



# NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

The LINK-Letter **Vol. 13, No. 10** **October 2020**

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



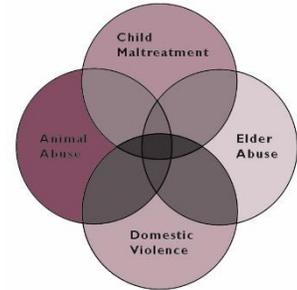
ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE



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

[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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**🎀 October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month 🎀**

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE... and THE LINK

### NIBRS Analysis Links Animal Abuse Cases with Other Crimes

Assaults, vandalism and burglary are the most common of eight other crimes co-occurring with home-based animal neglect and intentional cruelty incidents, according to a recent data analysis in an article that suggests that animal control officers should be considered “family pet social workers” to solve community problems in an innovative manner.

Writing in the August issue of [PM \(Public Management\) Magazine](#) for the International City/County Management Association, Julie Palais notes that, “With the recognition that pets, for many, are surrogate family members, or simply accepted as part of the human family, they are treated just like other human family members in many ways. While in some situations this is a welcome development, in other cases, especially in households where there is domestic violence, or child/elder abuse/neglect, this can pose serious problems not only for the human family members, but also for the animals that are part of the family.”



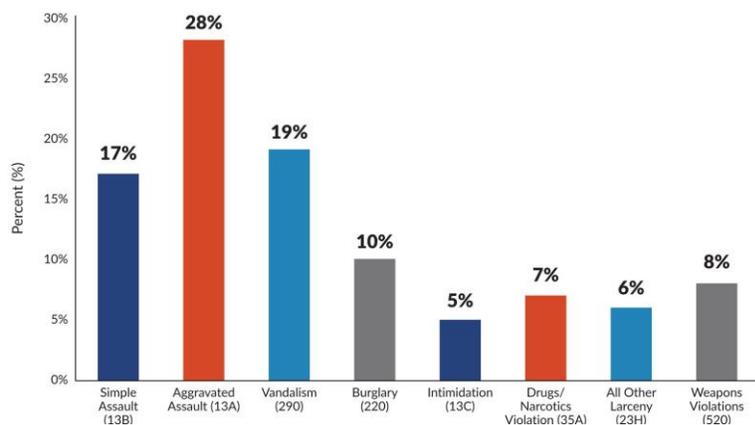
**Julie Palais**

Previous ICMA publications have addressed issues related to running animal services and shelters and have noted how the role of the animal control officer has been redefined in recent years as communities develop innovative programs that keep people and pets safe, happy and healthy. However, not all ACOs work for, or even with, law enforcement agencies, a challenge that keeps many animal cruelty incidents from being reported to the FBI’s new National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS).

Palais analyzed the 2018 NIBRS data ([See the September 2020 LINK-Letter](#)) and found that the crimes most frequently co-occurring with animal cruelty were assaults, vandalism, burglary, and other crimes against society, such as drugs/narcotics offenses and weapons law violations. (The analysis included only crimes of neglect and animal cruelty, as these constituted 97% of the animal crime incidents reported; animal sexual abuse and organized animal fighting are also reported to NIBRS.) The findings illustrate “the importance of how paying attention to crimes involving animal cruelty could help communities anticipate when and where other types of crimes might occur,” she writes.

The NIBRS data also revealed that 68% of 2018 animal cruelty incidents occurred in the home, an ominous indicator of the potential Link to child abuse and neglect and domestic violence; her similar articles in the National Sheriffs Association’s *Sheriff & Deputy Magazine* and the National Animal Care & Control Association’s *Animal Care & Control Today* magazine noted a similar percentage of assaults occur in the home. “Animal cruelty crimes do not occur in a vacuum,” Palais writes. “These results support the notion that persons committing acts of intentional cruelty might be capable of other crimes considered violent or threatening.

**Figure 1. Most Common Crimes Happening at a Home Location Associated with Neglect and Intentional Cruelty Incidents**



“Therefore, it is especially important to the health and welfare of all human family members to pay attention to reports of animal cruelty in the community. When one recognizes that these reports could be the tip of the iceberg for what else might be going on at that home, one realizes why calls to animal control about an abused dog or cat could help law enforcement identify situations where other crimes either have occurred or are likely to occur in the future,” she writes.

“This new brand of ACO works on a personal level within the community doing community outreach and education, almost like a family pet social worker. This is an important model that all communities should consider. Given the Link between animal cruelty and domestic and family violence, it would make sense if animal control officers teamed up with police and other law enforcement officers, to work together in the community to solve the problems that are encountered every day in cities and counties around the country. It would also help to improve the animal cruelty data collected by the FBI that is important for developing a better understanding of crimes involving animal cruelty.

-- Palais, J.M. (2020, August). *The Link between animal cruelty and public safety: Defining the role of the animal control officer. Public Management, 16-21.*

-- Palais, J. (2020, September/October). *Crunching the numbers on cruelty: The National Incident-Based Reporting System delivers preliminary data on animal cruelty investigations. Sheriff & Deputy Magazine, 72(5), 70-73.*

-- Palais, J. (2020, Summer). *Animal cruelty in the U.S.: What you should know and how you can help. Animal Care & Control Today, 19-23.*

## NCJFCJ Webinars Address The Link in Family Law Cases

The [National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges](#) (NCJFCJ) is offering a three-part free webinar series to provide training on the Links between animal abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse. The series will also address animal hoarding and its impact on human and animal welfare. The three-part webinar series will provide participants with practical information on recognizing and responding to maltreatment of animals and humans in family law cases. On Oct. 26, John Romero, Diane Balkin and Kathleen Wood will conduct a free webinar on “The Link between Animal Cruelty and Domestic Violence.” On Nov. 2, Rosa Figarola and Diane Balkin will conduct a free webinar on “The Link between Animal Abuse and Elder Abuse. On Nov. 16, Gale Rasin and Jamie Contreras will conduct a free webinar on “Animal Hoarding: Issues in Family Law Cases.” [Click here](#) to register.

## Link Cited in U.S. DOJ Animal Abuse Enforcement Unit Bill

Citing studies that “repeatedly show that there is a close link between animal cruelty and violence toward people,” four U.S. Representatives on Aug. 14 introduced **H.R. 8052**, the Animal Cruelty Enforcement (ACE) Act, sweeping bipartisan legislation to protect animal welfare and keep our communities safe. “By bringing charges against perpetrators of animal cruelty, we can prevent individuals with a propensity for violence from further harming animals or turning that violence on people,” the co-sponsors said in a press release announcing the measure.

The bill would establish a dedicated Animal Cruelty Crimes Division at the U.S. Department of Justice to aid in the investigation, enforcement, and prosecution of felony animal cruelty crimes. The measure is in the House Judiciary Committee.

While all 50 states have laws prohibiting animal cruelty, there are often delays in enforcement in states and from the Department of Justice, with many crimes unprosecuted, said the co-sponsors. Having dedicated staff at the Department of Justice would facilitate much stronger enforcement of animal cruelty laws by providing specialized knowledge and a streamlined process for handling these offenses.

 <p><b>Rep. Joe Neguse</b>          “Proper enforcement of animal cruelty laws will protect animal welfare and help keep each of our communities safe from the violence often linked to these crimes,” said Rep. Joe Neguse (D-CO). “For too long the Department of Justice has missed the mark on providing timely and efficient prosecutions. The Animal Cruelty Enforcement Act seeks to right this by providing the necessary resources and staffing for efficient enforcement of these laws, so animals and communities alike are protected and justice is served.”</p>	 <p><b>Rep. Matt Gaetz</b>          “I am proud to join my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to introduce the ACE Act, an important step forward in the fight against animal cruelty,” said Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL). “This bipartisan, bicameral bill will help protect animals and bring bad actors to justice nationwide, and I look forward to its swift passage.”</p>
 <p><b>Rep. Steve Cohen</b>          “Intentionally inflicting harm to defenseless animals, including through competitive dog fighting and other inhumane practices, has no place in civilized society. Enforcement of measures already on the books is critical to ending these barbaric practices, which is what this measure aims to do,” said Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN).</p>	 <p><b>Rep. Buddy Carter</b>          “Congress has made important strides to prevent animal cruelty recently,” said Rep. Buddy Carter (R-GA). “Now, we need to ensure the laws are enforced. This legislation will provide the resources necessary to combat animal-fighting and other barbaric practices. I thank my colleagues for the bipartisan work on this bill.”</p>

Neguse and Gaetz earlier secured two amendments to the House Appropriations Minibus to provide the USDA Office of the Inspector General and the Department of Justice with \$1,000,000 each to enforce animal cruelty laws. They also secured language in the base Appropriations bill to encourage enforcement of animal cruelty crimes and to instruct the Department of Justice to study the creation of a dedicated animal cruelty crimes unit through a letter signed by 45 other Congressmembers.

## *CHILD ABUSE... and THE LINK*

### Tech-sniffing Dog Aids in Fight Against Child Sex Trafficking



**“Sota” has joined the BCA**

Therapy dogs are increasingly being accepted into Children’s Advocacy Centers and courtrooms to help comfort children being examined, interviewed and cross-examined in child sexual abuse cases, but the State of Minnesota has developed an even more novel program where dogs are fighting child sex exploitation.

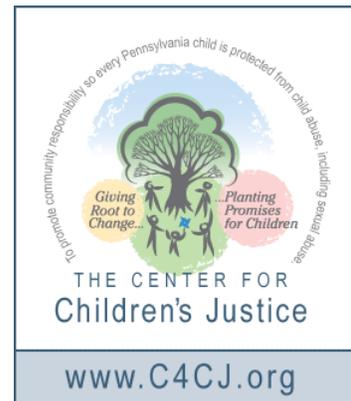
“Sota,” a British Labrador, has joined the state’s Bureau of Criminal Apprehension as an electronic device-sniffing dog. Her super-sensitive sense of smell can locate the scent of triphenylphosphine oxide, a chemical coating on electronics like cell phones, USB drives and memory storage cards. These devices often are hidden from investigators searching for evidence of child pornography and online sex trafficking.

The [Duluth News Tribune](#) reported that Sota has already assisted the BCA on 10 cases since May and has found 21 different pieces of evidence. Though trained to work on investigations of violent and financial crimes, authorities plan to use her primarily in child exploitation cases in the bureau’s predatory crimes section.

### Pennsylvania Child Welfare Group Pursuing Several Link Campaigns

The [Center for Children’s Justice](#) is involved in several statewide legislative and prosecutorial campaigns in Pennsylvania to bring greater awareness of The Link between animal abuse and child maltreatment.

In August, the Center released an analysis of two years’ worth of data from the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts that detailed more than 21,000 criminal offenses that were filed since the landmark passage of “Libre’s Law,” the Link-based overhaul of Pennsylvania’s archaic state cruelty statutes ([See the July 2017 LINK-Letter](#)). Two percent of the court filings involved an alleged perpetrator of animal cruelty, aggravated cruelty or neglect under the age of 18. The Center is pursuing opportunities for a deeper analysis that would indicate how many of these offenses co-occurred alongside any criminal offenses against children.



Founder Cathleen Palm tells The LINK-Letter that they are working with state legislators to re-introduce a bill when the 2021 legislative session opens that would add animal control and humane officers to those mandated to report suspected child abuse and to infuse an expectation of cross-reporting so child welfare investigators would report possible animal neglect or maltreatment to the proper authorities.

The Center has sent a letter to Westmoreland County, Pa. District Attorney John W. Peck recognizing him for adding animal cruelty charges to earlier counts of homicide and manslaughter brought against a New Kensington couple ([See News article later in this issue](#)) and offering support to help prevent cruelty and violence against children and animals.

In June, the Center spearheaded a two-hour webinar that was attended by over 550 participants and was co-sponsored by eight other national and state organizations ([See the July 2020 LINK-Letter](#)).

## *SOCIAL WORK...and THE LINK*

### **Veterinary Social Work Summit Addresses The Link and Poverty**

The [6<sup>th</sup> International Veterinary Social Work Summit](#), held on Oct. 8-10 in a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic, featured a significant five workshops discussing The Link between animal abuse and human violence. As the Summit's overall theme was how poverty affects human-animal relationships, the issue of animal abuse exacerbated by poverty takes on additional relevance.



**Amanda Molé**

Amanda Molé, LCSW, presented **“Anyone Can Be a Victim: Companion Animals at the Intersection of Domestic Violence and Poverty.”** Citing extensive research as to how many women report coercive threats to their animals and delay their leaving accordingly, she noted that financial abuse is another tactic used to keep survivors dependent upon their abusers and often results in homelessness.

Because survivors are often without income, marital assets, or sufficient employment during and after leaving an abusive relationship, the pet fees required by hotels, airlines and potential new residences can be an insurmountable barrier, forcing a survivor to choose either to escape or to abandon a pet. This already painful choice becomes even more difficult when children's safety is at stake. Additionally, most crisis shelters do not allow pets, leading some survivors to choose homelessness over abandoning a pet.

She identified micro, mezzo and macro interventions including: screening for pet issues at intake and on hotline calls; including pets' supplies and information in safety planning kits; building on-site facilities for co-sheltering pets; developing relationships with other community agencies for pet services and foster care; and advocating for state laws that allow survivors to better protect their pets.



**Bethanie Poe**

Bethanie Poe, Middle Tennessee Coordinator of HABIL (Human-Animal Bond in Tennessee) led two workshops. In **“Serving Domestic Violence Survivors with Pets,”** she again emphasized that pet-related issues may pose even more of a challenge for survivors who are in poverty. Given that the availability of assistance for survivors with pets varies widely based on geographic location, Poe argued that making services for pet-owning domestic violence survivors should be a universal standard of service.

In **“Older Adults and Animal Abuse,”** Poe described the many financial, psychological and social factors that put older adults at increased risk for vulnerability and poverty, with abuse and neglect also extending to their pets. Accordingly, she argued that it is crucial for veterinary social workers to be aware of and be able to attend to the needs of this growing population. She explored the connections between elder abuse and animal abuse and reviewed methods that both human and animal welfare professionals can implement as a means of assessment and intervention.

Linda Fielder, Emily Lewis and Kris Otteman Brant discussed **“Ethics and Options: Pre-empting Animal Cruelty and Preserving the Bond.”** They noted that while many individuals pursue careers in veterinary medicine because they want to help animals, it is not until they are working in private practice that they realize the significant role they play in the lives of the humans who bring them their patients. When a low-income client presents a severely neglected animal to a veterinarian for treatment, the doctor faces a difficult conundrum: is it their duty to protect the animal from continued neglect or is it their duty to help the person who may be struggling financially to care for their animal?

The presentation reviewed the ethical dilemmas that practitioners face and clarified the veterinarian's role in addressing animal cruelty or neglect resulting from poverty. They described how veterinarians can identify a patient who is at risk of neglect and means of addressing it before it escalates into a criminal violation in various states – where reporting of suspected animal abuse is either mandatory, permissive or not addressed – when faced with clients who have severely limited resources.



Phil Arkow

Phil Arkow, Coordinator of the National Link Coalition, presented a workshop on “Human-Animal Relationships and Social Work: Opportunities Beyond the Veterinary Environment” ([See article below](#)).

## Social Work Journal Addresses Human-Animal Relationships



The field of social work has only recently begun to realize that the modern definition of family includes companion animals, and that our emotional attachments to pets and issues surrounding their care and welfare can be important to social workers' clients. Only a handful of schools of social work include human-animal relationships – not to mention The Link of how animal abuse affects human welfare and safety ([See the September 2020 LINK-Letter](#)).

The prestigious *Journal of Child and Adolescent Social Work* is taking a significant step to advance the field forward by publishing a special issue dedicated to human-animal relationships. While the full issue will not be published until December, individual articles are starting to appear online.

[The first article](#) was written by National Link Coalition Coordinator Phil Arkow. In “Human-Animal Relationships and Social Work: Opportunities Beyond the Veterinary Environment,” Arkow traces the history of the Veterinary Social Work specialty from its origins in 1978 at the University of Pennsylvania and its development at the University of Tennessee, where its four areas of engagement are The Link, animal-related grief and bereavement, compassion fatigue and conflict management, and animal-assisted interventions.

He argues that there are many more career opportunities above and beyond Veterinary Social Work for social workers to include concern for human-animal relations. He describes six reasons why social workers should be aware of the significance of human-animal relationships:

- A 21<sup>st</sup> Century definition of “family” includes its non-human members as well.
- The presence of pets enhances social capital as well as individual well-being.
- Inquiring about clients' pets builds rapport and trust.
- Children's positive and negative experiences with animals can have lifelong consequences.
- Awareness of animal abuse can reveal other forms of family violence.
- Pet loss can have significant implications for clients.

Arkow introduces nine career opportunities, with action steps, in which social workers can introduce human-animal interactions into pre-professional and continuing education training and practice outside the more established field of Veterinary Social Work:

- Agencies involved in child abuse and child sexual abuse protection and prevention.
- Children's advocacy centers and courthouse facility dogs.

- Animal shelters.
- Domestic violence shelters.
- Public policy advocacy.
- Clinical social work practice.
- Social work with older and disabled populations.
- Veterinary medicine’s response to domestic violence.
- Working with homeless populations.

By including human-animal relationships in pre-professional training, continuing education and practice, social workers can use their problem-solving skills to improve delivery of services, identify clients’ risk and resiliency factors, enhance social and environmental justice, expand academic inquiry, and better protect all vulnerable members of families and communities.

The issue is being coordinated and co-edited by: Mary Beth Rautkis, of the University of Pittsburgh’s Child Welfare Education & Research Programs; Janet Hoy-Gerlach, Associate Professor in the School of Social Justice at the University of Toledo; and Lisa Schelbe, Associate Professor of Social Work at Florida State University.

-- Arkow, P. (2020, Sept. 5). Human-animal relationships and social work: Opportunities beyond the veterinary environment. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-020-00697-x>

## COVID-19... AND THE LINK

### Pandemic’s Impact on Family Violence Spotlighted

In recognition of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, WellBeing International – a nonprofit organization founded on the principle that the long-term well-being of people, animals and the environment are interconnected -- published an [extensive article](#)



on how the ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted increases in family violence.

“*Unintended Consequences of COVID-19 Include Increases in Child and Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence*” was written by National Link Coalition Coordinator Phil Arkow and Indianapolis researcher Andrew Campbell.

The article describes the increases in sales of guns and ammunition, domestic violence survivors forced to quarantine with abusers, economic hardships, remote learning keeping teachers from being able to report suspected child maltreatment, social distancing requirements in domestic violence shelters that reduce capacity, and psychological stressors as exacerbating conditions for family violence. The article echoes Campbell’s contention that the pandemic’s effects mirror those of natural disasters (*See the [September 2020 LINK-Letter](#)*).

The article also addresses the pandemic’s impact on animal care and control, with shelters closing, services reduced, and pets being dislocated from their families. It argues that human and animal survivors of abuse are often losing their safe spaces during lockdowns when their homes are no longer safe.

## DOMESTIC ABUSE... and THE LINK

### Need for Pet-Friendly Shelters Called Urgent During the Pandemic



**Nina Leigh Krueger**

The *Washington Post* and *Inside Philanthropy* have joined the mainstream media outlets recognizing the urgent need for more pet-friendly domestic violence shelters – a need that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a [sponsored-content submission](#) on Aug. 7 from the *Post*'s BrandStudio division, Nina Leigh Krueger, President of Purina, wrote that more focus must be given to the roles that pets play in a survivor's ability to escape in a world where home isn't a safe place to be during stay-at-home orders.

Citing the number of people who won't leave domestic violence situations without their pets, Krueger described Purina's solutions that allow survivors to bring their pets. Purina has partnered with RedRover in the Purple Leash Project (See the [March 2019 LINK-Letter](#)) and committed \$500,000 to create a pet-friendly shelter in every state by 2022 and to make ¼ of shelters pet-friendly by 2025. (According to [Sheltering Animals and Families Together](#) – SAF™, 219 U.S. shelters are currently pet-friendly; only Delaware, Hawai'i, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, and Rhode Island are believed to lack shelters that also accept pets.)

"We know, for example, that abusers will often use pets as leverage to manipulate their victims, and that pets can be threatened, harmed or even killed as the result of domestic violence. The trauma can leave pets with lasting emotional scars and a fear of people. We've also learned that pets may be the primary source of unconditional love for domestic abuse survivors, leading them to stay with an abuser if pet-friendly services aren't available," Krueger wrote.

Purina is also working with GreaterGood.org on three approaches to renovating shelters to become pet-friendly: adding durable floors and safe perches and cubbies to residents' rooms; adding dog kennels and a cat room in the shelter; or adding a separate shed-like kennel structure on the property.

"These solutions all sound good in theory, but sometimes, they're easier said than done—especially for older shelters that could have a hard time retrofitting their space to accommodate pets. For these long-running shelters, the prospect of serving both people and pets can seem overwhelming," she added, noting that there are solutions to make the transition easier.

*Inside Philanthropy* published an [extensive blog](#) on Aug. 21, praising the fact that "dozens upon dozens of domestic violence shelters across the nation have updated their facilities to ensure they never have to turn away anyone seeking shelter with a pet" – a situation made even more critical by the COVID-19 pandemic. Michael Kavate interviewed National Link Coalition coordinator Phil Arkow and SAF-T founder Allie Phillips for an article entitled, "More Domestic Violence Shelters Take Pets. Philanthropy Helped Make That Happen."



**Michael Kavate**

"Working alongside activists and nonprofits, philanthropy has played a critical role in bringing about this transformation," he wrote. With interviews from such groups as RedRover, the Urban Resource Institute and A Kinder World Foundation, Kavate identified several corporate and private foundations that have enabled shelters to become pet-friendly.

## Community Agency, National Website Help Survivors Find Pet-Friendly Apartments

An ongoing concern for domestic violence survivors with pets is finding pet-friendly living accommodations, either as an immediate refuge after leaving an abusive home or in transition housing after residing in a shelter. A community agency in Champaign-Urbana, Ill., has tapped into a national website directory that can make this process immensely easier.

The Care Center was founded more than 15 years ago to provide resources that help Illinois families be more successful pet owners at all stages of their pets' lives, including in times of medical crisis. In addition to providing training advice and financial assistance to persons who need medical care for their pets, the Care Center offers an [online list of pet-friendly apartments](#) in Champaign, Urbana, Danville, and Decatur. The search engine, which is already filtered to list only pet-friendly apartments, allows viewers to see photos, floor plans, rental costs, and to check for availability.

**Apartmentguide**\* The listings actually come from a national resource, [www.apartmentguide.com](http://www.apartmentguide.com). Viewers can enter the name of any city, ZIP Code or neighborhood in the U.S. and add various filters, such as being pet-friendly, number of bedrooms and baths, other amenities, and cost. The filters screen out unsuitable properties.

This can be a terrific resource for any domestic violence agency working with survivors who face the daunting task of relocating and want to keep all the members of their family together. We thank the Care Center for bringing this remarkable resource to our attention.

## PCADV Launches Link Initiative

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence has launched an [initiative](#), "Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence," to work on the state and local levels to ensure that people recognize The Link. PCADV is providing training for local domestic violence programs, court personnel, domestic violence attorneys, and magisterial district judges. The initiative is partnering with the Harrisburg Area Humane Society, the National Link Coalition, and the Pennsylvania office of the Humane Society of the U.S. to reach wider audiences. Current and future work includes: trainings for court personnel and domestic violence attorneys' networks; jurist articles and STOP technical assistance bulletins; benchcards for judges; and new chapters for the Court of Common Pleas and magisterial district judges.



### What is The LINK?

Legislation...

Intervention...

Networking...

Knowledge...

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

## *NEWS FROM LOCAL LINK COALITIONS*

### **North Texas Coalition Educates about Suicide Prevention and The Link**

The increased and prolonged levels of stress experienced by people working or living in the Link cycles of violence can be an increased trigger for potential depression and suicide. That was a key takeaway from a Zoom webinar organized on Sept. 11 by the [North Texas Link Coalition](#) that addressed suicide awareness and The Link.



**Cami Fields**

Cami Fields, LMSW, Director of Education and Outreach for the [Grant Halliburton Foundation](#), led a discussion about the importance of suicide awareness and prevention and how it correlates with the Link. The foundation was established in 2006 in memory of a Dallas teen who had battled depression and bipolar disorder for several years before his suicide at the age of 19.

Anyone who works in prevention and response to family and community violence and abuse can be subject to high exposure to compassion fatigue and ongoing stress. These can trigger elevated levels of cortisol and adrenalin as a result of a prolonged stress response. This can be the biggest risk factor for depression, Fields said, in presenting an extensive list of changes in mood, behaviors and words that can be life-threatening red flags and warning signs for suicide ideation.

Meanwhile, the unique dynamics created by the COVID-19 pandemic are leaving many people feeling more isolated from traditional support systems. Checking in with quarantined individuals to see how they are doing can be very helpful. In addition, child abuse, domestic violence and the social isolation of elders can be additional risk factors for suicide.

Veterinarians, in particular, are experiencing extremely high rates of suicide. Suicides among animal shelter employees are not uncommon, and a [recent study](#) by the [American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#) revealed that animal rescue workers have a suicide rate of 5.3 in 1 million workers. This is the highest suicide rate among American workers; a rate shared only by [firefighters and police officers](#). The national suicide average for American workers is 1.5 per 1 million.

Veterinarians and shelter personnel also must recognize that persons who ask to euthanize all of their pets are thinking of suicide as part of a pattern of cleaning up their affairs.

While suicide is the tenth leading cause of death for all people, it is the second-most common cause of death for youths, Fields said. Most suicides don't want to die: they just want to end their pain in a world where they don't see things ever changing. Given another option, most of them would rather live.

Fields described a three-part response to a potential suicide called TAG: Take it seriously; Ask questions; Get help. The National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-TALK [8255]) and the 741741 Crisis Text Line are available resources. Calling 911 can connect you with a mental health crisis intervention team. Asking the person questions can help determine how serious and imminent the threat is.

Protective factors against suicide include having strong coping and problem-solving skills which build resilience, and connections to family, friends, school, work, peers, and the community.



## New Link Coalition Forming in North Florida

A new Link coalition is being organized in the Jacksonville area, where the [North Florida Link Project](#) is beginning to work to expand community awareness and empower action that results in the prevention of animal, child, domestic, and elder abuse. “Using data driven research and statistics, the North Florida Link Project provides free educational resources exposing The Link between animal cruelty and human violence. The Link Project endeavors to inspire and empower citizens to take action resulting in the prevention of harm for a safer society,” says the group’s new website.

Coordinator Kelly Anderson’s goal in forming the group is to connect existing nonprofits and government agencies that are already working on like-minded missions. “My vision is a place to provide everyone with up to date research, data, resources, and training information. This will also allow them to network better, provide increased exposure, and may possibly reduce duplicating services,” she says. Anderson’s experience includes a background in nonprofit organizational consulting, public education, and organizations working with the homeless and mentally ill.

An advisory board is being created that already includes representatives from the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office, the Florida Department of Education’s Office of Safe Schools, and a psychologist. Anderson is recruiting advisory board members from the field of adult protection and domestic violence.

The Project’s website includes extensive resources from the National Link Coalition, a status report on bills in the Florida legislature, links to a wide array of human and animal services agencies, and hotline numbers to report child, domestic, elder, and animal abuse. There is also a Twitter account.

Jacksonville is the nation’s 14th largest city with some 800,000 residents and more than 1 million in the metro area. “My area is rich in highly competitive nonprofits. I understand the value of building and sustaining relationships within every aspect of the community and will call on these relationships to create a solid foundation for a Link Coalition,” Anderson adds.

We also have a very active [South Florida Link Coalition](#) that is based in the West Palm Beach area (See the [December 2015 LINK-Letter](#)).

## *BUILDING LINK AWARENESS*

### Link Training Comes to Kentucky AMR Group

Joye Keeley, Coordinator of the [Kentucky Link Coalition](#), and her dog, “Quill,” were co-trainers at a Link program for American Medical Response in Lexington, Ky. on Sept. 10. Keeley tells The LINK-Letter that it was a really receptive audience. Quill is a rescued Great Pyrenees from Graves County, Ky.



## Latham Foundation Awards Grants for Humane Education and Animal-Assisted Interventions for Abused, At-Risk and Offenders



The Latham Foundation has announced its [grant recipients](#) for its 2020 focus on promoting humane education through animal-assisted activities where both animals and people benefit. Thirty-five organizations – many of which serve abused, at-risk or offending youths and adults – shared in the awards which range up to \$10,000. Latham President Hugh Tebault said that more than 200 organizations applied for grants and that the grants committee was highly impressed with the diversity of applications received from across the U.S. and around the world. Recipients of the awards were:

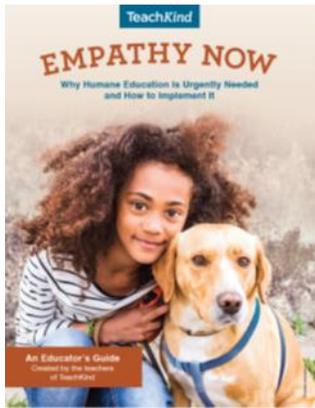
<p>A Fair Shake for Youth, New York, N.Y.            AHEAD With Horses Inc., Shadow Hills, Calif.            Animal Farm Foundation Inc., Bangall, N.Y.            Berkshire Horse Works, Richmond, Mass.            Canine Therapy Corps, Inc., Chicago, Ill.            Circle Tail, Inc, Pleasant Plain, Ohio            Detroit Horse Power, Detroit, Mich.            Dr. Franklin Perkins School, Lancaster, Mass.            Forget Me Not Children’s Services, Santa Rosa, Calif.            Freed Spirits Animal Rescue, Phoenix, Ariz.            Friends of Paws in Prison, San Antonio, Texas            Gabriel’s Angels, Phoenix, Ariz.            Hand2Paw, Philadelphia, Pa.            Hearts and Hooves Therapy, Ramona, Calif.            Hinchinbrook Farm Society, Blockhouse, N.S., Canada            Hoffman Homes for Youth, Littlestown, Pa.            K9 Youth Alliance, Pasadena, Calif.            Keystone Service Systems, Harrisburg, Pa.            Langton Green Inc., Annapolis, Md.</p>	<p>Native Horsemanship Youth Program, Poulsbo, Wash.            New Leash on Life USA, Penn Valley, Pa.            Newfoundland Pony Conservancy Center, Jaffrey, N.H.            Our Companions Animal Rescue, Manchester, Conn.            Paws and Think, Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.            Paws for Heroes, Houston, Texas            Project POOCH, Lake Oswego, Ore.            Prospect Riding Center, Myakka City, Fla.            RBS Therapy Dogs, Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel            Shy Wolf Sanctuary and Education Center, Naples, Fla.            Son Care Foundation, Inc., San Luis Obispo, Calif.            Tempus Renatus School of Classical Horsemanship, Raeford, N.C.            The Little Dog Laughed Animal-Assistance, Portland Ore.            The Pig Preserve, Jamestown, Tenn.            Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.            Wilderwood Equine Therapy and Rescue, Peralta, N.M.</p>
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## National Link Coalition Featured in Human-Animal Bond Podcast

National Link Coalition Coordinator Phil Arkow was interviewed on Sept. 16 as part of an ongoing series of [Animal Academy podcasts](#) that showcase professionals sharing their areas of interest to explain how people can learn from animals. Moderator Allison White, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, interviewed Phil about both the “good side” of the human-animal bond – animal-assisted interventions – and the “dark side” – how animal abuse often presages interpersonal violence. “A Conversation on the Many Aspects of the Human-Animal Relationship” is a 43-minute recording discussion how social workers and therapists, in particular, can learn about clients’ risk and resiliency factors by inquiring about their attachments to animals and those animals’ welfare concerns. The podcast is also available on iTunes, Spotify, TuneIn, Stitcher, and Amazon Music.



## Link Underlies Premise for PETA Humane Education Guide



A [new guide](#) to help teachers respond to students who have witnessed or committed animal abuse and to implement humane education programs in their schools has been developed by TeachKind, the humane education arm of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). *“Empathy Now: Why Humane Education is Urgently Needed and How to Implement It”* is a 19-page manual that proposes a trauma-informed approach to education that includes compassion for animals.

Citing extensive research about The Link between animal abuse and human violence, the guide focuses on how common it is for young people to witness or perpetrate animal abuse, including an interactive map of cases of children who harm animals. It features a list of free resources available to schools as well as testimonials from teachers who use TeachKind materials.

The guide is introduced with a lengthy introduction on the animal abuse/human abuse connection. It emphasizes that a case of animal cruelty may just be the tip of the iceberg. “Youth violence against animals is occurring with alarming frequency across the nation, and it’s imperative that educators recognize that the consequences are destructive and far-reaching,” it states. “Unfortunately, children’s violence toward animals often goes unexamined — until that aggression is directed toward humans.”

It encourages educators to recognize that not only have many school shooters and serial killers had histories of animal cruelty, but that it is common for children to have witnessed animal abuse and that doing so is a form of trauma and a risk factor for committing animal abuse themselves. “It’s important for schools to enhance their anti-bullying efforts by incorporating lessons on showing empathy, compassion, and kindness to all sentient beings — humane education has the potential to save both human and animal lives.”

The guide links humane education to state mandates for character education. It describes a three-tiered approach: delivering empathy training to the entire student population to reach children before they engage in abusive behavior; supporting students who have witnessed animal abuse with assistance from guidance counselors, psychologists and social workers; and having teachers and mental health support staff conduct interventions and monitor students with histories of violent behavior.

The guide describes the importance of talking to children about animal abuse, with specific guidelines for discussing the topic with elementary, middle and high school students. It offers suggestions on what to do if you suspect a student has hurt an animal. It describes TeachKind’s curriculum resources for elementary, middle and high school classes and professional development workshops for teachers.

The guide includes a link to the National Link Coalition’s [National Directory of Abuse Investigation Agencies](#) and an extensive list of Link references.

“At TeachKind, we focus on helping teachers capitalize on children’s natural affinity for animals in order to foster empathy for *all* living, feeling beings,” it concludes. “If we raise the next generation with compassion for animals, we will be taking a significant step toward reducing violence of all kinds and creating a kinder world. Sadly, the opposite is also true — when children become desensitized to the suffering of animals, the outcome can be dangerous for both animals *and* humans.”

## *THE LINK... in the LITERATURE*

### French Study Links Adolescent Animal Abuse with Speciesism

Writing that animal abuse is considered a significant marker of violence towards humans, and that understanding its determinants is important, a researcher has conducted what is believed to be the first large-scale survey on adolescent animal abuse in France. Laurent Bègue, a psychologist at La Université Grenoble Alpes, introduced and tested the relative explanatory power of a new variable potentially involved in animal abuse: speciesism, defined as the belief that humans are intrinsically more valuable than individuals of other species. In a sample of 12,344 students aged 13–18 years, 7.3% of participants admitted having perpetrated animal abuse. Consistent with existing studies, cats and dogs were the animals most often abused. Animal abuse was a solitary behavior approximately half of the time, and in 25% of instances it involved only another person. Animal abuse was more frequent among males and occurred more often among adolescents with less positive family climate, lower support from friends, lower attachment to school, and with higher anxio-depressive symptomatology. As implied by the generalized deviance hypothesis, animal abuse was related to more deviant behavior such as drunkenness and bullying. The study showed for the first time that animal abuse was higher among adolescents who endorsed speciesist attitudes. The results suggested that beyond psychopathological factors, normative beliefs regarding the value of animals and their human use may also be involved in animal mistreatment.



Laurent Bègue

-- Begue, L. (2020, Sept. 24). Explaining animal abuse among adolescents: The role of speciesism. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520959643>

## *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 **an amazing 119 bills** that have been introduced into the 2020 legislative sessions. Please let us know if you hear of other measures not included here:

#### *Animal Hoarding*



**New Hampshire H 1449** defines animal hoarding and sets forth a provision for a person charged with animal hoarding to be given a psychiatric evaluation. The bill passed the House and is in the Senate.



**New Jersey S 1760** establishes the animal cruelty crime of animal hoarding and requires mental health counseling for all adult and juvenile animal cruelty offenders, including animal hoarders. The bill is in the Senate Energy & Environment Committee.



**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.



**West Virginia H 4880** would have declared animal hoarding to be a misdemeanor and require the animals to be turned over to an animal shelter for proper care and relocation. The provision, part of a much larger increase in protections for the welfare of domestic animals, **died in the House Judiciary Committee**.

## *Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders*



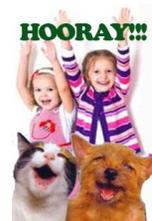
**Arizona HB 2321** would have allowed courts to issue “severe threat orders of protection”, which would prohibit respondents from possessing firearms based upon a credible threat of death or serious injury, against individuals who committed or attempted to commit acts of violence including cruelty to 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.**



**Illinois HB 4768** would establish a grant program from the Department of Human Services to provide capital funds, and to search for third-party funding and services, to support domestic violence shelters in counties with a population of 200,000 or more to become pet-friendly. The bill is in the Rules Committee.



**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. The measure has been pre-filed for the 2021 legislative session as **Bill Request BR 243.**

 **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.

 **Minnesota HF 9** would have allowed courts to include a conviction for animal cruelty in determining whether an individual should be prohibited from possessing firearms in the issuance of an Extreme Risk Protection Order. The bill passed the House but died in the Senate Judiciary & Public Safety Finance & Policy Committee **when the legislature adjourned**.

 **Mississippi SB 2299**, which would have authorized courts to include pets in orders of protection from domestic abuse, **died in the Judiciary Committee**.

 **Missouri HB 2626** and **SB 959** would have allowed courts, in issuing adult protection and child protection orders, to restrain or enjoin an individual from committing or threatening to commit abuse against a pet, to include an order of custody of the pet, and to pay for the medical costs of treating the pet abuse. The bills were in the House and Senate Judiciary Committees **when the legislature adjourned**.

 **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.

 **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.

### *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.**

 **Connecticut RB 415** would have required veterinarians who treat a dog that they believe was injured or killed as a result of animal fighting to report the incident, with immunity from civil liability, to local law enforcement. **The bill died in the Joint Committee on the Environment.**

 **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. **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 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 and **was signed into law 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 Jersey A 2734** would require employees of the Department of Children & Families to report suspected abuse of a companion animal to the Chief County Humane Law Enforcement Officer or State Police, and of a livestock animal to the Chief County Humane Law Enforcement Officer and the Department of Agriculture. The bill is in the Assembly Women and Children Committee.



**New York S 3415** and **A 1211** would require animal cruelty investigators to report suspected child maltreatment, and child abuse investigators to report suspected animal cruelty. **S 3415** passed the Senate and joined **A 1211** in the Assembly Children & Families 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 companion animal abuse. 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 Agriculture & Natural Resources 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** had 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 have made it a felony to create, record, distribute, sell, advertise, or appear in non-evidentiary video or still image of animal cruelty **was stricken from the docket of the Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources.**



**Wisconsin SB 139 became law on March 4.** It increases penalties for bestiality from current misdemeanor levels to a variety of felony charges for sexual contact with an animal; advertising, harboring, transporting, providing or transporting animals for sexual contact; and creating, distributing or possessing animal pornography. Penalties are further enhanced if a child is involved. Offenders must register as a sex offender; current law only permits courts to order such registration.



### *Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment*



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



**Missouri HB 2626 and SB 959** would have allowed courts, in issuing adult protection and child protection orders, to restrain or enjoin an individual from committing or threatening to commit abuse against a pet, to include an order of custody of the pet, and to pay for the medical costs of treating the pet abuse. The bills were in the House and Senate Judiciary Committees **when the legislature adjourned.**



**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-A** is in the Children and Families Committee. **S 3415-A** 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 have made it a felony to bring a minor to a dog- or cockfight. The bill was in the Senate Rules & Operations Committee **when the legislature adjourned**.

 **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 7740** and **S 2828** would increase penalties for animal cruelty if the act is committed in the presence of a minor child. The bills are in their respective Judiciary Committees.

 **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.**

### *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.

## *“CASA for Animals”*



**California AB 2645** would have allowed 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. **It had not been referred to a committee when the Assembly adjourned.**



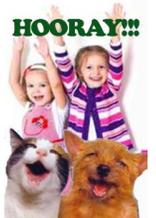
**Florida SB 1048** would have provided for the appointing of an advocate for the interests of an animal in certain court proceedings, at the court’s discretion, and require the Florida Bar Association’s Animal Law section to maintain a list of attorneys and certified legal interns who meet specified requirements to be appointed as advocates. **The bill died in the Judiciary Committee.**



**Illinois HB 3995** and **HB 5530** would permit courts to appoint a pro bono attorney or law student as a special advocate to represent the interests of a cat or dog in cases involving the injury, health or safety of the animal. The bills are in the House Rules Committee.



**Maine LD 1442** allows a court to appoint volunteer advocates for justice in animal cruelty cases, either under its own initiative or upon the request of a party or counsel. Advocates 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 have created a special advocate for cats and dogs that are neglected or otherwise treated cruelly. **The bill was considered “inexpedient to legislate.”**



**New Jersey A 4533** and **S 2868** would allow courts to appoint a pro bono attorney or law student special advocate to represent the interests of animals in cruelty or dogfighting criminal cases. The bills are in the Assembly and Senate Judiciary Committees.



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



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

## *Animal Abuse and Other Crimes*



**H.R. 8052**, the bipartisan Animal Cruelty Enforcement (ACE) Act, would establish a dedicated Animal Cruelty Crimes Division at the U.S. Department of Justice to aid in the investigation, enforcement, and prosecution of felony animal cruelty crimes. The measure is in the House Judiciary Committee.



**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** (“Cash’s Law”) would allow the state’s sentencing guidelines to provide an enhancement in cases where a domestic animal is harmed or killed during the course of a criminal trespass or burglary. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.

### *Psychological Evaluation of Offenders*



**California SB 580** would amend procedures requiring animal abuse offenders on probation to undergo a mental health evaluation by a court-named evaluator and to complete mandatory counseling if the mental health professional deems it necessary, at the defendant’s expense. The bill passed the Senate 38-0 and was in the Assembly Appropriations Committee **when the legislature adjourned.**



**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 Jersey S 1760** establishes the animal cruelty crime of animal hoarding and requires mental health counseling for all adult and juvenile animal cruelty offenders, including animal hoarders. The bill is in the Senate Energy & Environment Committee. **S 2179 (“Shyanne’s Law”)** would require mental health evaluation for all animal cruelty offenders; that bill is in the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee.



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



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

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

### **Ex-football Star Charged with Sexual Activity with Minors and Animal Neglect**



**Telvin Smith**

Former Jacksonville Jaguars football player Telvin Smith, 29, who had been arrested in April for allegations of unlawful sexual activity with minors, was charged with seven civil citations for alleged animal neglect. Jacksonville Animal Care and Protective Services said Smith left dogs tethered and unattended in his yard, according to the [Florida Times-Union](#). A star athlete at Florida State University, Smith played for the Jaguars in 2014-2018 but abruptly stepped away from football to focus on his health and family.

### **12-Year-Old Who Shot Family Dog Charged with Bringing Guns to School**

A 12-year-old boy who had recently killed the family dog with a pellet gun was arrested after Nassau County, Fla. deputies said he brought three guns and ammunition to school. Citing the severity of the incidents, [WJXT-TV](#) identified the boy as Gabriel Dean Lewis Stanford, of Callahan. The principal of Lighthouse Christian School called the Nassau County Sheriff’s Office after staff found two firearms and two boxes of .380 caliber ammo in his lunchbox; a third gun, that was loaded, was later found along with a violent drawing of a man outside a school with guns. The man was surrounded by dead bodies, covered in red marker indicating blood.

Sheriff Bill Leeper called the incident “very scary,” saying it’s “dangerous for kids to have weapons like that, much less taking one to school.” The boy’s mother said he had recently accidentally killed the family’s Chihuahua with a pellet rifle when he was unsupervised.

“When you look at the killing of a family pet, you look at some of the drawings that were found in the kid’s desk, it is alarming,” Leeper said. “You don’t know what’s in the child’s mind and what they’re thinking — maybe innocent, maybe not. But surely, you don’t want to take that chance; you want to make sure the child gets the help that he needs to make sure nothing like this will happen in the future.”

## Man Charged with Shooting Neighbor Who Complained About His Dog



**Johnny Hogue**

Johnny Hogue, 80, of Cleveland, Ohio, was being held in the Cuyahoga County Jail on \$1 million bond after being charged with aggravated murder in the fatal shooting of his 68-year-old neighbor who tried to intervene in an argument over dogs. The [Cleveland Plain Dealer](#) reported that Hogue and a different neighbor were arguing about their dogs when Barbara Rogers tried to intervene. Police said that Hogue pulled out a gun and shot Rogers several times in the head and body at close range. The neighbor had called police the day before to report that Hogue had shot at her dog but missed. Police reports said that Hogue had threatened to kill a different neighbor in 2018 over an argument about Hogue's dog which was running around the neighborhood without a leash. Hogue was reportedly also charged in June, 2019 with five unidentified criminal offenses and was admitted to a Selective Intervention diversionary program for defendants with no prior criminal records or pending cases.

## Couple Charged with Animal Abuse and Death of Son

A New Kensington, Penna. couple charged with the death of a 2-year-old boy have also been charged with animal cruelty for allegedly beating a dog so badly that one of its legs had to be amputated. Keith Dale Lilly Jr., 31, and Teresa Lynn Fetterman, 24, face multiple counts, according to the [Pittsburgh Tribune Review](#). Lilly faces a possible death penalty for the homicide of Teresa Fetterman's son Mikel last April; Teresa Fetterman has been charged with involuntary manslaughter, aggravated assault and other offenses. Westmoreland County prosecutors charged the pair with animal cruelty and neglect in September for the animal abuse, which allegedly occurred last March.



**Keith Lilly and Teresa Fetterman**



**Jeffery Sullivan**

## Pit Bull Owner with Child Support Charges Accused of Manslaughter in Mauling of Neighbor

Jeffery Kenneth Sullivan, 35, of Gray Court, S.C., was charged with involuntary manslaughter and three counts of possession of a dangerous animal in connection with the death of his trailer park neighbor, Jacqueline Nicole Robinson-Downs, who was apparently mauled by his three pit bulls, the [Laurens County Sheriff's Office](#) reported. Court records indicated that Sullivan had been arrested last July for allegedly failing to pay child support. Animal Control removed the dogs, which were displaying aggressive behaviors.

### *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.

## ***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.

**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 (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. 18 (online):** Joye Keeley of the Kentucky Link Coalition, will join Kentucky Animal Action, Making a Difference Now, and two attorneys for a [Link webinar](#) on “How to Report Animal Abuse in Kentucky and Why It’s Important.

**Oct. 21 (online):** Phil Arkow will conduct a Link presentation for [NW Veg](#).

**Oct. 25 (online):** National Link Coalition steering committee members Gale Rasin and Kathleen Wood will participate in a webinar on “Judicial Decision-making: Reaching Key Stakeholders in Animal Cruelty Cases” at the Animal Legal Defense Fund’s virtual [Animal Law Conference](#).

**Oct. 25-28 – St. Louis, Mo. and/or virtual:** Allie Phillips will present on “Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T): A Life Saving Initiative” at the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence’s [19<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Domestic Violence](#).

**Oct. 26 (online):** John Romero, Diane Balkin and Kathleen Wood will conduct a free webinar on “The Link between Animal Cruelty and Domestic Violence” in a [three-part series](#) about Animal Cruelty Issues in Family Law Cases for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

**Oct. 29 (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,” and Kathleen Wood will present on cross-reporting at Animal Law Source’s 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual [Animal Protection and Wellness Expo](#).

**Oct. 30 (online):** Jenny Edwards will present “Connections between Animals and Human Trafficking: What the Dark Web Has to Do with Animals,” and Lila Milot and Shana Knight will discuss “Community Interventions to Reduce Neglect and Abuse” at Animal Law Source’s 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual [Animal Protection and Wellness 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. 2 (online):** Rosa Figarola and Diane Balkin will conduct a free webinar on “The Link between Animal Abuse and Elder Abuse” in a [three-part series](#) about Animal Cruelty Issues in Family Law Cases for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

**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](#).

**Nov. 16 (online):** Gale Rasin and Jamie Contreras will conduct a free webinar on “Animal Hoarding: Issues in Family Law Cases” in a [three-part series](#) about Animal Cruelty Issues in Family Law Cases for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

**Jan. 7, 2021 (online):** Phil Arkow will conduct a training on “The Link between Animal Sexual Abuse and Human Violence” for the [Hawaiian Humane Society](#).

**Feb. 10, 2021 (online):** Phil Arkow will speak on “The Cruelty Connection: Practical Guidance for the Effective Recognition and Response by Veterinarians to Suspected Animal Cruelty and Other Family Violence” to the Class of 2024 at [Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine](#).

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

**July 15, 2021 (online):** Emily Lewis of the Animal Legal Defense Fund will present a [webinar](#) on “Preserving the Bond and Preventing Cruelty: The Veterinarian’s Role” for the Justice Clearinghouse.



To subscribe to The Link-Letter (*it's free!*)  
– Just send an e-mail to Coordinator Phil Arkow  
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Please tell us what organization(s) you're with  
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## 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

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