability policy; providers of veterinary practice insurance may also be able to assist. Clients can also sign liability waivers when they turn their animals in to foster care programs.

She also noted that funding for these programs appears to be sustainable, as donors see the value in these activities. The main expenses are for veterinary care but private practitioners and animal shelter veterinarians are often willing to provide pro bono or low-cost routine vaccination and examination services; clients can be told that additional or unusual veterinary care will be their financial responsibility.

## ***THE LINK AND... ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE***

### **The Link Between Child Sexual Assault and Animal Sexual Assault**



In 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada issued a decision clarifying that the term "bestiality" in the national criminal code captures only "penetrative" sexual acts involving a human and an animal. Recognizing that the bestiality statute plays an important role in prohibiting sexual acts that involve animals and children, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection set out to learn more about the nature of bestiality offending in Canada.



**Debra Danco and Monique St. Germain**

Debra Danco and Monique St. Germain, co-authors of the resulting paper, [Bestiality as Reflected in Canadian Case Law](#), described 38 reported cases from 2016-2017 involving an act of bestiality, 47 cases involving visual content depicting bestiality, and 167 bestiality images or videos reported to Cybertip.ca. Many cases involved horrifying situations of sustained offending against both human and animal victims, they reported.

The frequency with which the abuse of animal and human victims, particularly children, overlapped suggests a need to examine the adequacy of not only existing laws, but also the systems in place to manage risk and protect animals and people who are vulnerable to being victimized, they said.

The report's many findings included:

- In 82% of cases involving bestiality, sexual abuse of children occurred as frequently as, if not more frequently, than the coerced sexual abuse of an animal. In roughly half of the cases, the child was either compelled to commit the act of bestiality or forced to watch someone else commit such an act.
- Coerced oral sexual acts with an animal, and manual stimulation of an animal, are more common forms of abuse than penetrative acts. Notably, all of the nine cases that involved a non-penetrative sexual act with an animal also involved the sexual abuse of a child.
- 87% of the bestiality cases involved more than one offense, including sexual interference, sexual assault, child pornography, and online luring.
- In 68% of cases that involved the sexual abuse of an animal and a child, the offender was in a position of trust over the child, usually a close family member such as a parent or stepparent.
- All bestiality cases involved a male offender, but there were a surprising number of cases in which an adult female was charged as a co-offender. These did not include cases where adult female victims were also compelled to commit bestiality.
- In almost all of the cases, a dog — often the family dog — was the targeted animal, or one of the targeted animals. Goats, horses and cats were also involved.
- A visual recording was made in 11 cases; in most cases the visual recording was the primary evidence relied upon to obtain a conviction, reinforcing the need to make a concerted effort to search for recordings in cases where coerced sexual activity involving an animal is alleged.

The study was unable to ascertain in much detail the impact of the bestiality upon the child victims. This was “perhaps not surprising given that the victims in these cases were subjected to other significant sexual abuse, usually over multiple years. This would have left victims with a plethora of bad experiences to address in their victim impact statements,” they wrote. The lack of impact information is troubling and raises a host of questions:

- How do victims relate to animals after this type of abuse has occurred?
- Are there specific/additional impacts associated with being forced to engage in such conduct that are distinct from the impacts arising from the sexual abuse itself?
- Do victims feel responsible for the abuse of the animal?
- Do these victims face additional challenges in disclosing their abuse, particularly in relation to the abuse that involved an animal?
- Do victims discuss this aspect of their abuse with therapists, support persons and others?
- Does this type of abuse warrant additional or more specialized supports?
- And what about the impact on the animal?

Because the animal victims cannot report the abuse, “It appears that this activity only comes to light if there is a human victim or witness or a visual recording depicting the activity is made,” they wrote. They suggest that a thorough investigation into reports of other abuse should facilitate the uncovering of bestiality offenses. “In this regard, a thorough investigation starts with considering the possibility of animal involvement and cultivating an awareness of the most likely evidence sources,” such as visual recordings and veterinary evidence.

-- Canadian Centre for Child Protection (2018). *“Bestiality” as Reflected in Canadian Case Law.*  
Winnipeg: Author

## Federal PACT Act Signed into Law

In introducing **H.R. 724, the “PACT Act”** (Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture) into Congress, U.S. Rep. Ted Deutch (D – Fla.) said passage of this law would “stop animal abusers who are likely to commit acts of violence against people.” In a rare example of bipartisanship in today’s legislative climate, Deutch partnered with Rep. Vern Buchanan (R – Fla.) and got 301 Democrat and Republican co-sponsors for the bill which passed the House by a vote of 416-3 and the Senate by unanimous consent and was signed into law on Nov. 25.



**U.S. Reps. Ted Deutch and Vern Buchanan**

The new law strengthens and closes a gap in the Animal Crush Video Prohibition Act, which was passed in 2010 to make the creation, sale and distribution of animal “crushing” pornographic videos illegal. These gruesome videos often show animals being tortured, such as small pocket pets being stomped to death by women in high heels. But the 2010 law did not make the underlying acts of cruelty themselves illegal. Under the PACT Act, these acts are now federal felonies and offenders will face fines and up to seven years in prison.

The bill had been widely supported by the law enforcement and animal welfare communities. For example, American Veterinary Medical Association President Dr. John Howe called the Senate’s earlier approval of the bill “a historic victory for animal welfare. Thanks to the bipartisan work of lawmakers and animal welfare advocates, we’re one step closer to finally criminalizing the cruel and inhumane act of animal crushing.”

“For many Americans, their pets are a part of their family. That’s been true in my home and that’s why the signing of this bill is such an important milestone,” said Buchanan.

## *THE LINK &... LAW ENFORCEMENT*

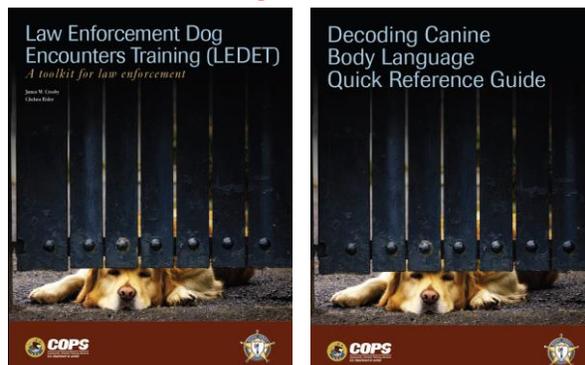


### **Collaboration and Communication Seen as Solutions to Effective Investigations**

**A panel of local experts gave the Canadian Violence Link Coalition their on-the-ground perspective of the challenges and best practices to get cross-sector collaboration when investigating animal cruelty cases and their link to other crimes. The panelists were, from left: Ann Marie Tupling, Toronto police sex crimes/domestic violence/child abuse investigator; Maureen Bellmore of the Ontario Attorney General’s office; and veterinarian Margaret Doyle.**

## Manuals Help Police Officers to Avoid Adverse Dog Encounters

Law enforcement officers routinely report that the incident calls they fear the most are domestic disputes, where “he said/she said” arguments often turn volatile and deadly. But another type of dangerous and potentially lethal incident has attracted attention in recent years, namely the issue of law enforcement officers shooting first and asking questions later when they are confronted by a dog that they perceive – often mistakenly – to be a dangerous threat to their safety.



After considerable involvement and encouragement from many national and local animal care and control organizations, the U.S. Department of Justice’s COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) program has published two training manuals to help law enforcement officers avoid these unfortunate situations. The [Toolkit](#) of model training policies and legislation is designed to keep dog encounters safe for all involved and keep adverse media publicity, the lack of public trust and lawsuits to a minimum. A [guide to canine behavior](#) serves to “decode” canine behavior and help police who may be unfamiliar with dogs to recognize real from imaginary threats.

“Reports allege that thousands of companion dogs are victims of the use of deadly or unnecessary force by law enforcement officers each year. Companion dogs are perceived as more than property, and the effects of these shootings ripple deeply across communities,” the Toolkit observes. Only six states (Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas) currently require officers to be trained to recognize common canine behavior and know how to respond appropriately to a dog encounter.

The manuals were championed by the National Sheriffs Association and authored by Link advocates Jim Crosby and Chelsea Rider.

In addition to the risks to dogs, research by Andrew Campbell in Indiana has reported that first responders face as much as twice the risk of lethality when investigating a possible domestic violence situation where the suspect has a history of animal abuse ([See the August 2019 LINK-Letter](#)).

## Animal Cruelty and the FBI’s NIBRS System: A Slow, 12-Year Grind



Mary Lou Randour, Senior Advisor to the Animal Welfare Institute, described to the Canadian Violence Link Conference the 12-year process by which the FBI was introduced to the idea of including animal cruelty data in its National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and the slow progress by which this was finally accomplished and is being implemented ([See the May 2019 LINK-Letter](#)).



Mary Lou Randour

The first three years of admittedly limited data are already revealing some intriguing findings, she said. Animal cruelty offenders tend to be between the ages of 25 and 39. Animal abuse is mostly home-based with 72% of incidents occurring in the residence. Some 25% of incidents result in an arrest, a rate that is comparable to other similar offenses. There does not appear to be a racial bias in

cases reported to law enforcement, with 81% of incidents involving white suspects and 16% involving African-Americans. (African-Americans comprise approximately 16% of the U.S. population.)

She cited examples of challenges in states such as Kentucky, where the bulk of animal cruelty reports come from only a few, urbanized counties and where many rural counties make no reports; and Colorado, where suburban cities are more likely to report animal abuse than the major city of Denver. Many communities, especially those with animal control officers who are not sworn law enforcement officers, have yet to enter data into the system.

“We were excited to get animal cruelty in NIBRS as it should be because it’s a statement, but at the same time if we don’t get an accurate count there’s a danger of people saying it’s not as serious a crime as we thought. It will take up to 10 years to know how well we’re doing but we’re working on it.”

## ***ANIMAL ABUSE AND... VETERINARY MEDICINE***



**Melinda Merck**

### **The Connection Between Animal Cruelty and Societal Violence and Vulnerability**

Melinda Merck, of [Veterinary Forensic Consulting](#) in Austin, Texas, introduced The Link to the participants, recognizing the interactions between animal, child, domestic and elder abuse, with The Link with elder abuse remaining a largely hidden problem. “These connections are everywhere, and the studies go back decades through many disciplines,” she said. “The problem is everybody is working in silos and things need to change.”



She described the “failure of the system” with the example of Devin Kelley who was convicted of cruelty to animals in Colorado and had been court-martialed for domestic violence when in the military, but his criminal records were not entered into national crime data bases. Kelley subsequently moved to Texas where he killed 26 people and wounded 20 others in a 2017 shooting massacre in a Sutherland Springs church.

“Many fields are making the connections, but we still don’t have the connections to all the stakeholders. We still don’t have cross-reporting for all the points of intersectionality,” Merck said. She noted that while veterinary forensics has become a recognized specialty, many practitioners still do not recognize themselves as “the other family doctor” in responding to animal abuse and indicators of other family neglect or violence. “Veterinarians need to be a part of these community responses,” she said, adding that the impact of the opioid epidemic is leading to another form of animal cruelty – some addicts are hurting their pets on purpose to get access to their pain meds. “There’s a whole other Link there,” she said.

Merck described several cases of animal hoarding that pose risk to both humans and animals. She noted how children are often exposed to harmful environmental conditions and how animal hoarders can be suicidal when their animals are removed. “These cases are complex, and there’s vulnerability, and we need to be prepared for that,” she said.

“We definitely need a community response involving all stakeholders,” she concluded. “It takes everybody to make a difference and to make changes. It’s particularly critical to include the veterinary community and associations,” she said, noting that The Link can be seen as a wellness issue and a One Health issue. Everybody needs to be in the same room and veterinarians can help drive the issue.

In response to a question about how to encourage veterinarians who fear losing clients if they were to report animal abuse, Merck noted, “It’s not a complex issue; it’s an ignorance issue. Veterinarians practice in a bubble. They think all these bad things are going to happen or that they’re not going to see cruelty. Let your clients know you are working against animal cruelty and it enhances the practice. As a practice owner for 17 years, I didn’t lose clients. We need to be able to hold veterinarians accountable for failure to report. If they don’t report, report them to their state board.”

## Florida Cross-Reporting Bill Aimed at Saving Human and Animal Lives

Two bipartisan bills have been pre-filed for introduction to the Florida State Legislature in 2020 that would require veterinarians to report suspected animal



cruelty to a dog or cat with immunity from [Reps. Daley and Plakon and Sen. Pizzo](#) civil and criminal liability. [HB 621](#) and its companion measure, [SB 1044](#) (“Allie’s Law”) are sponsored by Reps. Dan Daley (D – Broward) and Scott Plakon (R – Seminole) and Sen. Jason Pizzo (D - Miami-Dade).

The measure would also prohibit the alteration or destruction of certain records and specify that failure to report is grounds for disciplinary action.

The bills are a response to a case involving “Allie,” an abused 4-year-old Boston terrier who was rescued by Dave Heine who found her on Craigslist on Christmas Day 2018. She was one of seven abused dogs being sold by a veterinary technician for \$400 who did not have to report suspected animal abuse under Florida law. The case and legislation were spotlighted by [WTSP-TV](#) in a feature called “The Toxic Triad of Abuse” that noted how veterinarians who report animal abuse could also save victims of child and domestic abuse.

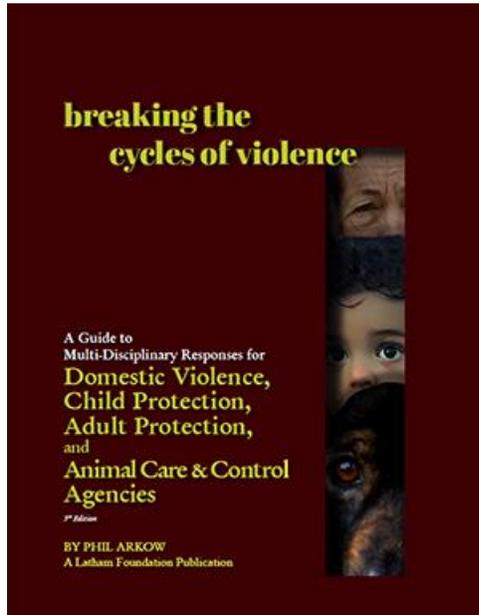
WTSP investigators reported that since 2015, 39 people arrested for abusing animals in eight counties around Tampa Bay were also arrested for domestic violence. In Highlands and Hardee Counties, 12% of those arrested for animal abuse were also arrested for child abuse and neglect.

“There is no guarantee that one type of abuse leads to other types of abuse, but there are many times when you do see one that does lead to the other or they’re happening at the same time,” Doug Brightwell of Pinellas County Animal Services told the TV station.

“The cycle of abuse must end. Animal abuse is an indicator that a home is not safe and is usually correlated with family dysfunction, including domestic, child and elder abuse,” said Rep. Daley.

## THE LINK... IN THE LITERATURE

### Latham Foundation Updates *Breaking the Cycles of Violence* Manual



The Latham Foundation pioneered new professional and public awareness of The Link in 1995 and 2003 with its landmark publications of *Breaking the Cycles of Violence*, a training manual designed for human and animal services agency personnel to recognize each other's signs of abuse and to facilitate cross-training and cross-reporting across multi-disciplinary platforms. A new and significantly updated [3<sup>rd</sup> edition](#) has just been published.

*Breaking the Cycles of Violence: A Guide to Multi-Disciplinary Responses for Domestic Violence, Child Protection, Adult Protection, and Animal Care & Control Agencies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, was authored by the National Link Coalition's Phil Arkow. The richly illustrated 94-page Guide features extensive charts and figures, a bibliography, a list of online resources, national veterinary association position statements on responding to family violence, and case studies from the National Link Coalition's files. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition adds Adult Protective Services into the process.

The nine chapters include:

- Background on the history and significance of The Link between animal abuse and human violence.
- Incidence rates for child, domestic, adult, and animal abuse.
- Risk factors that prompt people to abuse animals.
- Guides to defining and identifying suspected child, domestic, elder and animal abuse.
- Descriptions of the state and local systems and agencies for investigating each of the four forms of abuse.
- Mechanisms for mandatory and permissive reporting of the four forms of abuse.
- The advantages of inter-disciplinary community collaborations to combat all four forms of family violence.
- Review of recent innovative policy and program changes in response to growing recognition of The Link.

The Guide was written to “continue to encourage cross-training and cross-reporting between agencies and to promote community coalitions in the hope their work will endure and succeed at reducing violence in society,” said Latham Foundation President Hugh H. Tebault.

“Traditional compartmentalized responses to human and animal abuse can be improved through a broader, interdisciplinary strategy that cross-fertilizes information across species and disciplines,” said Arkow. “This significantly expanded edition of the Guide will offer agencies more comprehensive responses to family violence and fill gaps in services.”

Breaking the Cycles of Violence is available for \$20.00 on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

## THE LINK... AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE



### Crimes that Capture Harm Related to the Violence Link

When is it acceptable to hurt an animal? “We have seriously conflicting views about animals, so society is deeply divided and struggles with these ideas, and that struggle is apparent in our law,” said Mandy MacLeod, family protection prosecutor from Alberta. Her presentation at the Canadian Violence Link Conference – what she called “the helping professions edition” of her program – defined The Link and the current legal status of animals, what prosecutors need to bring charges against an offender, and how The Link can be applied in criminal cases.



Mandy MacLeod

MacLeod traced four widely different and evolving views by which society over the centuries has regarded animals as a unique category of property:

- **Thomas Aquinas’ “Natural Law”** in which man was seen as superior to all other beasts because animals can’t reason. Killing animals was seen as a problem only if they belonged to another person. But there was a caveat that because of man’s superior status we have a responsibility to treat animals charitably.
- **Immanuel Kant’s “Contractualism”** in which human society should be concerned with the treatment of animals because someone who treats animals badly might treat other people badly – and we can’t have that.
- **Jeremy Bentham’s “Modern Utilitarianism”** in which animals are equal to humans in their capacity to suffer and therefore we should protect them from cruelty.
- **Peter Singer’s “Animal Liberation”** in which animals are sentient beings with their own intrinsic value and interests in living and living well, so they are deserving of personhood.

Though there are differences among these four philosophies, “At least they all agree that you can’t treat animals any way you want. Unlike all other forms of property there are limits on how animals can be treated,” MacLeod said.

“Animal cruelty laws often sound straightforward, but often they’re not,” she said, describing the challenges courts face in defining such words as “pain,” “suffering” or “unnecessary” that appear in most laws. Legal definitions may vary from public perception and some acts may be deemed necessary if they are for a legitimate purpose and are socially accepted. Canadian courts have been debating these issues since 1889.

“People may cause pain and suffering to animals for a variety of reasons, from eating them to parading them around Madison Square Garden. But we all generally believe that hurting animals in anger, or to control them, or out of ignorance or laziness are not culturally acceptable and are therefore illegitimate and unnecessary purposes,” she said.

Animal cruelty offenses were not codified with the violence Link in mind. They were designed at a different time that had no regard for vulnerable victims. MacLeod said she hopes that more contemporary laws come to recognize how animals are harmed in the context of their being used as instruments of power and control. “People love their pets and would do anything for them and abusers know this, too. I see this every day in my work. The Link is the co-occurrence of harm, especially in the context of family violence.”

MacLeod noted that The Link can be used to influence sentencing. Canadian courts have upheld that violence is violence, that violence of any kind, whether against humans or animals, may be relevant in sentencing for other violent crimes. Judges also care about cases where animals are abused in front of an intimate partner as a tool of power and control, she said. “Judges also recognize that vulnerability of pets makes the human crime worse.”

## How Can Legislators Get Involved in The Link?



Two Liberal MPs convened a “fireside chat” to discuss legislators’ priorities and how advocates can use The Link to advance legislation. “I think it’s incredible that everyone comes together for conferences like this,” said Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, noting the significance of spreading Link ideas across many different sectors.

**Barbara Cartwright, CEO of Humane Canada, discusses the perspective of legislators with Canadian Members of Parliament Arif Virani and Nathaniel Erskine-Smith.**

Explaining the challenges when many animal welfare bills are introduced independently addressing individual issues, he suggested an overarching Link approach can help consolidate so many diverse concerns. “What I’d like to see is a special Parliamentary committee dedicated to animal welfare issues. Politicians follow what the voters want. To see so many different groups come together over The Link makes it a nonpartisan issue.”

“It’s no great surprise that people who prey on vulnerable animals will prey on vulnerable humans as well,” said Arif Virani. “Legislators depend on evidence so it’s important to get the evidence, especially when your most sympathetic legislators are in the minority party, to be able to reach across the aisle and make progress. I think everybody agrees that abusing a woman or a child is a bad thing. No one disputes that. Find the little nuggets that everyone agrees on and move past the differences that would otherwise keep you from talking to people you disagree with. So we start from that point, move on and we make it a cross-party discussion.”

“For far too long, we’ve seen animals as being separate from our communities, said Barbara Cartwright, CEO of Humane Canada. “The vulnerability Link brings it all back together and helps legislators recognize that pets are part of the family and that protecting pets also protects people who are vulnerable. Using The Link is a better way to make sure that people and animals are better protected.”

## THE LINK... AND SOCIAL WORK



**Lynda Ashbourne, Andrea Breen, Sarah Bernardi, and Ranjana Basu described the Link work social workers and veterinarians**

how people and animal family members interact and the strengths and risks that exist across species. They are mentoring future social workers to encourage them to think about animals as well to make life better for all involved. Their research will help expand community and family services to meet the needs of diverse populations and cultures and include the animal members of the community.

## Social Work and the Violence Link

Four professionals at the Canadian Conference addressed risk and resilience for children and teens and the importance of including the impact of companion animals in interventions and assessments.



Lynda Ashbourne and Andrea Breen described their FIDO program at the University of Guelph – Families Interacting with Dogs – that is researching how people and animal family members interact and the strengths and risks that exist across species. They are mentoring future social workers to encourage them to think about animals as well to make life better for all involved. Their research will help expand community and family services to meet the needs of diverse populations and cultures and include the animal members of the community.

They emphasized several reasons why social workers should take their clients' experiences with dogs seriously:

- Pets' physical condition and behaviors can provide clues to human experiences and family functioning.
- Dog-human relationships are contextual for learning and resilience in the wake of family violence.
- Strengthening these relationships, and helping people better understand their animals' behaviors, can promote well-being in both species and enable people to leverage inclusion and a sense of belonging in community relationships.

"We also know that violence is interconnected and that animals are important in their own right," Breen said.

"We need to position dogs to help families break the cycle of violence," she added. This can be accomplished with not just therapy dogs, but also with family dogs to serve as teachers. Children can learn empathy, nonverbal communication, self-awareness, and positive parenting skills from their pets.

FIDO research is focusing on how dog professionals, such as mobile veterinarians, and child welfare workers conduct home visits in the context of domestic violence and child abuse. They are investigating whether social services workers make sense of the presence of animals, and what resources, training and policies might strengthen their awareness of human-animal interactions and help them to recognize how family pets might mirror signs of safety and risk for human and canine family members.

Sarah Bernardi, the first Veterinary Social Worker at a 24/7 Toronto emergency animal clinic with 150 employees, described how veterinary social workers are at the intersection of human and animal safety. "Pets are our family members and our attachments to them can't be invalidated," she said. She noted that social work is a health care profession that takes a holistic approach in establishing effective communications. Because pets are well-integrated into family systems and human health and wellness, veterinarians can be involved with responding to family violence. But because it is difficult to identify

animal abuse with complete certainty and even more challenging for practitioners to respond to human family violence, many veterinarians are fearful of getting involved.

She noted that some veterinarians actively report suspected abuse but many have a fear of defaming a client with what may turn out to be a false report. Social workers also have a responsibility to do community good and the profession's code of ethics allows space for reporting.

Ranjana Basu, a social worker and doctoral candidate at Royal Roads University, described her research project linking animals, social justice and social work. A multidisciplinary team raised awareness among social workers of "speciesism" as part of social work's commitment to social justice and fighting oppression in order to increase their willingness to advocate for animals in social work policy and practice.

Preliminary findings reported that introducing an educational curriculum and networking to social workers resulted in:

- Their existing personal interest in animals evolved into a deeper professional interest.
- Linking animal abuse to oppression resonates with social workers.
- An ongoing "undercurrent" of social work activity related to animals, such as how animals are threatened in domestic violence situations, became more recognized.

Basu recommended that social workers should include their clients' interactions with animals in the genograms they design to represent family dynamics. "If you ask children to draw pictures of their family they almost always include the animals. But social work seems to have lost that," she said.



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

## ***BUILDING LINK AWARENESS***

### **Rhode Island Law School Address Domestic Violence and The Link**



On Oct. 30, the Roger Williams Law School's Women's Law Society, Criminal Law Society and Student Animal Legal Defense Fund recognized Domestic Violence Awareness Month with a panel discussion involving individuals who work with survivors of domestic violence and issues related to the Link. Participants included (from left): Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM, president of Forensic Veterinary Investigations, LLC; Clasper Lee Torch, men's engagement coordinator for the Ten Men Project from the Rhode

Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Brynae Riggins, President of the Roger Williams Law School Student Animal Legal Defense Fund; Jessica Ryan, President of the Women's Law Society; Abena Asare, Women's Law Society Vice President; Carla Cuellar, Providence Police Department liaison and manager at Family Service of Rhode Island; and Jeff Richard, Providence Police Department detective. Missing from the picture is Alexandria Aksterowicz, President of the Criminal Law Society who also facilitated this important discussion.

## ***NEWS FROM LOCAL LINK COALITIONS***

### **Oklahoma Link Coalition Produces Information Video, Gets TV News Coverage**



OKLAHOMA LINK COALITION

The [Oklahoma Link Coalition](#), with support from the Kirkpatrick Foundation's Safe & Humane campaign, has produced a [2-1/2-minute animated video](#) to explain The Link.

"The Link is clear: when animals are abused, people are at risk, and when people are abused, animals are at risk. It's that simple," explains the narration which goes on to describe how child, domestic, elder and animal abuse rarely occur in a vacuum and often overlap. Interspersing key statistics that show how abuse cycles can be perpetuated, the video adds, "We are Linked, with everyone and everything in our communities including our most vulnerable members. Addressing animal abuse also helps reduce violence against people and keeps communities safe, it concludes.

Also, the Coalition got extensive TV news coverage of their training in Tulsa to help law enforcement officers to spot animal abuse as a way to help "more than animals". The two-minute news feature spotlighted studies showing correlations between people who commit animal abuse and later commit more violent crimes. Many officers recalled having seen co-occurring crimes but had not previously made the connection. "It's not just an animal victim or even just a family issue," Oklahoma Link Coalition Coordinator Kathleen Romero told [Fox 23 News](#). "This is something that spills out into communities."

## THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

### Link Bills We're Watching

The majority of the 2019 state legislative sessions have ended, but we're following a record number of bills impacting animal abuse and its Links with other crimes. ***If you know of any such bills not included here, please let us know.***

#### Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders



**Arizona HB 2161** would have allowed a petitioner to request an ex parte severe threat protection order based on the respondent's ownership of a firearm; in determining whether ground exist for an order, courts would have considered all relevant evidence including the respondent's cruel mistreatment of an animal. The order would have required the respondent to relinquish all firearms and ammunition. **The bill died when the Legislature adjourned.**



**California AB 415** would expand provisions of the California Victim Compensation program to allow the costs of temporary housing for the pets of domestic violence victims to be reimbursable as part of relocation expenses. The bill passed the Assembly 76-0 and the Senate and **was signed into law** by the Governor on Oct. 8.



**California AB-109** and **SB 109**, the Budget Act of 2019 which makes appropriations for the support of state government for the 2019-2020 fiscal year, includes the allocation of \$5,000,000 for providing shelter, food and basic veterinarians' services for the pets of individuals in homeless shelters; significant numbers of individuals came to be homeless due to domestic violence. The bills **were enacted into law** on Sept. 27.



**Colorado HB 19-1177** creates "Extreme Risk Protection Orders" that allow courts to prohibit persons from having or obtaining a firearm upon a finding that the person presents a significant risk to self or others. In determining grounds for the issuance of such an order, courts can consider the person having been arrested for domestic violence and/or animal cruelty. **The bill was signed into law on April 12.**



**Florida HB 379** and **SB 774** would have allowed courts to issue protection orders enjoining the respondent from interfering with the custody, transferring, encumbering, concealing, harming, or disposing of any animals owned by the petitioner and/or respondent and minor children in the home. **The bills died when the Legislature session adjourned.**



**Georgia HB 582** would have allowed courts to create a detailed "pet care plan" of responsibilities and schedules to ensure animals' best interests in marriage dissolutions. **The bill was in the House Judiciary committee when the Assembly adjourned.**



**Indiana HB 1615** amends existing provisions in IC 31-9-2-42 which include "beating" an animal without justification within the definition of "domestic or family violence" to read "abusing" an animal. The bill passed both houses overwhelmingly and **was signed into law on April 29.**





**Kentucky HB 25** would have: prohibited pretrial diversion for a person charged with torture of a dog or cat; made torture of a dog or cat a Class D felony; and prohibited early release for those who torture a dog or cat as a way to threaten, intimidate, coerce, harass, or terrorize a family member or member of a dating relationship. **The bill died in the House Judiciary Committee.**



**Michigan HB 4498** would enjoin and restrain respondents served with personal protection orders, which include protection of pets, from possessing, using, transporting, selling, purchasing, carrying, shipping, receiving, or distributing a firearm or ammunition. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.



**Mississippi SB 2014** would have prohibited respondents from removing, damaging, hiding, harming, or disposing of any companion animal owned or possessed by a person protected by the order. The court could have also authorized the removal of a companion animal from the respondent. The bill passed the Senate 51-0 but **died in the House Judiciary Committee.**



**Missouri HB 370** would have added “intimidation” – injuring, killing, or threat to injure or kill an animal if such act is done to coerce, control, punish, or be an act of revenge against a household member – as grounds for a court to issue a protection order. **The bill died in the Judiciary Committee.**



**New Hampshire HB 361** adds animals to the tangible property whose disposition may be determined by courts during divorce or annulment settlements; this property settlement “shall address the care and ownership of the parties' animals, taking into consideration the animals' wellbeing.” **The bill was signed into law by Gov. Chris Sununu.**



**New Jersey A 5549** and **S 3886** would prohibit persons undergoing a divorce from surrendering a dog or cat to an animal shelter without the consent of the other party. The bills are in the Assembly Agriculture & Natural Resources and Senate Environment & Energy Committees, respectively.



**New Mexico HB 52** would have defined an act of animal abuse intended to coerce, control or intimidate a domestic violence victim as an act of domestic violence as well as animal cruelty. The bill passed the House 50-13 but **died in the Senate.**



**New York A 588** would create a felony crime of animal cruelty to companion animals that is intended to threaten, intimidate or harass a family or household member, with additional penalties if committed in the presence of a minor child. The bill is in the Assembly Codes Committee.



**New York A 767** and **S 1251** would amend language in pet protection orders to allow the court to grant petitioners exclusive care, custody and control of animals kept by the petitioner, respondent or child, and to order the respondent to stay away from, take, transfer, conceal, harm, or dispose of the animal. The bills are in the Assembly Judiciary and Senate Rules Committees.



**New York A 1097** and **S 6222** would require courts to consider the best interest of companion animals in awarding their possession in a divorce or separation proceeding. The bills are in the Assembly Judiciary and Senate Domestic Animal Welfare Committees.



**New York A 7395** and **S 6158** would require police officers and prosecutors investigating a domestic violence incident to advise the victim of many options, including the ability to include pets and service animals in an order of protection. The bills were consolidated and have passed both the Assembly and Senate and are back in the Assembly.



**North Dakota HB 1537** would have allowed family members to file a petition for a “public safety petition order” prohibiting the respondent from having or obtaining a firearm if the respondent is believed to pose a risk of injury to self or others; among the criteria to establish such risk is a history of violence or cruelty toward an animal. **The bill died in the House.**



**Pennsylvania SB 90** and **HB 1075** would create “Extreme Risk Protection Orders” that would allow courts to prohibit persons from having or obtaining a firearm upon a finding that the person presents a risk of suicide or of causing death or serious bodily injury to another person. Factors that could help make such a determination include a history of domestic abuse and/or animal cruelty. **HB 1028** would allow household members to file a petition for a “Firearm Restraining Order” prohibiting a respondent from having firearms, weapons or ammunition if the respondent presents an immediate and present danger to physical safety, as represented by acts of domestic violence or killing or threatening to kill pets or other animals. The bills are in their respective Judiciary Committees.



**Rhode Island H 5023** and **SB 225** now allow courts to provide for the safety and welfare of all household animals and pets in protection orders for adult and child victims of domestic abuse and sexual exploitation. **The measure was signed by the Governor on June 28 and took effect immediately.**



**Rhode Island H 5483** and **H 5822** would have allowed the district court to determine the ownership of a pet between “formerly cohabiting parties” based on what would be in the pet’s best interests. **Both bills were held by the House Judiciary Committee for further study.**



**Texas SB 194** adds “indecent assault,” which encompasses numerous actions of illegal sexual gratification, to the list of crimes for which victims can obtain a protection order that includes harming or threatening the victim’s animals. Such pet protection orders are already in place for victims of domestic or family violence, sexual assault or abuse, and stalking. **The measure was signed into law on June 14 and took effect Sept. 1.**



**Texas HB 3021** would have directed the Attorney General and the State Bar of Texas to provide information to the public about the availability of provisions that allow pets to be included in protective orders. The bill **died when the legislature adjourned.**



**Texas HB 2516** would have added cruelty to non-livestock animals with the intent to coerce, control, punish or intimidate another family member to the definition of “family violence”. The bill was in the Criminal Jurisprudence Committee **when the legislature adjourned.**



**Utah SB 45** defines an act of aggravated animal cruelty intended to coerce, control or intimidate a spouse or partner as an act of domestic violence as well as animal cruelty. **The bill was signed into law on March 27.**





**Virginia HB 2642** and **SB 1276** would have made any animal cruelty violation a Class 6 felony if carried out to threaten, intimidate, coerce, harass, or terrorize a family or household member.

**The bills died in the Senate.**



**Wyoming HB 235** allows courts to issue protection orders granting sole possession of any pets kept by the petitioner, the respondent, or a minor child “for the purpose of protecting the household pet.” The order orders the respondent to not contact, abduct, remove, conceal, or dispose of the household pet. **The new law took effect July 1.**



### *Animal Abuse and Elder Abuse*



**Maryland HB 561** would have added the crime of psychological abuse of a vulnerable adult, defined as the intentional use of verbal or other conduct resulting in a vulnerable adult’s apprehension of fear, confusion, intimidation, depression or emotional distress; such conduct would include the destruction or harm of an animal owned by the vulnerable adult. **The bill was withdrawn from the Judiciary Committee.**



**New York A 1153** would bar landlords from denying residential occupancy or evicting persons over age 62 solely for keeping a common household pet. Property owners could establish reasonable rules for the care and handling of pets. The bill is in the Assembly Housing Committee.



**Pennsylvania SB 819** would extensively revise the Older Adults Protective Services Act and would impose a 25-year ban on individuals convicted of having sexual intercourse with animals from working in long-term care nursing facilities, personal care homes, home health care agencies, and adult daily living centers. The bill passed the Senate and is in the House Aging & Older Adult Services Committee.

### *Animal-Assisted Interventions for Crime Victims and Witnesses*



**New Hampshire HB 513** would have allowed victims and witnesses of child abuse and sexual abuse, and persons with intellectual disabilities, to have a comforting facility dog or therapy animal accompany them to court. **The bill was retained in the Judiciary Committee.**



**New Jersey A3729** would allow assistance dogs to be used to help facilitate the taking of testimony of victims or witnesses in open court in criminal prosecutions. The bill is in the Assembly Judiciary Committee.



**New Jersey A3558** would appropriate \$100,000 to establish a pilot program in the Department of Children & Families to provide animal-assisted therapy to victims of childhood violence and trauma. The bill is in the Assembly Human Services Committee.

## *Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment*



**H.R. 2808**, the Child & Animal Abuse Detection and Reporting Act, would amend the Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act (CAPTA) to include data on animal abuse in the National Child Abuse & Neglect Data System (NCANDS). The bill was introduced by Rep. Ann McLane Kuster (D – N.H.) and John Katko (R – N.Y.) with 20 co-sponsors and is in the House Education and Labor Committee.



**Colorado HB 19-1220**, allows any witness, including victims of child sexual abuse, to be accompanied by a court facility dog.



**New York A 831** would increase the penalty for aggravated animal cruelty from two to four years if committed in the presence of a child. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.



**New York A 955** would make it a misdemeanor to knowingly cause a minor child under age 16 to attend an animal fight. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.



**New York A 1211** and **S 3415** would permit mandated reporters of suspected child abuse to report suspected animal cruelty, notwithstanding confidentiality provisions, if the act were committed by a person also suspected of child abuse or maltreatment. Individuals already permitted to report suspected child abuse (which includes everyone in New York State) could also report suspected animal cruelty. Reports made in good faith would be immune from civil and criminal liability. **S 3415** passed the Senate and both measures are in the Assembly Children & Families Committee.



**New York A 2664** and **S 3327** would amend the definition of child endangerment and other related statutes to include committing acts of animal cruelty in the presence of a child and to strengthen penalties for existing animal cruelty charges when committed in the presence of a child. The bills are in the Assembly Codes and Senate Domestic Animal Welfare Committees.



**North Carolina H 507** would make it a felony to bring a minor under the age of 18 to a dog- or cockfight. The bill passed the House 113-0 and is in the Senate Rules & Operations Committee.



**Washington HB 1235** would have created a new crime of “providing a harmful material to a minor” that includes bestiality and animal mutilation, dismemberment, rape, or torture. The bill was in the House Committee on Public Safety **when the legislature adjourned**.

## *Psychological Evaluation of Offenders*



**California SB 580** would amend current procedures requiring animal abuse offenders on probation to complete counseling for behavior or conduct disorders, to instead undergo psychiatric or psychological evaluation, treatment, and a responsible animal owner education course as the court deems appropriate. The bill passed the Senate 38-0 and is in the Assembly Public Safety Committee.



**Colorado HB 19-1092** allows courts to order mental health treatment to adult and juvenile offenders convicted of cruelty to animals; current law only allows courts to impose anger management treatment. The bill also requires courts to impose a ban of three to five years upon a felony conviction for adults and permits such a restriction for juvenile offenders. **The bill was signed into law on May 1.**





**Mississippi HB 984** would have required offenders convicted of aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat to undergo psychiatric or psychological evaluation or counseling. **The bill died in the House Judiciary Committee.**



**Missouri HB 111** would have allowed courts to require adults and juveniles convicted of animal abuse to undergo psychological or psychiatric evaluation and treatment; these would be mandatory if the offense were torture or mutilation, or upon a second conviction for animal abuse. *The bill also addressed Cross-Reporting*. It was approved by the Rules and Crime Prevention & Public Safety Committees but **died when the Legislature adjourned.**



**New Jersey** currently requires juveniles (but not adults) convicted of animal cruelty to undergo mental health counseling. Five bills would expand that to include adults as well. **A3049** and **S1636 (“Shyanne’s Law”)** would require a mental health evaluation for juvenile and adult animal cruelty offenders, to be followed by mental health counseling if warranted by the evaluation. The bills are in the Assembly Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Health, Human Services & Senior Citizens Committee. **A3856** and **S2165** would require both juveniles and adults to undergo mental health counseling; those bills are in the Assembly Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Economic Growth Committee. **S2749** would likewise require mental health counseling for all persons convicted of animal cruelty; it is in the Senate Environment and Energy Committee.



**New York A 984** and **S 385** would require courts to impose mandatory psychiatric evaluation and treatment for juvenile and adult offenders convicted of aggravated cruelty to animals. **S 384** would require juvenile offenders to undergo psychiatric evaluation and treatment where necessary. The Assembly bill is in the Agriculture Committee. The Senate bills are in the Domestic Animal Welfare Committee.



**New York A 987** and **S 2007** would prohibit a person convicted of “Buster’s Law” from having a companion animal unless authorized by court order after they complete appropriate psychiatric or psychological testing. **A 987** is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee; **S 2007** is in the Senate Domestic Animal Welfare Committee.

### *Animal Sexual Abuse*



**H.R. 724, the “PACT Act”** (Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture) was signed into law on Nov. 25. The new law builds on the Animal Crush Video Prohibition Act, which passed in 2010 to make the creation, sale and distribution of animal “crushing” pornographic videos illegal but which did not make the acts of cruelty themselves illegal. Under the PACT Act, offenders will face fines and up to seven years in prison.



**California AB 611** closes loopholes to make any sexual act with an animal a crime; current law prohibits sexual assault of animals only for the purpose of sexual gratification. It authorizes the seizure of animals in such cases. It also adds this misdemeanor offense to the list of crimes which would prevent a convicted offender from owning animals for a specified period. **The bill was signed into law** by the Governor on Oct. 8.





**Hawai'i HB 24** would have added a new crime of sexual assault on an animal with eight specific actions considered illegal. It would have been a Class C felony unless a minor were involved, in which case it would be a Class B felony. Offenders would have had to surrender or forfeit all animals to a humane society; pay the organization for the animals' care; obtain psychiatric or psychological treatment; and be prohibited from owning, keeping, residing, working, or volunteering with animals for at least five years. **The House Agriculture Committee recommended it be deferred.**



**Kentucky SB 67** creates a new section of KRS Chapter 525 to establish the felony offense of sexual crimes against an animal and amend KRS 436.605 to add sexual crimes against an animal to the list of crimes for which an animal control officer may utilize peace officer powers. **The bill was signed into law** on March 26.



**Kentucky HB 98** would have created a new section of KRS Chapter 525 to prohibit cruelty to equines including situations involving abuse, neglect and sexual contact. **The bill was in the House Judiciary Committee when the Legislature adjourned.**



**Maryland HB 641** amends §10-606 of the Annotated Code of Maryland defining Aggravated Cruelty to Animals to include “sexual contact with an animal.” It further defines aggravated cruelty to animals as a crime of violence. Persons convicted of sexual contact with an animal will be included among Tier III sex offenders. **HB 641 was signed into law by the Governor on April 18.** The new law took effect on Oct. 1, 2019.



**Massachusetts S.891** would replace the archaic “Crime against nature” – the “abominable and detestable crime against nature, either with mankind or with a beast” – with a new crime of a “sexual act on an animal.” The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.



**Pennsylvania HB 1312** would deny offenders convicted of sexual intercourse with animals the right of having their criminal records expunged. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



**West Virginia HB 2792** would have prohibited activities connected with sexual abuse of an animal; establish criminal penalties; and provide for forfeiture of animals, payment of associated costs, and restrictions on owning animals upon conviction. The bill was in the House Judiciary Committee **when the regular legislative session ended.**



**Wisconsin AB 152** and **SB 139** would increase penalties for bestiality from current misdemeanor levels to a variety of felony charges for sexual contact with an animal; advertising, harboring, transporting, providing or transporting animals for sexual contact; and creating, distributing or possessing animal pornography. Penalties would be further enhanced if a child is involved. The bills would also require offenders to register as a sex offender; current law only permits courts to order such registration. **SB 139** was passed by the Senate and sent to the Assembly. **AB 152** is in the Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

## Cross-Reporting

 **Florida HB 7125** allows veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse to law enforcement or certified animal control officers without notice to or authorization from the client unless the suspected violation occurs at a commercial food-processing animal operation on agricultural land. **The measure was signed into law.**



 **Florida SB 7000** was prefiled. It would require all mandated reporters of child abuse to report suspected animal abuse within 72 hours. The Dept. of Children and Families and the Florida Animal Control Association would develop a 1-hour training curriculum for all child protective and animal control investigators. The bill is in the Senate Children, Families and Elder Affairs Committee.

 **Florida HB 621/SB 1044** (“Allie’s Law”) were pre-filed for the 2020 Legislative session. It would require veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty to a dog or cat with immunity from civil and criminal liability; prohibit the alteration or destruction of certain records; and specify that failure to report is grounds for disciplinary action.

 **Illinois SB 1778** recodified language mandating that domestic violence crisis line and program personnel, animal control officers and field investigators of the Department of Agriculture’s Bureau of Animal Health and Welfare immediately report suspected child abuse and neglect. **The bill became law on Aug. 23.**



 **Iowa SF 3** would have mandated veterinarians who “conclude that an animal is being subjected to animal cruelty” to complete an animal cruelty report and submit it to a local law enforcement agency. Individuals who report, cooperate with or assist in such investigations in good faith would have been immune from civil and criminal liability. The bill was in the Senate Judiciary Committee **when the legislature adjourned.**

 **Kentucky Bill Request 205**, prefiled for the 2020 legislative session, would require veterinarians to report suspected abuse and provide immunity for a good-faith report; it would also allow veterinarians to release information in order to report abuse. **Prefiled Bill Request 288** would require veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse to an animal control officer.

 **Michigan SB 352** would require Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services workers to report suspected animal abuse or neglect to an animal control or law enforcement officer, with confidentiality and immunity from civil and criminal liability. Failure to report would be a crime, with escalating penalties based on whether the animal abuse is a misdemeanor or a felony. The bill passed the Judiciary & Public Safety Committee and is in the full Senate.

 **Michigan SB 429** would permit veterinarians to report suspected abuse or neglect of a companion animal to an animal control shelter or law enforcement agency. The bill is in the was approved by the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety and is in the full Senate.

 **Minnesota HF 1530/SF 1517** would have granted veterinarians, who are already mandated to report suspected animal cruelty, immunity from civil and criminal liability for making such a report in good faith. **HF 1530** was in the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Division; **SF 1517** was in the Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee, **when the legislature adjourned.**

 **Missouri HB 111** would have granted immunity from civil liability to all persons, including veterinarians, teachers and school personnel, who report suspected animal abuse to a law enforcement agency in good faith. *The bill also addressed Psychological Evaluations.* It was approved by the Rules and Crime Prevention & Public Safety Committees but **died when the Legislature adjourned.**

 **New Jersey A 5512** would require employees of the Department of Children and Families who investigate child abuse and neglect to report suspected animal abuse to humane law enforcement officials or the state police; suspected abuse of livestock would be reported to the Department of Agriculture. The bill is in the Assembly Women and Children Committee.

 **New York A 1170** would require veterinarians who reasonably and in good faith suspect that a companion animal is the victim of cruelty, abuse or neglect to report the incident and disclose necessary records to law enforcement and humane investigators. Currently, N.Y. veterinarians are permitted to make such reports. Both the existing and proposed law accord veterinarians who report in good faith – to protect the health and welfare of the patient or the public – immunity from civil and criminal liability. The bill is in the Assembly Committee on Higher Education.

 **Ohio HB 33** would require veterinarians, social services professionals, counselors, social workers, and marriage and family therapists to immediately report suspected abuse of companion animals. Dog wardens and deputy dog wardens would be required to report violations concerning companion animals to appropriate social services professionals in situations where a child or older adult resides with the alleged violator and where the animal abuse has an impact on the child or older adult. Good-faith reporters would be immune from civil and criminal liability. The measure is in the House Criminal Justice Committee.

 **Oregon HB 2227** adds animal control officers to the list of individuals mandated to report child abuse. **The measure was signed into law by the Governor on May 22.**



 **Oregon HB 2500** allows veterinarians addressing the effects of animal abuse to sue the person inflicting the abuse. Plaintiffs who prevail will be able to collect compensatory damages for expenses incurred in providing veterinary care, plus costs and reasonable attorney fees. **The bill was signed into law and becomes effective Jan. 1, 2020.**



 **Rhode Island S 82** would have amended the law which permits veterinarians, technicians, and animal shelter and kennel personnel to report suspected animal abuse, to mandate such reporting with immunity from lawsuits if made in good faith. **The Senate Judiciary Committee recommended it be held for further study.**

 **Texas SB 1750 and HB 2787** would have allowed veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty to appropriate governmental entities without violating veterinarian/client confidentiality. Both **bills died when the legislature adjourned.**

 **Washington HB 1919** expands provisions against animal fighting to include fighting paraphernalia and mutilating or abandoning fighting animals, but a requirement that the Washington State Patrol establish and maintain a statewide toll-free hotline to allow the public to report animal abuse **was deleted in a substitute bill.** The deleted section would have facilitated community reporting and law enforcement response to animal abuse by creating



a central repository of incidents of animal abuse, neglect fighting, and sexual abuse for inclusion in the FBI's National Incident Based Reporting System. The State Patrol would have referred incidents to local law enforcement agencies for investigation as appropriate. The animal fighting provisions were **signed into law by the Governor on April 29 and took effect July 28.**

### *“CASA for Animals”*



**Illinois HB 1631** would have allowed pro bono attorneys or law student advocates to be court-appointed to represent the health or safety of a cat or dog in judicial proceedings. The bill was in the House Rules Committee **when the legislature adjourned.**



**Maine LD 1442** would allow a court to appoint volunteer advocates for justice in animal cruelty cases, either under its own initiative or upon the request of a party or counsel. Advocates could monitor the proceedings, consult with individuals and records relevant to the case, and present appropriate information and recommendations. The bill passed both the House and Senate and was held by the Governor for review at the beginning of the next legislative session which began on Sept. 19.



**Michigan HB 4592** would allow courts to appoint pro bono lawyers or law students as advocates to represent the interests of animals in criminal prosecutions. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



**New Jersey A 4840** and **S 3322** would authorize courts to appoint advocates in criminal cases that affect the welfare or care of cats or dogs. Advocates would monitor the case, attend hearings, consult with relevant individuals, review records, and present information and recommendations to the court in the animals' best interests. **A 4840** is in the Assembly Judiciary Committee; **S 3322** was reported favorably out of the Senate Judiciary Committee.



**New York A 25, S 3027** and **A 702** would create court-appointed advocates for animals. **A 25** and **S 3027** are in the Judiciary Committees; **A 702** is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.



### **What is The LINK?**

**Legislation...**

**Intervention...**

**Networking...**

**Knowledge...**

*...to protect **ALL** vulnerable members of the family*

## THE LINK... IN THE NEWS



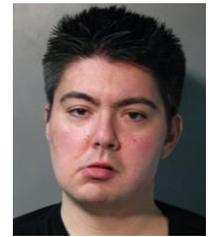
James Garcia

### Son Charged with Killing Mother's Dog After She Refused to Let Him Have Sex in her Home

A man who had been staying with his parents off and on for years was charged with allegedly throwing his mother's small dog to its death in a fit of rage after she told him he could not bring a woman home to have sex with her. James Garcia, 39, was arrested on charges involving the death of "Roxy," who was reportedly flung 20 feet across the house from the sofa into the kitchen, the [San Antonio Express-News](#) reported.

### New York Man with Extensive Criminal Record Charged in Cats' Brutal Deaths

A Long Island, N.Y. man with an extensive criminal record was charged on Nov. 27 with felony aggravated cruelty to animals for allegedly beating six kittens and cats to death with what the Nassau County District Attorney's Animal Crimes Unit called "grievous" and "gruesome" injuries. [Newsday](#) reported that Justin J. Visconti, 37, of Mineola, was arrested and that the cats were probably tortured before they died from blunt force trauma. Visconti is said to have a criminal record that includes arrests for grand larceny, stalking, coercion, aggravated harassment, and criminal contempt, and is on probation until 2022. He faces up to two years in prison.



Justin Visconti

## LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

**Dec. 10 – Pittsfield, Mass.:** [HAVEN](#) (the Human-Animal Violence Education network) will meet at the Berkshire Humane Society. Martha Smith-Blackmore will be the featured speaker.

**Jan. 25, 2020 – Tokyo, Japan:** Keiko and Sakiko Yamazaki will lecture on how The Link affects children as part of the Animal Literacy Research Institute's 2<sup>nd</sup> [Advanced Animal-Assisted Intervention Workshop](#).

**Jan. 30-31, 2020 – Owasso, Okla.:** Kathleen Romero of the Oklahoma Link Coalition will present at the Demand Project's [Beyond Awareness Summit](#) addressing crimes against children and sex trafficking.

**Feb. 19, 2020: Ithaca, N.Y.:** Phil Arkow will address the veterinarian's role in responding to family violence to the Ethics and Animal Care class at the [Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine](#).

**March 26-27, 2020 – Novato, Calif.:** Phil Arkow will present on The Link to staff of the [Marin Humane Society](#) and community agencies.

**June 16, 2020 (online):** Phil Arkow will present a webinar on "Improving Public Safety by Stopping Animal Cruelty: The Link" for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).



## 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

#### Phil Arkow, Coordinator

Consultant, ASPCA  
Chair, Animal Abuse & Family Violence Prevention Project,  
The Latham Foundation  
Etowah, N. Car.

#### Lesley Ashworth

Founder/President, American Veterinary Charitable Fund  
Consultant, Ohio Domestic Violence Network  
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#### Diane Balkin, J.D.

Senior Staff Attorney, Animal Legal Defense Fund  
Past President, Int'l. Veterinary Forensic Sciences Assn.  
Denver, Colo.

#### Barbara W. Boat, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Univ. of Cincinnati College of Medicine  
Exec. Director, Childhood Trust, Cincinnati Children's Hospital  
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Colorado State University School of Social Work  
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#### Jane A. Hunt

Community Volunteer  
Loveland, Colo.

#### Mark Kumpf, CAWA

Director, Detroit Animal Care & Control  
Detroit, Mich.

#### Randall Lockwood, Ph.D.

Consultant,  
ASPCA  
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#### Paul Needham

Chair, Education Committee,  
National Adult Protective Services Association  
Shawnee, Okla.

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Animal Welfare Scientist, Animal Welfare Division  
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#### Allie Phillips, J.D.

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#### Gale Rasin, J.D.

Retired Associate Judge, Baltimore City Circuit Court,  
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#### Chelsea Rider, J.D.

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#### Chris Risley-Curtiss, MSSW, Ph.D.

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#### Hugh Tebault III

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#### John Thompson

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