



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

The LINK-Letter Vol. 14, No. 1 January 2021

A monthly report of news from THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER



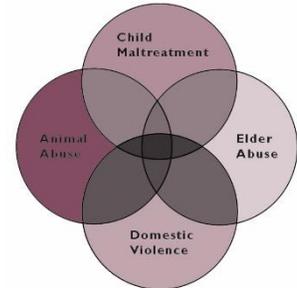
ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE



www.NationalLinkCoalition.org

[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

SUBSCRIBE – It's Free!!



*Happy New Year, everyone!
Here's hoping for a happier, healthier, and safer 2021*

CHILD ABUSE... and THE LINK

Courthouse Facility Dogs Humanize Process for Child Abuse Victims

Citing research that children often experience anxiety and retraumatization when testifying in family and criminal courts that may not necessarily be “either developmentally or trauma sensitive,” Colleen Phelan, Director of Communications and Development for the [Courthouse Dogs Foundation](#), told a [National Organization for Victim Assistance](#) webinar that courthouse facility dogs are one way to bring some compassion in to de-stress anybody in the criminal justice process.



Colleen Phelan & “Blake”

Phelan reviewed the breeding and training protocols that enable courthouse facility dogs, now working in nearly 300 jurisdictions in the U.S., Canada and overseas, to provide victim-centered services that can be lifesaving and help reduce the harm of violence. “The opportunities for the work they can do is limitless and constrained only by the limits of our imagination,” she said.

The dogs must graduate from training programs accredited by Assistance Dogs International. They are purpose-bred to have low mobility when moving through the world – not knocking things over and having a quiet presence and unobtrusive, non-reactive demeanor in many settings. They have to be able to hold a down-stay for many hours over several days and be able to work an 8-hour daily shift, whether working in a courtroom, Children’s Advocacy Center, children’s group home, or forensic medical examinations. “They’ve been exposed to so many things that when they get into the courtroom it’s just another day at the office. Once they put their vests on, they’re professionals,” she said.

Phelan, a Special Victims advocate at the Pima County, Ariz., Attorney’s Office, has partnered with “Blake” since 2012. She emphasized that facility dogs can experience vicarious trauma if they work too hard. Blake gets down-time in his crate in the office when he’s not in the courtroom.

Handlers are professionals already in the legal system, such as paralegals, prosecutors or court-appointed special advocates. They are trained to ensure that the dogs don't disrupt the legal processes with judges and courtrooms whose guidelines might be different. They regularly review the dogs' welfare to ensure they are healthy and being treated appropriately.

Phelan described several factors to be considered during pretrial motions as to whether a facility dog will be allowed in the courtroom. Procedures have to be in place to ensure the dog's presence doesn't create unfair sympathy for the victim: the dog can be in the gallery, concealed in the witness box, or enter the courtroom with the victim or witness outside the jury's presence. Research has found that a dog's presence does not adversely affect a jury. Permission must be obtained to make sure no one is allergic to dogs.

Facility dogs are currently allowed in 41 states. Both the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys and National District Attorneys Association have issued statements supporting the use of courthouse facility dogs to aid in the investigation of crimes and courtroom procedures involving young or vulnerable victims and witnesses.

"Dogs usually appeal to children of all ages," she concluded. A child may be brought in to a Children's Advocacy Center by a parent or by law enforcement and it can be highly stressful. The dogs establish rapport. Children who are afraid of being touched can touch the dog and learn that it's OK. Children who have experienced victimization have a lack of confidence and giving commands to the dog can help them to regain confidence. Some dogs have their own mailboxes where kids can write letters to them. "It's difficult to quantify what a dog does but comfort is such an important part of the process it's often overlooked. When you see how dogs can humanize the process you realize how important this is."

Pennsylvania High Court to Rule on Courthouse Facility Dogs

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court is poised to rule on the question of whether the rare accommodation of courthouse facility dogs adversely prejudices a jury's sympathies.



Example of a courthouse facility dog

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court on Dec. 9 agreed to hear *Commonwealth v. Sheron Jalen Purnell*. Purnell was found guilty of third-degree murder and illegally carrying firearms in March, 2019, and sentenced to 20-¹/₂-to-47 years in prison. The Chester County trial court allowed an autistic minor, identified only as "A.H.", who witnessed the crime, to have a courthouse facility dog provided by the county sheriff's K-9 unit present. Prosecutors filed appropriate motions for special procedures. The dog entered the courtroom prior to the jury's entrance, exited only after all jurors were excused, and remained at the witness stand outside the presence of the jury as A.H. testified.

The [*Legal Intelligencer*](#) reported that Purnell's public defender appealed, saying the dog's presence generated undue sympathy for A.H. and that prosecutors failed to establish the necessity for the dog. The Superior Court rejected that argument, saying that the court followed procedures to minimize the dog's presence and that Purnell failed to demonstrate any harm from the decision to allow the dog. A.H.'s testimony merely corroborated what other witnesses had testified.

A majority of jurisdictions have concluded that a finding of "necessity" or "need" is not required in order for a trial court to allow the presence of such an animal, provided that it alleviates the witness' stress and helps the witness testify truthfully and completely, the Superior Court ruled.

Once the Supreme Court reaches a decision, if the dog's presence was found to be prejudicial a new trial may be warranted, unless other witnesses' testimonies make the issue moot.

DOMESTIC ABUSE... and THE LINK

ASPCA Webinar Calls for Multi-Agency Response to Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse

Emphasizing the need for a multi-agency response to achieve the best outcomes when animal cruelty and domestic violence intersect, two experts from the ASPCA presented an [ASPC Apro webinar](#) that gave an excellent overview of The Link and offered practical tips for law enforcement and animal control officers to investigate and strengthen their domestic violence cases in which animal abuse may be a component.



Maya Gupta

“We can’t take the humans out of the animal welfare equation, nor can we take the animals out of the human welfare equation,” said Maya Gupta, Senior Director for Strategy and Research for the ASPCA. “Helping both improves our effectiveness and makes us more successful in navigating the complexities of cases by looking at the whole picture.”

Gupta noted that not all domestic violence-related animal abuse is violent, and that it can occur before, during and after domestic violence and involve many species from goldfish to horses. Abusers can threaten or harm animals, retaliate against them, take them away, express jealousy over the victim’s bond with an animal, exercise financial control by preventing the animal from getting proper food or veterinary care, and force victims to watch or participate in animal abuse including animal sexual abuse. These tactics serve to control and inflict emotional harm on other family members and act as barriers preventing them from escaping or testifying.

“Not everyone who harms animals engages in other crimes or vice versa,” she said. But when they do co-occur, “We can’t lose sight that each crime is important in its own right.”



Leigh Anne Garrard

Leigh Anne Garrard, Director of ASPCA’s Legal Advocacy and Investigations, noted that law enforcement officers typically use a tactical approach when responding to any potential crime scene. The same tactics can be utilized when domestic violence and animal abuse as suspected. These include:

Listening: Separate the parties and have each one tell their story. Use open-ended statements such as “tell me in detail how...” or “show me exactly...” or “describe to me specifically...” to determine what happened. Ask about current and past animals, and whether the animals and the human victims are safe. Interviewing neighbors, other family members, and veterinarians and animal control officers familiar with the animals and location can be invaluable. Have

them write their stories in their own words. But also listen for sounds of animals – dogs barking or howling.

The crime scene: If you don’t see animals but you do see food bowls, ask where the animals are. Document the environmental conditions the people and animals are living in. The presence of blood, hair or weapons should be documented to help establish probable cause for filing charges. Photograph damage to property, items that are out of place and the animals’ living conditions.

Evidence: The animals themselves, whether dead or alive, are evidence. They are property and ownership must be established. You may need a search warrant to seize them. Their trembling or pacing behaviors exhibiting fear and anxiety may be relevant. Injured and dead animals should be examined by a veterinarian based either on exigency or pursuant to a search warrant.

It's not uncommon for abusers to give their victims a pet as part of a reconciliation and then take it away, Garrard noted. Abusers will also try to downplay the animal victims and offer far-fetched excuses for the abuse or try to pass the blame on to someone else.

Prosecutors can advise you on what charges to file; animal abuse may be a separate charge or serve to escalate other crimes to aggravated levels.

The webinar concluded with a reminder that the most success has come from multi-agency responses where all agencies have investment and buy-in. "The best resolutions will encompass safe paths for both the human and animal victims of domestic violence," said Gupta. "It takes a village to build an effective response."

PAWS Act Funding Increased for 2021

The massive, \$1.4 trillion, 5,593-page federal Omnibus Spending Bill finally enacted by Congress in the waning days of December to provide COVID-19 relief funding included many tacked-on provisions to secure passage. One such provision of interest to The Link between animal abuse and domestic violence was an increase in grant funding for the Pet And Women Safety (PAWS) Act.



The PAWS Act was finally signed into law (Public Law 115-334, Sect. 12502) in December, 2018 ([See the January 2019 LINK-Letter](#)), after languishing in the 113th, 114th and 115th Congresses. The measure was designed to appropriate \$3,000,000 in federal grant money annually for shelter, support and training services to help domestic violence shelters care for survivors' pets.

The first round of grant applications was completed in May, 2020. For reasons that are unclear, the 2020 appropriations was cut to \$2,000,000. However, this figure was increased in the Omnibus Spending Bill to \$2,500,000 in 2021.

Agencies eligible to apply for PAWS grants include: state, local and tribal governments; domestic violence and sexual assault organizations, service providers and coalitions; community-based and culturally specific organizations; nonprofits; and organizations that work with pets and collaborate with domestic violence agencies.

The PAWS Act also extends across state lines provisions now in place in 35 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico in which courts can include pets in protection-from-abuse orders.

14 Animal and Family Shelters Share \$244,627 in Safe Housing Grants

The latest round of [RedRover grants](#) to enable domestic violence shelters to create on- and off-site space to house pets and also allow animal shelters to build dedicated housing for animal victims of abuse has awarded a record 14 grants totaling nearly a quarter-million dollars.



The Sacramento-based organization awarded \$244,627 in Safe Housing grant funds during its second grant cycle of 2020. Of the 14 grants awarded, six are [Purple Leash Project](#) grants, a collaborative program of RedRover and Purina (*See the [March 2019 LINK-Letter](#)*). Four grants, totaling \$80,000, were awarded to animal shelters. Organizations receiving grants during this application period were:

Animal Shelters

- Lost Our Home Pet Rescue – Maricopa County, Ariz., \$20,000
- Valley Oak SPCA – Tulare County, Calif., \$20,000
- Alaqua Animal Refuge – Walton County, Fla., \$20,000
- Monroe County Humane Association – Monroe County, Ind., \$20,000

Domestic Violence Shelters

- Advocates for Victims of Assault, Inc (aka Summit Advocates) – Summit County, Colo., \$8,302
- Branch County Coalition Against Domestic Violence – Branch County, Mich., \$15,000
- North Star Advocacy Center – Nodaway County, Mo., \$5,340
- The Spring – Tulsa County, Okla., \$20,000

RedRover + Purina Purple Leash Project Domestic Violence Shelter Grantees

- Sojourner Center – Maricopa County, Ariz., \$20,000
- Domestic Violence Intervention Program – Johnson County, Iowa, \$13,485
- Domestic Abuse Family Shelter – Forrest County, Miss., \$20,000
- Hope Haven of Cass County – Cass County, Mo., \$12,500
- Palomar Family Justice Center – Oklahoma County, Okla., \$30,000
- YWCA Nashville and Middle Tennessee – Davidson County, Tenn., \$20,000

Since the program's inception in 2012, RedRover has awarded 138 grants in 41 states, totaling more than \$1.5 million. Safe Housing grants have created the first pet-friendly domestic violence shelters in nine states. RedRover and Purina set a goal to have at least one pet-friendly domestic violence shelter in each state; only Hawai'i and Rhode Island lack a pet-friendly domestic violence shelter.

Deadlines for grant applications are May 15 and October 15 each year.

In separate action, RedRover reached across the Canadian border to partner with SafePet Ottawa (*See the [September 2014 LINK-Letter](#)*) to enable more shelters in Ontario to become pet-friendly. Grants of up to \$26,342 CAD (\$20,000 US) are being made available through support from the Donner Canadian Foundation.

RedRover President and CEO Nicole Forsyth said, "The link between domestic violence and animal abuse is undeniable. Too often, survivors will not leave an abusive relationship if they cannot find a domestic violence shelter that accepts pets. Our grants allow these shelters to create pet-friendly spaces so that no one ever has to choose between their safety and their pet."

CRIMINAL JUSTICE... and THE LINK
**Ohio Enacts Comprehensive Cross-Reporting Law
Affecting Child, Elder and Animal Abuse**

After lengthy consideration spanning several legislative sessions, and recognizing the frequent intersections of animal abuse with other forms of family violence, the State of Ohio has finally passed one of the nation’s most comprehensive cross-reporting laws that encompasses suspected child maltreatment, elder abuse and animal cruelty. **HB 33** was signed by Governor Mike DeWine on Jan. 6. It takes effect in 90 days.

The measure requires veterinarians, social services professionals in public children’s service agencies, employees and agents of county Departments of Job and Family Services responsible for adult protective services, counselors, social workers, and marriage and family therapists to immediately report suspected abuse of companion animals to a law enforcement officer, county humane society agent or animal control officer. Officers, dog wardens and deputy dog wardens will have to report suspected animal cruelty violations to appropriate social services personnel when a child or older adult resides with the alleged violator and that the animal abuse may have an impact on the child or older adult.



Reps. Laura Lanese (left) & Sara Carruthers

Individuals making such reports will be immune from civil and criminal liability if the report is made in good faith. Reports made in bad faith would result in attorney’s fees and costs being awarded to the party who was the target of the complaint. Veterinarians and other professionals could be issued a confidential written warning for a first violation of the requirement to report; subsequent violations could result in civil penalties of \$100 or \$500.

Following a similar measure which failed in the previous session, the bill was introduced in June, 2019, with Reps. Laura Lanese (R – Grove City) and Sara Carruthers (R – Butler County) as primary co-sponsors among 35 other sponsors. Numerous representatives from Ohio Animal Advocates, veterinary, children’s services, social work, the Animal Welfare Institute, and other sectors testified on behalf of the bill. The awareness raised by the bill has led to extensive trainings among domestic violence, social work and other audiences across Ohio, according to Vicki Deisner who helped shepherd the bill’s passage.



Gov. Mike DeWine signs the landmark HB 33 on Jan. 6

Prior law required only humane society officials, but not dog wardens or animal control officers, to report suspected child abuse, a holdover from the early history of the humane movement when Ohio humane societies, like many others, were involved in both child and animal protection. There were no other cross-reporting provisions, nor is there still universal mandated reporting of child or elder abuse in Ohio as exists in many other states.

Guam Legislation Bans Bestiality but Dilutes Earlier Link Provisions

An animal welfare bill in the Guam Legislature, which Link advocates had been watching because it included several groundbreaking provisions affecting the relationship between animal abuse and human violence (*See the [March 2020 LINK-Letter](#)*), was passed on Dec. 23 and is expected to be signed into law by Gov. Lourdes A. Leon Guerrero in early January, but with several significant Link provisions deleted from the original bill.



Bill No. 185-35, known as the Protecting Animal Welfare and Safety (PAWS) Act or Puguá’s Law to honor a dog whose 2018 shooting galvanized the community of 165,000 Guamanians to rally against animal abuse, reinforces existing standards for animal welfare, but also provides best practices to ban previously unaddressed forms of animal cruelty such as bestiality. It also establishes pre-conviction processes for seizing abused animals and post-conviction procedures for community service, education, mental health evaluation and treatment, and restitution. It replaces older language about animal “cruelty” with the more modern terms of “abuse,” “aggravated animal abuse,” “neglect,” and “sexual assault of an animal.”

The PAWS Act bans animal fighting, but specifically exempts the cultural tradition of “cockfighting that is authorized by law,” which may still be prosecuted as illegal under federal law. Guam is a U.S. island territory in Micronesia.

Two key Link provisions – increased penalties for offenders with histories of family and sexual violence, or if the offense was committed in the presence of a child – were deleted from the final version. Similarly, a requirement for offenders to register in an animal abusers’ registry was dropped.

As is popular in many new state anti-cruelty laws, the Guam law requires convicted offenders to undergo psychiatric, psychological or mental health evaluations, which may include humane education classes, and to forfeit all legal interests in the animal. Courts can ban offenders from coming in contact with animals for 5-to-15 years. Animals’ owners can sue offenders to recover costs including the value of the animal, veterinary expenses, attorney’s fees, and costs of emotional distress and loss of companionship.

MANDATED REPORTING PROVISIONS

Veterinarians, physicians and other health professionals are now mandated to report suspected animal fighting with immunity from civil and criminal liability if the report is made in good faith. Police officers and social workers are permitted to report any suspected animal abuse to the Animal Control Division of the Department of Agriculture, unless such communication is privileged, with immunity from civil and criminal liability for reporting in good faith. An original provision in the bill, mandating reporting of animal abuse by psychologists, attorneys, professional counselors, and marriage and family therapists, was deleted in the final version.

PROTECTION ORDERS

Puguá’s Law mandates the creation of a restraining order against anyone charged with a felony under the Act from contacting, harassing, intimidating, or retaliating against the animal or other persons who own the animal or witness the incident. However, pet protection orders in cases of domestic violence are not specifically addressed.

Law Journal Explores The Link

Joye Keeley, Coordinator of the [Kentucky Link Coalition](#), has published an extensive article in the *Journal of Animal and Environmental Law* describing multiple aspects of The Link, commonalities between abuse of animals and humans, and practical solutions for legislatures, prosecutors, judges and law enforcement agencies to address a more holistic, species-spanning approach to crime prevention.



Joye Keeley

The article spotlights numerous Link incidents in Kentucky, befitting the journal's positioning as the flagship publication of the Louis D. Brandeis School of Law at the University of Louisville. She recounts several dogfighting incidents in Kentucky and their impact on child spectators and Links to such crimes as drug trafficking and racketeering, and Kentucky bestiality cases Linked to child pornography and child sexual abuse.

But Keeley also approaches the topic from a global perspective, citing numerous studies Linking animal abuse with interpersonal violence and resolutions and policies from the National Sheriffs Association, International Association of Chiefs of Police, National District Attorneys Association, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

Keeley says The Link “describes how animal abuse is connected to violence against humans, with common motivations, perpetrators and victims.” She notes that while animal and interpersonal abuse are separated by laws, by the responding agencies, the services offered to the survivors, the medical care provided, and many other variables, two things unite animal abuse and interpersonal violence: the abusive nature of the perpetrators and the suffering and the damage those perpetrators cause.

She describes common physical indicators of neglect of animals, children and vulnerable adults and how such situations are often Linked to drug or alcohol abuse or mental health issues. She identifies commonalities of physical abuse between animals, children and survivors of domestic violence. In all of these cases, she emphasizes that the General Deviance Theory is more prevalent than the Graduation Theory in being predictive of other antisocial behaviors.

She cautions, however, that The Link is not a simple solution: “Abusive behavior, as with all types of human behavior, is not linear. There can be multiple forms of abuse in a household, or there can be animal abuse and no known human abuse, or interpersonal violence but no known animal abuse. Additionally, there may not be a co-occurrence of abuse to different species, or to different persons within the household. Risk factors should not be considered determinative, only a reason to look for other forms of abuse,” Keeley advises.

The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but Can they suffer? The next question we should be asking is “Who else could be suffering by the same hands?”

She notes that federal, state and local laws are beginning to reflect The Link between animal abuse and violence against humans. “However, the failure to include this Link in law enforcement training, in risk or lethality assessments, and in protective orders for partner violence has profound consequences. These failures diminish the effectiveness of any legislation, diminish the opportunities for collaboration between agencies on a local level and consequently,

diminish the protection afforded by the legislation to those the laws were enacted to protect.”

Keeley encourages the criminal justice system, social services, those in the human and animal healthcare fields, and indeed the public as a whole, to work collaboratively to act as a force multiplier. She argues that silo effects are a clear and present danger for vulnerable members of society. Greater cross-training and cross-reporting should increase the effective identification of animal cruelty and interpersonal violence offenders, as well as improve rates of conviction and enhanced sentencing.

Keely concludes by citing Jeremy Bentham, the English philosopher and jurist who first raised the issue of animals' rights, who wrote, "The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but Can they suffer?" Keeley responds: "The next question we should be asking is 'Who else could be suffering by the same hands?' Too often we focus on the species of the victim when instead we should focus on the abusive nature of the perpetrator. The voiceless and the vulnerable deserve our attention, so that no victim is left behind."

-- Keeley, J. (2020). *The link between animal abuse and crimes against humans. Journal of Animal and Environmental Law, 12(1), 1-25.*

Funding Available for Investigating Dog Fighting and Abuse



The [Association of Prosecuting Attorneys](#) has created a National Dog Abuse Investigation and Prosecution Assistance Program. In collaboration with the Stanton Foundation, the program's goal is to provide prosecutors with resources to ensure that canine cruelty and dogfighting cases are thoroughly investigated and

properly adjudicated by addressing some of the financial barriers that exist for law enforcement and prosecutors.

APA is accepting requests for funding to cover appropriate costs related to dog abuse cases that can include, but are not limited to, (1) costs of care; (2) necropsies and forensic evidence analysis; and (3) expert witness fees. [Click here](#) to apply.

THE LINK... in the LITERATURE

Brazilian Journal Addresses The Link during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Expansion of work on The Link ("O Elo") in Portuguese-speaking Brazil received a significant boost with an extension project at the Federal University of Santa Maria. The project, "Facing Domestic Violence and Mistreatment of Animals in the Time of COVID," aims to promote actions to help the community gain greater understanding of The Link. The authors hope that such awareness will create a network to face domestic violence and mistreatment of animals, particularly during the pandemic period, through the promotion of socio-educational measures including social networks, website creation, online courses and lectures, and didactic materials. 31 extension students from different areas of Brazil developed the content of the educational materials.

Wolf, L., Muraro de Alvarenga, F., Hauptman, L., Nunes, B., & Garcia, R. (2020). *Enfrentamento da violência doméstica e maus-tratos aos animais em tempo de COVID-19. [Coping with domestic violence and animal abuse in covid-19 time.] Experiencia. Extension Scientific Journal, 6(2), 52-61. [Portuguese] doi: <https://doi.org/10.5902/2447115163227>.*

VETERINARY MEDICINE...and THE LINK

Florida Re-Introduces Mandatory Reporting Measure

A bipartisan package of four bills designed to ease veterinarians' fears about reporting suspected animal abuse has been re-introduced in the Florida State Legislature where Link advocates hope that the measures, introduced in the 2020 session to save animal and human lives but which failed to pass, will succeed in 2021.



"Allie"

Florida HB 47 and **SB 216**, named "Allie's Law" in honor of an abused Boston terrier rescued on Christmas Day in 2018 by the late Dave Heine (See the [December 2019 LINK-Letter](#)), would require veterinarians, technicians and other animal treatment provider employees to report suspected animal cruelty (at locations other than commercial food-producing animal operations) to authorities with immunity from civil and criminal liability, professional disciplinary action and employer retaliation. Veterinarians would be permitted, but not mandated, to report animal cruelty at commercial food operations.

Failure to report would be grounds for disciplinary action. It would be a misdemeanor to destroy or alter medical records to conceal animal cruelty.

Responding to concerns that clients might retaliate against practitioners if the medical records were made public under Florida's sunshine laws, companion measures **HB 49** and **SB 218** would allow veterinary records to remain confidential, except to law enforcement and court officials, if animal cruelty is reported. These provisions would protect veterinarians and encourage reporting by making them feel personally and professionally safe to report.

The National Link Coalition provided input in the drafting of the bills' language to help ease the concerns of veterinarians. Practitioners are currently mandated to report certain forms of suspected animal abuse in 18 states. The laws would take effect July 1 if they are approved.



To subscribe to The Link-Letter (it's free!)
– Just send an e-mail to Coordinator Phil Arkow
(arkowpets@snip.net)
Please tell us what organization(s) you're with
and where you're located.

ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE... and THE LINK

Hawai'i Tries Again to Ban Animal Sexual Assaults



Legislators in Hawai'i are planning to re-introduce a bill in the 2021 legislative session that would make the island state the 47th state in the U.S. to finally ban bestiality. A similar measure in the 2020 legislature, **SB 2718** had passed the Senate unanimously with a companion bill in the House, **HB 1618** (*See the [February 2020 LINK-Letter](#)*). Both bills were in the House Judiciary and Agriculture Committees when the 2020 Legislature adjourned.

As with the earlier legislation, the new bill is based upon the premises that sexual assault of an animal is already banned in 46 states, but that “while Hawai'i has strong animal cruelty laws, the sexual molestation of animals by humans is not adequately addressed.” It notes that typical animal cruelty prosecutions require the infliction of bodily injury, which may not occur in cases of animal sexual assault. In addition, many acts of animal sexual abuse are discovered only long afterwards, limiting the available evidence.

The bill further notes that “the sexual assault of an animal can be a strong predictor of a tendency to commit other violent and sexual crimes,” particularly child sexual abuse. The FBI singled out animal sexual abuse as one of four Group A offenses in its National Incident Based Reporting System. Enactment of the law “will allow state law enforcement officers to better identify potentially dangerous and violent sexual predators in their communities,” it states.

The measure would prohibit subjecting an animal to sexual contact, permitting such activity to occur, or obtaining or organizing an event with the intent of subjecting an animal to sexual contact. Offenses would be a Class C felony or a Class B felony if a minor were exposed to the crime. Convicted offenders would be required to: surrender all animals in their custody; reimburse animal services agencies for the costs of the animals' care; undergo psychological or psychiatric treatment; make restitution to the animals' owners; and be barred from being around animals for at least five years.

In addition to Hawai'i, sex with animals – and its Link to child sexual abuse and other crimes -- is still legal in New Mexico, West Virginia and Wyoming.

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.

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.

SOCIAL WORK...and THE LINK

Pet-Inclusive Social Work Enhances Domestic Violence Services

Based on an understanding of The Link between human- and animal-directed domestic violence, a new research article from New Zealand argues for companion-animal-inclusive domestic violence service delivery and reflects on the challenges this offers to social work and human services.



Nik Taylor, Heather Fraser and Damien Riggs

Nik Taylor, Heather Fraser and Damien Riggs, who have co-authored numerous articles on The Link particularly as it affects domestic violence survivors and LGBTQ populations (*See the [March 2019](#) and [November 2020 LINK-Letters](#)*), consider the importance of companion animals in many people's lives and then offer an overview of material on The Link between human- and animal-directed violence, specifically as it pertains to domestic violence. The article discusses implications for service design and delivery and emphasizes the importance of centering animals in considering human-animal violence Links. They outline how this is an opportunity to challenge and re-think the human-centric foundations on which traditional social work is built by extending thinking about power, domination and control.

They identify several key implications of The Link for domestic violence service providers:

- Animal abuse often means increased violence against humans.
- Human-animal bonds can intensify through shared experiences of violence.
- Victims and survivors are often unwilling to leave without their pets.
- Supporting companion animals can assist human victims, while ignoring animals in social work practice can hinder workers' abilities to help their clients.
- There are enhanced benefits of human and animal victims and survivors recovering together.

After noting challenges which have historically been barriers to putting animal-inclusive social work into practice, they identify several key insights. "Domestic violence services are often well placed to move to, or extend, their animal-inclusive service delivery design given they are predominantly provided by women, many of whom care about and, most importantly, advocate for animals," they write. "Even those staff who are not particularly interested in other animals are often well placed to understand the ethics and practices associated with animals being victims of domestic violence, given both forms of violence (to humans and animals) are based on power and control."

To operationalize animal-inclusive social work, they call for several action steps to be undertaken:

- Staff need to be willing to champion the importance of human-animal bonds.
- Provisions must be made for physically accommodating animals without jeopardizing the safety of other residents.
- Care must also be provided for pets who are similarly recovering from exposure to violence.
- Policies and procedures must be updated.
- Professional development for staff and community education and social work curricula regarding the importance of human-animal relationships must be put into place.

-- Taylor, N., Fraser, H., & Riggs, D.W. (2020). Companion-animal-inclusive domestic violence practice: Implications for service delivery and social work. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 32(4), 26-39.

BUILDING LINK AWARENESS



Phyllis Erdman (left) and Lori Kogan

Joint University Classes Learn about The Link

A unique cross-platform honors class on human-animal interactions for Washington State and Colorado State Universities is including a three-part presentation on The Link. National Link Coalition Coordinator Phil Arkow has pre-recorded three segments which will be discussed by students at the two colleges on April 28.

The three segments feature a [generalized introduction](#) to The Link between animal abuse and human violence and how this focus can advance social services interventions and animal welfare legislation; The Link between [animal abuse and domestic violence](#); and The Link between [animal abuse and child maltreatment and elder abuse](#).

The program on “The Dark Side of the Human-Animal Bond” is meant to balance out the other programs in the 15-week course which focus on the many positive applications of human-animal interactions. Other world-class authorities will present on such topics as the history of animal rights, legal aspects of pets, international issues affecting animals, dog behavior, animal-assisted interventions with the homeless, animal protection as a career, and pet loss.

The course is being coordinated by Phyllis Erdman in the College of Education at WSU and Lori Kogan with the Human-Animal Interaction Studies program at the CSU College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences.

“PAWcast” Spotlights the Domestic Violence Link during COVID-19



The Link between animal abuse and domestic violence in general, and the impact that COVID-19 lockdowns have had in particular, are the subject of a 30-minute “PAWcast” by the Humane Roundup. National Link Coalition Coordinator Phil Arkow was interviewed for the Jan. 8th broadcast, episode #62 in an ongoing series of podcasts dedicated to providing information to animal control, animal services and humane officers.

The PAWcast is based out of California, where creator Micheal Hildebrandt is an animal control officer in Sacramento County. The co-hosts for the program are Daniel Ettinger, lead field training officer for Denver Animal Protection in Colorado, and Ashlee Bishop, humane officer for the city of Wausau, Wis. The [Humane Roundup website](#) offers links to state animal control associations, a tribute to fallen ACOs, and other resources for animal care and control officers.



What is The LINK?

Legislation...

Intervention...

Networking...

Knowledge...

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

NEWS FROM LOCAL LINK COALITIONS

New Mexico Coalition Adapts its Trainings to the Pandemic

While 2020 was a year most of us would prefer to forget, for our [Positive Links](#) coalition in New Mexico the coronavirus pandemic restrictions offered a unique opportunity to pivot into what President Tammy Fiebelkorn calls “a new approach to The Link education.”



Tammy Fiebelkorn and friend

Travel restrictions caused the coalition to swiftly convert its traditional in-person trainings to a series of seven webinars that addressed The Link and the COVID-19 crisis’ impacts on family violence. Experts from the U.S. and Europe described what was happening and offered ideas as to how various first responders and community stakeholders can work together to keep all family members safe during these difficult times. The webinars, which attracted hundreds of viewers from over a dozen countries, are all available for [free viewing](#) online.

“The public health crisis created other problems - including an increase in family violence coupled with a decrease in reporting of family violence. In families experiencing violence, isolation is not a good thing,” Fiebelkorn wrote in a year-end review. Nevertheless, Positive Links continued to work with New Mexico domestic violence shelters throughout the year and was able to fund the veterinary services and vaccinations for the dogs of a family who were experiencing domestic violence.

“This allowed the woman to get to safety, know that her dogs were going to be safe, too, since the domestic violence shelter could house the dogs once they were vaccinated and healthy. Positive Links’ Domestic Violence and Animals Project was created for just this type of situation. We don’t ever want a domestic violence victim to stay in a dangerous situation because of fear for the safety of companion animals,” she added.

THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

Legislative Wrap-up – 2020

The 2020 legislative year was like none that we’ve ever experienced. In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic which forced all state and federal legislative bodies to close their capitols and work remotely, and an especially contentious and tumultuous election campaign, we still saw a record 119 bills introduced in state legislatures and the U.S. Congress addressing aspects of The Link between animal abuse and human violence.

We saw a significant number of victories – and many others which are destined to be re-introduced as the 2021 legislative season begins. Here’s a summary of our victories in 2020, those still pending, and those that we hope will live to see another day.

Link Victories We're Celebrating

<i>Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders</i>		<i>Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment</i>
 <p>Florida HB 705 requires every county in the state that maintains shelters for emergency evacuations to designate at least one shelter that can accommodate persons with pets. It took effect July 1.</p>	 <p>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. It was signed into law on June 18.</p>	 <p>Maryland SB 101/ HB 311 established 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 on Oct. 1.</p>
<i>Cross-Reporting</i>		
 <p>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. It was signed into law on April 24.</p>	 <p>Minnesota HF 1530 /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, was signed into law on May 17.</p>	 <p>Ohio HB 33 requires veterinarians, social services professionals, counselors, social workers, and marriage and family therapists to report suspected pet abuse. Dog wardens must report pet abuse cases to social services if the animal abuse has an impact on a child or older adult residing there. Good-faith reporters are immune from civil and criminal liability.</p>
<i>Animal Sexual Abuse</i>		<i>"CASA for Animals"</i>
 <p>Guam Bill No. 185-35 bans sexual assault of an animal, imposes mental health evaluation and treatment for animal abusers, mandates veterinarians to report suspected animal fighting, and allows social workers to report animal abuse. The Legislature approved the bill on Dec. 23 for the Governor's expected signature in January.</p>	 <p>Wisconsin SB 139 increases penalties for bestiality and animal pornography from misdemeanors to felonies. Penalties are further enhanced if a child is involved. Offenders must register as a sex offender. It became law on March 4.</p>	 <p>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. The bill became law on Jan. 12.</p>
<i>Psychological Evaluation of Offenders</i>		
 <p>Iowa HF 737 allows 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 became law on June 29.</p>		

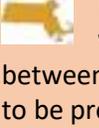
Link Bills Still Pending or Re-Introduced

Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders

 <p>Kentucky HB 26 would include violence against a domestic animal used as coercive conduct within the definitions of “domestic violence and abuse” and “dating violence and abuse” and would allow judges to award possession of a domestic animal to the petitioner in a protection-from-abuse procedure.</p>	 <p>Massachusetts H.3833 would cause animal abuser to be civilly liable to others for the infliction of emotional distress if the abuser should have known that the conduct would cause severe emotional distress. The bill was being held for a Study Order.</p>	 <p>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.</p>
 <p>New Jersey A 4880 and S 3168 would expand the statutory definition of domestic violence to include acts of animal cruelty against animals owned or possessed by the persons affected by these types of abuse. The bills are in the Assembly Agriculture and Senate Environment and Energy Committees.</p>	 <p>New Jersey S 930 would allow courts to designate ownership or protective custody for a pet in an animal cruelty violation, domestic violence, matrimonial action, action for dissolution of a civil union, or judgment of divorce or dissolution or maintenance giving primary consideration to the well-being of the animal. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.</p>	 <p>Texas HB 674, prefiled for the 2021 legislative session, would require the public to be informed about the availability of provisions to include pets and other companion animals in protective orders.</p>

Animal Abuse and Elder Abuse

Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment

 <p>New Jersey A 4880 and S 3168 would expand the statutory definition of elder abuse and abuse of the developmentally disabled to include acts of animal cruelty against animals owned or possessed by the persons affected by these types of abuse. The bills are in the Assembly Agriculture and Senate Environment and Energy Committees.</p>	 <p>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.</p>	 <p>New Jersey A 4880 and S 3168 would expand the definition of child abuse to include acts of animal cruelty against their animals. The bills are in the Assembly Agriculture and Senate Environment and Energy Committees.</p>  <p>New York A474 would increase prison terms for aggravated animal cruelty committed in the presence of a child.</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<i>Animal Hoarding</i>		<i>Animal Sexual Abuse</i>
 <p>New Hampshire pre-filed Legislative Service Request LSR 298 defines animal hoarding and sets forth a provision for a person charged with animal hoarding to be given a psychiatric evaluation.</p>	 <p>New Jersey S 1760 establishes the crime of animal hoarding and requires mental health counseling for all adult and juvenile animal cruelty and hoarding offenders. The bill is in the Senate Energy & Environment Committee.</p>	 <p>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 “sexual act on an animal.” The bill was referred in a Study Order to the Senate Judiciary Committee.</p>
<i>“CASA for Animals”</i>		
 <p>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.</p>	 <p>New Jersey A 4533/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 cases. The bills are in the Assembly and Senate Judiciary Committees.</p>	 <p>Ohio HB 350 would re-enact the law outlawing bestiality and animal fighting, modify its language to conform to newer statutes, and make these prohibitions uniform statewide. The bill is in the Criminal Justice Committee.</p>
<i>Animal Abuse and Other Crimes</i>	<i>Psychological Evaluation of Offenders</i>	
 <p>New Jersey A 1572/S 746 would bar animal abusers from possessing a firearm. The bills are in the Assembly Judiciary and Senate Law & Public Safety Committees.</p>	 <p>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.</p>	
 <p>New York S197 would expand aggravated animal cruelty to include harm to a pet during the commission of a felony.</p>	 <p>New York S230 would require courts to order psychiatric analysis and evaluation of animal abusers and to unseal the records of juvenile animal abuse offenders.</p>	
<i>Cross-Reporting</i>		
 <p>Michigan SB 352 would require CPS and APS workers to report suspected animal abuse/neglect to animal control or law enforcement, with confidentiality and immunity from civil and criminal liability. Failure to report would be a crime. The bill is in the full Senate.</p>	 <p>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.</p>	 <p>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.</p>

 <p>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.</p>	 <p>New Jersey A 2426/S 1980 would allow certified animal control officers to enforce municipal animal control ordinances and require them to report suspected animal cruelty to notify the municipal humane law enforcement officer. The bills are in the Assembly Agriculture and Senate Environment & Energy Committees.</p>	 <p>New Jersey A 4880 and S 3168 would require veterinarians, veterinary technicians, investigators of domestic violence and abuse, employees of the Department of Children and Families and Divisions of Aging and Developmental Disabilities, police officers, and caregivers at residential health care facilities, police officers, or any person who has reasonable cause to believe an animal has been subjected to an act of animal cruelty to report the suspected violation to the appropriate law enforcement officer, with immunity from civil and criminal liability. The bills are in the Assembly Agriculture and Senate Environment and Energy Committees.</p>
 <p>Florida HB 47 and SB 216 (“Allie’s Law”) would require veterinarians, technicians and other animal treatment provider employees to report suspected animal cruelty (at locations other than commercial food-producing animal operations) to authorities with immunity from civil and criminal liability, professional disciplinary action and employer retaliation. Failure to report would be grounds for disciplinary action. It would be a misdemeanor to destroy or alter medical records to conceal animal cruelty. Reporting at commercial food operations would be permissive. HB 49 and SB 218 would allow veterinary records to remain confidential if animal cruelty is reported as a means to protect veterinarians and to encourage such reports by making them feel safe to do so.</p>		

Link Bills That Didn't Make it in 2020: We Hope They'll Be Re-Introduced		
<i>Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders</i>		
Include animal abuse as cause for issuing Extreme Risk Protection Order: Arizona, Minnesota, Pennsylvania	Allow courts to award custody of pets in divorces in animals' best interests: Georgia, Indiana, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island	Fund pet-friendly domestic violence shelters: Illinois
Include pets in protection-from-abuse orders: Mississippi, Missouri, New York	Address issues of pets in shelters for the homeless: Connecticut	
<i>Animal Abuse and Elder Abuse</i>		
Define emotional stress of animal abuse as elder abuse: Maryland	Prevent landlords from evicting older residents with pets: New York	Ban animal sex offenders from working in long-term care and adult daily living centers: Pennsylvania
<i>Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment</i>		
Increase penalties for animal abuse in the presence of a child: Rhode Island	Include pets in protective orders for children: Missouri, Rhode Island	Prohibit children from attending animal fights: New York, North Carolina
Include data about animal abuse in National Child Abuse & Neglect Data System (NCANDS): U.S. Congress	Permit mandated reporters of child abuse to report suspected animal abuse despite confidentiality requirements: New York	Allow good Samaritans to remove children or animals from hot car: South Carolina
<i>Animal Hoarding</i>	<i>Animal Sexual Abuse</i>	
Create crime of animal hoarding: New York, West Virginia	Prohibit sex with animals: Hawai'i	Amend laws against animal sexual abuse: New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia
<i>"CASA for Animals"</i>	<i>Cross-Reporting</i>	
Allow courts to appoint pro bono attorney and law student advocates for animals to represent their interests and/or justice: California, Florida, Illinois, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island	Require veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse or fighting: Connecticut, Florida, Hawai'i, Iowa, Kentucky, New York	Initiate cross-reporting between child protective services and animal welfare agencies: Florida, New York
<i>Psychological Evaluation of Offenders</i>	<i>Animal Abuse and Other Crimes</i>	
Offer immunity for reporting abuse: Missouri	Create an animal cruelty hotline: New York	
Provisions for animal abusers to undergo mental health evaluation or treatment: California, Missouri, New Hampshire	Prohibit frivolous reports of animal abuse: Alabama	
<i>Animal Abuse and Other Crimes</i>		
Expand definitions of animal abuse committed during the course of another crime: Pennsylvania	Define animal fighting under laws against corrupt enterprises: New York	Require law enforcement agencies to use FBI NIBRS system for animal abuse crimes: Mississippi
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: U.S. Congress		

THE LINK... IN THE NEWS



Damiane Buehner

Two-time Dogfighter Gets 30 Years in Drug Overdose Homicide

A Michigan man who had been jailed twice for dogfighting is facing a 30-year prison sentence for the drug overdose of an Afghanistan war veteran and then trying to cover up the homicide by incinerating his body in the trunk of a car. "Sentencing a 43-year-old man to 30 years in prison cannot but help sending a strong message of general deterrence to anyone contemplating the distribution of opioids in general, and heroin in particular," Assistant U.S. Attorney Hagen W. Frank told [WZZM-TV](#).

Damiane Buehner, 43, provided the victim, Tyler Herendeen, with a fatal dose of carfentanil, an extremely potent synthetic opioid primarily used as a tranquilizer for elephants. Buehner served time in state prison for arranging dog fights and was released in 2015; in 2018 a federal judge sentenced him to nearly four years in prison for doing it again in an interstate case where 37 dogs were rescued.

Meanwhile, the investigation was continuing into the 2017 death of Herendeen, who suffered from PTSD and a heroin addiction as a result of his combat service.

Fiancé Charged with Child Abuse and Animal Cruelty in Shooting of Two Dogs

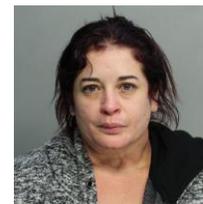
William Petty, 49, of DeLand, Fla., was charged with animal cruelty, child abuse and carrying a concealed weapon after he allegedly tried to make his fiancée's 16-year-old son shoot one of her two dogs, and then reportedly shot the dogs himself. Volusia County Sheriff's officials said that following an argument with her, Petty drove the dogs and the teen to a wooded area; when the boy refused to shoot a dog, Petty killed it and tossed both dogs into the woods, the [Tampa Bay Times](#) reported.



William Petty

Mother Accused of Sending Son's Friend Lewd Photos and Bestiality Video

Darling Noa, 43, of Homestead, Fla., was arrested on charges of lewd and lascivious conduct, aggravated stalking, and harmful electronic transmission to a minor for allegedly sending her son's friend inappropriate photos, text messages, voice mails, and bestiality videos. The [Miami Herald](#) reported that the boy, age 15, called police after Noa texted him topless photos of herself, pictures of her in nothing but underwear, images of her in see-through lingerie, and a video of a person having sex with a horse. When she asked him if he wanted to have sex with her, she reportedly said he could decline the offer, but if he agreed she would give her children medicine to make them go to sleep early.



Darling Noa

Woman Threatening to Jump Throws Dog Off Motel Balcony Instead

A Daytona Beach, Fla. woman who threatened to jump from a second-story motel room but instead allegedly threw a dog off the balcony was charged with animal cruelty and resisting an officer with violence. The [Orlando Sentinel](#) reported that Allison Murphy, 35, had threatened to jump from a Motel 6 balcony; after Volusia County Sheriff's deputies knocked on her door, she came out with a German shepherd and threw the dog off the balcony. The dog, named "Miracle" by Volusia County Animal Services, landed on its feet and was not seriously injured although an x-ray found a sewing needle lodged in her right thigh. A future court hearing will determine custody provisions for the dog.



Allison Murphy



Kenneth and Kerri Weber

Domestic Violence Suspected in Death of Wife and Her Dog

Kenneth Weber, 56, of Langford, B.C., Canada, was charged with second-degree murder after his wife’s unresponsive body and that of their dog were found inside their home. According to the [Saanich News](#), participants in a candlelight vigil for Kerri Weber, 55, said there had been a history of domestic violence in the home and that she had expressed plans to leave the marriage. Her Chihuahua, “Alexis Babydog,” was also found dead, but it was not known if animal cruelty charges were also filed. Karen Reilly, Kerri’s sister-in-law, told the vigil, “If there’s a takeaway from this, please check in with people, especially loved ones and friends, and especially with the pandemic and mental health issues. And don’t leave an abusive relationship on your own – seek help. Talk to somebody, anybody.”

Wife, Children and Dog Stabbed to Death in Apparent Triple Homicide

Copperas Cove, Texas police filed three counts of murder against Bryan Richardson, 27, for allegedly stabbing his wife, two children and dog to death. The [Killeen Daily Herald](#) reported that police, responding to a welfare check after the slain wife’s brother was unable to reach her, found Richardson lying in the bed, covered in blood, with the body of his wife. The bodies of their two young children were also found in the room and a small dog was lying dead in a pool of blood in the kitchen. During his booking, a screening form asked Richardson if he had been worried about “losing a job, his spouse or custody of his children; the criminal complaint said he responded, “I already lost all of those.”



Bryan Richardson

Man Charged with Choking Woman and Beating Dog

Jimmy Blane Williams, 54, of Monticello, Ky., was charged with domestic violence assault, animal cruelty, strangulation, and criminal mischief for allegedly assaulting and choking a woman while they were “fussing over another man,” according to police reports. The [Somerset Commonwealth Journal](#) reported that she told Wayne County deputies that she nearly passed out while being choked; after she got free, Williams reportedly started hitting the dog and “burning her stuff.”

Community Responds to Boy, Dog Abandoned in Cemetery at Christmas

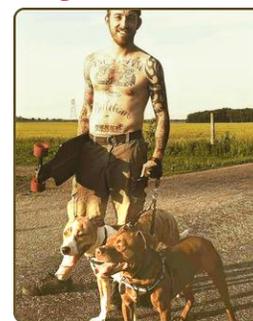
Police in Hinckley, Ohio are investigating a strange incident in which a 3-year-old boy and his family dog were allegedly abandoned by the boy’s parents in a cemetery two days before Christmas. Police posted a photo of the boy, who knew his name is Tony, and turned him over to protective custody with Medina County Children Services. Tony identified his parents only as “David” and “Katy,” which was enough for police to identify them and return the dog to Tony’s father. The [Medina Gazette](#) reported the investigation was continuing and that community response to an appeal for Christmas presents for Tony was overwhelming; the heartbreaking story of the boy and his dog frantically chasing after a car speeding away resulted in the police station’s lobby being filled with enough toys and gifts to stock a small store.



“Tony”

Pit Bull Rescuer Charged with 42 Counts for Allegedly Defrauding Donors

A pit bull advocate who was indicted last August on 42 felony and misdemeanor counts of animal cruelty, grand theft, bribery, telecommunications fraud, tampering with evidence, and impersonating a peace officer was charged on Dec. 15 with violating the terms of his bail bond for allegedly testing positive for drugs. Steffen Baldwin, also known as Steffen Finkelstein, 40, had been extradited last August from California back to Marysville, Ohio after being arrested by U.S. Marshals posing as potential customers, according to the [Columbus, Ohio, Dispatch](#). Baldwin, a former executive director of the Union County, Ohio Humane Society who once tried to organize a multi-county animal cruelty task force (*See the [December 2013](#)*



Steffen Baldwin

LINK-Letter), was charged with allegedly defrauding pet owners by charging as much as \$1,000 to rehabilitate or re-home their dogs, then pocketing the fees for personal use and euthanizing at least 18 of the dogs. He created a network of followers in California through a dog training ranch in Acton.

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.

Jan. 13 – Albuquerque, N. Mex. (online): Edie Bowles will present “Animal Law in the UK: 101” in a [Positive Links New Mexico](#) webinar.

Jan. 21 – Portland, Ore. (online): The Animal Legal Defense Fund and National Animal Control Association will present a webinar, “Preserving the Bond and Preventing Cruelty: The Veterinarian’s Role,” for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

Feb. 3 – Phoenix, Ariz. (online): Phil Arkow will speak on The Link and Domestic Violence, and Allie Phillips will present on Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T): Housing People and Pets of Domestic Violence Together for the [Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence](#)’s virtual summit.

Feb. 10 – Ithaca, N.Y. (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– Columbus, Ohio: Phil Arkow will present on “Responding to Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence” at the [Midwest Veterinary Conference](#).

March 2 – (online): Nina Stively of Loudoun County, Va., Animal Services will present “When the Animal Wags its Tail” to help law enforcement officers document animal welfare conditions during domestic violence investigations for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

March 3 (online): Allie Phillips will present on Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T): Housing People and Pets of Domestic Violence Together at the [My Dog is My Home Co-Sheltering Conference](#).

March 3-4 – Ridgewood, N.Y. (online): Allie Phillips, Leslie Irvine, and representatives from the Urban Resource Institute, WisCARES and the National Alliance to End Homelessness will join others in the [My Dog Is My Home Co-Sheltering Conference](#).

March 10 – Tallahassee, Fla. (online): Phil Arkow will present on “The Link between Interpersonal Violence and Violence Against Animals” to the International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association’s Virtual Veterinary Forensics Rounds.

March 22 – Washington, D.C. (online): Phil Arkow will join a panel discussing “The Abuse Interface: Animal Abuse, Child Abuse, and Domestic Violence” for the [D.C. Bar Association](#)’s Animal Law Committee.

April 15 – Rockville, Md. (online): Phil Arkow will conduct a webinar on “The Link between Elder Abuse and Animal Abuse and Opportunities for Eldercare Agencies” for the [ElderSAFE Center](#).

April 28 – Pullman, Wash. & Ft. Collins, Colo. (online): Phil Arkow will lecture on animal abuse’s Link to human violence for the [Human Animal Interaction Research course](#) co-taught by Washington State and Colorado State Universities.

April 30 – Pulaski, Va. (online): Phil Arkow will present a webinar on “The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence and its Implications for the Criminal Justice System” for the [Pulaski Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court](#).

May 11 – Sacramento, Calif. (online): Katie Campbell of RedRover will present “Pet-Friendly Domestic Violence Shelters” in a webinar for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

May 19 – Springfield, Mo.: Phil Arkow will present “The Link Between Human and Animal Abuse: Connecting the Dots” and “How to Implement the Animal Abuse Link Concepts Into Your Work” at the [Missouri Office of Prosecution Services](#)’ 15th Annual Conference on Family and Sexual Violence.

July 15 (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.

Nov. 6-7 – Maple Ridge, B.C., Canada (online): Phil Arkow will conduct a webinar on “Veterinarians’ Response to Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence” for the [Canadian Veterinary Medical Association/Society of BC Veterinarians Chapter](#).



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.

The Hon. Rosa C. Figarola

Circuit Probate Judge, 11th Judicial Circuit
Miami, Fla.

Maya Gupta, Ph.D.

Senior Director of Research,
ASPCA Department of Strategy & Research
Woodstock, Ga.

Joey Orduna Hastings

CEO, National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges
Reno, Nev.

Helen Holmquist-Johnson, MSW, Ph.D.

Director, Human-Animal Bond in Colorado (HABIC)
Colorado State University School of Social Work
Ft. Collins, Colo.

Kendall Houlihan

Assistant Director, Animal Welfare Division
American Veterinary Medical Association
Schaumburg, Ill.

Mark Kumpf, CAWA

Director, Detroit Animal Care & Control
Detroit, Mich.

Randall Lockwood, Ph.D.

Consultant, ASPCA
Falls Church, Va.

Paul Needham

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

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

Director, Research
ASPCA Department of Strategy & Research
Chicago, Ill.

Allie Phillips, J.D.

Director, Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T)
Lansing, Mich.

Gale Rasin, J.D.

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

Chelsea Rider, J.D.

Director,
National Law Enforcement Center on Animal Abuse
Dallas, Texas

The Hon. John J. Romero, Jr.

Retired District Judge, Children's Court Division
2nd Judicial District, Albuquerque, N. Mex.

Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM

President, Forensic Veterinary Investigations, LLC
Veterinary Services Director, Div. of Animal Care & Control
Boston, Mass.

Hugh Tebault III

President, The Latham Foundation
Alameda, Calif.

John Thompson

Executive Director emeritus,
National Animal Care & Control Assn.
North East, MD

Kathleen Wood

Staff Attorney, Criminal Justice Program
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Portland, Ore.