



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

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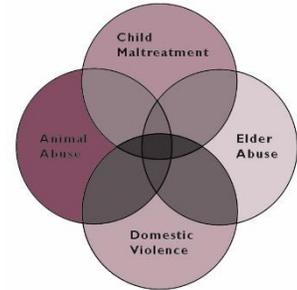
ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE



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[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor



SPECIAL FOCUS: COVID-19 and The Link DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... AND THE LINK Coronavirus Lockdowns May Increase Risk of Family Violence

An unintended consequence of the coronavirus pandemic may be an increase in family violence, according to a researcher whose cutting-edge work has heightened awareness of the risk of domestic violence and animal abuse to first responders (See the [July 2019 LINK-Letter](#)).



Andrew Campbell

Andrew Campbell will conduct a Justice Clearinghouse [webinar](#) on “Unintended Consequences of the Coronavirus Response: Increasing Risk of Family Violence” on April 15. He will discuss how fear-induced stress, mass closures, limited childcare options, loss of income, social isolation, feelings of helplessness, and long periods of families sequestered increase the risk of domestic, child and animal abuse. Campbell has also posted a [YouTube video](#) addressing the issue.

These forces combine to present great risks to the mental health of families, many of whom are already living with the daily threat of domestic violence. Increased time spent together and feelings of isolation in these already stressed families could increase victimization both during and after the outbreak. “All victim-serving agencies must be aware of the increased risk for all in these homes, especially children and pets as they often represent the most vulnerable household members,” Campbell told *The LINK-Letter*.

| How the Coronavirus response is increasing the risk of family violence | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Action | Effect |
| Schools, libraries, and churches close. | All critical to family routines, children now spending MUCH more time in the home. |
| Bars and restaurants close. | 74% of “highest-risk” perps abuse alcohol and/or have mental illness. Now drinking more IN home. |
| Social Distancing widely encouraged. | Common isolation tactic of domestic violence abusers, now compounded further. |
| Limited resources and layoffs. | Known risk factors for abuse and likely to compound stress and spike risk in home. |
| Instructed to self-quarantine. | Victims often wait until abuser leaves to call 911, may not have opportunity to do so now. |

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Data from: Campbell, A. M., Thompson, S. L., Harris, T. L., & Wiehe, S. E. (2018). Intimate Partner Violence and Pet Abuse: Responding Law Enforcement Officers' Observations and Victim Reports From the Scene. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518759653>

Link Dangers of Sheltering-in-Place Detailed

The National Link Coalition has collaborated with the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) and Andrew Campbell (*see preceding article*) to produce [a letter](#) explaining in greater depth the increased risks of domestic, animal and child abuse that authorities are expecting in the wake of extended periods of quarantines and shelter-in-place regulations:



**ANIMAL LEGAL
DEFENSE FUND**

The Hidden Dangers of Lockdown Orders for Domestic Violence Victims and Companion Animals

This article is co-authored by the Animal Legal Defense Fund; Phil Arkow, Coordinator, the National Link Coalition; and Andrew Campbell, CEO, Campbell Research & Consulting

As shelter-in-place orders are given across the nation, there is a growing concern that family violence will be on the rise. Lockdown orders have us all finding new ways of coping with increased anxiety, economic stressors, cabin fever from close confinement, inundation of negative news, balancing children's needs for education and constant stimulation, and general uncertainty. However, the results of shelter-in-place orders can be devastating for domestic violence victims. Having limited access to anything – or anyone – outside of the home, domestic violence victims are facing a disturbing reality: constant confinement with their abusers; unavailable resources; and increased vulnerability. With more people – and animals – confined to their homes, experts believe that rates of domestic violence will dramatically increase. In fact, China's media reported that domestic violence tripled last month during the country's mandatory lockdown, and France is reporting a 32% increase.

While social distancing may be new to many of us, for domestic violence victims, being kept away from loved ones, work, and social gatherings is, sadly, nothing new. Abusers use a variety of control tactics to exert power over others, including restricting victims' movements to certain places, cutting off resources, and keeping victims away from loved ones. With the heightened restrictions currently in place for so many Americans for the foreseeable future, abusers may use the COVID-19 outbreak to exercise further control over human and animal victims, including discouraging them from leaving the home for any reason, all in the name of preventing potential exposure to the coronavirus. This may make it nearly impossible for victims to obtain the essential services they need.

Additionally, the COVID-19 crisis presents some unique problems for domestic violence victims, particularly with obtaining treatment for abuse-related injuries. With the growing tally of reported COVID-19 cases, many victims are reluctant to seek medical treatment at hospitals out of fear of getting exposed to the coronavirus. Consequently, they are forgoing dire medical and veterinary care and opportunities to expose their abusers. Experts believe that abusers may exploit this fear and escalate their violence because they know their victims may be less likely to obtain treatment. Abusers themselves may be under additional financial stress and may take out their aggression on the most convenient targets. With bars and restaurants closed, abusers may also be drinking more at home. Concurrently, there have been reports of alarming increases in the sale of firearms and ammunition.

Unfortunately, humans are not the only vulnerable victims in the home. Often, pets are the collateral victims of domestic violence and are used as pawns by abusers to manipulate and control human victims. Companion animals may often be the sole source of unconditional love, security, stability, companionship, and comfort – all critical components of mental health – for victims of domestic violence. In turn, abusers harm – and in some intensified acts of violence, kill – animals in the home to

further control their human victims. Many of these appalling acts of violence are done in front of human victims. In fact, abusers may often go out of their way to make sure any children residing in the home witness the acts of animal abuse to further intensify the effect on the household.

Domestic violence victims frequently use windows of opportunity to seek refuge from their abuse, waiting until they are alone or out of the home to find help. These opportunities are no longer readily available due to many schools and workplaces closing and social gatherings eliminated. Having no way of escaping confinement with their abusers is likely taking a toll on the emotional, physical, and mental wellbeing of all victims. Now, more than ever, all domestic violence victims need access to help and resources they urgently need.

Many shelters are reeling from the COVID-19 crisis, trying their best to remain open, but it has not been easy. In some cities, domestic violence shelters have been deemed essential services, but are seeing their numbers at or near capacity. In other cities, particularly smaller shelters have seen a decrease in staffing levels and volunteer support, leading to the termination of walk-in services, making it difficult for people to obtain resources and help. However, domestic violence agencies are trying their best to adapt. Many are utilizing alternative ways to communicate with victims, by increasing phone and virtual services. While it may still be difficult for victims to contact agencies for help and resources because they have limited time away from their abusers, it is imperative that victims have alternative methods to contact agencies for help.

Shelters should be aware that pets in the home are also at an increased risk of experiencing violence because of COVID-19. Many domestic violence victims stay in abusive situations because they are either unable to take their companion animal with them or have no safe place to foster or re-home their animal. In turn, shelters and domestic violence hotlines should ask callers about companion animals in the home and work with callers on including companion animals in any escape plans. Furthermore, shelters should be aware of resources available to domestic violence victims with companion animals. The [Animal Welfare Institute](#), [RedRover](#), and [Sheltering Animals & Families Together™](#) maintain lists of organizations that either provide co-sheltering services to domestic violence victims and their companion animals or have cooperative agreements with community agencies for off-site foster care.

While these are dire times for domestic violence victims, social services are available. During this national crisis, there is great opportunity for domestic violence shelters and animal welfare providers to improve collaborations and ensure that victims of domestic violence and their companion animals receive the resources and assistance they need, both during this pandemic and thereafter.

If you or a loved one are experiencing domestic violence, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or <https://www.thehotline.org/>.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For additional insight into the increased COVID-19 risks of family violence in these times, see the March 24 [New York Times](#) or Andrew Campbell's [Forensic Science International](#) article. Some states, such as North Carolina, have an exemption in stay-at-home orders allowing individuals whose homes are unsafe, such as victims of domestic violence, to leave and stay at a safe alternate location. State domestic violence coalitions, such as [Violence Free Colorado](#), have published extensive resource guides addressing not only the impact of COVID-19 on domestic violence families but also on LGBTQ, undocumented immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities, the homeless, and people with disabilities. The [Charlotte Observer](#) and the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) reported on additional challenges survivors face in getting protective orders, custody hearings and criminal cases when courts are closed, with innovative solutions such as applying for protection orders by FaceTime or email; [Women Against Abuse](#) in Philadelphia reported a 30% increase in calls for assistance.

Spain Addresses Pets' and Survivors' Needs During COVID-19 Crisis



Despite the massive COVID-19 crisis that has overwhelmed the Spanish healthcare system and caused the deaths of thousands of residents, the Spanish government has recognized the implications of the crisis on domestic violence victims and their pets and taken steps to protect them as the pandemic rages on.

Recognizing the increased risks of domestic violence and animal abuse during the turmoil, emotional and financial strains and quarantine regulations, the Ministry of Equality, the Animal Rights Directorate and VioPet have launched a plan to assist domestic violence victims who need safe havens for their animals.

Because emergency shelters and hospitals rarely allow animals to accompany people, a new hotline phone number has been implemented specifically for victims who need free foster homes for their animals. In just the first 24 hours of setting up the hotline and asking the public to provide foster homes, some 100 families agreed and two high-risk cases were activated, [VioPet](#) founder Dr. Nuría Querol tells *The LINK-Letter*.

Despite the quarantine regulations, Spanish dog owners are permitted to take their dogs for short walks just for basic elimination purposes as long as there is no contact with other people or animals. Dog owners must carry bottles of water and detergent to clean up any urine and bag the dog's feces, and try to time the walks when there are fewer people out and about.

People who feed feral cat colonies are urged to go outdoors only during less busy times and try to space out the feedings to minimize the number of days they might be exposed. Workers are allowed to feed and care for animals on farms and in animal shelters.

VioPet was founded in 2013 to coordinate temporary and permanent care for animal victims of domestic violence in Spain. Its motto is that no woman should have to choose between her own safety and that of her pets. Querol says that the organization received its incorporation status during the lockdown and is now a country-wide program endorsed and promoted by the government.



\$2,000,000 in Federal Grants Available for Co-Sheltering Pets and Domestic Violence Survivors

The U.S. Department of Justice is seeking applicants for up to \$2,000,000 in grant funds which will support shelter and transitional housing services to victims of domestic violence and their companion animals. The DOJ's Office for Victims of Crime anticipates awarding five grants of up to \$400,000 each for a 36-month period of performance.



The deadline for applications is May 29. **A webinar explaining the program in more detail is scheduled for 3:30 – 5:00 p.m. EDT Tuesday, April 14.** The webinar, which is optional but strongly encouraged, will review requirements and answer questions. **Participation in the webinar is optional, but strongly encouraged.** [Click here to register for the webinar.](#)

The objectives of the grants are to:

- Increase the number of shelter beds and transitional housing options to meet the needs of victims of domestic violence who need shelter or housing for them and their companion animals; and
- Provide training to local stakeholders on (1) the link between domestic violence and the abuse and neglect of companion animals; (2) the needs of victims of domestic violence; (3) best practices for providing, or referring, support services to such victims; and (4) best practices in designing and delivering services that protect victims' confidentiality.

The [OVC FY 2020 Emergency and Transitional Pet Shelter and Housing Assistance Grant Program](#) is open to state, territorial, tribal and local governments; organizations and coalitions addressing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking; and animal shelters and other animal welfare organizations that collaborate with such governmental or domestic violence organizations.

Fraternal Order of Police Supports Kentucky Link Bill

The [Kentucky chapter of the Fraternal Order of Police](#) has taken the unusual step of endorsing a Link bill. **HB 216** would include violence against an animal used as coercive conduct within the statutory definitions of “domestic violence and abuse” and “dating violence and abuse” and would allow judges to award possession of a domestic animal to the petitioner in a protection-from-abuse procedure.



In a letter dated March 5 to primary sponsor Rep. Walker Thomas (R – Hopkinsville) supporting the measure, Drew Fox, Governmental Affairs Chair, wrote, “Kentucky law enforcement is uniquely positioned to see the worst in society. The men and women are bold and work valiantly on the front lines of defense for victims of domestic violence. We know that often pets are cruelly used by perpetrators as a means of coercion with victims of domestic violence and abuse. We appreciate your care and concern for a criminal justice system that works towards true justice and seeks to serve all victims.”

Florida Benchbook for Judges Emphasizes the Risk Factor of Animal Abuse Against Pets



The Office of the State Courts Administrator in Florida has produced a comprehensive Domestic Violence Benchbook for judges that includes significant references to the impact of animal abuse within the context of intimate partner violence and how such incidents can be included in judicial decisions.

The 280-page manual, [Florida's Domestic Violence Benchbook](#), was written in March, 2017 as a compilation of promising and science-informed practices and as a legal guide for use in legal proceedings involving interpersonal violence. The information includes legal and non-legal considerations in domestic violence cases and includes sections on such topics as mandatory reporting, injunction hearings, civil and criminal proceedings, child support concerns, injunctive relief, and firearms and domestic violence.

The Benchbook includes a **Fact Sheet on Violence Toward Family Pets** from the Office of Court Improvement. It begins with, "One common tactic of power and control used by batterers is the use of threats, to harm or kill the family pets." Citing statistics of how many battered spouses and partners delay leaving abusive situations due to fear for their pets' safety, it adds, "Women residing at domestic violence shelters were nearly 11 times more likely to report that their partner had hurt or killed pets than a comparison group of women who said they had not experienced intimate violence."

Florida's legislature considered the issue so serious that a provision in the domestic violence injunction statute § 741.30(6)(b)(4) reads:

"In determining whether a petitioner has reasonable cause to believe he or she is in imminent danger of becoming a victim of domestic violence, the court shall consider and evaluate all relevant factors alleged in the petition, including, but not limited to... whether the respondent has intentionally injured or killed a family pet."

The Benchbook advises court officials to look for evidence of animal abuse, and to include such information in its evaluation of the danger the respondent poses to the petitioner. The Benchbook describes three practices that courts can use to determine whether there has been any animal abuse:

- Asking whether there is a family pet.
- Eliciting testimony from both parties about any animal abuse alleged in the petition.
- Detailing to the parties that the presence of animal abuse can be considered by the court; parties may not be aware that courts can consider animal abuse in a domestic violence hearing.

It advises judges that courts can include in the "contact" portion of the injunction a provision barring the respondent from interacting with the pet and can authorize the petitioner to acquire family pets when he or she returns to the home with a law enforcement officer to obtain clothes and other personal effects.

The section concludes:

"Animal abuse is especially tragic when it is done as a method of control of or abuse to another person. The steps described above may increase petitioner safety, reduce violence, and protect family pets from harm."

Banfield Foundation Announces Results of Safer Together Initiative Inaugural Year



The [Banfield Foundation](#), which in 2019 announced an ambitious four-year plan to contribute \$1,000,000 to improve the welfare of animals caught up in the web of domestic violence (*See the [March 2019 LINK-Letter](#)*), is reporting its progress through the first year of the Safer Together Initiative. Executive Director Kim Van Syoc reports that in its first year, the initiative:

- Awarded \$311,806 through 21 Safer Together Grants.
- Helped 3,116 pets in 15 states.
- Educated more 100 veterinary professionals through a Safer Together continuing education training at two veterinary conferences.
- Launched a PSA in partnership with Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russel Wilson prior to National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, helping to raise awareness with the general public. The PSA has aired nationally nearly 7,000 times.
- Received the “2019 Pet Excellence Award” from Lost Our Home Pet Rescue in Phoenix, Ariz., honoring a person or organization that has made an extraordinary contribution to pets in Arizona.

“Our initial hope was to create a program that can provide organizations with as many resources as possible, whether it’s grant dollars, informational resources, or connections to experts. In our inaugural year, we not only achieved these goals, but we’ve also experienced an increase in requests from industry and nonprofit partners, as well as from associates within the Mars family, wanting to join our efforts and make a difference,” Van Syoc tells *The LINK-Letter*.

Future plans include launching the Humane State program in New Jersey, a three-year initiative in partnership with HSUS that will provide free bi-annual intensive training to those who have contact with animals, including animal welfare experts, shelter workers and volunteers, law enforcement, prosecutors, veterinarians, animal control, health department, and more. Through 32 core education tracks, the program aims to improve systemic issues that negatively affect pets. “This partnership stemmed from conversations about Safer Together and our work to educate veterinarians and other animal welfare professions about the impact of abuse on pets,” Van Syoc said.

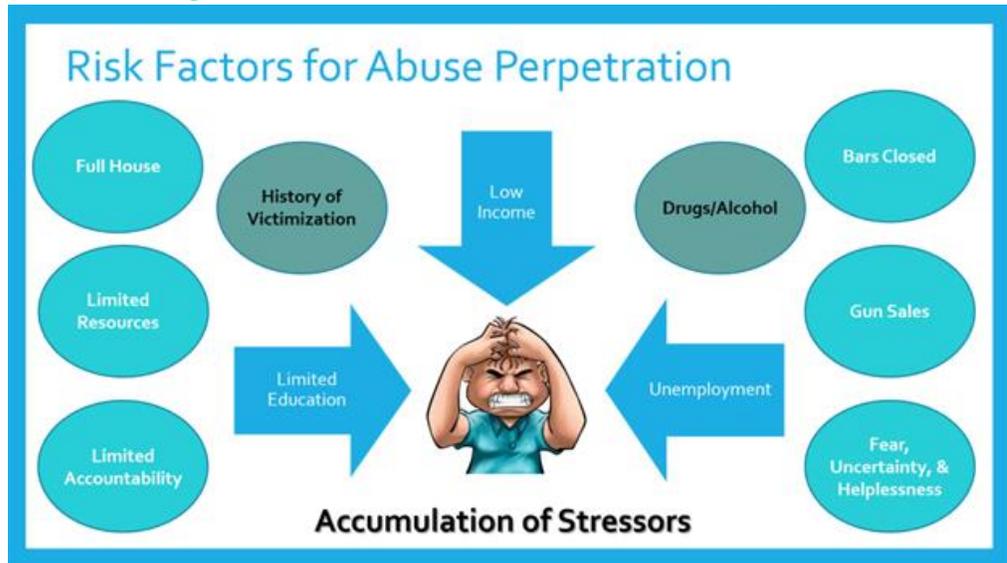
The Foundation is the charitable arm of the national chain of some 1,200 veterinary clinics.

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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

Sheltering-in-Home Programs Add Risk Factors for Family Violence

Andrew Campbell (See earlier articles) presented a model of how the additional stressors (blue ovals) of COVID-19 lockdowns exacerbate known risk factors for family violence, on a webinar for the [Positive Links](#) coalition in New Mexico on “Social Distancing, Isolation, and the Impact on Family Violence.”



Pet Custody Bills Spotlighted in Philadelphia

The growing interest of pet custody laws – in which divorce courts can award custody of pets in the animals’ best interest, similar to long-established child custody proceedings – received additional public awareness on March 18 when [the Philadelphia Inquirer](#) spotlighted a bill in the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

If enacted, **HB 1432** would establish factors for judges to consider when establishing proper guardianship for a pet:

- Whether it was acquired prior to or during the marriage.
- The animal’s basic daily needs.
- Who generally has provided veterinary care and social interaction for the pet.
- Who has ensured compliance with licensing and other regulations.
- Who has the greater financial ability to support the animal.



Rep. Anita Astorino Kulik

Advocates for the bill argue that the law has not caught up with the reality of 21st Century households in which increasing numbers of people consider their pets as members of the family rather than as inanimate property. State Rep. Anita Astorino Kulik (D – Allegheny) said she proposed the bill based on her experience as an attorney in divorce proceedings. “At times, a pet can be used by one party as leverage against the other when negotiating the division of assets,” she said, a pattern of coercive control familiar in domestic violence scenarios.

The article noted, however, potential obstacles, such as how to handle disputes between nonmarried couples and whether courts could order someone to provide financial support for the pet.

Pet custody laws were pioneered in Alaska in 2016, followed in subsequent years by Illinois, California and New Hampshire. In addition to Pennsylvania, pet custody bills are currently being considered in Georgia, Indiana and New York.

CHILD PROTECTION... AND THE LINK

COVID-19 Lockdowns Causing Increase in Child Abuse Cases

The increased stressors impacting families quarantined or under lockdown by the COVID-19 pandemic are reportedly causing a significant spike in reports of child abuse, according to doctors at Cook Children’s Medical Center in Ft. Worth, Texas. The physicians say they believe the stresses from the coronavirus pandemic are linked to six cases of severe child abuse seen at the hospital in one week in late March; the hospital normally sees that many cases over an entire month.



Christi Thornhill

“We knew an increase in abuse was going to occur, but this happened faster than we ever imagined,” Christi Thornhill, director of the hospital’s trauma program, told [KTVT-TV](#). This happened in a week and these are really bad abuse cases,” she added, noting that all of the children who had been admitted were under 4 years old.

Jamye Coffman, M.D., medical director of the Cook Children’s Center for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, said these unprecedented times have simply become too much for some parents. “People have so much increased stress right now,” Coffman said. “They’ve got financial stress. Some people lost their job or are worried about keeping their current job. They lost their income. You’ve got stress from being overcrowded. Everyone’s cooped up together. They feel like they can’t get away from each other. These stressors can lead to abuse.”



Jamye Coffman

Coffman said another factor is that people can’t get away from pandemic news on TV and social media. With lockdowns, parents can’t get time by themselves if schools are closed and it’s more difficult to take children to a grandparent or neighbor’s house. The number-one reporter of child abuse continues to be teachers, but kids aren’t seeing them right now.

The hospital suggested that parents can reach out to family members and friends because maintaining human connections makes us feel less isolated. Don’t be afraid to say, “I’m having a hard time” or even, “My kids are driving me nuts.”

“We worry about who will see abuse and report it right now,” Thornhill said. “That’s where we need neighbors and other family members to pay attention. If you hear the child next door screaming, call for help. All of us need to be involved. As much as most of us don’t want to, we all must make it our business.”

Podcast Helps Parents to “Hold On to Sanity” During Lockdowns

The ACES Connection (Adverse Childhood Experiences) is featuring a [group discussion](#) with five trauma-informed parenting experts aimed at helping parents who are overwhelmed with managing 24/7 care of children, schooling, meals, work, and illness during the pandemic. “We’re all going to have to learn how to take the foot off the gas pedal. This is going to be a different kind of period to settle into, being with each other and helping each other feel safe. Have some faith, have some fun, and that will be a lot better than worrying about whether their worksheets are getting done,” advises Dr. Bruce Perry during the hour-long video. Joining Perry are representatives from StopSpanking.org, Parenting Beyond Punishment, Parenting for Liberation, and Latinx Parenting.

COVID-19 and ANIMAL PROTECTION



Protecting Pets in a Pandemic

As animal programs around the world join other institutions forced to suspend many services and restrict contacts, many pet owners are concerned about the welfare of their companion animals during a lockdown. Many animal shelters, veterinarians and pet supply stores are considered “essential services” and may remain open during shelter-in-place edicts, but many are not, and those that remain open may not be able to offer the usual full range of services.

Claudine Wilkins, founder of the Animal Protection Society and Animal Law Source in Georgia, has prepared a [Pet Plan](#) to help the public continue to care for their companion animals during the crisis. “Leaving pets behind is not acceptable and stories emerging of animals being abandoned or dumped at shelters from Europe, China, the U.S., and now Georgia, are disturbing,” she tells *The LINK-Letter*.

Pets can offer a calming assurance that we will get through this unprecedented change in our daily lives. Before the inevitable spike in cases reaches your community, have a plan for your pets should you or a family member get sick. The plan includes:

- Keep your companion animals with you if you self-quarantine.
- Have a plan for a trusted person(s) to care for your pet should you become unable to do so. Contact them now instead of waiting for an emergency. Have a backup caretaker in case they are unable to care for your pet.
- Make sure you have enough pet food, pet medicines, leashes, toys, treats, crates and cages, and whatever else your pet is accustomed to.
- Your caretakers should have access to your pets’ records and veterinarian. Give your pet caretaker and backup a list that includes: pet(s)’ names, description, if spayed or neutered, medical needs, microchip number, location of pet records, pet essentials veterinarian’s contact information, pet’s routine, and any other information you believe is needed to ensure continuity of care for your pet. Leave this information and all necessary supplies, food and medications in a conspicuous place in your home in case of an emergency and there is no time to communicate.
- If a caretaker is coming to your house, give them full access if you have to leave abruptly. Provide codes to alarms, garage, and keys. Alert neighbors that caretakers may come for your pets.
- Make sure that cats and dogs are wearing collars and license, rabies and ID tags that are up to date. The average citizen who finds your pet won’t be able to scan for a chip, but they will probably be able to read the tag on the collar so make sure it has your phone number.
- If you cannot find anyone willing to step up and you must leave your home for an emergency, let first responders and 911 dispatchers know about all pets in your home and your veterinarian’s contact.
- Check with the AVMA on [updates about COVID-19](#) and pets.
- Maintain good hygiene practices, including washing your hands when interacting with pets. If you are sick refrain from kissing your pets.
- Use veterinary telemedicine to minimize exposure and so veterinarians can see only those patients that really need to be seen.

Sheltering-in-Place Might be Stressful for Some Pets

Meanwhile, the stresses of 24/7 lockdowns might also be affecting our pets, argue some California animal behaviorists who say that our pets might not be thrilled to have everyone at home all day because they really wish they could sleep all day in peace. [KGO-TV](#) in San Francisco interviewed several pet experts who suggested that some cats and dogs might love the extra bonding of the shelter-in-place phenomenon, but others might pick up on their humans' stress or prefer the peace and quiet of the good old days. Dogs might be missing the exercise and contacts at the dog park. Cat behaviorist Marilyn Krieger suggested creating "people-free zones" in the house to give pets a place where they can retreat.

Emergency Grants Will Cover Pet Boarding for COVID-19 Patients



An [Emergency Boarding](#) grant program, supported by a generous donation from Purina-RedRover's Purple Leash Project, is now available to help animals belonging to owners who are hospitalized due to COVID-19. Grants will cover up to two weeks of boarding while the owner is being treated.

Applicants must: contact area boarding facilities to find reasonably priced options; ensure boarding is through a business and not an individual; provide a written estimate and final invoice; obtain the owner's permission if someone else submits the application; and provide updates on the pet owner's condition. Grants can also cover costs of vaccinations needed for the animal to enter boarding.

Nicole Forsyth, RedRover President & CEO, said the grants are designed to enhance the human-animal bonds that are even more important during times of crisis. "Knowing a pet is well cared for will hopefully bring some peace of mind to those undergoing COVID-19 treatment," she said

Home-Schooled Children Getting Humane Education During the Lockdowns

As shelter-in-place provisions are being implemented globally, and children are being kept out of traditional classrooms for what promises to be a long time, a humane education program in South Africa (where it's illegal under lockdown rules to even take your dog for a walk!) isn't going to let a major pandemic stop the progress of teaching children to be kind to animals. The Caring Classrooms project has produced a "[Lockdown Learning Pack](#)" to enable parents who are home-schooling their children during the pandemic to become better ambassadors for responsible pet ownership.



The free kit includes templates and easy instructions on how to make booklets on responsible pet ownership; an art competition offering a laptop as a first prize; teachers' guides to humane education; and continuing education points for teachers.

Caring Classrooms was developed by the Humane Education Trust to bring humane education into classrooms throughout South Africa. Such programs are aimed at inspiring kindness, empathy and compassion toward all living things as game-changers in a world where hostility, mistrust and bullying have become the norm.

COVID-19 and ELDER/DISABLED ABUSE

Adult Protective Services Stressed, Fearful of Deluge of Reports



Lori Delagrammatakis

“APS is open for business,” says Lori Delagrammatakis, Executive Director of the [National Adult Protective Services Association](#), “but it’s getting really stressful and there are a lot of issues playing out.”

In addition to the higher mortality risks associated with older populations and long-term care facilities, APS agencies are encountering unique problems. Clients with mental health, cognitive or dementia issues may wander off and not heed stay-at-home orders. Residential facilities may send them to hospitals, where they face additional risks, or evict them with nowhere else to go. APS agencies are hearing of cases where individuals are being denied entry into long-term care facilities fearful of new residents importing the coronavirus. Many nursing homes and assisted living facilities are severely short-staffed when minimum-wage workers who are not sick refuse to work in fear of becoming sick.

Because the APS system is not federally funded like child protective services, there are no federal guidelines. Consequently, each state’s APS agencies are responding differently. Many states are conducting their investigations only by telephone or calling law enforcement agencies to investigate in their stead, or conducting inspections only in a true emergency. Many agencies lack personal protective equipment because APS case workers are not considered essential personnel.

“We’re hearing that in most states reports of child and elder abuse are way down,” she adds. In the case of children, they’re not being seen by such mandated reporters as teachers and pediatricians. Many seniors are simply locking their doors and not letting anybody in. “But nobody believes that abuse is really way down,” she says.

“What we’re really worried about is the recovery period: when the shelter-at-home orders are lifted we expect to be deluged with reports. Family members will finally get to see their loved ones, agencies will get to see clients who they haven’t been able to see, plus there will be a tremendous backlog of cases to deal with. We expect APS workers will encounter dead bodies when they get to go out. We’re expecting the recovery period to be incredibly traumatic for both APS workers and clients.”

Meanwhile, caseworkers will experience feelings of guilt for not having visited a client sooner or if they think they brought COVID-19 to a client, plus they have anxieties about their own family members getting sick. Seniors, especially those with underlying health conditions, may be fearful of letting anyone in and so may isolate themselves even further.

Additional Resources for the Field

In addition to NAPSA’s resources, the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life has published a [resource list](#) to help agencies working with the elderly, disabled, and domestic violence survivors respond to the COVID-19 crisis. The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims is conducting a [series of webinars](#) addressing how COVID-19 is impacting vulnerable adult populations. A national strategy session on sustaining services for survivors with disabilities during the pandemic, for example, noted that “People with disabilities experience victimization at higher rates than people without disabilities, often rely on support people and personal care services to maintain their independence, and are also more likely to experience serious health consequences should they contract COVID-19. With this trifecta of challenges facing the disability community, it is critical that service providers come together.”

LAW ENFORCEMENT... AND THE LINK

Animal Welfare Investigations Involve Human-Animal Violence Link



Kendra Coulter (left) and Brittany Campbell

Two Canadian researchers who are exploring various models of animal cruelty enforcement are citing The Link as underpinning much of animal welfare investigations with their recommendation that a government-run program of humane law enforcement may be more effective than the more historic SPCA and humane society model.

Kendra Coulter, of the Brock University Department of Labor Studies, and Brittany Campbell, from the Carleton University Department of Sociology and Anthropology, write in a new study that a growing body of research that has “identified a clear link between violence against

animals and the simultaneous and/or subsequent abuse of people (especially women and children), and the use of animals to control and harm human victims,” would imply that animal protection work would normally fall within the purview of governmental law enforcement agencies. However, in British Commonwealth countries this responsibility often falls to nonprofit SPCAs that have smaller workforces and fewer resources, funding and enforcement tools than public policing agencies.

A Canadian exception is in the province of Manitoba with a publicly funded, rather than charity-based and donation-dependent, animal welfare enforcement system. Their article assesses the strengths and limitations of the Manitoba model and notes that animal control officers are part law enforcement, part social worker, part nurse, and part educator as they interact with people “in a range of socioeconomic situations including poverty and those confronting housing, health and/or mental health issues.”

These dimensions augment the challenge of animal cruelty investigations, they write, “and point to the need for cross-reporting, additional data collection, and greater collaboration among animal protection officers, social service providers, health care workers, and other sorts of supportive organizations. Animal protection work is an opportunity to improve the wellbeing of people and animals alike, when resources are available.”

Coulter and Campbell praise the Manitoba model which, they hope, will lead to “a more robust and consistent approach to animal protection” that would include additional engagement with human-focused law enforcement agencies to ensure that police better understand animal protection processes and resources and the human-animal violence Link. Ideally, such training and collaboration would also extend to and include child protection workers and those in the domestic violence sector.

They add, “There are compelling ethical, human safety, health, feminist, and workers’ rights reasons for governments to be investing in animal cruelty investigations. Manitoba has been a path-maker in this respect and had the foresight to see the multifaceted importance of developing public policy that reflects the multispecies nature of our families, community, and society and assigning public funds to reflect these realities,” they write.

-- Coulter, K., & Campbell, B. (2020). [Public investment in animal protection work: Data from Manitoba, Canada. *Animals*, 10, 516. doi:10.3390/ani10030516.](#)

BUILDING LINK AWARENESS

Link Helps Bridge Gaps Between Humane & Human Service Agencies

The Link is all about bridging gaps that often separate human and humane services agencies, and the Humane Society of the United States' [Animal Sheltering magazine](#) spotlighted several programs where animal shelters are taking a holistic approach of helping all vulnerable members of families.

"All in the Family" described a domestic violence survivor who feared for the safety of her three dogs if she left them behind. She contacted the [Animal Rescue League of Iowa](#) whose crisis foster home program took care of the dogs. But the conversation didn't end there.

It was apparent to ARL's then- Community Outreach Coordinator Kim Wolf that the woman needed help for more than her dogs and didn't know where to begin. Wolf connected her with Children & Families of Iowa, who coached her on how to leave her home and get transitional housing and counseling. Wolf kept in contact with the woman's case manager; a month later the survivor had found a long-term rental and was able to reclaim her dogs.



Wolf had come to the humane field with a background as a case manager for social service agencies, so she knew the many ways in which people's lives can unravel. At the ARL, she saw how those scenarios impact family pets. Consequently, she expanded the ARL's community partnerships to include such groups as the Red Cross, YWCA, food assistance programs, and organizations serving the homeless, disabled and elderly.

"It's just such a natural fit," she said. "Pets can't exist without people, and many people can't exist without their pets. We can provide the pet care, but if it's not done in concert with taking care of the human, then we're still going to have an unstable situation."



Jenny Coffey, LCSW, who also entered the animal field with a human services background, was surprised to find the humane and human services sector operating so independently. She is Director of Community Engagement for [Animal Haven](#) and also developed the Mayor's Alliance for New York City Animals where developed temporary housing for the pets of domestic violence victims. She also found that the city's animal and human service nonprofits didn't know each other and were afraid of "mission creep" if they reached out across species lines.

Coffey began training other social workers on how they could use animals to connect with their owners and facilitate the delivery of human services. "The animals are more than just animals. They should be included in assessments and continuum of care for the person," she said. Meanwhile, she trained animal shelter staff on interpersonal skills used by social workers to engage with people, assess their needs and guide them to available resources in New York City.

Smaller animal shelters can stretch their limited resources further by partnering with human support services, said Mandi Wyman, then-Executive Director of the [Carver-Scott Humane Society](#) in Chaska, Minn. Wyman’s background in social and homeless services helped in setting up a partnership with the Community Action Partnership’s food pantry. Both agencies were reaching the same clientele and since clients were already being screened by the CAP, the humane society didn’t need to screen its applicants for donated pet food.



“Neither organization has to re-create the wheel,” Wyman said. “Each of us is playing to our strengths. CAP is able to offer a new program to their clients without it costing them more money, and we ... don’t need to create a new process or food shelf. It’s more economical on both sides.”

The partnership also allowed the humane society to identify pre-screened vulnerable clients who needed other services, such as spay/neuter and veterinary assistance, pet behavior counseling, pet food meals on wheels.

Wyman noted that it makes sense for animal organizations to piggyback on the infrastructure of human service programs. Direct outreach to vulnerable populations is still a relatively new concept in the animal welfare field, but since many human service agencies have followed this model for decades, they already have systems in place and an established clientele.



The [New Hampshire SPCA](#) was featured for its work with the Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority to bring pet wellness clinics to housing complexes for low-income elderly and disabled people, a program also instituted at the Animal Rescue League of Iowa. Staff and volunteers from the Housing Authority and SPCA would go in teams to sign up clients for the SPCA’s services. The Housing Authority staff already “know those people and there’s a trust there. We would take a little while to build up those relationships,” said Lisa Dennison,

SPCA Executive Director.

The article offered guidelines about how animal shelters can begin to reach out to their human services counterparts and frame how collaboration can further each organization’s mission. “When you frame it the right way, it’s going to appeal even to people who don’t care about pets and don’t see the value in them,” said Wolf. “It’s all about using the right narrative and speaking to the goals that they have.”

“The philosophy in the animal welfare community is switching to addressing human problems that underlie crises with animals. Animal shelters’ service philosophy is evolving to recognize that treating symptoms of animal welfare problems, such as animal homelessness, abuse and neglect, is only a stopgap solution: to be truly effective, underlying causes such as community and family dysfunction and violence must be addressed.”

-- Ipsos-Reid: 2010 national urban animal report.

Animal Control Officers Learn About Bestiality/Child Sex Abuse Links

Joye Keeley, Coordinator of the [Kentucky Link Coalition](#), presented a class at the Kentucky Animal Care and Control Association conference on legal updates, search warrants and how to investigate bestiality. Keeley emphasized The Link between animal sexual abuse and child pornography and sexual assault to children and animals.



Indiana News Media Raise Awareness of The Link

Although the First Ladies of Boone County's Breakfast in Zionsville, Ind., was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, The Link and the National Link Coalition were featured prominently in an [article in the local newspaper](#) describing animal abuse's intersections with child maltreatment and domestic violence.



The April 14 breakfast would have featured Link researcher Andrew Campbell and Boone County Animal Control Officer Hannah Fisher. They planned to share data from Campbell's study **Kassie Frazier, left, and Hannah Fisher** which found overlapping animal control and domestic violence parallel that threaten public safety (*See the [September 2018 LINK-Letter](#)*): 74% of domestic violence victims were strangled, 78% feared the suspect would eventually kill them, and children were present in 60% of the incidents.

Kassie Frazier of Sylvia's Child Advocacy Center in Lebanon, Ind., said that children living in homes where animals are abused are 75% more likely to be abused themselves. "Research shows that if a family animal is being hurt, most likely there are other forms of violence going on in the home, not just domestic or child abuse," Frazier said, calling animal control officers a first line of defense for children. Proceeds from the breakfast would have benefited the child advocacy center, serving children who are victims of sexual or physical abuse.

Meanwhile, Indianapolis' [RTV-6 TV station](#) ran a feature describing how the pressures of extended sheltering-in-place are already leading to an increase in domestic violence. On March 30, domestic frustrations bubbled over and an estranged husband shot and killed a family friend and then himself.

"There is no excuse for domestic violence. As we all spend more time in our homes, know that you are not alone – there are many resources that remain available," said IMPD Officer Genae Cook.

Indianapolis' Beacon of Hope Crisis Center is reporting an increase in calls but a decrease in the ability of victims to get out of harm's way. "Victims are afraid to stay and they're afraid to leave right now, so that's pretty tragic. They're limited because their abusers are home right now so they may not be able to have access or easily contact us online," said crisis center CEO Sandra Ziebold.

THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

Link Bills We're Watching

Although many state legislatures are temporarily suspended, we're watching 93 bills that have been introduced this session. Please let us know if you hear of other bills not included here:

Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders



Arizona HB 2321 and **SB 1626** would allow courts to issue "severe threat orders of protection", which would prohibit respondents from possessing firearms based upon a credible threat of death or serious injury, against individuals who committed or attempted to commit acts of violence including cruelty to animals involving torture, serious injury or protracted suffering within the previous six months. **SB 1626** is in the Judiciary and Rules Committees.



Connecticut Raised Bill 107 would establish a task force to address various issues at shelters for the homeless, many of whom are survivors of domestic violence, including accommodating homeless persons who have pets and service animals. The bill is in the Joint Committee on Housing.



Florida HB 705/SB 752 would require every county in the state to designate at least one emergency shelter that can accommodate persons with pets. Pets would have to be contained in secure enclosures in a separate area. **SB 752** was tabled as **HB 705** was approved by the House 115-0 and by the Senate 39-0 and was sent to the Governor on March 6.



Florida SB 1082/HB 241 would allow courts to award temporary exclusive custody and care of non-agricultural animals to petitioners and to order defendants to temporarily have no contact with the animal and to not harm or take the animal away. **HB 241** was tabled as **SB 1082** was approved by the Senate 38-0 and by the House 117-0 and was sent to the Governor on March 11.



Georgia HB 582 would allow courts to create a pet animal care plan in marriage dissolution proceedings that would include the prevention of cruelty to animals and the provision of food, water, shelter, and veterinary care. Courts would have to determine whether the parties have joint ownership of the animals and recognize that a close and continuing owner-pet relationship and continuity in the pet's life will be in the pet's best interest. The bill was in progress when the legislative session was suspended indefinitely due to the coronavirus pandemic.



Indiana HB 1423 would have excluded a party's service animals from a court's division of property in any actions for a dissolution of marriage. *The bill died in the Judiciary Committee.*



Kentucky HB 216 would include violence against a domestic animal used as coercive conduct within the definitions of "domestic violence and abuse" and "dating violence and abuse" and would allow judges to award possession of a domestic animal to the petitioner in a protection-from-abuse procedure. The bill passed the House 81-3 and was sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Massachusetts H.3833 would cause individuals convicted of animal cruelty to be civilly liable to another individual for the infliction of emotional distress if the person knew, or should have

known, that the conduct was extreme and outrageous and would cause severe emotional distress. The bill is in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.



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 2299 would have authorized courts to include pets in orders of protection from domestic abuse. *The bill died in the Judiciary Committee.*



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 Judiciary and Children & Families 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.



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.



Pennsylvania HB 1432 would recognize that “companion animals are living beings that are generally regarded as cherished family members that offer their owners companionship, security and assistance,” and as a “special category of personal property” need to be granted special consideration in the division of property during marriage dissolution. Parties could enter into an enforceable agreement regarding the care and possession of companion animals, and the court shall consider all relevant factors. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.

Animal Hoarding



New York A 261 would create the crime of companion animal hoarding. The bill is in the Agriculture Committee.



New York A 4569 would add a new crime of aggravated neglect of a companion animal. The bill is in the Agriculture Committee.

Animal Sexual Abuse

 **Hawai'i HB 1618/SB 2718** would prohibit subjecting an animal to sexual contact, permitting such activity to occur, or obtaining or organizing an event with the intent of subjecting an animal to sexual contact. Offenses would be a Class C felony or a Class B felony if a minor were exposed to the crime. Convicted offenders would be required to: surrender all animals in their custody; reimburse animal services agencies for the costs of the animals' care; undergo psychological or psychiatric treatment; make restitution to the animals' owners; and be barred from being around animals for at least five years. **HB 1618 died; SB 2718** passed the Senate unanimously and was sent to the House Judiciary and Agriculture Committees when the Legislature recessed indefinitely due to the pandemic.

 **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 where a Study Order was issued.

 **New York A 8744** would establish the crimes of sexual conduct with an animal, a Class A misdemeanor, and sexual conduct with an animal resulting in injury or death, a Class E felony. The bill is in the Agriculture 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.

 **Virginia HB 1065** would make it a Class 6 felony to create, record, distribute, sell, advertise, or appear in any video or still image of animal cruelty. Images used in evidence would be exempt. The bill was stricken from the docket of the Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources.

 **Wisconsin SB 139** increases 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 are further enhanced if a child is involved. Offenders must register as a sex offender; current law only permits courts to order such registration.



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.

 **Maryland SB 101** and **HB 311** would establish the Court Dog and Child Witness Program in the state's circuit courts allowing "facility dogs" and "therapy dogs" to accompany child witnesses. The bills passed both houses and were sent to the Governor.

 **Massachusetts S.1027** would allow juveniles between the ages of 14 and 18 to be prosecuted if the criminal offense involved the infliction or threat of serious bodily harm to a person or an animal. The Judiciary Committee issued a Study Order to review the bill.



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. **A 1211** is in the Children and Families Committee. **S 3415** passed the Senate but died in the Assembly and was returned back to the Senate Domestic Animal Welfare 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.



Rhode Island H 7030 would allow parents, guardians and DCYF requesting a protective order for a child who is suffering from domestic abuse or sexual exploitation to award the plaintiff custody of household pets. The bill is being held for further study by the Judiciary Committee.



Rhode Island H 7130 would authorize courts to award sole possession of a domestic companion animal in a divorce or separation proceeding by considering the best interests of the animal, including: how, when and by whom the animal was acquired; who has assumed most of the animal's care; who spends the most time with the animal; which living arrangement would be best; and whether it would be in the best interests of the children to keep the animal in their domicile for care and affection. Joint custody decisions would include: length of the animal's stay with each party; costs of veterinary visits, daycare and the pet's other needs; and additional criteria the court deems important. The bill is being held for further study by the House Judiciary Committee.



South Carolina S 908 would allow individuals to remove a minor or an animal from a motor vehicle if either is experiencing a life- or extreme health-threatening situation and provide that individual with immunity from civil and criminal liability. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

“CASA for Animals”



California AB 2645 would allow courts to appoint an attorney or law student advocate to represent the interests of an animal that is the subject of criminal abuse or neglect proceedings.



Florida SB 1048 would have allowed courts to appoint an advocate for the interests of an animal and require the Florida Bar Association's Animal Law section to maintain a list of attorneys and certified legal interns who qualified as advocates. *The bill died in the Judiciary Committee.*



Illinois HB 3995 and **HB 5530** would permit courts to appoint a legal aid to represent the interests of a cat or dog when a person is facing charges of animal neglect or abuse. The Department of Natural Resources would have to create a database of legal professionals and paraprofessionals willing to provide such representation. **HB 3995** is in the House Rules Committee and **HB 5530** is in the House Judiciary - Criminal Committee.



Maine LD 1442 allows 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 will be able to 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 became law** on Jan. 12 without the signature of the Governor.



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 Hampshire HB 1164 would create a special advocate for cats and dogs that are neglected or otherwise treated cruelly. The bill is in the 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.



Rhode Island S 2698 and **HB 7912** would authorize courts to appoint pro bono attorneys and supervised law students to serve as animal advocates in animal cruelty and abuse cases, to serve the interests of justice. The bills are in their respective Judiciary Committees.

Animal Abuse and Elder Abuse



Maryland HB 33 and **SB 153** would add “the destruction of or harm to an animal” belonging to a vulnerable adult to the definition of severe emotional distress and abuse of a vulnerable adult. **HB 33** passed both houses and was sent to the Governor.



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 Abuse and Other Crimes



Guam Bill No. 185-35 would ban bestiality, enact pet protection orders, mandate reporting of animal abuse, impose post-conviction mental health evaluation and treatment, and increase penalties for offenses committed in the presence of a child or by persons with histories of family or sexual violence. The bill was in the Committee on Health, Tourism, Historic Preservation, Land, and Justice when the Legislature recessed indefinitely due to the coronavirus pandemic.



Mississippi HB 272 would have required law enforcement agencies investigating crimes against animals to use forms consistent with the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System and to label such crimes as animal abuse. *The bill died in the Judiciary Committee.*



New York A 1834 and **S 186**, "Kirby and Quigley's Law," would expand the definition of aggravated cruelty to animals to include harm to a companion animal during the commission of a felony. **A 1834** is in the Agriculture and **S 186** is in the Domestic Animal Welfare Committees.



New York A 2509 and **S 609** would add animal fighting as a criminal act when referring to enterprise corruption. **A 2509** is in the Assembly Codes Committee; **S 609** passed the Senate but died in the Assembly and was referred back to the Senate Codes Committee.



Pennsylvania HB 1071 would allow the state's sentencing guidelines to provide an enhancement in cases where a domestic animal is harmed or killed during the course of a criminal trespass or burglary. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.

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.



Iowa SF 3 and **SF 369** would permit courts to order psychological or psychiatric evaluation and treatment for adult when convicted of any of a variety of animal maltreatment offenses. Such evaluation and treatment would be mandatory of the offender is a juvenile or if the offense is an aggravated felony or misdemeanor. The bills are in the Senate Judiciary Committee. *SF 3 also addresses Cross-Reporting.*



Missouri HB 1320 would allow courts to impose psychological or psychiatric evaluation or treatment upon animal cruelty offenders as a condition of probation; evaluation or treatment would be mandatory upon second or subsequent offenses or if the crime involved animal torture or mutilation. *The bill also addresses cross-reporting.* The measure is in the Judiciary Committee.



New Hampshire HB 1449 would allow courts to order an animal hoarder to undergo a psychological or psychiatric evaluation and to undergo appropriate treatment. If the person were found to be not competent to stand trial, the court may order custody of the seized animals to be given to another person, shelter or rescue organization. The bill was approved by the Environment & Agriculture Committee and was sent to the full House.



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.

Cross-Reporting



Alabama SB 196 would make it a Class C misdemeanor for someone to submit a “frivolous” complaint alleging that an “animal enterprise” has engaged in animal cruelty. Persons found guilty of making a frivolous complaint would be required to pay the county or municipality the costs of conducting the investigation and any animal boarding fees that ensued. The bill was approved by the Senate Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry Committee.



Florida S 7000 would have declared that “early identification of animal abuse is another important tool in safeguarding children from abuse and neglect, providing needed support to families, and protecting animals.” It would have required child protective investigators to report suspected animal abuse to a supervisor within 72 hours for submission to a local animal control agency. Reporters would have been presumed to have acted in good faith and be immune from civil and criminal liability and administrative penalties. Animal control officers would have had to report suspect child abuse to the central child abuse hotline. Failure to cross-report would have been a second-degree misdemeanor for child protective workers and a third-degree felony for animal control officers. The Department of Children and Families, in conjunction with the Florida Animal Control Association, would have had to develop a one-hour training curriculum for all child protective investigators and animal control officers on the identification of and accurate and timely cross-reporting of abuse. *The bill was approved by the Senate 38-0 but died in the House.*



Florida HB 621/SB 1044 (“Allie’s Law”) would have required 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. *The bills died the House Business & Professions Subcommittee and the Senate Rules Committee.*



Hawai’i SB 2985/HB 2528, HB 2130 and **HB 2453** would require veterinarians who have reasonable cause to suspect that an animal has been killed or injured through participation in a staged animal fight or has been a victim of animal abuse or cruelty to promptly report the case to an appropriate law enforcement authority, with immunity from civil liability. **SB 2985** passed the Senate and the House Agriculture Committee and was sent to the House Judiciary Committee. **HB 2528** was approved by the House Agriculture and Judiciary Committees and was sent to the Finance Committee; **HB 2130** and **HB 2453** were referred to the Agriculture, Judiciary and Finance Committees. The bills were in their respective committees when the Legislature recessed indefinitely due to the pandemic.

 **Iowa SF 2029** and **HF 2374** would grant veterinarians immunity from administrative, civil and criminal liability for assisting in the investigation or prosecution of animal abuse, neglect, torture, fighting, or bestiality. **HF 2374** passed the House 97-0. **SF 3** would require veterinarians who conclude that an animal is being subjected to cruelty to report the incident to the local law enforcement agency, with immunity from civil and criminal liability and administrative disciplinary action for reporting in good faith; the law enforcement agency would have to report to the Department of Human Services if the investigation of suspected animal abuse indicated a minor child witnessed the incident. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee. *SF 3 also affects psychological evaluation of offenders.*

 **Kentucky SB 21**, which would have required veterinarians to report suspected abuse and provided immunity for a good-faith report, was amended to merely permit veterinarians to report and deleted the immunity provision. It passed the Senate 35-0 and was approved by the House Agriculture Committee and sent to the Rules Committee. **HB 60** would require veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse to an animal control officer. The bill is in the Licensing, Occupations & Administrative Regulations Committee. **HB 108** would provide civil and criminal immunity to veterinarians who, in good faith, report suspected animal abuse, provide records relating to such reports, and testify in any judicial proceedings relating from such reports. That bill is in the Agriculture Committee.

 **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.

 **Michigan SB 780** would require animal control officers to report suspected child abuse or neglect. The bill is in the Committee on Families, Seniors & Veterans.

 **Minnesota HF 1530** and **SF 1517** would grant veterinarians immunity from civil and criminal liability for reporting suspected animal cruelty in good faith and in the normal course of business. **HF 1530** is in the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Division; **SF 1517** is in the Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee.

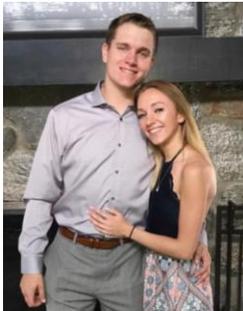
 **Missouri HB 1320** would grant immunity from civil liability to veterinarians, teachers, school personnel, and others who report suspected animal cruelty to law enforcement agencies. *The bill also addresses psychological evaluation and treatment.* The measure is in the Judiciary Committee.

 **New York A 1170** and **S 7815** 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 bills are in their respective Committees 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.

THE LINK... IN THE NEWS



Schunke and Jahn in happier days

Sailor Who Tortured Wife’s Dog Has Sentence Reduced

A former Norfolk, Va. sailor who had pled guilty to a felony charge of animal cruelty for torturing his wife’s dog to death had his sentence suspended after he completed an anger management course and had a year of uniform good behavior. Richard Schunke had his sentence reduced to a misdemeanor with all 12 months’ time suspended. Schunke, then 25, had pleaded guilty to viciously beating “Layla,” an 8-year-old beagle belonging to his newlywed wife, Laura Jahn, in 2017 and was facing a possible 5-year prison term. Schunke had said he beat the dog because she wouldn’t obey him. [WAVY-TV](#) reported that Schunke must now be on uniform good behavior for two years or he’ll be convicted of the felony charge. A day after Layla died, Jahn called a lawyer to file for divorce. Within 48 hours she moved back to her mother’s home in Connecticut, the Norfolk [Virginian-Pilot](#) reported.

Illegal Exotic Animals Seized in Narcotics Investigation

Drug Enforcement Administration authorities executing a search warrant in a narcotics case discovered a large collection of illegal exotic animals including a white Bengal tiger at a Mercedes, Texas residence that the [Harlingen Valley Star](#) called a “narco zoo.” The seized animals also included a bobcat, kinkajou, porcupines, llamas, emus and deer at the property which is only about two miles north of the Mexican border. No arrest warrants were issued but the investigation is continuing. Texas game wardens had to euthanize the bobcat and two deer because it would not have been safe to reintroduce them into the native population. The other animals were taken to the Austin zoo for medical evaluation and rehabilitation.



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 Please tell us what organization(s) you’re with
 and where you’re located.

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

NOTE: In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic restrictions, many of these scheduled meetings may have been canceled, rescheduled or converted into virtual formats. Click on the underlined hyperlinks to go to the conference information pages for more detailed information.

April 14 (online): Katherine Darke Schmitt of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime will lead a [webinar](#) explaining the process for government entities, domestic violence/sexual assault agencies and coalitions, and animal welfare organizations to apply for \$2,000,000 in grant funding to increase emergency and transitional housing opportunities for the animals of domestic violence survivors.

April 15 – London, U.K.: [The Links Group UK](#) will meet.

April 15 (online): Andrew Campbell will conduct a [webinar](#) for the Justice Clearinghouse on “Unintended Consequences of the Coronavirus Response: Increasing Risk of Family Violence.” The webinar will discuss how fear-induced stress, mass closures, limited childcare options, loss of income, reduced social contacts, feelings of helplessness, shifts in daily routines, and families sequestered for long periods of time are increasing the risk of domestic violence and animal abuse.

April 21 – Forsyth, Ga.: John Thompson, Claudine Wilkins, and Jim Crosby will speak at the [Crimes Against Animals Symposium](#) at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center on: the connections between gang investigations, animal abuse and animal fighting; The Link in domestic, child and elder abuse; Correlations between human trafficking and sex crimes against animals and children.

April 22 – New York City, N.Y.: Four speakers from the U.S., Canada, U.K., and Belgium were scheduled to lead an interactive forum on “Facility Dogs Give Voice to Victims of Trauma and Violence Worldwide” as part of an effort to create courthouse dogs programs in the E.U. as part of the American Bar Association’s [International Animal Law Committee](#)’s Spring meeting. The meeting has been rescheduled into a virtual format and details are being worked out.

April 23 (online): Jake Kamins, Animal Cruelty Deputy District Attorney for Oregon, will present a [webinar](#) on “Working with Your Local Vets: Creating Veterinary Partnerships among Law Enforcement, Prosecution and Your Veterinary Community” for the Justice Clearinghouse.

April 28 – Oklahoma City, Okla.: The [Oklahoma Link Coalition](#) will convene to discuss future plans.

April 29 (online): Phil Arkow and Jessica Bibbo will conduct a webinar on The Link between animal abuse and elder abuse for the [National Adult Protective Services Association](#).

May 7 (online): Virginia Senior Assistant Attorney General Michelle Welch will present a [webinar](#) on “Understanding The Link between Animal Abuse and Other Human Crimes: What Probation Officers Need to Know” for the Justice Clearinghouse.

May 20 (online): Phil Arkow will conduct two webinars on the Impact of Animal Abuse in Domestic Violence in Civilian and Military Families for the [National Organization for Victim Assistance](#).

May 20 – Dallas, Texas: The [Conference on Crimes Against Women](#) was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, but Allie Phillips’ presentations on “Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAFT)[®]: A Global Initiative that Saves Lives” and “Family Violence: Investigation, Prosecution and Service Strategies to Keep Families Safe” will be taught in a virtual format at a later date.

May 21 (online): Andrew Campbell will discuss the impact on child development and toxic stress of witnessing threats or violence against animals in a webinar on “More than Words: The Emotional Maltreatment of Children” for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

June 8: Bloomington, Ill.: Belinda Lewis will discuss multidisciplinary responses to animal hoarding, and Lauren Malmberg and Buzie Bertagnolli will discuss how unified efforts can get laws passed that protect both people and animals, at the 20th Annual [Prairie States Animal Welfare Conference](#).

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

June 18-19 – Providence, R.I.: Shelley Prebenda of the Animal Law Committee will present on The Link at the [Rhode Island Bar Association](#)’s Annual Meeting.

June 21 – Tampa, Fla.: The [National Coalition on Violence Against Animals](#) will hold its annual meeting.

July 9 (online): Martha Smith-Blackmore and Jessica Rock will present a [webinar](#) on “Processing Evidence in Animal Crime Cases” for the Justice Clearinghouse.

July 30 (online): Jake Kamins, Animal Cruelty Deputy District Attorney for Oregon, will present a [webinar](#) on “Working and Managing Inter-Agency Relationships: Investigating and Prosecuting Animal Abuse Cases” for the Justice Clearinghouse.

Sept. 3 (online): Katie Campbell will present a webinar on “Supporting Domestic Violence Survivors and their Pets through Collaboration” for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

Sept. 15 (online): Andrew Campbell will discuss the need to extend domestic violence family services to include pets, gaps in domestic violence research and literature, and improving access to children in homes where domestic violence is present, in a webinar on “Domestic Violence: The Forgotten Frontier” for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

Sept. 25-26 – Alpharetta, Ga.: Phil Arkow will present on The Link at the 23rd Annual [Animal Protection Conference and Expo](#).

Oct. 8-10 – Knoxville, Tenn.: The [6th International Veterinary Social Work Summit](#) will focus on Animals and Poverty: How Poverty Impacts the Human-Animal Relationship.

Oct. 13 – Tifton, Ga.: The Animal Protection Society/Animal Law Source will present a [day-long training](#) for law enforcement officers about animal cruelty, animal fighting, dangerous dogs, and The Link.

Oct. 16 – Quincy, Ill.: Phil Arkow will headline the 8th Judicial Circuit Family Violence Coordinating Council’s Domestic Violence Summit at the [Quincy Humane Society](#).

Oct. 16 – Cleveland, Ohio: Six speakers will address “Animal Abuse and Family Violence: Understanding The Link and Local Resources” for social workers at the [Greater Cleveland Elder Abuse/Domestic Violence Roundtable](#).

Nov. 6 – Toledo, Ohio: Vicki Deisner, Janet Hoy-Gerlach, and Steven Heaven will present at the [Toledo Community Partnership Against Child Abuse](#).



What is The LINK?

Legislation...

Intervention...

Networking...

Knowledge...

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



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

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

Lesley Ashworth

Former Director, Domestic Violence/Stalking Program,
Columbus City Attorney's Office/Prosecution Division
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Diane Balkin, J.D.

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