



# NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

**The LINK-Letter Vol. 13, No. 7 July 2020**

*A monthly report of news from THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER*



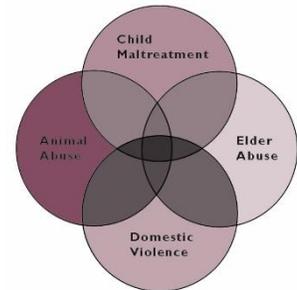
**ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE**



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

[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

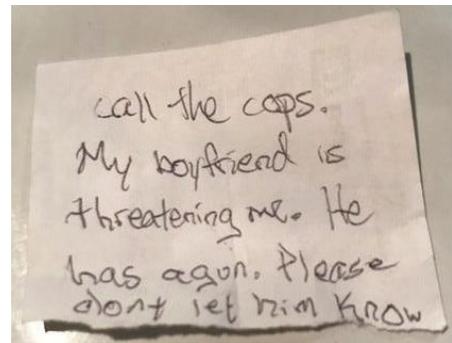
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## **VETERINARY MEDICINE... AND THE LINK**

### **“DV & the DVM”: How Can Practitioners Discreetly Flag Suspected Domestic Violence Cases?**

Given that the majority of veterinary clients are women, and increasing recognition that veterinary medicine has a responsibility to respond to suspected domestic violence, the question has been raised as to whether a discreet signaling system can be established in veterinary clinics to alert the practice to a potential domestic violence situation, similar to procedures in place in physicians' offices.



Meredith Montgomery, an Assistant Professor at the University of Florida's Veterinary Community Outreach program, asked the National Link Coalition whether such a signaling program is in place. "I happen to be a mom (with one on the way). I am inspired by a discreet signaling program for women who do not feel safe in their homes being used at my OBGYN's office throughout by pregnancy care," she writes.

"While women are pregnant, we are always being monitored for proteinuria which can be a precursor of pre-eclampsia. For that reason, my doctor's office is using discreet signaling of sharpie color to ID the urine sample as a 'flag' for pregnant, post-partum, etc. women in distress who are not comfortable or able to speak to health care practitioners face to face.

"As a veterinarian, I would love to know about 1) how to make this practice of discreet signaling accessible to veterinary practices, and 2) if any discreet signaling is being successfully used in veterinary practice at this time."

**We invite LINK-Letter readers to [email us](#) and let us know if they are aware of any clinics using this or a similar approach, and any thoughts on how such a system might be implemented.**

Veterinary response to domestic violence gained national attention in 2018 when a woman who was being held at gunpoint by her boyfriend convinced him her dog needed to go to the vet. She was able to

slip the staff a note, the police were called and the man was arrested without incident (*See the [November 2018 LINK-Letter](#)*).

Professional awareness of the subject is increasing. In 2015, the New Zealand Veterinary Association took a One Health approach in defining veterinary medicine as “a three-dimensional profession” with a unique voice to speak out for animals, humans and the environment. They signed on to a national domestic violence initiative. In 2016, the Scottish government invested in a national domestic violence campaign to train the three front-line professions identified as being most likely to encounter abused women: beauticians, dentists, and veterinarians.

The New Zealand Code of Professional Conduct reads: *Veterinarians, when confronted with situations of animal abuse, should consider whether people within that home might be at risk.* The UK’s Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons reads: *“Given the links between animal, child and domestic abuse, a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse reporting suspected or actual animal abuse should consider whether a child or adult within that home might also be at risk”*

Three veterinary journal articles have appeared about the DVM’s role in DV:

- **Allison, M., Satterwhite, C., Ramaswamy, M., Hynek, M.T., & Agnew-Svoboda, Z. (2017). Strategies veterinary practices can use to address the problem of intimate partner violence. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 250(1), 42-45.**
- **Larkin, M. (2018, Sept. 15). When domestic violence arrives at the clinic door: How veterinary staff can respond to abused clients and patients. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 253(6), 656-660.**
- **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.**

The National Link Coalition also suggests three other “DV & the DVM” strategies for veterinary clinics:

- Staff can **wear buttons** borrowed from the domestic violence field that read “It’s OK to talk to me about family violence and abuse.” Such a signal tells domestic violence survivors that they are in a safe space where resources and support can be made available.
- Clinics can **display literature** from local domestic violence agencies and state domestic violence hotlines in their lobbies.
- Our **free posters** proclaiming vet clinics (and animal shelters) as “Hit Free Zones” can be downloaded and customized with your clinic’s information. (*See the [February 2020 LINK-Letter](#)*). The poster proclaims that it’s not right to hit people or animals in this facility, an idea adapted from similar campaigns in human healthcare facilities. The posters also have accompanying instructions. Go to <http://nationallinkcoalition.org/resources/articles-research> and scroll down to “National Link Coalition Organizational Documents” and you’ll find the poster with instructions for use.







## ASPCA Position Statement Addresses Domestic and Pet Violence in a Pandemic

Recognizing that volatile domestic situations are a threat to vulnerable people and pets under even ordinary circumstances, the ASPCA has issued a [position statement](#) outlining the proactive steps that can be taken to minimize the damaging impact of COVID-19 and help ensure that people and pets have a safe and secure place to call home during the pandemic and long after the crisis has passed.

“COVID-19 and Housing Challenges: Keeping People and Pets Together” notes that housing insecurity is a daunting problem looming over many pet owners even in the best of times and that the coronavirus pandemic threatens to exacerbate the problem exponentially for both renters and homeowners. Job losses and widespread illness can lead to missed mortgage and rent payments with threats of eviction and foreclosure. Meanwhile, domestic violence and child abuse survivors, forced to stay at home with their abusers, face additional challenges. The result may be people forced to relinquish their pets to animal shelters which are similarly constrained currently in their ability to provide full service.

The ASPCA statement notes that federal and state governments’ steps to minimize the risks of evictions and foreclosures over the short-term do not apply to everyone or for what is expected to be a prolonged recovery period. Meanwhile, the threat of loss of a home is complicated for pet owners who need to transition, even temporarily, to other housing which may not be pet-friendly.

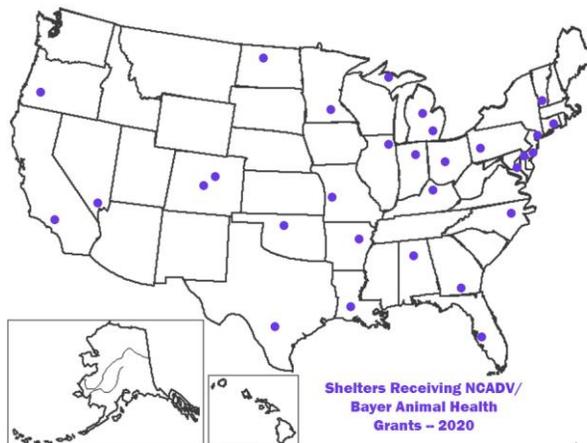
The ASPCA calls for residential landlords to be flexible. It asks insurance companies and landlords to temporarily relax breed prohibitions and waive size and weight restrictions, pet security deposits, and requirements that pets be spayed or neutered.

Because COVID-19 poses special challenges for pet owners who are survivors of domestic violence, the ASPCA position statement calls on community agencies to work together to protect domestic violence victims and their entire families, including their animal companions. To that end, the ASPCA recommends the following steps:

- **First responders** should integrate questions about pets and other animals in their standard interaction protocols and provide resources to domestic violence victims with pets.
- **Animal care and control agencies** should partner with law enforcement to help transport animals to safety if victims cannot do so themselves.
- **Law enforcement** should escort victims who have fled a residence and need to return to retrieve their pets.
- **Domestic violence shelters** that are not already pet-friendly should consider providing short-term, emergency boarding for pet victims of domestic violence.
- **Domestic violence advocates** should encourage victims to incorporate their pets into their safety plans.
- **Agencies assisting victims** should be aware of the National Link Coalition’s [state-by-state list](#) of pet protection orders and states in which [coercive-control animal abuse is also defined as domestic violence](#).
- **Veterinarians, groomers, pet supplies dealers, and boarding kennels** should partner with local programs to provide veterinary care, emergency boarding and other support for domestic violence victims’ animals.

## 30 Shelters Share \$100,000 in Grants to Aid Pet Survivors of Domestic Violence During COVID-19

The [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence \(NCADV\)](#) and [Bayer Animal Health](#) have announced the recipients of \$100,000 in funding that will help 30 domestic violence shelters in 27 states to either provide on-site pet facilities or otherwise accommodate pets in the interim as families escape abuse with their pets during the COVID-19 pandemic. Applications for the grants were opened in May ([See the June 2019 LINK-Letter](#)) to help alleviate the amplified strains put on domestic violence shelters and programs to accommodate pets as well as human survivors affected by community lockdowns.



“We are delighted to join with Bayer to support shelters and programs during this challenging time,” said Ruth Glenn, president and CEO of the NCADV. “These grants will provide critical resources to aid families seeking shelter with a beloved pet. Victims no longer have to choose between leaving an abusive partner and keeping their pets safe.”

“We’re humbled and honored to support these 30 domestic violence shelters and programs during this pandemic to help fill the gap that exists for families escaping domestic violence with their pets,” said Lauren Dorsch, Deputy Director, Communications, Bayer Animal Health U.S. “No one should have to choose between their safety and their pet.”

### Recipients of \$5,000 Grants

- Aurora-Arapahoe Battered Women’s Shelter (Gateway Domestic Violence Services), Aurora, Colo.
- Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Midland, Mich.
- Dove Center, Oakland, Md.
- LSS CHOICES for Victims of Domestic Violence, Worthington, Ohio
- Safe Futures, New London, Conn.
- Safe Nest: Temporary Assistance for Domestic Crisis, Las Vegas, Nev.
- Second Chance Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Shelter, Wynne, Ark.
- Urban Resource Institute, New York, N.Y.
- Women’s Center-Sasawin Safe Haven Program, Marquette, Mich.
- YWCA Glendale, Glendale, Calif.

### Recipients of \$2,500 Grants

- Battered Persons’ Advocacy (Peace at Home Advocacy Center, Roseburg, Ore.
- Battered Women’s Shelter, Valdosta, Ga.
- Center for Family Services, Camden, N.J.
- CHILD, Inc., Wilmington, Del.
- Connections for Abused Women and their Children, Chicago, Ill.
- Faith House, Lafayette, La.
- Family Violence Prevention Services, San Antonio, Texas
- First Step - The Western Wayne County Project on Domestic Assault, Plymouth, Mich.
- HOPE Family Services, Bradenton, Fla.

- Hope House, Lee’s Summit, Mo.
- Kosciusko County Shelter for Abuse (The Beaman Home), Warsaw, Ind.
- My Sister’s House, Rocky Mount, N. C.
- PeaceWorks, Bailey, Colo.
- Project Against Violent Encounters, Bennington, Vt.
- Souris Valley Animal Shelter, Minot, N.D.
- Southern Valley Alliance for Battered Women, Belle Plaine, Minn.
- Victim Services of Cullman, Cullman, Ala.
- Women’s Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- Women’s Crisis Center, Covington, Ky.
- YWCA Enid, Enid, Okla.

## Domestic Violence Fatalities Triple in UK During Lockdown



Following a tragic and all-too-familiar pattern (*See the [April 2020 LINK-Letter](#)*) seen in France, China and elsewhere, the United Kingdom is also reporting that the number of domestic violence fatalities has tripled during the COVID-19 lockdowns compared to the comparable period in 2019. The [New York Times](#) reported that the British government failed to heed early warnings predicting an increase in domestic abuse during the pandemic and the consequences for victims trapped with their abusers have been “catastrophic.”



During the first month after lockdown began, 16 women and girls were killed in suspected domestic violence homicides – more than triple 2019’s figures. At least 10 more have died since then. The victims ranged in age from 2 to 82. There have also been eight men killed by a partner or relative.



Meanwhile, calls to the National Domestic Abuse Hotline have risen by 49%. Emergency housing providers cannot meet demand, domestic violence shelters are closed, and courts are experiencing lengthy delays and sending home abusers under restraining orders rather than having men be homeless. Escaping victims report being unable to find new housing because landlords are not accepting new tenants. Although the government pledged £46,000,000 in emergency funds for domestic abuse charities, only £1,000,000 has actually reached these organizations.



Some of the victims

When two prominent domestic violence service organizations shifted to staff working from home, administrators had to drive to electronics stores to buy laptops for them.

The article contrasted the chaos in the UK with well-planned responses in New Zealand, Italy, Spain, and Germany to house abuse victims and provide funding to shelters and other DV services.

The article features stunning portraits and profiles of many of the victims. Meanwhile, agencies are predicting a surge in demand for services once the lockdown restrictions are lifted and people are free to escape.

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

### **Multidisciplinary Pennsylvania Webinar Explores Child and Animal Abuse Link**

An all-star, multidisciplinary panel of child protection, animal welfare and domestic violence experts led nearly 600 participants from Pennsylvania and elsewhere on an extensive two-hour review of **“The Dangerous Link between Child and Animal Maltreatment”** in a webinar on June 24. Moderated by Valerie Pritchett, co-anchor of ABC27 news in Harrisburg, the collaborative presentation and panel discussion raised considerable awareness and identified ways for agencies to collaborate.



**Cathleen Palm**, founder of the [Center for Children’s Justice](#), set the stage by noting that The Link between child and animal abuse has been “centuries in the making.” She examined the famed “Little Mary Ellen” case in New York City in 1874 when there was no pathway for child protection until ASPCA founder Henry Bergh saw a similar pattern in rescuing animals and secured the girl’s release from an abusive home.

**Cathleen Palm**

Palm emphasized that The Link is not a case of people caring about animals more than about children, but rather a recognition that many investigations of animal abuse also uncover incidents of child maltreatment. “If we start caring about one group we can take better care of both,” she said.

**Kristen Tullo**, Pennsylvania State Director for the Humane Society of the U.S., cited academic studies that reported: children who commit animal abuse are eight times more likely to perpetrate crimes against people; a “startling propensity” of animal abuse offenders in Chicago committed other violent offenses against humans; and that animal sexual abuse is the single greatest predictor of an increased probability of committing child sexual abuse, resulting in a 600% increase in arrests for bestiality in the past seven years. She also noted that children who witness animal abuse have an increased risk of committing future acts of violence. She echoed the common theme of the webinar in calling for greater interagency communication. “When we collaborate, our communities are safer.”



**Kristen Tullo**

Tullo also explained Pennsylvania’s pioneering “Libre’s Law” ([See the July 2017 LINK-Letter](#)) which used The Link as a basis for the most sweeping overhaul of Pennsylvania’s anti-cruelty statutes in decades. The law has five major components: prohibiting animal tethering, which gives law enforcement officers opportunities to assess an animal’s home environment for possible child neglect and abuse; protecting horses, which made the state’s laws not species-specific; felony-level penalties for animal torture; mandatory forfeiture of animals, which prevents victims from being returned to their abusers; and civil immunity for veterinarians and humane society police officers who report animal abuse in good faith.

[Montgomery County Assistant District Attorney Lauren Marvel](#), who handles animal abuse cases as part of her office’s Family Protection Unit, presented a case study of how a report of the suspicious deaths of two dogs in 2017 led to a multi-agency collaborative investigation that resulted in Jonah Harris and Heather Harris pleading guilty to 25 and 15 counts, respectively, of animal cruelty, child endangerment, evidence tampering, and corruption of minors. She offered constructive tips on how to conduct an investigation.



**Lauren Marvel**

The initial investigation into two dogs that had been starved led to finding four barefoot children, aged 12 to 16, living in a home filled with feces, urine, flies, mold, uninhabitable bedrooms and bathrooms, and 11 dogs, cats and chinchillas living in varying stages of neglect. “You have to treat these cases as a miniature homicide investigation,” she advised the audience. The investigating team included detectives, humane society police officers, school resource officers, the Department of Children & Youth, and the District Attorney’s office. “When you have all of these people involved and communicating, that is how you make sure all the boxes are being checked. Your SPCA and humane society investigators will be a huge asset.”



**Cpl. Michael Spada**, Animal Cruelty Officer, Investigative Services Division, Pennsylvania State Police [Bureau of Criminal Investigation](#), coordinates services with local humane society officers. He presented another case study of how an initial investigation into something seemingly innocuous – a request from a child welfare worker for a welfare check on children playing on the side of the road – uncovered four children aged 11 to 19 living in an unsanitary, deplorable house that had maggots in the kitchen, several inches of black water and a strong odor of mold in the basement, flies, moths, urine, and feces. Officials seized eight

dogs, nine cats, two snakes, a tarantula, two rats, two bearded dragons, decomposing pigs, chickens and rabbits, and numerous firearms.

Spada offered tips on how to write and execute a search warrant and the need to involve such agencies as the humane society, health department and the zoning office. The parents have been charged with 20 counts of animal cruelty and endangering child welfare.

Spada emphasized the value of interagency collaboration. Police departments should have a protocol in place of knowing their local points of contact for animal abuse cases and what they can offer, much as they already have for car crashes and child abuse cases. For example, an animal hoarding case might reveal high levels of ammonia in a home. “I don’t carry an ammonia reader with me but I know which fire departments I can call that do have one,” he said. Similarly, veterinarians can assist with cases involving unusual animals. “If you don’t know about dairy cows or reptiles, maybe your veterinarian can tell you what you’re looking at. And let veterinarians know that if someone brings in an animal with an injury that doesn’t make sense let them know that they can contact you.”

Veterinary forensics consultant [Melinda Merck](#) recommended that agencies that investigate animal cruelty establish a relationship in advance with veterinarians trained in forensics so they have a resource to call when a case arises. She noted that few veterinary colleges offer such training yet. She also noted that forensic entomologists can be of great help in establishing timelines of animals’ death and degrees of decomposition.



**Melinda Merck**

Merck echoed the common message regarding The Link. “Whenever you have child abuse or animal abuse, everyone in that home is at risk,” she said.





**Maria McColgan**

**Maria McColgan**, child abuse pediatrician and Pediatrics Fellowship Director at the [CARES Institute](#), Cooper University Health Care, noted that animal abuse in the home is often a form of emotional abuse to the children and a mechanism of control that makes children fearful. Humane investigators should call child welfare offices when they see children in the home. Children who have witnessed animal abuse should be evaluated for their welfare and possible physical injury and malnutrition. They may need trauma-focused counseling to deal with their emotional abuse. These children might also need to be placed in protective custody.

Interviewing children in such situations can be complicated and should be done only by people trained appropriately. “But if the child wants to talk, let them, and document verbatim what they say,” McColgan advised. “It can be incredibly important in the care of the child later.” Such information may have implications for the eventual returning of the child to the parents and even whether the parents should have future children.



**Nikki Thompson**

**Nikki Thompson**, chief humane police officer for the [Bucks County SPCA](#), described the collaborations her agency has had for years with the Children & Youth Social Service Agency, Area Agency on Aging, the District Attorney’s Office, and municipal police departments. The SPCA conducts interagency trainings to describe the telltale signs of animal abuse and what her agents look for in an investigation. “What we look for with animals is almost the same as with children,” she said. “Body condition, being thin or overweight, weepy or goopy eyes, poor skin condition, the condition they’re living in, odors, where they’re being kept. If you think something’s wrong, contact us.”

Although Pennsylvania law does not mandate SPCAs to report suspected child abuse, the Bucks County SPCA has its own policy requiring personnel to report. “Just making a call to these agencies and reaching out is the key to having help when you need it,” she said. “Having everybody working together will be successful in the long run. Once you start involving other people, more people come on board: it spiderwebs from there.”

**Virginia Trea**, Intake Manager for the [Bucks County Children & Youth Social Service Agency](#), advised animal cruelty investigators to look for the condition of any children they encounter. Their physical condition – skin color, circles under their eyes, thinness – might indicate malnutrition. A parent who appears impaired may indicate a meth house or other substance abuse. “We would want to get children in a home with a situation like this into immediate medical care and also get a history of their medical and dental care,” she said. Child welfare investigators would also look for histories of mental health treatment, issues with day care and performance in school, and make arrangements for precautionary and comprehensive assessments through children’s advocacy center with a multidisciplinary team.



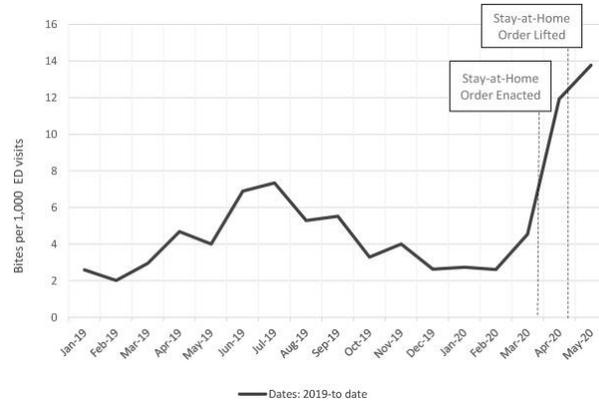
Trea reiterated Thompson’s call for more agencies to establish interdisciplinary Link collaborations. “Nikki’s team takes care of the animals and we take care of the children. At the end of the day, all vulnerable species are being taken care of. There’s so much power in collaboration.”

## Dog Bites in Children Surging During COVID-19 Pandemic

One of the unexpected outcomes of the stay-at-home lockdowns necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant surge in the number of children requiring medical treatment for dog bites, with at least one hospital reporting a three-fold increase in children's visits to the ER.

Writing in a [forthcoming issue](#) of the *Journal of Pediatrics*, Cinnamon Dixon and Rakesh Mistry of the University of Colorado Children's Hospital note that the surge exceeds even what is the normal increased dog bite incidence seen during summer months and has persisted even after stay-at-home restrictions were relaxed.

Dixon and Mistry write that families with children and dogs are undergoing unique challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Caregivers have the additional tension of children staying at home 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for weeks and now months on end; little to no reprieve afforded by out-of-home activities such as school, playdates, parks or libraries exist. Meanwhile, dogs in these households are presumably also experiencing untoward stress. Not only do the dogs have increased exposure to children, which may or may not be supervised, dogs may be experiencing 'emotional contagion' – a state in which companion dogs mirror the emotions and stress levels of their human caregivers."



Dog bites per 1,000 ER visits, Jan. 2019 – June 2020

They cite several factors contributing to the increased number of dog bites: increased child--dog exposure as a result of shelter-in-place regulations, similar to summer months when children are ordinarily out-of-school; greater dog stress given increased child presence and amplified household stress in a time of chaos and uncertainty; and decreased adult supervision of children around dogs, due to new and competing home responsibilities for parents and caregivers. "Together, these unique circumstances can increase the likelihood of adverse interactions between children and their dogs."

Children have the highest risk of dog bites, with large incidences and greater severity of injuries. Of the nearly 340,000 ER visits for dog bite injuries each year – over 900 per day – more than 40% of the victims are children and adolescents, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

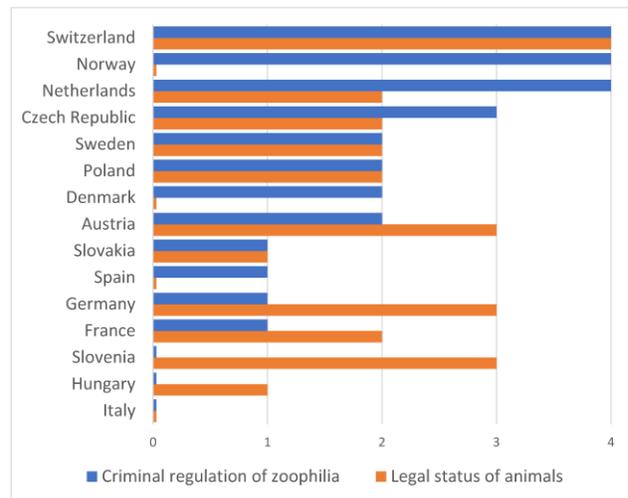
They list 10 strategies that parents and children should observe to try to minimize the risk of being bitten, and urge healthcare providers, public health professionals and injury control experts to strengthen and increase advocacy and educational efforts for prevention in order to minimize dog bites. "Children, especially those ages 5-9 years, have the highest incidence of dog bites. Infants and younger children have a higher likelihood of bites to the head and neck. Importantly, most dog bites occur by the family dog or another known dog. Dogs are more likely to bite in circumstances of resource-guarding (such as in protecting their property, toys, and food) or if they are ill, excited, or frightened," they write.

"It is our duty to provide frequent reminders to children, families, and dog owners now as we continue to co-exist in this 'new norm.' If we fall short, our nation will not only see the medical and other societal fall-out of COVID-19, but we may experience exponential increases of this preventable injury, affecting millions of children and their 'historic best friend' – their dogs."

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

### **Study Ranks Bestiality with Legal Status of Animals Across Europe**

A Hungarian study correlating the legal status of animals with the criminal law investigation of bestiality (or zoophilia) in 15 European countries is reporting that countries that place greater emphasis on regulating animal sexual abuse are also more likely to have clearer rules in place regarding the legal status of animals. The study looked at criminal prosecutions of both sexual acts performed with animals and the possession and distribution of animal pornography. The study found Switzerland to have the best record for both criminal regulation of zoophilia and animals' legal status, with Italy ranking last.



Switzerland, Norway and the Netherlands were found to have the most complete criminal legislation in terms of the assessment and sanctioning of zoophilia, while Hungary, Italy and Slovenia do not include specific penal sanctions. Five countries (Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Switzerland, and Sweden) offer specific constitutional protection of animals in the law. The authors conclude that criminal sanctioning of zoophilia and stronger legal status of animals are correlated with a legal recognition of the intrinsic value of animals, and that “animal welfare is inseparably and symbiotically connected with the physical and mental health of humans.”

Animal sexual abuse and pornography are frequently Linked with child sexual abuse and pornography. Awareness of these Links has now made bestiality illegal in 46 of the 50 U.S. states and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

-- Vetter, S., Boros, A., & Ózsvári, L. (2020). Penal sanctioning of zoophilia in light of the legal status of animals: A comparative analysis of fifteen European countries. *Animals*, 10, 1024; doi:10.3390/ani10061024

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

### **Interspecies Empathy and Humane Education Seen as Important for Social Workers**

Humane education has long been viewed as a strategy to impart empathy in children towards animals, through which they may develop empathy towards other people. Social workers, however, who have similarly embraced empathy as a core value and skill have been slow to incorporate interspecies empathy into this model, stemming from the field's humanist foundations and uncertainty over how to think about human-animal relationships. This article, in a prominent Australasian social work journal, introduces The Link between animal abuse and human violence as one reason why empathy toward animals should be important for social workers. It presents comments from students who completed a humane education program and self-reported increases in empathy for animals.

-- Fraser, H., Taylor, N., & Signal, T. (2017). Young people empathising with other animals: Reflections on an Australian RSPCA humane education program. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 29(3), 5-16.



## Facility Dogs Found to Reduce Stress in Children Undergoing Forensic Examinations

At least 10 states (Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Virginia, and Washington) are believed to have enacted legislation allowing specially trained facility dogs to accompany sexually abused children into forensic examinations and courtrooms to provide emotional support during these intense times of stress (*See the [June 2020 LINK-Letter](#)*). A recent research article examines how these dogs reduce children's stress.

Stress biomarkers were measured in 51 children aged 4-16 to examine how salivary cortisol, alpha-amylase, immunoglobulin A, heart rate, and blood pressure were affected. The results showed that the group of children who were accompanied by facility dogs had significant decreases in systolic and diastolic blood pressure compared to a control group of children undergoing forensic examinations without facility dogs present. Other statistically significant biomarker changes were reported in the children with the facility dogs, supporting the stress-reducing effects of a service-trained facility dog for children undergoing forensic interviews for alleged child sexual abuse.

The authors suggest that the logical next research step is to examine if facility dogs increase the likelihood of a child to disclose and/or enhance the accuracy of recalling sexually abusive events. They also suggest that such research should examine how stress processes function, how to improve child-friendly forensic interview setting characteristics, and what direct role facility dogs may play in the investigative processes.

-- Krause-Parello, C.A., Thames, M., Ray, C.M., & Kolassa, J. (2018). Examining the effects of a service-trained facility dog on stress in children undergoing forensic interview for allegations of child sexual abuse. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 27*(3), 305-320.

## Study Explores Attachments and Proclivity for Animal Abuse

Studies that examine factors related to animal abuse have often found that those who commit such offenses commonly have experienced dysfunctional childhoods and high anxiety levels. Yet, no study has examined how attachment styles which are by-products of maladaptive childhoods, social anxiety and animal abuse proclivity are inter-related. This study assessed the association between attachment styles and social anxiety as indicators of animal abuse proclivity within an adult sample. The researchers found that an anxious attachment significantly correlated with direct proclivity (i.e., animal as the perceived provocateur) while the relationship between social anxiety and indirect animal abuse proclivity (i.e., animal as the outlet for aggression) was mediated by avoidant attachment. The findings emphasize the importance of exploring how interpersonal relationships influence our relationship with animals in order to advance treatment and assessment of animal abusers.

-- Ford, J., Bytheway, A., & Alleyne, E. (2020). Man's best friend and sometimes target: Negative interpersonal relations are related to animal abuse proclivity. *Society & Animals, 28*(2), 113-132.

## Information Sought on Link among LGBTQ, Disabled Populations

While [extensive research](#) has documented how actual or threatened animal abuse is a coercive control strategy employed by abusers to intimidate and retaliate in situations of intimate partner violence, much less is known about similar techniques used against pets belonging to LGBTQ individuals or service animals for the disabled. Two researchers have contacted the National Link Coalition recently seeking information to explore these issues further.



Claire Renzetti & Nik Taylor

S. Paige Brenner is starting her dissertation at Walden University on intimate partner violence and animal abuse in the LGBTQ community. To the best of our knowledge, there have only been a few studies researching this concern. Sociologist Claire Renzetti wrote *Violent Betrayal: Partner Abuse in Lesbian Relationships* (SAGE Publications, 1992) almost 30 years ago.

Sociologist Nik Taylor, at Australia's Flinders University and New Zealand's University of Canterbury, and her colleagues have published several articles on the topic. Their writings include:

- Taylor, N., Fraser, H., & Riggs, D.W. (2019). Domestic violence and companion animals in the context of LGBT people's relationships. *Sexualities*, 22(5-6), 821-836.
- Riggs, D.W., Taylor, N., Fraser, H., Donovan, C., & Signal, T. (2018). The link between domestic violence and abuse and animal cruelty in the intimate relationships of people of diverse genders and/or sexualities: A binational study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* [<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518771681>].
- Taylor, N., Riggs, D.W., Donovan, C., Signal, T., & Fraser, H. (2019). People of diverse genders and/or sexualities caring for and protecting animal companions in the context of domestic violence. *Violence Against Women*, 25(9), 1096-1115.
- Riggs, D.W., Taylor, N., Signal, T., Fraser, H., & Donovan, C. (2018). People of diverse genders and/or sexualities and their animal companions: Experiences of family violence in a binational sample. *Journal of Family Issues*, 39(18), 4226-4247.
- Fraser, H., & Taylor, N. (2016). Researching marginalized issues, policies and programs: Companion animals, same-sex abuse, and housing. In H.D. Fraser & N. Taylor (Eds.). *Neoliberalization, universities and the public intellectual: Species, gender and class and the production of knowledge* (pp. 61-83). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Meanwhile, Marc Dubin, an attorney and consultant with extensive expertise in disability rights and the Americans with Disabilities Act, is the founder of [CAVNET](#) – the Communities Against Violence Network. While there have been anecdotal reports of abusive individuals harming or threatening the service animals of their disabled spouses and partners out of jealousy, no Link research, legislation or programming has come to our attention formally addressing this issue.

We invite LINK-Letter readers who have any insights into these new and emerging Link topics to [contact us](#) and we will assist in informing researchers, program developers and legislators who are concerned about these aspects of The Link between animal abuse and vulnerable and marginalized humans.

## Study Explores Scottish Children’s Experiences of Cruelty to Animals

While childhood animal cruelty is widely seen as a risk for later interpersonal violence and a red flag for other forms of violence in the household, relatively few studies have spoken to children directly about their cruelty to animals. Research by Animal Guardians, a humane education program run by the Scottish SPCA for children aged 5 to 12 who have been cruel to animals or deemed at-risk, investigated how 10 children spoke about their experiences of animal cruelty and factors surrounding it. The children: tended to have small attachment networks which often included pets; tended to interpret ambiguous situations predominately negatively; tended to like animals and see them as sentient; and struggled admitting to cruelty. Three main superordinate themes emerged: bonding to animals; exposure to/normalization of violence; and signs of emotional issues/trauma. Children who were referred for animal cruelty were from vulnerable backgrounds, often had complex backdrops to their at-risk or cruel behavior, and sometimes had trouble regulating their emotions and behaviors. The paper recommends that programs hoping to address childhood animal cruelty should be aware of these complex emotional, psychological and behavioral factors and tailor interventions accordingly.

-- Wauthier, L., Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Scottish SPCA), & Williams, J.M. (2020, June 29). A qualitative study of children’s accounts of cruelty to animals: Uncovering the roles of trauma, exposure to violence, and attachment. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1-34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520928640>

## CROSS-REPORTING... and THE LINK

### West Virginia Has Extensive Cross-Reporting Laws

In our [June 2020 LINK-Letter](#), we reported on a novel bill, **A 9948**, in the New York State General Assembly which would require law enforcement authorities who investigate suspected animal abuse to inform Children and Family Services to further investigate and determine if the accused individual has any history of family or domestic violence. We also noted that this bill might be the first example of mandated cross-reporting of animal abuse and domestic violence.



We have since found a precedent for this approach in West Virginia. **Art. §7-10-2** in the West Virginia Code states that humane officers who, in the course of an investigation of animal cruelty, suspect domestic violence shall report the suspicion and the grounds for the suspicion to the State Police. (Not all counties in the state are believed to have humane officers, with some counties still having the more limited position of county dog wardens.)

Similarly, **Art. §48-27-702** requires law enforcement officers responding to a domestic violence incident who suspect that an animal is a victim of cruel or inhumane treatment to report the suspicion and the grounds therefor to the county humane officer within 24 hours.

West Virginia has perhaps the most comprehensive statutes mandating cross-reporting of various Link crimes. Humane Officers in West Virginia are also mandated to report reasonable suspicions of abuse or neglect of a minor child or incapacitated or elderly person to the local child or adult protective services agencies. Meanwhile, **Articles §9-6-9a** and **§49-2-806**, respectively, require adult protective services and child protective services workers to report suspected animal cruelty to a county humane officer. West Virginia veterinarians are similarly mandated to report suspected animal abuse under **Article §7-10-4a**.

## ***BUILDING LINK AWARENESS***

### **“2020 Vision” Looks at COVID-19 Issues and Emerging Link Trends**

National Link Coalition Coordinator Phil Arkow recorded two webinars that address the theme of “2020 Vision” – new developments and emerging trends affecting The Link between animal abuse and human violence -- and implications of the pandemic on social services and animal care & control agencies.



**“Improving Public Safety by Stopping Animal Cruelty: The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence in a Post-COVID World”** was presented on June 16 for the Justice Clearinghouse. The 75-minute webinar introduced 258 participants to how animal abuse interfaces with domestic, child and elder abuse; how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting animal and domestic violence shelters and child and adult protective services; and emerging Link developments in animal care & control, social work, domestic violence, veterinary medicine, criminal justice, law enforcement, academic research, and legislation.

The webinar is archived on the [Justice Clearinghouse website](#) as part of an ongoing series of continuing education presentations co-sponsored by the National Sheriffs Association and the National Animal Care and Control Association. The Justice Clearinghouse maintains a year-round, interdisciplinary peer-to-peer educational outreach to criminal justice and public safety officials.

A similar 60-minute program was presented on June 17 to 30 participants on behalf of our New Mexico affiliate, Positive Links. **“2020 Vision: New Frontiers and Opportunities in The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence”** also presented an introduction to The Link, COVID-19’s implications, and emerging trends for the 2020s and beyond. The webinar was part of an ongoing series by Positive Links addressing family safety issues during the coronavirus pandemic and “life in lockdown.” These webinars are [archived on the Positive Links website](#).



See our list of training opportunities at the end of *The LINK-Letter* for a list of upcoming Link-related webinars being presented by the Justice Clearinghouse and Positive Links. We thank these two organizations for their ongoing efforts to inform the public and professionals about how animal abuse is a sentinel warning sign for potential family and community violence.



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

**Legislation...**

**Intervention...**

**Networking...**

**Knowledge...**

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

## Suggestions Offered for Reducing Family Violence During the Stressors of a Pandemic

In the [April](#) and [May LINK-Letters](#), we began exploring how the Link risks of interpersonal and interspecies family violence might be increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the physical trauma risks presented to children when they and their dogs are confined during stay-at-home orders (*see above article*), several recent informational resources are helping the human and non-human members of the family respond better to the stressors of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Allie Phillips, who pioneered the [Sheltering Animals and Families Together \(SAF-T™\)](#) model of co-sheltering for pets and domestic violence survivors, gave an interview on nationally-syndicated radio host [Steve Dale's PetWorld](#) radio program. Phillips noted that the multiple stresses of uncertainty over COVID-19, combined with political demonstrations, have increased the number of suicide attempts. While pets may be great stress relievers for us, during these chaotic times pets can easily pick up on the negative energy existing inside and outside our homes which can trigger anger among all

species.

The interview discussed how pets process our emotions and what people can do to prevent the cycles of anger from building up in the home. Phillips recommends that people stay physically and emotionally well every day, and not leave their physical and emotional wellness until the end of the day when they're too tired to work on them. She also suggests that people "check out of social media" and walk away from online confrontations, and isolate pets away from difficult and contentious conversations. Phillips and Dale both serve on the National Link Coalition's steering committee.

Dale also aired an [earlier segment](#) about preparing pets that have been accustomed to being at home for prolonged periods of time during lockdowns to overcome separation anxiety when their owners return to work. In a similar vein, the American Veterinary Medical Association issued a [press release](#) on June 12 encouraging pet owners to take steps to ensure a smooth and stress-free transition for pets as communities reopen following months of lockdowns.



AVMA recommended seven steps to get pets ready for their humans' return to work:

- Slowly re-introduce workday routines.
- Take anxiety out of your departure, by gradually extending the time you are gone.
- Exercise and play with the dog before leaving.
- Keep pets engaged while you're gone by providing treats, food puzzles and automatic feeders.
- Create a safe space where the dog can stay during your absence.
- Look for signs of stress and film your pets when you leave to monitor their reactions.
- Consult with your veterinarian about behavior and wellness issues.

## NEWS about LINK COALITIONS

### Scottish SPCA Revives First Strike Scotland Campaign

The Scottish SPCA has revived its pioneering [First Strike campaign](#) to help humans and animals affected by domestic abuse. The campaign, first introduced in 1998, was one of the first in the world to highlight the link between domestic violence and animal abuse. At the time, this was not a common association and one of the first steps was to convince the veterinary profession of the relationship between the two.



In September 1998, the National Link Coalition’s Randall Lockwood traveled throughout Scotland to help publicize the original launch of First Strike Scotland. The trip served as the basis of the award-winning BBC documentary *The Cruelty Connection* that aired the following January and was the first major coverage of Link issues by media in the UK. The Link is now widely recognized across the UK, said Gilly Mendes Ferreira, head of

education, policy and research, and the program today works with medical professionals, veterinary surgeons, police, social workers and animal welfare organizations.

“The re-launch of our First Strike campaign reaffirms the Scottish SPCA’s commitment to helping people and animals who are victims of domestic violence. The nature of our work means we often enter situations where domestic violence is a problem, and in our experience animals can often be the forgotten victims. Pets can be exploited as a form of control by an abuser and be beaten or mistreated directly,” she said.

The reactivation of the campaign coincides with increased awareness of the dangers posed to animal survivors of domestic violence caused by the COVID-19 shelter-in-place requirements. “There is real concern the lockdown imposed due to the coronavirus pandemic has put those who were already being abused at even greater risk, confining them to a home with their abuser. We are determined to help people and their pets should they find themselves in this situation,” she noted.



The Scottish SPCA is a global leader in highlighting the link between cruelty towards animals at a young age which can potentially lead to violence towards humans and other serious crimes as an adult. The society’s ground-breaking [Animal Guardians](#) program works with young people who have hurt animals or are displaying behaviors towards animals which are cause for concern (*See the [May 2018 LINK-Letter](#)*). Over 100 children have already been referred to the program, and results of a study examining these youths’ involvement with animals have just been published (*see above article*).

The First Strike campaign aims to raise awareness of the link and keep people and their pets safe. In addition to educational outreach and community collaborations, the Scottish SPCA is providing shelter to animals involved in domestic abuse that need help.

## *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** requires every county in the state that maintains shelters for evacuation during an emergency to designate at least one emergency shelter that can accommodate persons with pets. Such shelters will have to comply with FEMA Disaster Assistance Policies and Procedures and with local and state emergency management plans' safety procedures regarding the sheltering of pets. **HB 705** was approved by the House and Senate 39-0 and was signed by the Governor on June 29. It **took effect July 1.**



**Florida SB 1082** allows 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. **SB 1082** was approved by the Senate 38-0 and by the House 117-0 and **was signed into law on June 18 by Gov. Ron DeSantis.**



**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 is in the House of Representatives.



**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 respondents served with 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 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 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. **SB 2718** passed the Senate unanimously and both bills are in the House Judiciary and Agriculture Committees.

 **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 was referred in a Study Order to the Senate Judiciary Committee to review numerous bills relative to judicial issues and was discharged 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 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 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 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 the state's 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 bill was referred in a Study Order to the Senate Judiciary Committee to review numerous bills relative to judicial issues and was discharged to the Senate Rules Committee.

 **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 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 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 and provide that individual with immunity from civil and criminal liability. **The bill was in the Senate Judiciary Committee 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 have permitted 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 had to create a database of legal professionals and paraprofessionals willing to provide such representation. **HB 3995** was in the House Rules Committee and **HB 5530** was in the House Judiciary - Criminal Committee **when the General Assembly adjourned.**

 **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 can monitor the proceedings, consult with individuals and records relevant to the case, and present appropriate information and recommendations. **The bill 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. **A 1834** is in the Assembly Agriculture and **S 186** is in the 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 Class C misdemeanor to submit a “frivolous” complaint alleging that an “animal enterprise” has engaged in animal cruelty. The bill died 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 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 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 both fields. **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 and specify that failure to report is grounds for disciplinary action. **The bills died in 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.



**Iowa SF 2029 and HF 2374** would have granted 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 have required 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 had to report to the Department of Human Services if the investigation of suspected animal abuse indicated a minor child witnessed the incident. **All of the bills died when the Legislature adjourned on June 14.**



**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 have granted immunity from civil liability to veterinarians, teachers, school personnel, and others who report suspected animal cruelty to law enforcement agencies. *The bill also addressed psychological evaluation and treatment. It died in the Judiciary Committee.*



**New York A 1170 and S 7815** would require veterinarians who reasonably and in good faith suspect that a pet 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 passed the House by a vote of 89-2 and was sent to the Senate.

## *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 HF 737**, which redefined animal cruelty, neglect and torture and their penalties, added a provision allowing courts to order a psychological or psychiatric examination and treatment for adults convicted of animal mistreatment. Such provisions are mandatory if the offender is a juvenile or committed aggravated or felony animal mistreatment or torture. The bill was **signed into law** on June 29.



**Missouri HB 1320** would have allowed courts to impose psychological or psychiatric evaluation or treatment upon animal cruelty offenders as a condition of probation; evaluation or treatment would have been mandatory upon second or subsequent offenses or if the crime involved animal torture or mutilation. *The bill also addressed cross-reporting. It died 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 and laid on the table by the Senate.



**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 bills are in the Assembly Agriculture and Senate Domestic Animal Welfare Committees.



**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.

## *THE LINK... IN THE NEWS*



**Matthew Garman**

### **Alleged Dogfighter Gets 6 Years in Prison for Earlier Crimes**

A Cleveland, Tenn. man who had been charged with fighting animals for allegedly causing the death of a neighbor’s dog was sentenced to six years in prison on previous charges of robbery and conspiracy. [WTVG-TV](#) in Chattanooga reported that Matthew Garman received the sentence after the dog fighting allegations prompted a court to revoke Garman’s probation on the earlier charges. Garman had been arrested in March after he posted a video on his Facebook page of two dogs fighting at his home and adding “He did good” as the caption. The other dog, named “Manny,” later died, leading to community protests outside the Bradley County Jail. Several bystanders reportedly did nothing to stop the dogfight. A second video, involving another dog named “Roscoe,” reportedly surfaced later.

## Baby in Dog Kennel, 700 Animals Rescued in Tennessee

Officers in Henry County, Tenn. rescued a 1-1/2-year-old baby being kept in a 4' x 4' dog kennel, and more than 600 animals from a property with a single-wide trailer with an overwhelming smell of urine and crawling with bugs and mice. [Fox17 News](#) in Nashville reported that Heather Scarbough, 41, the mother of the child, Thomas Jefferson Brown, 46, the child's stepfather, and Brown's father Charles Brown, 82, are facing felony charges of aggravated child abuse, aggravated animal cruelty, possession of illegal firearms and drug paraphernalia, and manufacturing marijuana. Henry County Sheriff Monte Belew said a 10-foot boa constrictor and two snakes were seen dangling above the toddler's cage. Confiscated items included 531 mice, hamsters and rats, 86 chickens and roosters, 56 dogs, eight snakes, 10 rabbits, four parakeets, three cats, a pheasant, a gecko, and three sugar gliders, plus 127 marijuana plants, and 17 guns. The child was taken into protective custody by Child Protective Services. Belew said that upon his arrest, the younger Brown, a convicted felon, was worried about getting his animals back and did not ask about the child.



Charles Brown, Heather Scarbough, and Thomas Brown

## Kentucky Couple Indicted on Bestiality and Animal Cruelty Charges



Attorney General Daniel Cameron

It took the Commonwealth of Kentucky until 2019 to make it illegal to have sex with an animal, but the criminal justice system has begun to act quickly on the new law. The Attorney General's office announced on June 10 it had filed charges of bestiality against a couple in what is believed to be the second such case since the new law went into effect. Nolene Renee Horn, 44, of Bracken County, and Christopher S. Jones, 50, of Mason County, were each indicted on two felony counts of sexual crimes against an animal and two misdemeanor counts of torture of a dog, the [Lexington Herald Leader](#) reported. "This type of heinous and obscene crime cannot go unpunished," said Attorney General Daniel Cameron.

The new law made Kentucky the 46<sup>th</sup> state to ban bestiality ([See the April 2019 LINK-Letter](#)): sex with animals, strongly linked with child sexual abuse and child pornography, is still legal in Hawai'i, Wyoming, New Mexico, and West Virginia. Opposition to the bill had been based on property rights, with false fears that authorities might confiscate farm animals. Last Fall, Kentucky State Police arrested Larry "Grover" Stewart, 44, of Christian County, on 14 felony counts of possession and distribution of child pornography and a sexual crime against an animal ([See the November 2019 LINK-Letter](#)).

## Seven People and Dog Killed in Mass Shooting in Alabama

Four men, three women and a dog were shot to death in a house that was set on fire to destroy evidence in Valhermoso Springs, Ala. [AL.com](#) reported that the Morgan County Sheriff's office said the suspects had gone to the residence with the intention of shooting everyone there. Police later tracked two suspects to Salem, Ore., where the [Statesman Journal](#) reported that John Michael Legg and Frederic "Ric" Rogers were awaiting extradition to Alabama to face capital murder charges.



John Legg and Frederic Rogers

## Louisiana Man Charged with 500 Counts of Child and Animal Pornography



**Keith Taylor**

Keith Allen Taylor, 40, of Calhoun, La., was arrested on June 17 and charged with 400 counts of possessing child pornography and 100 counts of sexual abuse of an animal. The [Monroe News-Star](#) reported that Louisiana State Police Special Victims Unit investigators, acting on a tip, located approximately 400 images and videos of child sexual abuse and approximately 100 images and videos of sexual abuse of an animal. The arrest report stated that Taylor confessed to downloading and possessing the material. Louisiana's criminal code defines sexual abuse of an animal as a "crime against nature," knowingly or intentionally filming, distributing or possessing pornographic images of a person and an animal engaged in sexual contact. Taylor was booked into the Ouachita Correctional Center, and was being held under \$500,000 bond -- \$1,000 for each of the 500 felony counts.

## Estranged Husband Charged with Burning Wife's Dog, Burglary and Arson



**Nyles Andres**

Nyles Reylito Andres, 29, of Caldwell, Idaho, was charged with burglary, intimidating a witness, arson, malicious injury to property, assault, and animal cruelty for allegedly breaking into the home of his separated wife and throwing a kenneled dog on a fire. [The Idaho Press](#) reported that court documents alleged that Andres went to his wife's house in anger, looking to fight with a man he believed to be having an affair with his wife. A Canyon County sheriff's deputy responding to a call from Andres' stepdaughter saw the dog in a metal kennel in a large fire where some of his wife's clothes were also being burned. Andres reportedly also had a hunting knife in one hand and a hatchet in the other and was trying to stab the dog as if in a knife fight. Three children, aged 4, 5 and 16, were in the home and barricaded themselves in a room. The dog was treated at a veterinary clinic for severe burns to its lower body and legs.

## 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.

**July 14 (online):** The Links Group UK will present a [webinar](#), hosted by The Webinar Vet, on "The Link Between Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence: Implications for Veterinary Teams During COVID-19 and Beyond"

**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 22 (online):** Kathleen Wood and Brittany Hill of the Animal Legal Defense Fund will conduct a [webinar](#) on mental health evaluations for animal cruelty offenders.

**July 29 (online):** Allie Phillips will conduct a [webinar](#) on "Domestic Violence Shelters and Animals" for Positive Links New Mexico.

**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.”

**Aug. 3 (online):** Diane Balkin and Judge John Romero will conduct a [webinar](#) on The Link and child abuse for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

**Aug. 10 (online):** Barbara Boat, Judge H. Lee Chitwood, and Jamie Contreras of the Animal Legal Defense Fund will conduct a [webinar](#) on The Link and juvenile Justice for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

**August 19 (online):** Andrew Campbell will conduct a [webinar](#) on “How Disaster Outside the Home Leads to Disaster Inside the Home” for [Positive Links](#) New Mexico.

**Aug. 25 (online):** Vicki Deisner will present on The Link in a [webinar](#) for the Wood County, Ohio, Domestic Violence Task Force.

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

**Sept. 2 (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](#).

**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. 18 (online):** Janet Hoy and Vicki Deisner will present on The Link in a [webinar](#) for the Public Children’s Association of Ohio.

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

**Oct. 8 (online):** Phil Arkow will present on “Human-Animal Relationships and Social Work: Opportunities Beyond the Veterinary Environment” at the virtual version of the [6<sup>th</sup> International Veterinary Social Work Summit](#), which 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 (online):** Aviva Vincent and Vicki Deisner will conduct a webinar on “Animal Abuse and Family Violence: Understanding The Link and Local Resources” for social workers at the [Greater Cleveland Elder Abuse/Domestic Violence Roundtable](#).

**Oct. 30 – Columbus, Ohio:** Vicki Deisner will present on The Link at the [All Ohio Counselors Conference](#), cosponsored by the Ohio School Counselor Association and the Ohio Counseling Association.

**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, multidisciplinary 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.**

Retired Chief Deputy District Attorney, Denver, Colo.  
Retired Senior Staff Attorney, Animal Legal Defense Fund  
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Exec. Director, Childhood Trust, Cincinnati Children's Hospital  
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**Mark Kumpf, CAWA**

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**Randall Lockwood, Ph.D.**

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**Paul Needham**

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

**Maria Luisa O'Neill**

Account Representative,  
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**Gale Rasin, J.D.**

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