



# NATIONAL LINK COALITION

*Working together to stop violence against people and animals*

**The LINK-Letter Vol. 13, No. 8 August 2020**

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



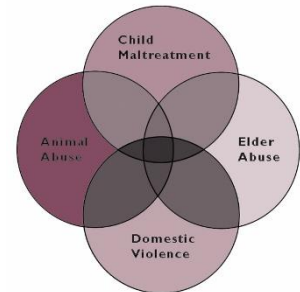
**ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE**



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

[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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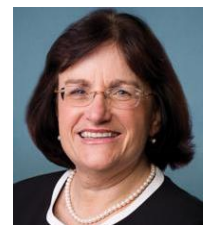


## **CHILD PROTECTION... AND THE LINK**

### **Congressional Group Seeks to Include Link in NCANDS Reporting**

A Congressional sub-committee is seeking to expand the national data-collection system for reporting child abuse to include a history of animal abuse as a potential risk factor for child maltreatment.

**HR 2808**, the Child and Animal Abuse Detection and Reporting Act, introduced by Rep. Ann Kuster (D – N.H.) with 20 co-sponsors, would amend the Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act (CAPTA) to include data on animal abuse within the National Child Abuse & Neglect Data System (NCANDS). It would require NCANDS to maintain and disseminate information relating to child abuse and neglect cases in which animal abuse occurred, including any failure to act, which results in undue pain, suffering or death to any animal. NCANDS currently includes a similar provision regarding substance abuse in 700,000 cases of child abuse each year (*See the [October 2019 LINK-Letter](#)*).



**Rep. Ann Kuster**

Kuster and colleagues later wrote to leaders of the House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee requesting the following language be added to the Appropriation committee's report. In the section recommending allocating \$37,500,00 for Child Abuse Discretionary Activities (an increase of \$2,500,00 above FY 2020 levels), the explanatory report adds:

**National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS).**—The Committee notes the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) was established in response to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1988. NCANDS is a voluntary data collection system that gathers information from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico about reports of child abuse and neglect. In light of the acknowledged close relationship between child maltreatment and animal abuse, and with exposure to animal abuse considered an Adverse Childhood Event (ACE), the Committee encourages HHS to explore the feasibility of including a category of animal abuse to caregiver characteristics and environmental factors that may place the child at risk for maltreatment.

The full Appropriations Committee was expected to approve the language. Meanwhile, the Animal Welfare Institute is working to try to get similar language added to the Senate version of the appropriations. **H.R. 2808** is in the House Education and Labor Committee.

## ***DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... AND THE LINK*** **Study Describes “Intimate Terrorists”** **and Links Animal Abuse with Financial Abuse**

A groundbreaking study of women in Canadian domestic violence shelters is describing coercive-control animal abusers as “intimate terrorists” and is the first such study to link violence against partners’ pets with financial abuse. Amy Fitzgerald and her colleagues write that reporting one’s intimate partner of threatening or actual abuse of companion animals increases the probability of the victim experiencing at least one form of emotional or financial abuse by 38.6%.



**Amy Fitzgerald**

The study continues to challenge the commonplace (and often statutory) conceptualization of animal abuse as a form of property abuse, but is the first to include financial abuse among the many dynamics of emotional abuse incorporated by threat or harm to a partner’s pets.

The study correlates threats or harm to animals with women’s reports of financial abuse, defined as being prevented from knowing about or having access to the family income even if they ask, or being forced to give their partners money, possessions or property. Victims who reported that their partners had abused animals increased the likelihood that they were prevented from gaining access to family income by 5.3% and were forced to give money, possessions or property by 4.9%.

The study also found that experiencing violence against animal companions increased the probability of a respondent reporting their partner had:

- Limited their contact with friends and family by 11.9%
- Put them down or called them names to make them feel bad by 23.1%
- Become jealous and tried to prohibit their contact with other men or women by 19.2%
- Demanded where he or she was or was with at all times by 17.5%
- Damaged or destroyed their property by 7.3%

The study also expands the concept of “intimate terrorism”, part of a constellation of isolating victims and jealousy, to include coercive and intimidating violence against animals.

The study, part of what is believed to be the first project to examine the co-occurrence of animal abuse and intimate partner violence among a nationally representative sample of the general public in Canada, previously reported on the severity of coercive-control animal abuse and intimate partner violence (*See the [August 2017 LINK-Letter](#)*); the reasons why women whose pets have also been abused delay leaving their abusers (*See the [October 2018 LINK-Letter](#)*); and the need for more nuanced thinking about the animal abuse/domestic violence link (*See the [March 2019 LINK-Letter](#)*).

-- Fitzgerald, A. J., Barrett, B.J., Gray, A., & Cheung, C.H. (2020). The connection between animal abuse, emotional abuse, and financial abuse in intimate relationships: Evidence from a nationally representative sample of the general public. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1-23. [/doi.org/10.1177/0886260520939197](https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520939197)

## Webinar Discusses Details of Pet Co-Sheltering

The [latest webinar](#) in New Mexico's Positive Links training program brought together representatives from three organizations addressing strategies for caring for the animal survivors of domestic violence. Tammy Fiebelkorn, founder of Positive Links, said the question of providing safe housing for pets so the rest of the family can escape abusive homes is the question she is asked most frequently.



Allie Phillips, founder of the [Sheltering Animals & Families Together \(SAF-T\)](#)<sup>™</sup> program, described the comprehensive, global initiative that has already allowed over 200 domestic violence shelters worldwide to open their doors to animals as well. "The SAF-T concept is, at its core, all about safety. It's a solution to Link crimes. It's a way out and a way to safety," she said.

During times of healing and recovery, we come to our pets and they come to us. Keeping kids and pets together maintains an empathetic bond rather than having children get caught in the cycles of family violence, she said. The SAF-T program also removes a key barrier to leaving an abusive home: otherwise, the family's options are to either stay in the abusive home or become homeless.



Phillips walked 48 participants through her SAF-T Start-Up Manual ([See the February 2020 LINK-Letter](#)) which she provides free to domestic violence shelters. The manual helps shelters go through the process of assessing the need in their community and getting community and staff support to start co-sheltering pets and people. "There truly is a village need to support this and when they do the programs thrive," she said.

Pet co-sheltering is built upon the foundation that because shelters already have to accommodate service and emotional support animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act, extending this capability to companion animals shouldn't be much of a stretch. And because 68% of Americans have pets, donors will be more willing to support a shelter that addresses the needs of the entire community and doesn't neglect 68% of its residents.

Phillips showed photos and discussed the four types of SAF-T programs: housing pets within families' rooms; taking over a separate room within the shelter; constructing a shelter in a separate building; and arranging for pet care in transitional housing so there is never a drop in the continuum of safety.

She encourages shelters to establish four key policies:

- Having an MOU with the area animal shelter to deal with excess, noisy, aggressive, large, or exotic animals.
- Partnering with a veterinarian. "Finding a vet when an animal comes in with a medical problem is not the time to start looking," she said.
- Partnering with an agency serving the homeless as a way to identify families who are experiencing homelessness because they couldn't find care for their pets.
- Striving for the best option, namely having families caring for their own pets. This creates a sense of normalcy for the family and avoids shelter staff's having to clean up, feed and walk the animals. It also reduces the risk of injury and keeps insurance premiums lower.

The SAF-T Manual addresses aggressive and stressed pets, breed restrictions, allergies and odors, staff and residents who fear animals, and potential injuries. It also covers confidentiality so abusers can't find the animals; court orders and protective pet orders; custody and ownership issues; and the need for kennel licenses and special permits. It includes forms addressing intake, assessment, pet supplies, guidelines for families caring for their pets, noise abatement, environmental enrichment for the animals, safety and security, pet loss and grief counseling, and procedures so if the family abandons their pet it is turned over to the animal shelter partner for adoption.

She also outlined fundraising strategies for the initial set-up, pet supplies, security, veterinary care, and other expenses. "Unless this is a huge metropolitan area, these programs don't cost a lot of money to run," she noted. Grant funding is available from such organizations as RedRover, the American Kennel Club, Banfield, the Jackson Galaxy Project, the Veterinary Care Foundation, and the USDA.

"The goal is to make this process easy and simple for the shelters," she said. "I get requests every day from people needing help with their pets and it's heartbreaking."

Laurel Meleski, Program Coordinator and Facilities Manager for [RedRover](#), described their grant opportunities for domestic violence and animal shelters to care for animal survivors. **Safe Escape** grants provide support to individuals needing help for their pets in order to leave an abusive home; since 2007 this program has paid for over 36,000 safe nights.

**Safe Housing** grants create more permanent change by funding capital

construction for domestic violence and animal shelters to create dedicated space for these animals. What started out as \$1,500 grants have now grown to \$20,000, and 110 shelters have received over \$1,000,000 in grants since 2012. These grants are also available to help domestic violence shelters establish collaborative foster care programs as a steppingstone to eventual co-sheltering.

**"The people heal the pets and the pets heal the people.  
It's worth any extra work on the part of the shelter."**

*– Testimonial from RedRover grant recipient*



Animal Protection  
of New Mexico

Victoria Murphy described Animal Protection of New Mexico's [CARE \(Companion Animal Rescue Effort\)](#) program, a partnership with the New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the state's Children Youth & Families Department to expand care for domestic violence survivors and their pets and livestock. Safe Haven providers offer safe temporary housing and other services for pets so their people can get into a shelter, get the resources they need to start a new life, and eventually be happily reunited with their animals, she said.

CARE supports veterinary exams, routine vaccinations, pet housing and transportation, referrals to other agencies, surgical procedures, reunification, and animal transfer or adoption. Animals can be housed for one week to 90 days, but this has been extended due to COVID.

New Mexico has five pet-friendly shelters, but it's still not enough to meet the need, Murphy said.

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

### **Veterinary Reporting, Bestiality Laws Raised Kentucky's Reputation**

The legislation which finally enabled veterinarians in Kentucky to report suspected animal abuse (*See the [May 2020 LINK-Letter](#)*) and which outlawed animal sexual abuse (*See the [April 2019 LINK-Letter](#)*) – and which in the process raised Kentucky's animal welfare legislation rating from #50 to #47 on the [Animal Legal Defense Fund's](#) annual rankings – received excellent publicity recently. [Spectrum News 1](#) in Lexington, Ky. noted that for the first time in 13 years, Kentucky was no longer at the bottom of the country for animal welfare.

**SB 21**, which went into effect on July 15, allows veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse that they see; previously, practitioners were only able to report abuse if the client gave permission or if there was a court order, due to a loophole in a 2009 law that, in adding privacy for veterinary records, inadvertently created the prohibition on vets' reporting suspected abuse.

Jim Weber, chair of the Kentucky Veterinary Medical Association's Governmental Relations Committee and past KVMA President, said that ½ to ¾ of veterinarians will encounter abuse during their careers. "Hopefully, [the new law] will have very little impact. Hopefully we don't have a lot of animal abuse going on that veterinarians feel the need to report," he said.



**Jim Weber**

The story noted two Link-related situations where veterinarians' reporting could save lives:

- Pets becoming victims of domestic violence when a person turns the abuse from their partner to their partner's animal.
- Drug users injuring their animals so they can come to veterinary clinics and obtain pain medication for themselves.

The new law exempts veterinarians from reporting abuse of livestock. And unlike other states with similar provisions, Kentucky veterinarians have to report to the State Veterinarian for a second opinion rather than reporting directly to law enforcement agencies.

### **Veterinary Participants Sought for Study on Animal Sexual Abuse**



**Alexandra Zidenberg**

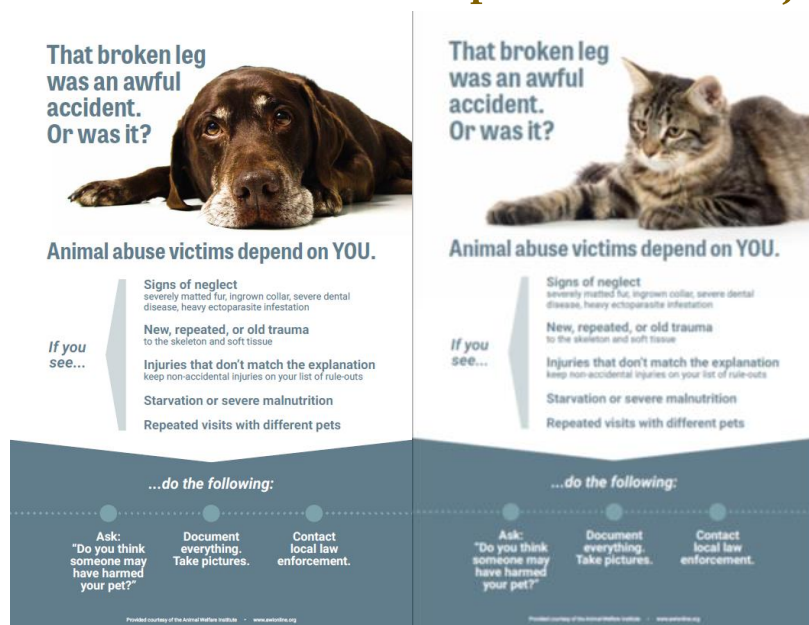
Participants are sought for a research study on "Animal Care Professionals' Perceptions of Animal Sexual Abuse" to gain a better understanding of what animal care professionals know about abuse and how they respond to it. The study will take approximately 20-30 minutes and is completely anonymous. Participants must be a veterinarian, veterinary technician or veterinary nurse or an upper year student previously trained or currently working in Canada or the United States.

The survey asks participants about their knowledge and experiences around animal abuse and animal sexual abuse; their perceptions of animal abusers; and their professional background. Participants will receive a \$5 gift card.

For details, please contact Ph.D. student Alexandra Zidenberg ([alexandra.zidenberg@usask.ca](mailto:alexandra.zidenberg@usask.ca)) or the faculty supervisor, Dr. Mark Olver, at [mark.olver@usask.ca](mailto:mark.olver@usask.ca). Click the link below to begin the study: <https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/VetStudyASA>



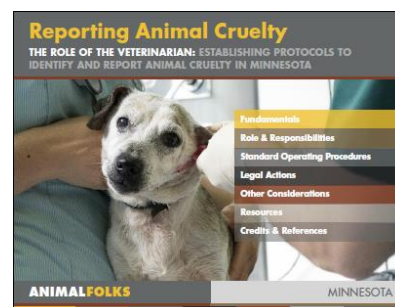
## Posters Alert DVMs to Suspicious Animal Injuries and Response



The Animal Welfare Institute has produced two attractive posters for use in veterinary offices to alert staff to be on the lookout for suspicious conditions that might indicate non-accidental abuse in dogs and cats. The free posters remind veterinarians and their teams to watch for companion animal abuse, listing some of the most frequent signs of abuse and the steps veterinarians can take to address such situations. The posters are [available as free pdf downloads](#) or [hard-copies can be ordered by mail](#).

## Minnesota Reporting Manual Updated

The groundbreaking manual produced in 2016 ([See the April 2016 LINK-Letter](#)) by [Animal Folks Minnesota](#) to help train veterinarians in that state on how to establish protocols to identify and report suspected animal cruelty, abuse and neglect has been updated. The new 2020 edition incorporates several changes in state laws and other developments that have transpired since the original publication. It is available as a free download. Ann Olson of Animal Folks tells *The LINK-Letter* that she hopes to update the versions produced for Oklahoma and Massachusetts, and to also include hyperlinks throughout the manuals.



## National Link Coalition Response to Concerns About Veterinarians' Mandatory Reporting

In response to a request from the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association, whose members may be faced with a new state law to report suspected animal abuse, the National Link Coalition has prepared a Q & A sheet to answer the most common questions raised by practitioners who are understandably fearful of entering into this new territory. The Q & A sheet appears on the following page: feel free to reproduce this or [contact the National Link Coalition](#) for additional copies.

## Veterinary Reporting of Suspected Animal Abuse:

### Concerns and Realities

CONCERN	REALITY
"I haven't been trained to identify animal abuse."	Training materials and curricula are widely available on Non-Accidental Injury (NAI). Routinely include NAI in the differential diagnosis.
"How do I know that it's abuse? I'm not trained to play judge and jury."	You don't know – and you won't have to. The legal definitions of cruelty, abuse and neglect vary widely, are highly situational, and will be made by others. The DVM's role is to document suspicious cases and report them objectively to the appropriate authority.
"I'm still not sure about a particular case."	Ask a colleague for a second opinion. Ask the client for permission to keep the animal overnight for observation – and to give you more time to learn more.
"I don't know who to report to."	NationalLinkCoalition.org has a free online directory of animal abuse investigating agencies in over 6,500 cities and counties.
"I might get sued."	There's little evidence that physicians have been sued for reporting child or elder abuse. 31 of the 35 states that either mandate or permit veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse offer immunity from civil and/or criminal liability; several states also protect the practitioner from loss of licensure or administrative sanctions.
"I might lose the client."	There's no evidence that physicians have had erosion of the client base. And are these the kind of clients you want anyway?
"I might make the situation worse."	Perhaps. But not reporting will certainly make the situation worse, and endanger not only the patient but other animals and people in the household.
"Nothing will be done anyway."	In many communities, this may be true. But if more cases are reported, reluctant agencies will come to see that this is an important issue which must be addressed. And in many communities there are excellent response mechanisms in place.
"Patient-client-practitioner records are confidential."	Confidentiality can be waived if there is a public health or safety risk, or if the state law allows such records to be released, or if the client signs a waiver allowing the release.
"I don't want to endanger my staff."	Hospitals and healthcare facilities have developed protocols to color-code files or create subtle cues to alert staff to potential threats and to call police.
"I don't have time."	Early intervention saves time later. And what are the consequences of not responding?
"I'll be overwhelmed with additional work."	Very few cases are actually reported. The majority of cases involve unintentional neglect rather than deliberate physical trauma, and they can usually be resolved through education and ongoing monitoring.
"It's not my job to interfere in other people's lives."	It is your job to protect the health and welfare of the patient – and the other animals in the household who may be at risk.
"I don't know how to deal with clients who are deliberately misleading or contentious."	Perhaps you should consider bringing a Veterinary Social Worker on board.
"What happens if a staff member wants to report a case?"	Establish a protocol in advance covering who is authorized to report a suspicious case, and how to approach senior colleagues and practice owners to determine a course of action.
"I might get dragged into court."	Extremely few cases actually make it to court. Veterinarians can be paid expert witness fees to testify.
"Anyone who cares <u>enough</u> about their pets to see the vet won't harm them. Anyone who cares <u>so little</u> about their pet to harm them won't go to the vet."	Numerous studies have reported that practitioners do, in fact, see cases of suspected animal abuse. Abusers may not bring the animal in – but other family members will.
"My clients will resent me for reporting."	Laws mandating reporting remove, or at least reduce, clients' resentment by telling them that the law requires this action, it doesn't mean that anything will come of it, but if the client cares about the patient it needs to be looked into further.
"I feel like I'm all alone in this."	AVMA and AAHA both support reporting, as do the national veterinary associations in Canada, the UK, New Zealand, and elsewhere.
"I'm afraid."	It's the right thing to do.

## ***CRIMINAL JUSTICE... and THE LINK***

### **Indiana Woman Charged with Violation of Federal PACT Act**



**U.S. Attorney John Minkler**

A Kokomo, Ind. woman arrested on July 14 during a raid by the FBI was charged with two counts of extreme animal abuse for allegedly making and distributing animal “crush” videos depicting extreme mutilation, torture and killing of animals. Investigators believe Krystal Cherika Scott, 19, responded to online ads from persons giving their pets up for adoption. FBI agents reportedly found animal parts from dogs and cats, and several live dogs, cats and lizards. “As decent human beings, we have a great responsibility to protect and have compassion for the animals that inhabit this earth,” U.S.

Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana John Minkler told [news media](#). “It is unconscionable to think that any human being could possibly bring themselves to such acts upon an animal. We cannot allow this behavior in a decent and moral society.”

Scott faces seven years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a \$250,000 fine under the new PACT (Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture) Act ([See the December 2019 LINK-Letter](#)). The act closed a gap in the 2010 Animal Crush Video Prohibition Act which had made the creation, sale and distribution of these types of video illegal, but which did not make the underlying acts of cruelty themselves illegal.

Crush videos have been linked with acts of interpersonal violence. Indianapolis FBI Special Agent in Charge Paul Keenan referred to The Link in the media announcement. “Animal abusers have total power over that animal and, if someone is willing to be that cruel to an animal, evidence suggests they may target vulnerable humans as well,” he said.

The investigation also involved police and sheriff’s agencies in Boise, Idaho, the FBI office in Salt Lake City, and the ASPCA.



### **Podcasts Spotlight Courthouse Dogs and Their Handlers**

The Courthouse Dogs Foundation has launched a series of [podcasts](#), “Dogged Justice”, about Courthouse Dogs who comfort child victims of sexual assault and other crimes as they work their way through the criminal justice system. Animals’ handlers share their experiences from training to working with victims in a variety of settings. The podcasts are co-hosted by Dr. James Ha, a Certified Animal

Behaviorist working in the justice system, and victim advocate Colleen Phelan.

### ***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.



## Offender's Unaddressed Crimes Escalate; Now Charged with Child Sexual Abuse and Bestiality

A case that vividly demonstrates how crimes, including animal abuse, that are not dealt with can escalate to criminal acts that harm both people and animals recently came to life in Wichita Falls, Texas, where Matthew Layne Miser, 23, was charged with indecency with a child, bestiality and causing the death of an animal. The [Wichita Falls Times Record News](#) reported that police apprehended Miser on July 14 after he ran from them while serving two warrants from nearby Clay County for allegedly sexually assaulting an 8-year-old girl and engaging in forced sexual acts with a dog.



Matthew Miser

Miser had been arrested on June 23 for animal cruelty for allegedly poisoning an animal and was released the same day. On July 12 he was arrested for family violence assault for allegedly destroying his girlfriend's room, choking her and trying to steal her car, and was again released the same day.

Wichita County jail records reveal that Miser's troubles with the law began in 2015 when he was 18. In May, 2015 he stole property worth less than \$500, a misdemeanor which was dismissed. In July he was charged with burglary when he broke into a home and stole more valuable property, for which he got 2 years' probation. In 2017 he was charged with violating his probation. In November, 2017 he was charged with violating a protective order for interpersonal violence. In April, 2018 he was charged with possession of dangerous drugs; in each of these arrests he was released shortly.

By June, 2018 he was charged with 13 counts including theft, home burglary, motor vehicle offenses, and aggravated assault and spent three months in jail; three weeks after his release, he was charged with burglary and released two days later. In January, 2019 he was arrested for possession of controlled substances and a weapon, and was released four days later.

## Family and Juvenile Court Judges Learn About The Link

Diane Balkin, of the Animal Legal Defense Fund, and Albuquerque Children's Court Judge John Romero, Jr. conducted a webinar on Aug. 3 for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The hour-long webinar addressed "Animal Cruelty and Child Abuse: What Judges Need to Know and What They Can Do." The webinar has been [archived online](#).



John Romero & Diane Balkin

They noted that a juvenile's abuse of animals can be a sign that the child has been or is experiencing abuse, and that witnessing animal abuse can be equally as traumatizing. Foster care can be doubly difficult if a child is separated from a favorite pet. Meanwhile, while a child's attachment to pets can be a buffering and protective factor in abusive homes, that same attachment can be exploited to intimidate and control children through threats to the pet.

They encouraged judges to routinely ask children a series of questions about their pets and their welfare and presented the National Link Coalition's "Hit Free Zone" campaign ([See the February 2020 LINK-Letter](#)). They described the intersecting dynamics when child abuse and domestic violence co-occur and the need for cross-court and cross-agency discussions, collaborations and trainings to better address multi-species issues.

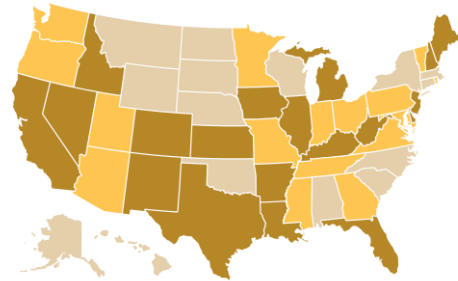
## Webinar Reviews Psychological Interventions for Animal Abusers



**ALDF Education Program Manager Priscilla Rader Culp, Criminal Justice Program Fellow Brittany Hill, and Staff Attorney Kathleen Wood (also a member of the National Link Coalition's steering committee) discussed issues involved with court-ordered evaluations and treatments of animal cruelty offenders.**

The Animal Legal Defense Fund conducted an hour-long webinar on July 22 on “Psychology and Sentencing: Mental Health Evaluations for Animal Cruelty Offenders.” The webinar reviewed the status of mandatory and permissive state laws addressing psychological and psychiatric evaluations and treatments for animal abusers; the differences between “active” abuse and “passive” neglect cases; considerations when offenders are juveniles; and the need to make sure a criminal justice system’s response is tailored to each offender’s individualized underlying reasons for committing animal cruelty.

Currently, 16 states are believed to authorize courts to order psychological evaluation and, if necessary, treatment for convicted abusers; 19 others and the U.S. Virgin Islands mandate such procedures. States vary in whether provisions apply to adults, juveniles or both, and whether all animal cruelty or only certain types of crimes were committed.



Psychological evaluations can identify and address these root causes, encourage rehabilitation, better inform and tailor appropriate sentencing, and protect future victims. However, the panelists readily acknowledged that, unfortunately, none of the evaluation tools currently available have been evaluated for their effectiveness in preventing recidivism. Meanwhile, many mental health professionals are unaware of the issues related to the diagnosis and treatment of animal cruelty offenders, and animal cruelty is sometimes seen as an untreatable offense.

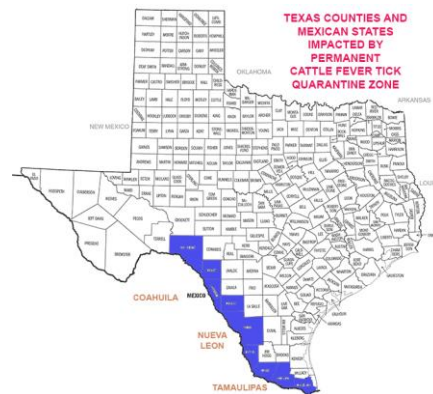
The panelists encouraged clinicians to treat cruelty offenders, recognizing that animal abuse is often a sign of underlying trauma, co-victimization, substance abuse, or domestic violence which clinicians are already well equipped to treat. Although responding to animal cruelty cases may require a few extra tools, clinicians should not be dissuaded from offering treatments.

The [webinar has been archived](#) on ALDF’s website.

## **COMMUNITY VIOLENCE... and THE LINK**

### **Community Violence Seen as Cause of Disease Affecting Cross-Border Cattle**

An unusual twist in how community violence is linked to animal welfare issues was published in a report describing social unrest and community violence along the U.S.-Mexico border as contributing to a rise in the number of cattle infected with fever ticks. The study reported that violence and social unrest in endemic areas, combined with changing weather patterns and land usage, affect the rate of infested cattle and compromise efforts to control and eradicate cattle fever ticks and their adverse impact on cattle and humans.



Tick-borne cattle fever (babesiosis) leads to anemia, reduced milk production, loss of weight, increased morbidity, and mortality in infected cattle that are left untreated. Cattle fever was once a significant animal health epidemic in the U.S., but through concerted efforts by livestock producers and federal and state agencies, the tick vector has been successfully eradicated. A Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program maintains a permanent quarantine and buffer zone along the Texas-Mexico border, ranging from 125 yards to nearly eight miles wide, to monitor and control re-incursions of the tick from Mexico due to movements of wildlife or stray animals. Mounted “tick riders” intercept stray livestock moving across the border, check and treat them for ticks, and return the animals to their owners where feasible.

The number of infested stray livestock that are apprehended is influenced by many factors including violence along the border, weather pattern changes, and the level of the Rio Grande. “Increases in the number of stray animals from Mexico due to economic or regional instability due to violence can lead to increased pressures as farms are abandoned and animals left to fend for themselves,” write the authors.

Numerous factors can cause cattle in the three Mexican quarantine zone border states — Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas which make up 33.24% of Mexico’s cattle exports – to break free of their enclosures and migrate into the U.S. In addition to environmental and economic forces, periods of violence and criminal activities that generate fear and unrest were found to increase the rate of farm abandonment and reduce animal management activity, leaving animals free to roam.

“It is possible that periods of intense violence and violent activities could lead to an increase in farm or cattle abandonment leading to increased stray animals. The significant effect of media-reported violence and violent activities on farm abandonment reinforces the literature in the broad effects of social and political conflicts,” they write. “In addition to farm abandonment, cattle may be triggered to move due to violent or loud, disruptive activity in their home ranges.”

The eradication of cattle fever ticks in the U.S. has cost more than \$3 billion. A reintroduction could be devastating to American cattle’s health and welfare. The range for these ticks is currently in Texas and California, but models suggest expansion of this range into New Mexico and Arizona, with Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida as moderately suitable habitats.

-- Thompson, J.M., Delgado, A.H., Hasel, H.S., & Bonilla, D.L. (2020, July 3). Effects of drought and media-reported violence on cattle fever tick incursions. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*.  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2020.00373>

## ***BUILDING LINK AWARENESS***

### **UK Webinar Addresses DV & the DVM and COVID-19 Responses**



The Links Group UK coordinated a [webinar](#) on July 14 on “The Link between Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence: Implications for Veterinary Teams During COVID-19 and Beyond.” The webinar, hosted by The Webinar Vet, promoted The Links Group’s [Guidance](#) for veterinarians’ response to abuse and featured British and Scottish experts on response to animal abuse and domestic violence. Panelists were (clockwise from top left): Paula Boyden, Links Group Chair and Dogs Trust Veterinary Director; Sean Taylor, veterinary expert witness; Vicki Betton, Veterinary Policy & Campaigns Manager for PDSA; Mike Flynn, Scottish SPCA Chief Superintendent; Caroline Allen, RSPCA Chief Veterinarian, and Wendy Sneddon, Links Group.

### **Minnesota Public Safety Officials Learn About The Link**



**Ann Olson and Reese Frederickson**

Ann Olson, Founder and Executive Director of [Animal Folks Minnesota](#), and Reese Frederickson, [Pine County Attorney](#), conducted a 90-minute Zoom webinar on July 14 for the Minnesota Department of Public Safety’s Office of Justice Programs. “Animal Cruelty: The Link To Human Violence and The Impact on Families and Communities,” attracted victim advocates, child protection services, adult protection services, social service workers, mental health professionals, attorneys, law enforcement, and others involved in the care and protection of vulnerable children and adults.

Olson and Frederickson presented an overview of animal abuse and The Link to child maltreatment, elder abuse, and domestic violence. Other crimes against animals linked to human violence were also discussed, such as animal hoarding, animal fighting, animal sexual abuse, and intentional animal abuse and torture. Specific Minnesota cases were presented and Minnesota law, resources, and tools were also provided, including the Minnesota Day One crisis hotline. The National Link Coalition was also referenced.



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

**Legislation...**

**Intervention...**

**Networking...**

**Knowledge...**

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



## ***NEWS about LINK COALITIONS***

### **National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges CEO Joins National Link Coalition's Steering Committee**

Joey Orduna Hastings, Chief Executive Officer of the [National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges](#), has joined the National Link Coalition's Steering Committee.

Founded in 1937 when a group of judges came together to find ways to improve the effectiveness of the nation's juvenile courts, the NCJFCJ has grown into one of the largest and oldest judicial membership organizations in the U.S., serving some 30,000 judges, referees, commissioners, court masters and administrators, social and mental health workers, police, and probation officers. Based in Reno, Nev., it is affiliated with the University of Reno and provides cutting-edge educational programs, wide-ranging technical assistance, nationally respected research, and unique advanced degree programs.



**Joey Orduna Hastings**

The NCJFCJ includes the Pittsburgh-based National Center for Juvenile Justice research division. Its extensive outreach in family violence and domestic relations issues includes the National Judicial Institute on Domestic Violence and the Judicial Engagement Network. Numerous projects are part of the council's child welfare and juvenile law components.

The NCJFCJ has embarked on several initiatives in recent years addressing The Link, often in partnership with the Animal Legal Defense Fund (*See the [June 2019 LINK-Letter](#)*). A 64-page technical assistance bulletin, ***Animal Cruelty Issues: What Juvenile and Family Court Judges Need to Know***, was [published](#) last Fall. The Council simultaneously adopted a ***Resolution Regarding Animal Cruelty and Its Link to Other Forms of Violence***. The document included 12 specific recommendations addressing the role of pets as family members, laws that include pets in protection orders, and cross-reporting between animal and child welfare agencies (*See the [September 2019 LINK-Letter](#)*).

NCJFCJ conducted two webinars, on Aug. 3 and Aug. 10, on what judges need to know about animal cruelty, child abuse and juvenile offending. Several demonstration projects for training, supporting and providing technical assistance to judges with child welfare dockets are under way. Plans to hold a 1-1/2 day conference on The Link in Sparks, Nevada in October may be temporarily postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

A native Nevadan and a graduate of the University of Nevada and Gonzaga University School of Law, Orduna Hastings has served as the legislative coordinator for former Gov. Brian Sandoval and as the district court administrator and clerk of court for the Second Judicial District Court. She was also the assistant county manager of administration and finance for Washoe County.

"I'm an animal lover and am excited to work with the coalition to bring greater awareness of The Link between animal abuse and human violence to the attention of juvenile and family court judges," Orduna Hastings said. "I'm looking forward to being with you and learning from you as well."



## ***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 signed into law on June 18 by Gov. Ron DeSantis.**



**Georgia HB 582** would have allowed 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 had 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 the House of Representatives when the Legislature adjourned.**



**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**, which would have authorized courts to include pets in orders of protection from domestic abuse, **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. **S 6222** passed the Senate. All three bills are all in the Assembly Judiciary Committee.



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




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


### *Animal Hoarding*





**New York A 261**, 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 have prohibited 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 have been a Class C felony or a Class B felony if a minor were exposed to the crime. Convicted offenders would have been 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 were in the House Judiciary and Agriculture Committees **when the Legislature adjourned**.

 **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 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 25 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** and will take effect on Oct. 1.





 **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-A** and **S 3415-A** 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 and was referred to the Assembly Children and Families Committee.

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

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

 **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 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 is in the Committee on Health, Tourism, Historic Preservation, Land, and Justice.



**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 pet 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 have required 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. **All the bills died when the Legislature adjourned.**



**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 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.

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

### **Abusive Couple Receive Massive Sentences in Illegal Kennel Case**

A woman who a psychiatrist said was suffering from battered spouse syndrome was sentenced to 33 years in prison, with all but seven years suspended, on 11 counts of aggravated animal cruelty after 27 dead dogs and 27 more dogs were found living in deplorable conditions. Laura Filler, 56, of Hempstead, Md., received the lengthy sentence which also included five years of probation and prohibition from owning animals, \$10,900 in

restitution to the Humane Society of Carroll County which cared for the dogs, and \$91,400 in restitution to the owner of the house which had to be demolished. Her husband, John J. Roberts, previously pled guilty to 11 counts of aggravated animal cruelty and also was sentenced to 33 years, with all but 11 years suspended. The home, which Judge Fred S. Hecker called a “chamber of horrors,” was the site of an illegal breeding operation. Altogether, the couple had been charged with 109 counts of aggravated animal cruelty. The [Carroll County Times](#) reported that Filler’s defense team said Filler had been controlled and abused by Roberts, was living in her car, feared him and felt she couldn’t leave him.



**John J. Roberts & Laura Filler**

## Violent Dog Abuser Gets Three Years in Prison

A Houston, Texas man with a history of violence that included a two-year sentence for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon was sentenced to another three years in prison for hitting and choking a dog. District Judge Abigail Anastasio handed down the stiff sentence to Michael Wayne Johnson, 48, who had pled guilty to animal cruelty charges. Johnson was arrested last October after witnesses saw him lift a Corgi-Australian shepherd mix named



**"Old Man" was rescued from the abuse**

"Old Man" off the ground by choking it and then repeatedly punch the dog in the face. The dog was taken into custody at an animal shelter and placed up for adoption. Assistant District Attorney Jessica Milligan, chief of the animal cruelty unit at the Harris County DA's Office, applauded the witnesses who came forth. "It is critical that people who observe neglect or intentional abuse against animals report what they see, otherwise animals have no voice," she said in a [press release](#). The DA's Office is part of the Harris County Animal Cruelty Task Force which has a streamlined animal abuse reporting hotline (See the [March 2018 LINK-Letter](#)).

## Dispute Over Dangerous Dog Leaves Two Neighbors and Gunman Dead



**Victim Harper Hansman**

An 82-year-old man apparently angry that his next-door neighbors had managed to get his dog declared dangerous went on what Port St. Lucie, Fla. law enforcement officials called a shooting rampage that killed two neighbors, including an 11-year-old girl, and the gunman. [WPTV](#) reported that Guy Alexander Hansman, 55, and his daughter Harper Hansman, 11, were shot and killed by their neighbor, Ronald Delserro, 82, after returning from a court hearing where Delserro's bull mastiff, "Roxy," was declared dangerous. "They all came home from court and then the suspect armed himself and went to the victims' house," Sheriff Ken Mascara said at a news conference. After the young girl called 911, police and sheriffs arrived at the Hansman house, where they exchanged gunfire with Delserro, who was armed with two handguns. It was not clear whether Delserro was killed by police or took his own life; one officer who was wearing a bulletproof vest was treated for a gunshot wound to the arm. Four other people in the house managed to escape. The neighborhood feud stemmed from a March 4 incident when Roxy attacked and bit a woman at the Hansmans' house. "I believe this to be an intentional act of violence against these neighbors," said Port St. Lucie Asst. Police Chief Richard DeToro.

## Australian Man Charged with Stabbing Man Trying to Rescue His Dog



**James Shilton and "Bruce"**

James Shilton, 32, of Empire Bay, N.S.W., Australia, was charged with allegedly stabbing a man five times in the chest when the man tried to rescue Shilton's dog amid concerns for the dog's welfare. Video cameras captured images of Shilton's partner kicking the dog in the head and face as it sat in a car, and of Shilton threatening the would-be rescuer before allegedly stabbing him. The incident occurred two days after other concerned residents visited the home of Shilton and his partner to express concern for the dog's welfare. The [Daily Mail](#) reported that Shilton, who has a criminal history, claimed he was acting in self-defense. The dog, a Staffordshire terrier named "Bruce," was seized by the RSPCA.



## Apparent Murder-Suicide Also Claims Four Children and Two Cats

Two family cats were apparent collateral victims of what San Antonio, Texas police called a murder-suicide in which a couple and four children were found in a garage, the victims of carbon monoxide poisoning. The [San Antonio Express-News](#) reported that police conducting a welfare check came across a cryptic note and a chemical smell, which led to the evacuation of more than 200 nearby homes after a drone sent inside the house found what appeared to be explosives. The note, which had to be translated from military jargon, said “Bodies or people inside, do not enter. The animals are in the freezer.” The couple, in their 30s, and the children, aged 11 months to 4 years, were found in the back seat of a small SUV; the cats were found in a basket in the front seat.

## Robbery Suspects Also Charged with Killing Victim’s Dog



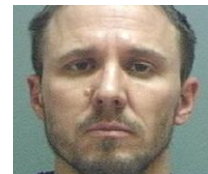
**David Miracle, Justin Davis and Kristina Williams**

commit torture on a pet with serious physical injury or death when they assisted others in killing the robbery victim’s dog. More arrests were expected as the investigation continued.

Three individuals accused of killing a dog during a robbery were charged in Middlesboro, Ky., with animal cruelty, robbery and drug offenses. [WRIL-FM](#) reported that David Miracle, 32, Justin Davis, 37, and Kristina Williams, 18, were charged in the incident. In addition to theft and possession of controlled substances, all three were charged with complicity to

## Petitions Call for Removing Judge Who Gave Child and Animal Pornographer Short Sentence

The former CEO of a defunct blockchain and cryptocurrency company who pled guilty to possessing more than 13,000 files of graphic child pornography, some of which involved rape and bestiality, was sentenced to seven months in jail in a case which has led to a petition to remove the judge for not imposing a tougher sentence. [KUTV](#) reported that admitted pedophile Douglas Saltsman, 40, of Sandy, Utah, could have received one to 15 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine for each of the three felony charges to which he pled guilty; he was originally facing 11 charges and at least 279 child victims were identified.



**Douglas Saltsman**

An online petition that generated 9,200 signatures has called for the removal of Judge Douglas Hogan who suspended the statutory terms and instead gave Saltsman 210 days in jail, four years’ probation, and registry as a sex offender.



**Kolton Barnes**

## Man Accused of Killing His Fiancée and Dog and Leaving Their Bodies for Her Children to Find

Kolton Barnes, 25, of Malmo, Neb., was charged with first-degree murder, two counts of child abuse and animal cruelty for allegedly killing his fiancée and her dog and leaving their bodies for his fiancée’s two children to find. The [Fremont Tribune](#) reported that Kayla Matulka had died from multiple stab wounds. The couple had recently applied for a marriage license and were set to be married next October.

Barnes was denied bond. The children, aged 6 and 11, were in the custody of their father.

## Family Charged with Throwing Molotov Cocktail at Police Officers on Horseback

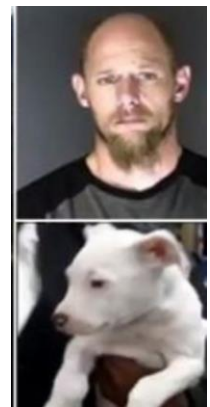
A man who allegedly threw a Molotov cocktail at four Albany, N.Y. police officers on horseback during a political protest was charged with four counts of attempted assault, four counts of attempting to injure a police animal, and reckless endangerment. Albany police arrested Dwight Parker, 38, of Troy, N.Y., following a largely peaceful May 30 protest outside a police station. The protests against police brutality and violence against Black people turned violent as night fell, with people throwing trash, bricks and rocks at police and smashing windows throughout the city, the [Albany Times-Union](#) reported. Police also arrested Parker's wife and daughter – Shalene Allen, 37, and Imari Allen, 18 – on charges of inciting a riot.



Albany mounted police officers react to a firebomb thrown at their feet on May 30

## Year-Long Manhunt Leads to Arrest of Boyfriend Accused of Running Over Puppy

It took a year for police in Colorado Springs, Colo., to track down a man captured on video allegedly running over his girlfriend's puppy several times with his truck, but John Smith was finally arrested in late June and charged with animal cruelty. [KKTV](#) reported that investigators said Smith had told his girlfriend in April, 2019, that he was out looking for her pitbull puppy, "Shelby," while surveillance video showed a driver letting a dog out of a truck, turning around to follow it, waiting for it to walk in front of the truck, then hitting the gas, doing a U-turn, and running over the dog again. Shelby, who was run over four or five times, did not survive. Officers from the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region worked with Colorado Springs police for more than a year to track Smith down.



John Smith & "Shelby"

## Man Charged with Domestic Violence and Animal Cruelty After Finding His Dog Having Sex with Another Dog

Justin Evon, 35, of Bristol, Conn., was charged with animal cruelty, breach of peace and assault in a domestic violence incident for allegedly beating his dog after finding it engaging in sexual intercourse with another dog. Police told the [New Britain Herald](#) that Evon came home and became enraged at the thought of the female dog getting pregnant; after beating the dog to get off the female, he reportedly dragged his dog into another room and continued to beat it. Police said Evon was also upset at two people who were caring for the dogs and kicked and assaulted them in what was considered domestic violence. According to court records, Evon has been convicted six times since 2011 for breach of peace, larceny, reckless endangerment, criminal possession of firearms, and narcotics offenses.



**Gregory Burton**

### **Dog Uninjured in Car Theft that Left Two Deputies Tased**

Gregory Lamar Burton, of Richwood, La., was charged with animal cruelty, theft of a motor vehicle, and assaulting a police officer for allegedly stealing a car, throwing the dog that was inside the car into a river, and tasing two deputies who tried to arrest him. The Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office told [KNOE-TV](#) that they found the elderly dog unharmed and returned it to its owner. During the chase, Burton reportedly grabbed a deputy's taser and used it against two officers before he was secured.



**Randy White**

### **Hiding Dog Shot for Growling at Woman's Fiancé**

Police in Spartanburg, S. C., investigating a domestic violence disturbance found a woman crying outside her home, saying her fiancé had shot her dog and then grabbed her by the hair when she tried to leave with her child. She told police that Randy White had been drinking heavily and was searching for the TV remote control under the bed when the dog, hiding under the bed, began growling at him. White allegedly left the room, got a gun, told her to get off the bed, got down on his knees, and fired twice, killing the dog. White was charged with domestic violence, discharging a firearm into a dwelling, and "ill-treatment of animals," according to [Fox Carolina](#).

## ***LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES***

**NOTE:** The pandemic has caused many meetings to be canceled, rescheduled or converted into virtual formats. Click on the underlined hyperlinks for more detailed information.

**Aug. 24 (online):** The [North Texas Link Coalition](#) will hold a webinar on "How to Manage Compassion Fatigue through the COVID Era."

**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.

**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. 14 (online):** Phil Arkow will present on “Connecting the Dots: Animal Abuse’s Links to Other Family Violence in Military and Civilian Families” for the [National Victim Assistance Academy](#).

**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. 29-30 (online):** Phil Arkow will present “Improving Public Safety by Stopping Animal Cruelty: The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence in a Post-COVID World” at Animal Law Source’s 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual [Animal Protection Conference and Expo](#).

**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  
Blowing Rock, N. Car.

#### Diane Balkin, J.D.

Retired Chief Deputy District Attorney, Denver, Colo.  
Retired Senior Staff Attorney, Animal Legal Defense Fund  
Denver, Colo.

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

Associate Professor, Univ. of Cincinnati College of Medicine  
Exec. Director, Childhood Trust, Cincinnati Children's Hospital  
Cincinnati, Ohio

#### Steve Dale

Nationally Syndicated Radio Host and Author  
Chicago, Ill.

#### Maya Gupta, Ph.D.

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#### Joey Orduna Hastings

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#### Helen Holmquist-Johnson, MSW, Ph.D.

Director, Human-Animal Bond in Colorado (HABIC)  
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#### Kendall Houlihan

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#### Mark Kumpf, CAWA

Director, Detroit Animal Care & Control  
Detroit, Mich.

#### Randall Lockwood, Ph.D.

Consultant, ASPCA  
Falls Church, Va.

#### Jane A. Hunt

Community Volunteer  
Loveland, Colo.

#### Paul Needham

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

#### Emily Patterson-Kane, Ph.D. (ALTERNATE)

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ASPCA Department of Strategy & Research  
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#### Allie Phillips, J.D.

Director, Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T)  
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#### Gale Rasin, J.D.

Retired Associate Judge, Baltimore City Circuit Court,  
Chestertown, Md.

#### Chelsea Rider, J.D.

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National Law Enforcement Center on Animal Abuse  
Dallas, Texas

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

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#### Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM

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