



# NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

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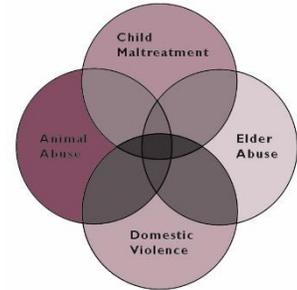
ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE



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[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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Assemblywoman Melissa Miller

## CROSS-REPORTING... and THE LINK “Bella’s Law” Would Mandate Cross-Reporting of Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence

A bill in the New York State General Assembly would require law enforcement authorities who investigate suspected cases of animal abuse to inform the Office of Children and Family Services to further investigate and determine if the accused individual has any history of family or domestic violence.

The measure, introduced by Assemblywoman Melissa Miller, may be the first in the U.S. to require cross-reporting of animal abuse and domestic violence. Many states have either mandated or permitted cross reporting between animal abuse and child abuse investigators and, to a lesser extent, elder abuse. New York currently has no cross-reporting between humane and human services.

**A 9948** would establish “Bella’s Law.” It would call for an investigation into possible domestic violence or abuse for persons who have been accused of animal abuse. Where practicable, reasonable, and not in contravention of law, the office of Children and Family Services would be notified by law enforcement of investigations and accusations of animal abuse crimes. Such reporting would not be mandated:

- where it would jeopardize an ongoing investigation or the personal safety of an individual;
- in circumstances where it is clear that the accused or investigated individual has no family members and no need for personal services from DCF; or
- where the particular investigation or accusation was previously reported.

Law enforcement members would be required to document their response, investigation and actions taken, including, where appropriate, on a domestic incident report. A domestic incident report would be prepared in every instance of abuse or threatened abuse against the companion animal of another family member, even if investigation of the incident reveals that no crime or offense was committed.

Upon notification of an accusation or investigation of an animal abuse crime, DCF would be required to promptly log and investigate the individual being accused or investigated. Where practicable, reasonable, and not in contravention of law, DCF would be required to coordinate such investigation

with and communicate its results to the referring or prosecuting agency. Such investigation would determine whether the accused or investigated party has any associated family or domestic violence. The bill is in the Committee on Children and Families.

## N.Y. Measure Would Institute First Animal Abuse Hotline



Assemblyman Karl Brabenec

Another bill introduced into the New York State General Assembly would establish what is believed to be the first large-scale government-run statewide hotline for reporting cases of suspected animal abuse. **A 9734**, sponsored by nine representatives led by Karl Brabenec would require the Attorney General to establish a 24-hour hotline and to make reasonable efforts to inform the public of its availability.

The Attorney General could designate a non-governmental organization specializing in animal protection to administer the hotline. Allegations of animal abuse received by the hotline would be immediately transmitted orally and electronically to appropriate state agencies, local law enforcement, or non-governmental organizations specializing in animal protection. The bill is in the Governmental Operations Committee.

The National Link Coalition's [National Directory of Abuse Investigation Agencies](#) shows that in New York State there is currently one number to call to report child abuse, two hotlines for suspected elder abuse, a state and national hotline for domestic violence, and at least 77 different numbers – plus 12 different State Police Trooper headquarters – where people can report animal cruelty, neglect and abuse. Delaware, with only three counties and a population only one-third the size of Brooklyn, has a single animal abuse reporting number to the state Division of Public Health's Office of Animal Welfare.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... AND THE LINK

### RedRover Extends Deadline for Safe Housing Grant Applications



Recognizing the additional strains being placed on families and domestic violence shelters affected by COVID-19, RedRover has announced that it is extending its application deadline for [Safe Housing](#) grants to June 30. RedRover is partnering with [Sheltering Animals and Families Together \(SAF-T\)](#) to create more

pet-friendly emergency shelter options for survivors of domestic violence with pets. The next deadline for Safe Housing grant applications will be October 30.

RedRover also offers Relief Safe Housing grants for construction of off-site housing for animals, such as at an animal shelter or rescue sanctuary, specifically designed to house animals of owners who are staying at the domestic violence shelter. Safe Housing Startup grants allow domestic violence shelters to create their own program to help survivors with pets to escape together, such as providing boarding arrangements with veterinarians or kennels. RedRover is also offering Relief Urgent Care grants for pet owners requiring emergency veterinary care, and Emergency Boarding grants for pets of patients hospitalized due to the coronavirus, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Bayer Animal Health Partners with NCADV for \$100,000 in Grants to Help Survivors and Their Pets



Noting increased demands on organizations providing services to families escaping abuse with their pets during the COVID-19 lockdowns, [Bayer Animal Health](#) on May 12 announced the availability of an additional \$100,000 to help alleviate the amplified strains being put on domestic violence shelters and programs that serve survivors and their pets.

Organizations had until May 27 to apply for funds through Bayer's partnership with the [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#). NCADV noted ongoing concerns of additional risks to people and animals forced into prolonged confinement with abusers, but also cautioned that it may be awhile before the total extent of domestic violence cases during the pandemic are known.

"No one should have to choose between their safety and their pet," said Lauren Dorsch, Deputy Director, Communications, Bayer Animal Health U.S. "We know that there are new difficulties and complexities in assisting survivors during this pandemic. Our hope is that this funding will help domestic violence shelters fill that gap that exists for families escaping domestic violence with their pets."



While staying home is acknowledged as the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19, home is not always a safe place for people who experience domestic violence. "Home is often times a dangerous place for survivors of domestic violence, and COVID-19 exacerbates the circumstances, due to the abusers' ability to further control," said Ruth Glenn, President & CEO of NCADV. "Victims often have to consider not only their own safety, but the safety of their pets. They might not seek (or be able to seek) safety because they are also fearful their pet may be harmed or even killed by the abusive person, if left behind. With assistance from Bayer, shelters will now have the resources to help families who find a way to leave with their pets, ranging from housing fees to accommodate pets to veterinary bills and pet food."

Glenn cautioned, however, that it will take a while to fully understand the statistics about domestic violence and pet abuse resulting from COVID-19. "It is difficult, at this point, to assess if there has been a significant increase (generally) in domestic violence incidents. After all, most victims don't report, and a decrease in calls to a hotline could mean that victims cannot get away from an abuser long enough to seek help (or don't have access in general)," Glenn said. "And, we know the coronavirus is not 'causing' more domestic violence; the violence (power and control) was already present. However, this perfect storm of circumstances does mean that abusers have extraordinary access to their victims."

The current funding program was open to 501(c)(3) domestic violence shelters with an on-site pet facility or domestic violence shelters who may need funding to help accommodate pets in the interim. Grant recipients are expected to be announced in mid-June. Bayer initiated its "Grants Fur Families" grants to domestic violence shelters in 2016 and expanded it with \$130,000 in grants to 13 shelters in 2019 ([See the March 2019 LINK-Letter](#)).

## Webinar Looks at U.K. Perspective on COVID-19 Lockdown and Family Violence

Our Link affiliate in New Mexico, [Positive Links](#), continued its ongoing [series of webinars](#) on Life in Lockdown, focusing on how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting the intersecting forms of family violence, with a unique international presentation on May 6. “[Domestic Abuse and COVID-19: Perspectives from the UK](#)” was presented by Christina Warner, a London-based barrister and experienced family practitioner whose practice focuses on matters involving children and family breakdown including domestic abuse.



Christina Warner

As of the date of the webinar, the U.K. had surpassed Italy and Spain and was second only to the U.S. in the number of COVID-19 fatalities. The country had been on lockdown since March 23 and the issues faced by animal and social services, and families confined to home, are quite similar to those reported in earlier Positive Links webinars from the U.S. and Spain ([See the April 2020 LINK-Letter](#)).

The U.K. has recorded an exponential rise in the number of people drinking at home and domestic abuse victims seeking help. She presented statistics from England and Wales from pre-COVID times what were already “quite grim”: an estimated 5.7% of adults had experienced domestic abuse in the past year, two women were murdered every week due to domestic abuse, and intimate partner violence accounted for 16.5% of all crimes yet was the least likely to be reported and had the most number of repeat victims. There were government funding cuts to legal services, representation in criminal and family court, refuges, shelters, domestic abuse charities, and medical and mental health services.

Lockdown has made the situation worse: calls to Refuge, the largest domestic abuse charity, have increased by 700%. There were at least 16 suspected domestic abuse killings over a three week period – including three children killed by their father – representing the highest mortality rate for at least the past 11 years and double the normal average for a 21-day period. 21% of individuals, or 8.6 million Britons, reported they have been drinking more heavily since lockdown was imposed. “The figures we’re seeing are truly shocking,” she said.

Warner identified numerous factors contributing to these increases, including:

- Proximity of being confined with the abuser during a quarantine.  
Loss of employment or compromised income.
- Increased consumption of alcohol.
- Suspension of support networks. These include being able to get away from the abuser by going to work, visiting supportive family and friends, or being able to go to a shelter.
- Reduced services from agencies working with individuals with drug, gambling or mental health issues.
- Fear of breaching COVID-19 restrictions.

“All of these issues may have been managed prior to the lockdown, but those support networks have been slowed down to a standstill because of the level of emergency,” she said. The conditions are “adding additional pressure to an already pressurized environment.”

As in the U.S., British agencies assisting survivors are bracing for what Warner anticipates will be a deluge of cases once lockdown restrictions are lifted and the courts are open again. “Only then will we truly understand the breadth and depth of the impact of the lockdown,” she said.

Warner emphasized how domestic abuse impacts these other vulnerable groups even under normal circumstances. There is currently no legislation in the U.K. that automatically requires family courts to include companion animals in injunctive relief to a domestic abuse petitioner. The Family Law Act of 1996 covers only the individual fleeing domestic abuse and the alleged perpetrator in the issuance of “non-molestation orders” (e.g., restraining orders) and does not cover companion animals as 34 American states currently do. Warner said she has encountered cases where judges have been asked to issue an injunctive order that encompasses family pets but that the family courts do not have the power to enforce such provisions.

Domestic abuse impacts all family members in the U.K., she said. 60% of British children will witness domestic abuse. Elder abuse is also an issue. 25% of individuals in LGBT relationships have reported domestic abuse. And a new definition of domestic abuse extends to include 16- and 17-year-olds who are intimidated, harassed or stalked by their partners or subjected to “revenge porn” on social media. The migrant community is often unable to access services for fear of jeopardizing their immigration status. Trans teens are particularly vulnerable, as they are often fearful of accessing social services if they are in danger, a situation exacerbated by the stressors of COVID-19.

Much like the U.S., there are anecdotal reports in the U.K. of domestic abuse reports spiking after a three-day bank holiday, particularly if a major sporting event occurred during the break. The British pharmacy chain Boots is offering domestic abuse victims safe spaces so they can leave an abusive home during the lockdown under a legitimate excuse to go to the pharmacy, where they can then secretly call domestic violence services.

No British refuges currently offer co-sheltering for pets, although several pet foster care schemes have been developed. However, the logistics of foster care can be difficult since no one knows how long the care will be needed between the time she flees and when she finds stable permanent housing, plus the animals may experience behavioral changes in trying to adjust to the relocations.

Animal abuse is incredibly demoralizing for domestic abuse victims, she said, and many people severely underestimate the emotional attachment victims have to their companion animals and the way abusers can gain leverage over their victims by harming or threatening the animals.

## ***CHILD PROTECTION... AND THE LINK***

### **Maryland Enacts Law Allowing Courtroom and Facility Dogs**

Maryland has become the latest state to enact legislation allowing therapy animals to accompany child witnesses into courts for emotional support when victims are facing their abusers. **SB 101/HB 311** establishes the Court Dog and Child Witness Program in the state’s circuit courts. The measure allows “facility dogs” and “therapy dogs” that have graduated from nationally recognized organizations, and their trained handlers, to provide emotional support to child witnesses in courtrooms, meetings, interviews, and other court processes. The courts will establish protocols and procedures regarding the expected roles of such animal assistance teams and how they may not interfere with evidence collection or the effective administration of justice. The bills became law on May 8 and will take effect on Oct. 1, 2020. Other states allowing therapy dogs in courtrooms include Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Hawai’i, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Virginia, and Washington.

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## **Animal Protection Agencies Can Help Protect Children Who Are Not Safe at Home**

Citing statistics that calls to Chicago's child abuse hotlines have dropped precipitously during the coronavirus pandemic, [NBC-5 News](#) noted that it takes a village to protect a child. If child abuse calls are being severely under-reported community partners, such as animal care and control agencies, should become partners in identifying and reporting suspected maltreatment.

Dr. Norell Rosado with Lurie Children's Hospital told the station that if cases are under-reported because teachers – the primary source of referrals for child abuse cases – and physicians aren't seeing children, it's time to partner with community agencies that might respond to other issues, like animal abuse. "For example, where there's animal abuse, there's a big correlation with child abuse. We need to work together with organizations that address animal abuse. If they receive calls and they see a child in the home, that should be a red flag and the authorities should be alerted in those cases," Dr. Rosado said.

Calls to the Illinois statewide child abuse hotline have decreased 44% since January, and Chicago police have seen a 50% decrease in child abuse reports. Doctors say child abuse is probably continuing and is exacerbated by the stresses of record unemployment and limited social support, but calls are not being reported. DCFS says that 75% of its hotline calls come from school personnel, social services, law enforcement, and medical personnel; calls from schools alone account for 57% of the call volume.

"COVID-19 has added a new layer of system failure for us in terms of protection of children," said Dr. Jill Glick, Medical Director of Child Advocacy and Protective Services at the University of Chicago's Children's Hospital. "Without those second, third pair of eyes on these kids, it's really alarming."

## ***VETERINARY MEDICINE... AND THE LINK***

### **Minnesota Practitioners Finally Get Immunity for Reporting**



Although Minnesota is believed to be the first state to require veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty, abuse or neglect – with a law enacted in 1987 – practitioners in the Gopher State have not had immunity for making such reports until now. That situation changed when, after a three-year legislative battle, [HF 1530/SF 1517](#) were subsumed into the joint House and Senate Agriculture Omnibus Policy bill [HF 1733/SF 1859](#) that passed both houses and was signed into law by Governor Tim Walz on May 17.

The measure, which becomes effective on Aug 1, reads, "A licensed veterinarian acting in good faith and in the normal course of business is immune from civil and criminal liability in any action arising in the connection with the report of a suspected incident of animal cruelty."

The Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association, which helped craft the bill, announced its success. At the time of the original 1987 law, there were no other states granting immunity for possible violations of the veterinarian-patient-client confidentiality provisions and liability was apparently not seen as a concern (*See the [November 2017 LINK-Letter](#)*). Of the 35 states that either mandate or permit veterinarians to report suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, only Alabama, Kansas, Nevada, and Wisconsin are now believed to not specify provisions for immunity. Maine, North Carolina and Virginia go still further and also grant immunity from administrative and professional penalties and sanctions.

## Flyer Describes 16 Roles for DVMs in Promoting Animal and Human Safety

Veterinary forensics investigator [Martha Smith-Blackmore](#), who serves on the National Link Coalition's steering committee, has designed a handy one-page flyer taking a One Health approach listing 16 ways in which veterinarians can contribute to public safety. The visual elements describe aspects of The Link between animal abuse and human violence and the practitioner's role in protecting both animal and human health.

They include:

- Including non-accidental injury in the differential diagnosis.
- Recognizing suspected animal abuse and neglect.
- Reporting suspicions.
- Keeping detailed records to aid investigators and court testimony.
- Taking macro, meso and micro photographs of lesions.
- Tracking patients' weight and Body Condition Scoring as they return to health.
- Serving as a resource for police and animal control.
- Providing expert witness testimony.
- Learning more about animal abuse's Link to other family and community violence.
- Getting to know local social service providers.
- Fostering pets of domestic violence survivors.
- Contributing to overall community safety.
- Promoting kindness.
- Sharing responsible pet ownership practices.
- Celebrating the human-animal bond.
- Recognizing that safety for all contributes to global health.



The flyer can be [downloaded as a free pdf](#) from Smith-Blackmore.

## Korean Study Describes Practitioners' Willingness to Intervene in Abuse Cases

What is believed to be the first Link research coming out of South Korea is reporting that veterinarians who have a "pro-animal attitude," a belief in The Link between animal and human abuse, and a belief in a moral and legal obligation to report are more likely to be willing to intervene in animal abuse cases.

The authors reported that 86% of 593 small- and large-animal practitioners surveyed have encountered suspected animal abuse cases, primarily passive physical or active mental neglect. Female and younger veterinarians and small animal practitioners report suspected abuse more frequently. The barrier to reporting that was cited most frequently was the practitioner's difficulty in assuring animal safety afterwards. To that end, the authors recommend strategies to strengthen professionalism through veterinary training in identifying non-accidental injuries caused by abuse, legislation to protect victims and veterinarians who report, and increased training in legal liability, moral responsibility and veterinary forensic medicine.

**"Animal abuse is not only an animal welfare issue, but it is also a critical concern to the wellbeing of humans."**

"Animal abuse is not only an animal welfare issue, but it is also a critical concern to the wellbeing of humans. It is considered as a sign of antisocial behavior trends based on the potential 'Link' between animal abuse and child abuse or other forms of domestic violence," they wrote. "Therefore, every member of a society shares the same responsibility with respect to reducing animal cruelty; however, veterinarians should have a stronger sense of duty in this regard compared to any other group because of their professional abilities."

The study confirms research in other countries that a variety of factors, including gender, age, type of practice, belief in their obligation, knowledge of The Link, degree of training, culture, and region affect the profession's willingness to respond to suspected cases. The research was prompted, in part, by reports from the Korean Supreme Prosecutor's Office that animal abuse crimes in that country have more than tripled over the past five years. The Korean Animal Protection Act now obligates veterinarians to report suspected abuse to the relevant authorities without incurring a penalty.

Over 73% of respondents agreed to a correlation between animal abuse with domestic violence. Only 1.9% believe that they do not have a moral obligation to report and 13.7% say they do not have a legal responsibility to intervene. As with surveys in other countries, Korean veterinarians are more poised to attempt counseling a client rather than filing a report with authorities.

**"Breaching client confidentiality can be considered as the lesser of two evils when taking into account the consequences of not reporting abuse."**

Also echoing U.S. studies regarding veterinarians reporting animal abuse and physicians reporting suspected child abuse, the Korean study found the most significant barrier to be a perceived difficulty in the current legal and police systems in assuring the animal's safety and welfare after reporting a suspected abuse case. Other common barriers included uncertainty in identifying animal abuse, concern about

breaching client confidentiality, and fear of losing income. Only 8.9% of participants had guidelines or helpful resources to aid them in managing such cases.

The authors noted that while concern for the veterinary-patient-client relationship is a barrier, “breaching client confidentiality can be considered as the lesser of two evils when taking into account the consequences of not reporting abuse.” They called for veterinary education to strengthen and improve ethical decision-making skills to maintain effective, balanced and extended relationships.

They suggested providing veterinarians with clear instructions on five steps to facilitate a professional response to suspected animal abuse:

- Building awareness.
- Resolving contentious ethical dilemmas.
- Providing guarantees of legal protection.
- Expertise in identification of abuse indicators.
- Developing standardized protocols on responses that can aid in overcoming normative barriers.

The Korean Animal Protection Act has been in effect only since 1991 and its enforcement is weak. Mandatory reporting by veterinarians was added into the law only in 2017. A year-long campaign against eating dog meat led to a Supreme Court judgment in 2018 that killing dogs for meat is illegal. Animal behavior, animal welfare and ethics have been taught in South Korean veterinary schools since 2000.

-- Joo, S., Jung, Y., & Chun, M.-S. (2020). An analysis of veterinary practitioners' intention to intervene in animal abuse cases in South Korea. *Animals*, 10, 802; doi:10.3390/ani10050802.

## New Zealand Review Examines Significance of Domestic Violence for Veterinarians

This thematic review examines 70 articles regarding the relationship between domestic violence and pet abuse, particularly in the veterinary clinical and educational contexts. It examines the veterinarian's role and associated legal and ethical obligations, and relevant current veterinary education standards, to identify future clinical and educational directions. Given that victims of domestic violence often seek veterinary aid for their pets, veterinarians may act as frontline professionals in the recognition of the Link between pet abuse and domestic violence. Veterinarians must assess individual cases for diagnostic indicators of non-accidental injury and consider demographic factors to identify suspected Links.

Despite existing legal and ethical obligations, veterinarians often have uncertainty and unpreparedness in addressing pet abuse and domestic violence in a clinical context, due to confusion about the reporting process and uncertainty in differentiating accidental versus non-accidental injuries. Specific published guidelines regarding the recognition and reporting of pet and domestic abuse in the veterinary clinical context are required. Although limited published evidence examines the success of implementing such training and reporting processes, the authors argue that ultimately, veterinary student education is needed to prepare veterinarians for their response to pet abuse and domestic violence in practice. Further research is required to examine the effects of the delivery of content regarding The Link in the veterinary curriculum on veterinary student knowledge and attitudes.

-- Newland, X., Boller, M., & Boller, E. (2019, March). Considering the relationship between domestic violence and pet abuse and its significance in the veterinary clinical and educational contexts. *New Zealand Veterinary Journal*, 67(2), 55-65. doi:10.1080/00480169.2018.1559108.

## Polish DVMs' Responses to Animal Abuse Similar to Other Countries

One of the few studies to examine Link issues in Poland has just reported that veterinarians' attitudes toward reporting suspected animal abuse, and their familiarity with animal abuse's Link with domestic violence, closely mirror findings from other countries. An in-depth series of interviews with 11 female and eight male veterinarians indicated that outright physical abuse of animals is not commonly seen in veterinary offices; respondents assumed that most owners who visit veterinarians treat their animals well and that perpetrators of abuse tend to avoid veterinary help. However, 17 of the veterinarians actively linked neglect with abuse and witnessed neglect significantly more often than physical abuse.

Upon witnessing outright animal abuse, the respondents said they took action (e.g., calling the police and other authorities, or local animal protection agencies). Having a moral obligation was openly mentioned as the motive to do this by a few respondents. However, the veterinarians did not have detailed knowledge of the existing regulations concerning the role of the veterinarian in reporting animal abuse and had only cursory knowledge of The Link. The findings also indicated there was poor cooperation from law enforcement authorities. Most interviewed veterinarians voiced at least some frustration toward such authorities in relation to their knowledge, attitude and quickness to act. The research showed that animal abuse cases and reports are not handled well by Polish law enforcement, consistent with a 2016 study of judicial application of animal protection law in Poland.

-- Pręgowski, M.P., & Cieślík, S. (2020). Attitudes to animal abuse in veterinary practice in Poland. *Anthrozoös*, 33(3), 427-440.

## British Survey Sees Self-Efficacy as Basis for Veterinarians Reporting Suspected Abuse

Using perceived self-efficacy as a basis, this study examined the psychological and experiential factors that facilitate practitioners' decision to report cases of suspected abuse to authorities. 176 veterinarians responded to questionnaires assessing the amount of training received on detecting and reporting animal abuse, perceived self-efficacy to report animal abuse, and whether they have reported animal abuse incidents to the relevant authorities. Perceived self-efficacy was positively correlated with suspecting and reporting animal abuse, number of hours of specialized training, and years working in practice. The findings highlight the psychological impact of specialized training on veterinarians' reporting behavior. Simply put, specialist training equips veterinarians with the confidence and self-efficacy to report suspected cases of animal abuse.

-- Alleyne, E., Sienaускаite, O., & Ford, J. (2019). To report, or not to report, animal abuse: The role of perceived self-efficacy in veterinarians' decision-making. *The Veterinary Record*, 185, 538.

## *ELDER ABUSE... and THE LINK*

### Maryland Animal/Elder Abuse Link Provision Deleted

A bill in the Maryland General Assembly, **HB 33**, which would have taken the progressive step of including "the destruction of or harm to an animal" belonging to a vulnerable adult to the definition of elder abuse became law on May 8 but the key provision about animal abuse was deleted. The new law merely makes it illegal to intentionally and maliciously inflict severe emotional distress on a vulnerable adult without defining the term. Colorado is believed to be the only state in which animal abuse is defined as a condition of elder abuse; 10 states include coercive control acts of animal abuse within the statutory definitions of domestic violence.

## *LAW ENFORCEMENT... and THE LINK*



**Michelle Welch**

### **Webinar Trains Probation Officers on The Link**

A critical, but often overlooked, partner in the criminal justice community's response to Link issues are probation officers who, while guarding the safety of their communities, may see abused animals in their home environments. Michelle Welch, Senior Assistant Attorney General and director of the Virginia Attorney General's Animal Law Unit, presented an educational outreach on "Understanding the Link between Animal Abuse and Other Human Crimes: What Probation Officers Need to Know."

The [May 6 webinar](#), presented by the Justice Clearinghouse in partnership with the National Sheriffs Association and the National Animal Care & Control Association, was designed to get probation officers to "think outside the box" and recognize telltale signs of animal abuse and neglect that might be present with the probationers they supervise.

"Violence is violence. Name your violence and animal abuse is there," Welch said. "Why should we care? Because there's a human component to it." Animal abuse has been linked to such crimes as mass shootings, serial killings, child pornography, terrorism, child sexual abuse, gang violence, and organized crime. Adding in animal abuse crimes can enhance the prosecution of other crimes.

"Animal issues are going to come up for you. You won't know when or how," Welch said, but probation officers need to be prepared. "It's never just an animal. We need to take this very, very seriously."

She encouraged probation officers to become familiar with their states' statutes addressing animal cruelty, neglect, bestiality, and animal fighting, and to report the four categories of animal abuse that are now included in the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System if their agency is part of the NIBRS system.

"We find out about animal abuse in many ways and you, as a probation officer, may find someone willing to talk about it," she added. Probation officers who see animals that are neglected, malnourished or living in deplorable conditions, or excessive numbers of animals, should call animal control. The situation may be grounds to cite the probationer for a violation and quick response may save animals' lives. "You can't do anything you want to animals, just like you can't to a child," she cautioned. "They're living and breathing – you can't just let them waste away."

She introduced probation officers to the Link between deviant child sexual abuse and animal sexual abuse and the high correlation of sexually violent predators who have animal abuse in their backgrounds. She also noted issues surrounding felony-level wildlife trafficking crimes where probation officers can be helpful eyes and ears. "Look at all animal crimes, not just the ones that pop out at you like in a domestic violence or family violence situation," she said.

Parole officers in particular have a responsibility to conduct frequent checks on animal hoarders who will recidivate and collect more animals again and again if not restrained. She alerted them to what animal fighting housing sites and paraphernalia look like and these crimes' links with gambling, narcotics for humans and animals, larceny, firearms offenses, vice crimes, homicide, rape, moonshining and illegal liquor, money laundering, and tax law violations over the winnings. Dog- and cock-fights are highly

organized, meticulously planned and covert, and police gang and narcotics units should be brought in.

“When you’re supervising your probationers, look for what else might be going on,” Welch concluded. “If you see something that makes you feel uncomfortable you need to call animal control or the police. Err on the side of calling early and document what you find,” she advised, noting that what was observed might not be a crime but the investigation puts the probationer on notice that someone is looking out for the animals’ welfare.

“The Link and the connection between animal abuse and other violence is strong, so don’t forget the animal. If they’re doing this to animals they might do something to a human.”

## Florida Updates and Expands Link Provisions in Benchbook for Judges

Florida’s  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
BENCHBOOK  
June 2020



Office of the State Courts Administrator  
Office of Court Improvement  
Florida Institute on Interpersonal Violence

In our [April 2020 LINK-Letter](#), we reported that Florida had pioneered the inclusion of animal abuse as coercive control in a benchbook for judges handling domestic violence court cases. That benchbook, written in 2017, was just updated with a 2020 edition that goes into even more detail and includes information about allowing courtroom facility dogs to comfort victims who are testifying.

The June 2020 edition of [Florida’s Domestic Violence Benchbook](#) includes a section on “Animals and Interpersonal Violence: When they Are in Danger and How They Can Help During Proceedings.” It cites salient statistics about the common tactic of domestic violence perpetrators to use threats to harm or kill family pets as power and control. The new edition details legislation enacted in 2020 which, as of July 1, will allow courts to award temporary exclusive custody of a family pet to a petitioner when either a temporary or final injunction for protection against domestic violence is issued. The court may also order the respondent to temporarily have no contact with the animal. The new law does not apply to animals owned for bona fide agricultural purposes or to the respondent’s service animal.

The benchbook advises judges that Florida law also authorizes courts to allow a facility dog or therapy animal to be present when taking the testimony of a minor victim or witness or sexual offense victim or witness in cases involving sexual offenses, child abuse, abandonment, or neglect.

It advises judges that courts at domestic violence injunction hearings can determine whether there has been any abuse directed toward a family pet by:

- Asking whether there is a family pet;
- Eliciting testimony from both parties about any animal abuse alleged in the petition;
- Detailing to the parties the factors, including animal abuse, that may be considered when determining whether the petitioner is in imminent danger of becoming a victim of domestic violence.

“Animal abuse is cruel in any form,” the updated benchbook concludes. “It is especially tragic when it is done as a method of control or of abuse to another person. The statutes and steps discussed above may increase petitioner safety, reduce violence, and protect family pets from harm. They may also provide comfort to victims or witnesses testifying in certain proceedings.”

## ***THE LINK... IN THE LITERATURE***

### **Link Found between Bestiality and Childhood Sexual Victimization**

A descriptive analysis of bestiality committed by 1,248 sexually violent predators in Virginia between 2003 and 2017 is shedding new light on the prevalence, motivations, and risks of interpersonal sexual and nonsexual violence posed to others by these offenders. The study reported that 2.6% of the sexually violent predators had a history of engaging in bestiality. These individuals were significantly more likely to be victims of childhood sexual abuse, to engage in nonsexual animal abuse, and to have committed child sexual abuse. They were most likely to report sexual contact with dogs and demonstrated a breadth of other atypical sexual behaviors. The lifetime prevalence of 2.6% was said to be low compared with other published findings, suggesting that the offenders may have intentionally minimized their history of atypical sexual behavior. The relationship between childhood sexual victimization and bestiality had not previously been reported in the literature and represents an important Link for future investigation. The authors suggested that the resulting psychological and interpersonal outcomes of childhood sexual victimization may contribute to subsequent use of animals as sexual outlets.

-- Holoyda, B., Gosal, R., & Welch, K.M. (2020). *Bestiality among sexually violent predators. Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, 48(3)*. doi:10.29158/JAAPL.003941-20.

### **Study Compares Animal Abuse in IPV with Abuse to Owners' Animals**

A study of animal cruelty incidents in Detroit between 2007--2015 suggests that the types of cruelty perpetrated by owners of an animal differ from cruelty against an animal belonging to a family member, neighbor, or intimate partner. Motivations for eight types of animal cruelty -- dog fighting, shooting, neglect, poisoning, threat, stabbing, kicking/hitting with blunt force, and "other" -- were analyzed. Perpetrators who are intimate partners or family members are more likely to demonstrate active cruelty such as kicking or blunt force injuries, while owners are more likely to evidence neglect. Cruelty type, motivations and interpersonal relationships were similar among all those who had also been charged with other crimes. The findings suggested that connections between interpersonal relationships and the types of animal cruelty perpetrated are complex and that actions to reduce animal cruelty must be multipronged and account for variation in types of interpersonal relationships and cruelty.

-- Richard, C., & Reese, L.A. (2019). *The interpersonal context of human/nonhuman animal violence. Anthrozoös, 32(1)*, 65-87.

### **Attachments to Pets Increase During Periods of Family Conflict**

While much has been written about how companion animals can have a positive effect on their owners' health and may also serve as a buffer to stress, few studies have investigated the role of the pet in adverse or tumultuous family circumstances. A new study explores whether family conflict is associated with the family's strength of attachment to their companion animals. 1,421 primary caregivers of children were asked to report the frequency of instances of intrafamily criticism and discussion styles, as well as the types of interactions with pets in the home, to assess the strength of attachment. Significant associations were found between family conflict and strength of attachment to companion animals: as family conflict increased, so did the strength of attachment to the family pet across multiple sociodemographic control variables. The findings suggest that companion animals play an important role in the lives of family members who are experiencing adverse situations or chronic strain and underscore a need for further investigation into the role of the pet in families experiencing childhood family trauma.

-- Applebaum, J.W., & Zsembik, B.A. (2020). *Pet attachment in the context of family conflict. Anthrozoös, 33(3)*, 361-370.

## Articles Sought for Special Journal Issue on Human-Animal Relationships During COVID-19

The ongoing interest in how sheltering-in-place during the COVID-19 pandemic may affect people and animals has caused the academic journal *Animals* to dedicate a special issue on the lessons learned from the experience. Aubrey Fine, an internationally renowned child psychologist from California State Polytechnic University, has been named guest editor for the special issue, "Social Isolation and the Roles That Animals Play in Supporting the Lives of Humans: Lessons for COVID-19."



Aubrey Fine and friend

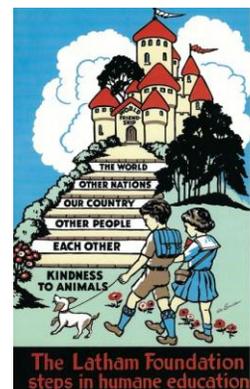
In addition to the potential increases in child, elder, domestic, and animal abuse during extended confinement in close quarters (*See the [April 2020](#) and [May 2020 LINK-Letters](#)*), "Isolation and a sense of loneliness are two outcomes that have occurred as a consequence of the recent COVID-19 pandemic," Fine said. "Science has clearly documented that loneliness has tremendous impact not only on people's mental health, but also their physical well-being. Clearly relationships with animals could support and ameliorate a sense of loneliness and hopelessness. Such relationships could also provide daily support for people and provide them with a positive outlet for hope."

The special issue will focus on lessons that have been observed and documented with vulnerable populations during the pandemic and how human relationships with animals provided a degree of social support and possibly acted as social capital. Details about submission guidelines are available on the [journal's website](#). The deadline for manuscript submissions is April 30, 2021.

## BUILDING LINK AWARENESS

### Latham Foundation Will Accept Applications for Grants July 1-10

The Latham Foundation has announced its latest round of grants for 2020 which will again focus on promoting humane education through animal-assisted activities where both animals and people may benefit. Awards of up to \$10,000 for a one-year grant will be made to programs that focus on animal-assisted activities that demonstrate people and animals working together for the benefit of both, and include humane education. Nonprofit organizations will have priority, but grants are not limited to 501c3 organizations.



The window for applying for grants is between July 1 and July 10; proposals submitted before or after those dates will not be considered. There are no geographical restrictions, but grants cannot be used for capital projects and equipment, publications, employee training, conference registrations, or travel.

Latham cautions applicants about applying for funds for salaries as funding cannot be guaranteed past the initial grant period. Additional details are available on the [Latham Foundation website](#).

## Link Webinar to be Aired in Japan

The Japan Animal Welfare Society is conducting a lecture on animal abuse and the LINK in their online lecture series, “Citizen’s Forum for Animal Welfare,” will be pre-recorded and available for free online between June 22-28. Aki Tanaka, DVM, of the Nippon Veterinary and Life Science University, and Sakiko Yamazaki, Ph.D., of the Animal Literacy Research Institute, will present, in Japanese, “Animal Abuse and The LINK.” [RSVP between June 1-12](#) at the seminar website.



公益社団法人 日本動物福祉協会  
Japan Animal Welfare Society

## NEWS about LINK COALITIONS

### Partnerships with Social Services Seen in Future of Animal Shelters

It’s long been a fundamental challenge in animal care and control than both governmental and nonprofit agencies have been segregated from human services, due to a common perception that animal needs are somehow less important than human needs. One underlying premise of The Link, however, is that both human and human services are working with the same underlying issues, often serving the same populations, and that a collaborative approach “lifts all boats” and achieves more comprehensive results for agencies that are all working with limited resources.

This concept is not new. Animal shelter personnel have said for decades that “We don’t have animal problems, we have people problems,” and that “The real problem is on the upper end of the leash.” A market study of animal shelters in 2010 found:

*“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.”*

If there is a silver lining in the societal changes evolving out of COVID-19, it may be that the pandemic is causing a lot of animal shelters to modify their fundamental programs and see themselves more as a partner with other social services agencies. A 10-point plan being field-tested in 31 cities includes an emphasis on partnerships with other community agencies that work with vulnerable populations to get all agencies to recognize pets and their people as a family unit.

These ideas were promoted in a [May 19 webinar](#) by American Pets Alive! that explored elements of an animal social services coalition model. “Human Animal Support Services: The Future of Helping Pets and People” attracted over 350 participants who learned that the history of animal shelters is based on a now-obsolete foundation of separating pets from their families, homes and communities and institutionalizing them in cages. “The best shelters today serve as community pet resource centers, but that foundation still exists,” explained Ellen Jefferson, Executive Director of American Pets Alive!



Ellen Jefferson



**Lisa Fontaine**

As with other sectors of the Link community, COVID-19 prompted an enormous transformation in the business-as-usual of municipal and nonprofit animal shelters by emphasizing more community outreach. COVID-19 restrictions on non-essential services led to rapid innovations – often implemented within only three to 10 days – that changed regular operational practices and switched to remote services and new ways to engage with stakeholders. These included: an enormous response from foster families that emptied the shelters; appointment-based services; reduced face-to-face contact; asking the community to help with strays and surrenders; telemedicine; and virtual animal adoptions. “Think about what all of that means for your resilience and capacity for innovation,” said Lisa Fontaine, President & CEO of the Humane Rescue Alliance. The animal shelter community “turned on a dime, and most of us turned in the same direction,” she said.



**Kristen Hassen-Auerbach**

The pandemic offers the movement a moment to make a choice, she added: can we go back to the way things were or choose a new path forward and lean into a new way to engage with the community?

Kristen Hassen-Auerbach, Director of Tucson’s Pima Animal Care Center described a 10-point program that is being piloted nationally to not only reduce the number of animals in shelters, but also reduce customer complaints, improve staff morale, return lost animals home and find new homes for pets more quickly, and provide better service to the community. Anchoring the plan is Element #10:

*Human social services agencies, rescue groups and other community partners work closely with the animal services organization, recognizing people and pets as a family unit. It requires working in partnership with organizations that are already working with vulnerable populations.*

“This will become a really important piece as we move forward,” she said.

Other elements include: greater engagement with volunteers in all aspects of shelter operations and outreach; making public access to and information from the shelter more user-friendly; housing more lost and homeless animals in community foster homes; recognizing animal services personnel as trained case managers who help people keep their pets and support struggling pet owners; triaging shelter intakes to prioritize animals who truly need care; and providing more remote medical, behavioral and other pet support services online to keep the human-animal family together.



**Bobby Mann**



**Gina Knepp**

Bobby Mann, Communications Manager of Sacramento’s Front Street Animal Shelter, noted that animal shelters historically have focused only on helping animals, but their work is also about caring for the people who are caring for animals, because they are truly the drivers of change. We need to be supporting both ends of the leash to support families and communities, he said.

“This is one of the most exciting things I’ve seen in this industry; it’s kind of sad that it took a pandemic,” said Gina Knepp of the Michelson Found Animals Foundation.

## ***THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES***

### **Link Bills We're Watching**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many state legislatures to abruptly cancel or temporarily suspend their legislative sessions. Nevertheless, we're keeping an eye on 93 bills that have already been introduced. Please let us know if you hear of other measures not included here:

#### ***Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders***



**Arizona HB 2321** would have allowed 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. **The bill was in the Rules Committee when the legislature adjourned.**



**Connecticut Raised Bill 107** would have established 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 was in the Joint Committee on Housing when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**Florida HB 705** 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. **HB 705** was approved by the House 115-0 and by the Senate 39-0 and was sent to the Governor.



**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 have included violence against a domestic animal used as coercive conduct within the definitions of "domestic violence and abuse" and "dating violence and abuse" and would have allowed 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 in the Senate Judiciary Committee when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**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 Assembly Judiciary and Senate Children & Families Committees.



**New York A 1097, A10333** 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 Abuse and Elder Abuse*

 **Maryland HB 33**, which would have added “the destruction of or harm to an animal” belonging to a vulnerable adult to the definition of severe emotional distress prohibited against a vulnerable adult, became law on May 8 **but the key provision about animal abuse was deleted**. The new law merely makes it illegal to intentionally and maliciously inflict severe emotional distress on a vulnerable adult without defining the term.

 **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 Hoarding*

 **New York A 261**, creating the crime of companion animal hoarding, and **A4569**, creating a crime of aggravated neglect of a companion animal, are 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 for lack of a hearing; SB 2718** passed the Senate unanimously and was sent to the House Judiciary and Agriculture Committees when the Legislature recessed indefinitely due to the coronavirus 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 and referred to the Senate Rules Committee.

 **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 have made 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 **died in 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** establish the Court Dog and Child Witness Program in circuit courts allowing “facility dogs” and “therapy dogs” to provide emotional support to child witnesses in courtrooms, meetings, interviews, and other court processes. **The bills became law** on May 8 and will take effect on Oct. 1, 2020.



 **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 for the Senate Rules Committee 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 the household pets. The bill is 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 have allowed individuals to remove a minor or an animal from a motor vehicle if either is experiencing a life- or extreme health-threatening situation with immunity from civil and criminal liability. **The bill died when the Legislature adjourned.**

### *“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 provided for the appointing of an advocate for the interests of an animal in certain court proceedings, at the court's discretion, and require the Florida Bar Association's Animal Law section to maintain a list of attorneys and certified legal interns who meet specified requirements to be appointed 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** 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 bill is in the Senate Judiciary 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. The bills are in the Assembly Agriculture and Senate 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.

### *Cross-Reporting*



**Alabama SB 196** would have made it a misdemeanor to submit a “frivolous” complaint alleging that an “animal enterprise” has engaged in animal cruelty, punishable by paying the county or municipality costs of investigation and any animal boarding fees that ensued. The bill was in the Senate Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry Committee **when the Legislature adjourned.**



**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.**



**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 committee when the Legislature recessed indefinitely due to the coronavirus 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 provide immunity for a good-faith report, was amended to merely permit veterinarians to report and to delete the provision granting immunity from liability. The amended bill passed the Senate 35-0 and was sent to the House, where it was approved 78-7, and **was signed into law on April 24.**



**Kentucky HB 60** would have required veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse to an animal control officer. **HB 108** would have provided civil and criminal immunity to veterinarians who, in good faith, report suspected animal abuse to animal control or peace officers, provide records relating to such reports, and testify in any judicial proceedings relating from such reports. **The bills were in committees when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**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**, which grant veterinarians immunity from civil and criminal liability for reporting suspected animal cruelty in good faith and in the normal course of business, were subsumed into the Joint House and Senate Agriculture Omnibus Policy bill that passed both houses and **was signed into law by the Governor on May 17.**



**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 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.



**New York A 9948** (“Bella’s Law”) would require law enforcement authorities statewide who investigate suspected cases of animal abuse to inform the state Office of Children and Family Services to further investigate and determine if the accused individual has any history of family or domestic violence. The bill is in the Committee on Children and Families.



**New York A 9734** would require the Attorney General to establish a 24-hour hotline for the public to report animal abuse and to make reasonable efforts to inform the public of its availability. The bill is in the Governmental Operations Committee.



**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.

### *Psychological Evaluation of Offenders*



**California SB 580** would amend 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. 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 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.

### *Permission to Reprint*

The news 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](http://www.nationallinkcoalition.org).

### *For Additional Information*

Just click on the blue underlined hyperlinks in these articles and it will take you to other websites with additional information about that topic.



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

**Legislation...**

**Intervention...**

**Networking...**

**Knowledge...**

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

## THE LINK... IN THE NEWS

### Woman Charged with Hanging Children, Bestiality Will Stand Trial

A Pennsylvania woman who was charged with homicide in hanging her two children, animal cruelty and sexual intercourse with a dog ([See the January 2020 LINK-Letter](#)) will stand trial, a Berks County District Judge ruled following a preliminary hearing. Lisa Rachelle Snyder, 37, of Albany Township, had argued that her son Conner, 8, took his own life and that of his little sister Brinley, 4, by fashioning a dog leash into two nooses, the [Allentown Morning Call](#) reported. Nearly a dozen witnesses testified at the hearing, including an occupational therapist who worked with Conner at his school who said the third-grader lacked the manual dexterity to fashion the dog lead into nooses. Snyder is also charged with tampering with evidence, endangering the welfare of children, and the animal cruelty and bestiality charges stemming from sexually explicit photos of Snyder with the family dog reportedly sent as Facebook messages uncovered during the homicide investigation. The family also had had a history with child protective services, and the children had been temporarily removed from their mother's care in 2014.



Lisa Snyder



### Man Caught on Doorbell Camera Choking Ex-Girlfriend's Dog Charged with Cruelty

A Slidell, La. man who was captured on his ex-girlfriend's doorbell camera apparently choking her dog on Mother's Day was charged with animal cruelty. Slidell police arrested Shane Mitchell, 30, and also got a court order to return "Ruby Jean," a 3-year-old Doberman pinscher, to her owner. The [New Orleans Times-Picayune](#) reported

that the woman, Rachel Fassy, had ended what she called a very bad relationship and had moved into her own place when Mitchell showed up at her door. He reportedly grabbed Ruby Jean's leash and would not give her back. After Fassy refused to let him back in, the video – which went viral -- captured Mitchell choking the dog in what Fassy said was an attempt at holding the dog as ransom. Police said additional charges may be filed.

### Teen Charged with Mutilating Cat Now Charged with Murdering a Woman



Cohen Heath

A teenager who admitted viciously mutilating his mother's cat in 2019 because it was an easier target than killing a friend ([See the November 2019 LINK-Letter](#)) has now been charged with killing a woman. Colorado Springs, Colo. police arrested Cohen Heath, also known as Vinn Heath, 19, and an unnamed 16-year-old in the death of Bridget Kenner, 44, a registered nurse. The [Colorado Springs Gazette](#) and [KKTV](#) reported that Kenner's body was found when police conducted a welfare check and the two youths were arrested on suspicion of first-degree murder several hours later.

Six months previously, Heath had admitted contemplating killing a friend but decided instead to kill his mother's cat while he was high on methamphetamine. Court records showed he faced a charge of felony aggravated cruelty to animals for putting "Ponyo" in a backpack to muffle its sounds, stabbing it six or seven times with a paring knife, cutting off a paw to make a necklace out of it, saving portions of the cat's face in a plastic bag, and giving his mother a paper bag with the cat's tail. Heath bonded out of jail last Oct. 2 and reportedly failed to show up for court in the months since. He is currently being held without bond in Kenner's death.



Sierra Manley

## Woman with Child Neglect History Charged with Animal Cruelty

A Pinellas Park, Fla., woman who had been charged with child neglect in 2013 was arrested on May 26 on a charge of felony animal cruelty after her dog was reportedly found dead in her back yard after being tied to a shed for multiple days without food or water. [WFLA-TV](#) reported that Sierra Manley, 27, told sheriff's deputies she had been in Miami for several days while the dog was tied to the shed and that she knew about the dog's passing and had texted a friend about the dog being dead and stinking.

## *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.

**June 12: Dallas, Texas:** The [North Texas Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting via Google. Members will share how COVID-19 has shaped their general procedures, how they are adjusting to the pandemic, and how they will adjust to "the new normal."

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

**June 16 (online):** Allie Phillips will present on "The Co-Occurrence of Animal Abuse and Child Abuse: Investigation and Prosecution Strategies" at the [Wyoming Joint Symposium on Children and Youth](#).

**June 17 (online):** Phil Arkow will present a webinar on "2020 Vision: New Frontiers and Opportunities in The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence" for [Positive Links New Mexico](#).

**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 22-28 (available online):** Aki Tanaka and Sakiko Yamazaki will record a Japanese-language webinar on "Animal Abuse and The LINK" as part of the Japan Animal Welfare Society's [lecture series](#), "Citizen's Forum for Animal Welfare." [RSVP between June 1-12](#) at the seminar website.

**June 24 (online):** The Center for Children's Justice, Penna. Chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers, Prevent Child Abuse Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, HSUS, and PCADV will host a [panel discussion webinar](#) on "The Dangerous Link between Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment."

**June 26 (online):** The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys will host a [webinar](#), supported by the Animal Legal Defense Fund, on implementing a peer support program for prosecutors and victim advocates who are exposed to emotionally taxing cases of domestic violence and animal abuse.

**July 8 (online):** Christina Warner will present a webinar on "Protecting Companion Animals in Situations of Domestic Abuse: Views from the UK" for [Positive Links New Mexico](#).

**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 16 (online):** Phil Arkow will conduct a webinar on “The Link and Healthy Relationships” for [TeamMates](#)’ school-based mentoring program.

**July 16 (online):** Melinda Merck will conduct a [webinar](#) on “Veterinary Forensics in Animal Investigations” for Texas Unites for Animals.

**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.

**July 30 (online):** Phil Arkow will conduct a [webinar](#) for the National Organization of Victim Assistance on “Protecting All Family Members: The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence in a Post-COVID-19 World.”

**August 28 (rescheduled from March 13) – Columbus, Ohio:** Vicki Deisner and Janey Hoy will speak about The Link at the [Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services](#)’ 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference.

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

**Sept. 9 (online):** Allie Phillips will present a webinar on “Animal Abuse + Family Violence: Investigation & Prosecution Strategies to Keep Families Safe” for the [Conference on Crimes Against Women](#).

**Sept. 15 (online):** Andrew Campbell will discuss extending 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. 22 – Dayton, Ohio:** Phil Arkow, Barbara Boat and Nancy Blaney will join local speakers in a [Link workshop](#) on “Cross-Reporting for Humane and Human Services: A Species-Spanning Approach to Safer Families and Communities.”

**Sept. 23 – Cincinnati, Ohio:** Phil Arkow, Barbara Boat and Nancy Blaney will join local speakers in a [Link workshop](#) on “Cross-Reporting for Humane and Human Services: A Species-Spanning Approach to Safer Families and Communities.”

**Sept. 24 – Athens, Ohio:** Phil Arkow, Barbara Boat and Nancy Blaney will join local speakers in a [Link workshop](#) on “Cross-Reporting for Humane and Human Services: A Species-Spanning Approach to Safer Families and Communities.”

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

**Oct. 8-10 – Knoxville, Tenn.:** The [6<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Family Violence Coordinating Council’s Domestic Violence Summit at the [Quincy Humane Society](#).

**Oct. 16 (rescheduled from April 3) – 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 on The Link and how to form local collaboratives at the [Toledo Community Partnership Against Child Abuse](#).

**Feb. 11-12, 2021 – Columbus, Ohio:** Phil Arkow will present on “Responding to Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence” at the [Midwest Veterinary Conference](#).



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.



## ABOUT THE NATIONAL LINK COALITION



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

### Members of the National Link Coalition Steering Committee

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