



# NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

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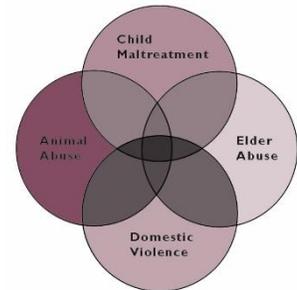
**ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE**



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[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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## ***CHILD MALTREATMENT... and The Link***

### **Family Court Judges Urged to Consider Ramifications of Animal Abuse**

If a judge has a child welfare case working its way through the court system, wouldn't it be incredibly helpful to know if there are histories of animal abuse, what the child's relationships are with pets or livestock, and the family's methods of disciplining children and animals in order to gain better insight into the family's inner workings?

These were some of the key themes behind a webinar held on Jan. 11 by the [National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges](#) and the [Animal Legal Defense Fund](#). Forty-five judicial officers, attorneys and multi-disciplinary professionals heard two noted authorities discuss "Animal Abuse and The Link to Child Abuse and Neglect: Promoting Child Welfare Professional Awareness of Animal-Human Relationships."



**Rosa Figarola**

Evidence of abusive behavior against animals can show up in court hearings, advised The Hon. Rosa Figarola, a retired judge from Miami. Abusers exploit their victims' emotional attachments and the pets become pawns in their exercising power and control. Animals can be taken away, allowed to escape or even euthanized as a way to terrorize other family members, she said. The pets of family and friends who help human victims escape also have their pets targeted by abusers seeking retaliation and revenge. Victims can also abuse their animals to protect them from even worse harm or to displace hostility towards the abuser.

By integrating knowledge of The Link and the family's human-animal interactions into court work, the court system can be mobilized to achieve better outcomes for families, Figarola said. Knowing about the animals and animal abuse in the household can better inform child placement and custody decisions, protection orders and case planning. "Asking questions about the animals continuously throughout the case is an interesting way to delve into the child's story without seeming threatening," she added.

“The U.S. is a pet-keeping country. We know that kids are more likely to grow up with pets than with a sibling or a father,” reminded Maureen MacNamara, Assistant Professor of Social Work at Appalachian State University. Until about the age of 15, children see their pets as another sibling, as special friends, and important family members.



**Maureen MacNamara**

Pets can provide children with social interactions, affection and emotional support. They can influence positive child psychological development, improve their cognitive abilities, teach empathy, support self-esteem, help build interpersonal skills, and provide opportunities for a child to confront loss and respond to grief. “Positive relations with animals can positively impact children,” MacNamara said.

“Because pets share the human social fabric they’re also a part of human welfare. Though cruelty to animals is defined differently in each state, small incidents of animal torment should not go uninvestigated because animal cruelty is part of conduct disorder identification,” she said.

There are significant Links between animal abuse committed by juveniles and violence in the home. Childhood acts of animal cruelty can be a sign that a juvenile has been or is experiencing abuse. Consequently, animal abuse is a matter of public safety and can reflect the chaos going on within a family, she added.

“One of the challenges is that as children are harmed they have two choices: they may act to protect their animals or the violence may travel downward.”

**“As children are harmed they have two choices: they may act to protect their animals or the violence may travel downward.”**

MacNamara noted that abuse and children’s emotional attachments to animals can affect livestock in rural areas as well as more unusual pets such as snakes and lizards. “We also need to pay attention to children harming wildlife, she said, noting this is not an issue of hunting or trapping. “Torturing of animals is different,” she noted.

Similarly, the presence of high-risk dogs, regardless of their specific breed, that are physically and actively dangerous to people needs to be noted.

The webinar offered several overarching goals for family court officials to consider:

- Add **questions about animals in child welfare assessments** through the child welfare practice model. These questions can lead to earlier identification of issues and enhanced safety for children and families, open additional dialogue, provide valuable insight into the family dynamic, and be a lens through which social workers and courts can assess boundaries, the degree of stability and emotional attachments in the child.
- Address children’s relationships with animals in **case planning**. Can or should the animal be removed with the child? What psychological damage may ensue if the child is separated from a pet? Can you ensure the continued safety of animals in the home when ensuring compliance with the safety or permanency plan? Can foster parents or relatives encourage child-animal interactions that will promote the child’s positive psychological development?
- Include animals in **therapeutic services** in child abuse prevention and intervention.

- Consider both human and pet safety by including pets in **protection orders and placements** that put all vulnerable family members in the safest possible environment.
- Be aware of how traumatizing it is for a child to **witness animal abuse**.
- **Collaborate with the animal agencies** in the community to develop multi-disciplinary and multi-species responses and strategies for violence prevention.

“You don’t have to be an animal lover to realize that this can be a valuable tool,” said MacNamara, adding how she is continually astonished by the “glaring gap” that human-animal relationships are ignored in social work textbooks and child welfare training.

“When animals are abused, people are at risk; when people are abused, animals are at risk,” said Figarola. “That makes intuitive sense. Animal abuse is the tip of the iceberg and often the first sign of family violence.”

## National Survey of Norwegian Youths Links Child, Animal and Domestic Abuse



A forthcoming article in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* describes the first national survey of Norwegian youths on their experiences of companion animal abuse and its co-occurring domestic violence. 9,240 adolescents responded to a school-based survey; 4% reported they had witnessed a parent being violent towards a family pet and 1% indicated an adult in the home had threatened to harm a pet.

The authors found a substantial overlap between companion animal abuse and child abuse, particularly psychological abuse and less severe forms of physical child abuse. This finding, they wrote, corresponds with the concept of domestic violence being an ongoing pattern of psychological abuse and coercive control. Meanwhile, the risk factors for animal abuse expressed by the youths were similar to known risk factors for domestic violence:

**From top left: Muri, Augusti, Bjørnholt & Hafstad**

low socioeconomic status, and parents’ histories of substance abuse, psychiatric illness and incarceration.

“We conclude that companion animal abuse co-occurs with other forms of domestic abuse and that it may be considered a part of the repertoire of domestic abuse that impacts children,” they wrote.

The authors are Karianne Muri, of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences; Else-Marie Augusti and Gertrud Hafstad, of the Norwegian Center for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies; and Margunn Bjørnholt, of the University of Bergen Sociology Department.

-- **Muri, K., Augusti, E.-M., Bjørnholt, M., & Hafstad, G.S. (2022). Childhood experiences of companion animal abuse and its co-occurrence with domestic abuse: Evidence from a national youth survey in Norway. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (in press).**

## Study Examines Children as Perpetrators or Reporters of Animal Abuse



**Andrew M. Campbell**

What is believed to be the first study to utilize U.S. animal control report data and narratives to explore how children are involved in cases of animal cruelty against companion animals and wildlife is reporting that although child perpetrators or reporters of animal abuse were most often in early adolescence, children reported by child welfare agencies to animal control were often under the age of five.

Andrew Campbell, whose previous studies in Indianapolis have included the [increased risk to domestic violence survivors](#) when animal abuse co-occurs and the [increased risk of lethality to first responders](#) in domestic violence scenarios, noted that animal control reports may be more reliable and less biased than prior studies of childhood animal abuse as self-reported or reported by parents and caregivers.

In analyzing 3,791 animal abuse or neglect incidents investigated by an animal control agency in a Midwestern city between 2016-2018, Campbell found that 53 (1.4%) of the reports mentioned children in some manner. Of that number, 72% involved allegations of children committing animal abuse and 28% involved animal neglect. Among the study's findings in these 53 reports:

- The average age of child perpetrators was 10.7 years, of child reporters of abuse 9.5 years, and of children cross-reported by child victim services agencies was 3 years old.
- 70% involved a dog (half of whom were described as a pit bull), 18% involved a cat, and 13% involved wild animals.
- Children were more likely to be solo perpetrators when the abuse involved pets (36%) rather than wild animals (15%). 14% of child-perpetrated acts involved an adult co-perpetrator. "When children not only witness an adult abuse an animal, but perpetrate the act with them, this likely only further increases the risk for them to perpetrate acts of animal cruelty in the future," he wrote.
- 89% of reports of child-perpetrated animal cruelty were made by neighbors or passers-by; the remaining 11% were divided between family members and family friends.
- Children's weapons against animals included knives, guns, sticks, rocks, and their hands and feet.
- Children's reports of animal abuse were made either directly to the animal control agency or indirectly through a trusted teacher, counselor or parent who then called animal control. Most children's reports involved neglect or severe acts of animal abuse committed by adults known to the child, such as a father, the mother's boyfriend, or a friend's father.

Although no formal child services/animal welfare cross-discipline reporting agreement exists in this community, several reports of animal abuse or neglect were cross-reported by a child protection or social services agency while visiting a home to check on the welfare of children. In nearly every case, the concerns for both children and the animal (invariably a dog) were the same.

Campbell called for more systematic cross-reporting and stronger partnerships between human and animal welfare agencies that may provide opportunities for earlier intervention and are likely to better many human and animal lives. He encouraged mandatory cross-reporting to ensure that child welfare agencies ascertain the well-being of children in homes deemed unsafe for companion animals and to protect from possible dangerous retaliation children who report suspected animal abuse committed by an adult household member.

“Animal control cross-reporting with child welfare agencies may provide a great opportunity to better identify young child–animal companion pairs at great risk of harm, and effectively work to prevent the future harm of both child and animal,” he wrote. “Stronger cross-discipline partnerships are likely to create opportunities to bridge existing gaps in family violence victim services. By working together, these critical agencies are likely to better reach and assist more humans and animals in great need of assistance.”

He noted that although children were rarely mentioned specifically in animal control reports, this is unlikely to be an accurate reflection of the proportion of animal control incidents that impact children, since pets are most frequently found in homes with children. He recommended that animal control agencies consider always noting if children reside in the home (even if not a reporter or perpetrator), given they may often share risk of harm with animals in these homes.

Campbell emphasized that there remains a great gap in the literature regarding child perpetration of cruelty against wild animals. This gap may exist in part due to the difficulties in detecting this abuse in isolated areas, and because harm may be more quickly attributed to acts of other wild animals. He called for considerable more research in this area.

He reiterated other findings that repeated acts of animal cruelty by youths warrant great concern as a predictor for repeated acts of interpersonal violence when the child enters adulthood. “Since children and animals often represent the most vulnerable beings in society, better protecting them remains paramount to better ensuring a higher quality of health and life for all in the community,” he wrote.

-- Campbell, A.M. (2022) *The intertwined well-being of children and non-human animals: An analysis of animal control reports involving children. Social Sciences, 11, 46.* <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11020046>

## ***DOMESTIC ABUSE... and THE LINK***

### **RedRover Seeking Community Outreach Coordinator**



RedRover – the Sacramento-based nonprofit that provides resources to domestic violence survivors and shelters to help pets escape abuse – is seeking a full-time [Community Outreach Coordinator](#). The position, which will pay \$45-55,000 per year and which can be staffed either in-person or remotely, will support RedRover’s domestic violence programming by conducting outreach, gathering data, and assisting with the Safe Escape and Safe Housing grant programs. The coordinator will also assist with the [Don’t Forget the Pets](#) collaborative project with Greater Good charities, which helps agencies to start pet programs.

To apply, send a cover letter and resume to [employment@RedRover.org](mailto:employment@RedRover.org) with Community Outreach Coordinator in the subject line. The position will remain open until filled.

## BestyBnB Links Kansas City Survivors with Foster Pet Caregivers

Domestic violence shelters in the Kansas City region that are fearful of, or unable to, initiate on-site co-sheltering for survivors' pets now have a new resource that Links them up with pet caregivers who can provide short- or long-term foster care for the animals.



Andy Bond (left) & Matt Krentz

[BestyBnB](#) was formally launched in October 2021 during Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Co-founders Matt Krentz and Andy Bond heard an NPR interview with a director of a Kansas City domestic violence shelter who said that over 50% of victims calling their hotline would hang up and not seek help if they couldn't bring their pets with them. "We hadn't heard of this before but as soon as we did it made real sense to us," said Bond. "We realized this is a real crisis and we decided we could solve the problem through technology instead of bricks-and-mortar."

Working with a team of 18 software developers over many months, and speaking with domestic violence and women's services organizations across the U.S., they developed what they call a robust and user-friendly platform where domestic violence shelters can refer survivors to an approved list of pet caregivers. They partnered with seven shelters and a variety of animal agencies in the Kansas City region to create an efficient central hub where collaboration can take place. In addition to the pioneering on-site co-sheltering program at the Rose Brooks Center, all seven shelters now offer at least an off-site foster care option.

"Because building on-site facilities for pets is so intimidating, we developed BestyBnB as the best way to introduce pets into shelters' ecosystem so in the future they may not be as fearful of co-sheltering," said Krentz. "Bringing this concept to agencies that typically wouldn't accept pets and introducing them to animal shelters gives them the tools to reduce this barrier."

The shelters arrange for getting the animals to the caregivers and returning them when the survivor leaves the shelter at a safe, neutral location. The survivor can communicate online with the caregiver through a secure login to receive updates on the pet's condition, but everyone's identity is kept confidential so neither the caregiver nor the survivor know the other's identity. Survivors who need employment are offered training videos on how to become a foster pet caregiver so when they leave the shelter they may be able to become a caregiver and earn money for their services.

The group plans to expand the concept nationally, building on the successes in Kansas City, by finding leadership partners in large metropolitan areas. Although serving domestic violence survivors remains the core mission, there are plans to expand the concept to other venues, such as Ronald McDonald Houses, homeless shelters, and treatment facilities for psychiatric patients.

"Your pet is your best friend – your 'besty,'" explained Krentz. "We wanted our name to suggest something as warm and loving a household as a B & B."

## Domestic Violence Training Course for Police Includes Animal Abuse as Risk Factor

Louise Lathey, Outreach Specialist in Violence Prevention for the BC SPCA in Canada and author of three veterinary journal articles describing practitioners' response to domestic violence, has developed a domestic violence training course for police in British Columbia. The BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General launched the online course to enable officers to better identify the risks of intimate partner violence, including abusive behaviors towards animals.



Louise Lathey

The course includes a Summary of Intimate Partner Violence Risk Factors, a tool used by officers to conduct risk-focused and evidence-based investigations. The tool has been amended to include animal abuse in several sections as something to look for when conducting these types of investigations.

According to the [BC SPCA](#), Lathey highlights prevention and collaboration with partner agencies as being crucial to protect animals and to provide support for vulnerable people and animals.

Lathey's articles about the role of the veterinarian in responding to domestic violence and animal abuse appeared in the June, September and December 2020 issues of [West Coast Veterinarian](#).

## Animal Welfare Institute Expands Library of Manuals for Survivors



Animal Welfare  
Institute

The Animal Welfare Institute has expanded its library of technical assistance manuals to help attorneys and advocates working with domestic violence survivors with pets to obtain protective orders and shelter that include their animals.

AWI initiated this library several years ago with its first manuals, *Representing Domestic Violence Survivors with Pets*, which were specific to laws affecting Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia (*See the [January 2015 LINK-Letter](#)*). More recently, similar manuals have been published for [Colorado](#), [Florida](#), [Maine](#), [Michigan](#), [New Mexico](#), [Ohio](#), [Texas](#), and [Wisconsin](#).

The free manuals advise advocates and attorneys how to ask survivors about their pets; discuss resources that are available to them in that state; review the state's protection orders affecting them and their pets; guide them on how to gather evidence for any hearings; and offer forms and recommended reading materials. AWI plans to eventually have a manual for each state.

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### *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.

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

### **Linked Crimes Impact an “Animal Harm Spectrum” Within a “Patchwork of Patchworks” of Enforcement Systems**

Citing the potential for concurrent or future human abuse as a serious consideration in defining an “animal harm spectrum” which can determine the priority for animal cruelty prosecutions, a Canadian researcher has presented the first overview of the Canadian animal cruelty investigations landscape which, like in the U.S., is a “patchwork of patchworks” of uncoordinated and not necessarily effective systems.



**Kendra Coulter**

Kendra Coulter, in the Brock University Department of Labor Studies, builds on the experience of the National Link Coalition in compiling our [National Directory of Abuse Investigation Agencies](#) in describing an “uneven and inequitable” landscape for reporting suspected abuse. “The task of reporting suspected violations is onerous and confusing. In most provinces, a complex series of instructions are necessary depending on where the issue has taken place, what kind of animal it is, and what time of day or day of the week it is. This undoubtedly adds to the confusion and level of frustration people seeking to report suspected cruelty feel and can delay the amount of time that passes before animals in distress are identified and investigations initiated.”

She notes that in the absence of a unified national approach to animal cruelty, “Enforcement is difficult to navigate and chronically under-resourced. This is a challenge that plagues countries around the world without national animal protection infrastructure. The organizations responsible for investigations are a patchwork of patchworks with no consistent or predictable pattern.”

She compares systems across industrialized Anglophile countries. Responsibility for front-line investigations and enforcement of animal cruelty legislation is commonly assigned to nonprofit animal welfare SPCAs in England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. In the U.S., however, the majority of this work is undertaken by and split about evenly between local policing agencies or public animal care and control services, with nonprofits covering the remaining areas.

Animal cruelty investigation is further sub-divided based on geography and/or the types of animals (companion, farmed, wild). “These divisions do not reflect a clear or predictable pattern,” she writes, noting that the lives and deaths of animals who are defined as members of multiple categories simultaneously, such as rabbits (who are kept as companions, farmed for meat, and live in the wild), would be governed by different laws based on the context. “The result is a very uneven enforcement terrain.”

Coulter offers two recommendations:

- 1. Reporting mechanisms should be streamlined.** “The easier it is for members of the public to report suspected cruelty, the more likely they are to do it. Regardless of which agencies are responsible for what kind of investigations or animals, the public should not have to sort out who to call.”

**2. Data gathering should be coordinated** to ensure consistency and better tracking. “The current, highly uneven cross-section of animal cruelty and welfare statistics is not serving animals, officers, organizations, policy makers, or members of the public well.”

She also calls for more research into how to both prevent and respond to interpersonal violence and different kinds of crimes against animals in order to thoughtfully inform front-line work and help create a more ethical and effective criminal justice system—and society. “There is a significant need for greater coordination and consistency in quantitative data collection, as well as more qualitative research internationally to better respond to the animal harm spectrum and, ideally, to both prevent abuse and promote the wellbeing of animals—and people.”

She concludes that law enforcement may or may not be an optimal solution. Solving and preventing problems by connecting vulnerable people with needed supports and resources, and educating people so they improve their behavior in ways that meaningfully augment animals’ quality of life, may not normally be quantified but can represent significant successes.

-- Coulter, K. (2022, Jan. 13). **The organization of animal protection investigations and the animal harm spectrum: Canadian data, international lessons. *Social Sciences* 11(1), 22.** <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11010022>

## Canadian Divorce Law, Toolkit Include Animal Abuse in Definition of Family Violence

Amendments to the Canadian divorce law enacted in 2021 require judges to take family violence – including threats, hurting or killing pets – into account in parenting cases and in determining the best interests of any children. A [new toolkit was just published](#) by the Canadian Department of Justice to help family law legal practitioners talk to their clients about family violence and the changes to the Divorce Act.



The definition of family violence under the Divorce Act includes threats to kill or harm an animal or the actual hurting or killing. The *HELP Toolkit: Identifying and Responding to Family Violence for Family Law Legal Advisers* -- mentions pets in the examples of a family violence checklist and provides practical guidance on how to initiate conversations about this issue with clients. Foster animal services are also listed among available support services for these families.

HELP stands for four components in identifying and responding to family violence:

- **H**ave an initial discussion about family violence.
- **E**xplore immediate risks and safety concerns.
- **L**earn more about family violence to help you determine what to recommend to your client.
- **P**romote safety throughout the family law case.

The HELP Toolkit was developed to help family law legal advisors respond to research, and to provide practical guidance for gathering information needed for the case and supporting advisors in their work.

Ten American states (Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Maine, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, Tennessee, Utah) plus the District of Columbia include acts of coercive-control animal harm within their statutory definitions of domestic violence or intimate partner abuse.

## List of Specialized Prosecutors & Law Enforcement Animal Cruelty Units Grows -- Thanks to Our Dedicated *LINK-Letter* Readers!

In our January [LINK-Letter](#), we published a list of 44 law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices believed to have established dedicated animal cruelty enforcement units, often based upon the growing evidence that preventing animal abuse often prevents crimes against humans. We asked our readers to share with us any additional such agencies that we weren't aware of, and several *LINK-Letter* readers were gracious enough to add more names to our list.

We now know of at least 56 such specialized units. Here are some additional examples of the Link basis for these programs:

- **Lee County, Fla. Sheriff's Office Animal Cruelty Task Force** was initiated in May, 2020 by Sheriff Carmine Marceno, in collaboration with Lee County Domestic Animal Services and their veterinarians, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, and SW Fla. Crimestoppers. A billboard features Marceno's picture and reads "Abuse an animal in Lee County and you WILL go to jail." "The link between animal abuse and human abuse is clear and frightening," Marceno said. "In addition to protecting defenseless animals, addressing animal cruelty will likely prevent future acts of violence against people in our county."



- **Kankakee County, Ill. State's Attorney's Office Animal Abuse & Neglect Crimes Division.** State's Attorney Jim Rowe's website says he takes cases involving violence against animals seriously and refers animal cruelty cases to one of two trained prosecutors. The office held an Animal Care & Cruelty Prevention Conference in 2019.



- **Las Vegas, Nev. Metropolitan Police Department Animal Cruelty Section.** Since 2015, a small unit of "pet detectives" has been investigating felony cases of people who abuse animals as an important way to stop other violent crimes in Las Vegas. The unit is under Metro's homicide and sex crimes bureau. Detective Robert Sigal said in a newspaper interview that investigating people who abuse animals is important to stopping other violent crimes in Las Vegas. "People that commit animal cruelty commit other forms of violence," Sigal said. "They commit our domestic violence, they commit our child abuse. Sometimes they've been known to go on and become serial killers as well."
- **Erie County, N.Y. District Attorney's Office Animal Cruelty Unit** was established because these cases require special training and increased devotion of time because the vast majority of crimes committed against animals must be proven entirely through circumstantial evidence as the victims, the animals, cannot speak for themselves. The prosecution of these cases in a court of law requires specialized knowledge and expertise in order to educate the judge or jury regarding the meaning and understanding of the evidence presented.

- **Will County, Ill. State’s Attorney’s Office Animal Protection Unit** was established by State’s Attorney James W. Glasgow to prosecute cases of animal abuse and neglect. He also created the county-wide League of Extraordinary Canines & Friends, an initiative to combat animal cruelty and abuse through advocacy, communication and cooperative efforts with humane and rescue organizations, the Unit, law enforcement, and all local units of government. His office also has extensive focuses on fighting domestic violence, safeguarding children and protecting senior citizens.



**James W. Glasgow**

- **Lawrence County, Penna. District Attorney’s Office Humane Department** is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of any act of abuse and/or cruelty towards animals. In furtherance of this mission, the Criminal Investigation Division is charged with reviewing all Humane Tip Line Complaints. District Attorney Joshua Lamancusa said, “I believe that we have a duty and a responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Animal abuse and/or cruelty should never be permitted nor tolerated within a community, and I will do all I can to hold those individuals who are responsible for crimes committed against animals.”



**Joshua Lamancusa**

Our list is posted in the [Resources section of our website](#) under “Tools for Prosecutors and Judges.” This is a work-in-progress, so if any additional agencies should be added to the list, [please let us know](#).

## ***SOCIAL WORK and THE LINK*** **Two Veterinary Social Worker Positions** **Will Intervene in Link Situations**



The [Boundary Bay Veterinary Specialty Hospital](#) in Langley, B.C., Canada is seeking a Veterinary Social Worker whose duties will include clinical intervention with domestic violence concerns. The VSW will develop and maintain a social work program for the veterinary hospital and its clients and staff, including providing emotional support to clients, short-term interventions and psychoeducational programs and training for employees. The VSW will provide crisis, grief and quality-of-life counseling, suicide assessment and prevention, and clinical intervention with domestic violence concerns. The VSW will also serve as field instructor for a social work internship program for the hospital. The position is full-time but work hours are flexible, with a salary of \$65,000 - \$80,000 per year. An MSW and three years’ experience are required, and experience in medical social work, grief and trauma counseling, and child welfare/protection or mental health settings are preferred. To apply, submit a resume to [humanresources@bbvsh.com](mailto:humanresources@bbvsh.com).

[Cornell University Veterinary Specialists](#) in Stamford, Conn. is seeking a Veterinary Social Workers whose responsibilities will include training staff in animal abuse recognition and responses to reporting agencies. The VSW will also assist client couples in disagreement, families with children, and the elderly and connect these clients with outside resources as needed. The salary range is \$60-\$85,000 a year. The job application information is [available online](#).



## ***VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK***

### **ALDF Project Promotes Collaborative**

### **Veterinary Response to Animal Cruelty Investigations**

As law enforcement agencies grapple with staffing shortages and budget cuts, the ability to invest resources into time- and labor-intensive, complex animal cruelty cases becomes increasingly difficult. These cases are further complicated because animal crimes often occur alongside domestic violence and neglect of children, gang activity and mental illness. Meanwhile many animal crimes go unaddressed because: law enforcement agencies don't consider animal issues a priority or recognize that these cases may be Linked to crimes against people; owners don't know their responsibilities under the law; and owners struggling with barriers don't have access to such resources as low-cost spay/neuter programs, veterinary care and pet food banks.

In response to these challenges, the Animal Legal Defense Fund has launched a pilot [Collaborative Response Project](#) to support a multidisciplinary response to animal crime through a partnership between local law enforcement agencies and community veterinarians. The project will provide financial assistance, hands-on training for veterinarians, law enforcement and prosecutors, and expert individual case consultations, in the investigation and prosecution of animal crimes with a focus on veterinary support.



**Emily Lewis, left, and Linda Fielder**

The new program was presented on Jan. 20 in a [Justice Clearinghouse webinar](#), "Partners in Investigating Animal Crimes," by Linda Fielder, Animal Cruelty Investigations Manager, and Emily Lewis, Managing Attorney, of the ALDF's Criminal Justice Program. They emphasized that a proactive and comprehensive response to animal neglect and abuse is foundational to building or rebuilding healthy communities and restoring public trust and goodwill. As in so many other areas of policing, collaborative relationships and community partnerships are filling gaps and offering solutions that result in positive outcomes for communities and enforcement agencies, they said.

The 12-month pilot project is designed to bring together the key players in animal cruelty investigations and equip them with the tools, training and support they need to succeed. It is designed to build strong relationships between veterinarians, law enforcement and prosecutors. Areas of specialized, two-day training include: veterinary forensics and necropsy; processing and protective custody of animal evidence; report writing and testimony; and pathways to education and compliance in cases where access to resources may preempt criminal citation.

Participants will also have access to customized forms, templates, protocols, and procedural documents, funding for veterinary forensics, case support and consultation, and eligibility for cost-of-care grants to help cover animal evidence holding.

Agencies can apply to participate in the program at <https://aldf.org/crp>.

## ***ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE and THE LINK*** **Bill Would Finally Ban Bestiality in the Nation's Capital and Provide Care for Pets in Divorce Cases**



A bill in the District of Columbia Council would finally prohibit animal sexual abuse in the nation's capital. **B24-0560** would close a loophole in the law and would prohibit sexual contact between a person and an animal, including the advertisement, offer of sale, or dissemination of photographs or video footage of bestiality, or entice others to participate in sexual contact with an animal. Councilmember **Mary Cheh**

The bill was introduced in December by Councilmember Mary M. Cheh with four co-sponsors as part of the Animal Care and Control Omnibus Amendment Act of 2021. The crime would be a felony and offenders would face prison terms, fines, forfeiture of their animals, and prohibition from owning, residing with or working with animals. The bill is in the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.

Sex with animals is still legal in West Virginia and New Mexico; 48 states have banned bestiality, many in recent years in growing recognition of this crime's Link with child sexual abuse and child pornography.

Among its omnibus provisions, the bill would also join a growing number of jurisdictions managing pet ownership in a divorce in the animals' best interests. Family pets are currently treated as property when a couple separates, divorces, terminates a domestic partnership, or has an annulment in the District.

Under current law in the nation's capital, the party who purchased the pet remains the determining factor for ownership — the wellbeing of the animal, including any bond with certain family members, has no bearing on who is considered to be the owner of pet. In contentious separations, the ownership of a family pet can be used as a tool to hurt the other party. The bill also modifies the pure property disposition of a pet in a divorce so that the court may assign sole or joint ownership of a pet based upon the care and best interest of the animal.

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

### **Study Examines Women's Proclivity for Animal Abuse**

While there has been limited research in animal abuse perpetrated by women, with men considered more likely to engage in such abuse, there has been a stronger association reported between animal cruelty and violent offending among women, in comparison with men. A new research paper presents two studies of factors impacting adult women's proclivity for committing animal abuse. The first study examined the relationship between proclivity (i.e., interest in, predisposition) to abuse animals and the link to aggression motivation, with psychopathy traits, sadism, and general maladaptive personality explored. The second study extended to focus on callous-unemotional traits. The authors predicted that proclivity to abuse would be associated with increased proactive aggression, with the former also associated with higher levels of psychopathy, sadism, and callousness. These traits were expected to mediate the relationship between proclivity to abuse and aggression. Results confirmed that between one- to two-thirds of women reported at least some proclivity to abuse animals. An association between proclivity and proactive aggression was demonstrated, with callousness-uncaring and sadism representing important traits to account for.

-- Ireland, J.L., Birch, P., Lewis, M., Mian, U., & Ireland, C.A. (2022). Animal abuse proclivity among women: Exploring callousness, sadism, and psychopathy traits. *Anthrozoös*, 35(1), 37-53.

## ***ASSESSMENT & TREATMENT OF LINK OFFENDERS***

### **Webinar to offer CEUs for BARK Abuser Diversion Program**



Because a substantial body of empirical evidence has established that domestic violence is correlated with animal abuse, methods to better identify, assess, and treat individuals who abuse animals can reduce both animal abuse and human violence. After reviewing the empirical literature and its implications for policy and practice, the [Animals & Society Institute](#) is offering a 6-hour Zoom webinar that may qualify for social work CEUS.

The webinar, “The Identification, Assessment, And Treatment of Adults Who Abuse Animals: A Diversion Program,” introduces BARK, a group-based diversion program for adults who have abused animals. Attendees will learn about and practice applying assessment instruments and an intervention that addresses the presenting problem of animal abuse. The intervention focuses on establishing accountability, examining attitudes and beliefs about animals, and developing interpersonal skills such as empathy, showing respect, accommodation, and stress and anger management. The course utilizes role-plays and other devices to directly involve attendees.

The course will be taught by Kenneth Shapiro, President of the Animals & Society Institute, and Kimberly Spanjol, of Iona College, on March 15. Registration is available through [Core Learning, Inc.](#)

## ***NEWS from LINK COALITIONS***

### **Wanted: Link News from Around the Globe!**

Although we are based in the U.S.A., the National Link Coalition’s interests extend globally, and we currently have several hundred *LINK-Letter* readers in 55 countries. We’d love to hear more from our foreign counterparts about what is going on in their countries. Has any legislation been introduced addressing the intersection of animal abuse and human violence? Have any exciting new programs been started? What training and public awareness campaigns are going on? Is any academic research being published? Please let us know! Send your updates to National Link Coalition Coordinator Phil Arkow at [arkowpets@snip.net](mailto:arkowpets@snip.net).



### **New Link Coalition Organized in Kansas City**

A new Link coalition has been started in Kansas City, Mo. The K.C. Coalition Against the Co-Occurrence of Pet Abuse and Domestic Violence was initiated in March 2021 as a vehicle to bring together the region’s many animal and domestic violence shelters. Two-hour meetings are held quarterly where participants can share information about their services and needs, and where guest speakers can present on educational topics of common interest to both sectors. The group succeeds a former Link coalition in Kansas City, KC CAN (Caring for All Animals). Spearheading the new group is [Kendyl Clark](#), pet advocacy coordinator at the Rose Brooks Domestic Violence center.



## **RAISING LINK AWARENESS**

### **Link Cited as Way to Improve European Animal Welfare Enforcement**



**Mark Randell**

Ukraine and Moldava ([See the March 2021 and February 2019 LINK-Letters](#)).

Efforts to revitalize lagging enforcement of animal welfare laws across the European Union were given a boost by a [recent article](#) citing how lax animal law enforcement means opportunities to fight human crimes are being missed. Sentient Media, a nonprofit journalism outlet based in San Francisco founded to help bring animal issues into the mainstream, publicized the work of several Link advocates in Europe.

Until crimes against animals are seen as an indicator of community malfunction and future violence towards other humans, opportunities to catch criminals will be squandered, said Mark Randell, a former police detective in the UK who has been working to bring Link training to law enforcement authorities in

“We know when you tackle animal abuse you get less rapes, less drug abuse,” Randell said, citing the Links between animal sexual violence and child sexual abuse, animal abuse as coercive control in domestic violence situations, and dogfighting rings. “We can find more drugs with dogfighting warrants than we do with drug warrants,” he said

But unfortunately, animal welfare is often treated in a secondary way by European institutions and national governments compared to other issues such as competition or economic interests, said Manuela Giacomini, an attorney in Genoa, Italy who works with animal NGOs. By the EU’s own admission, most recently in November 2021 recommendations from a special EU committee, its nations are doing a poor job of enforcing animal protection laws. As an example, two police officers in Spain are fighting reassignment to court duties for following more than 40 animal rescues which the department said was causing them to neglect their duties.

One potential solution is to appoint a public animal defender to represent the animal’s interests in criminal procedure, said Antoine F. Goetschel, lawyer and founder of the Global Animal Law GAL Association in Switzerland. Because current systems “do not see the animal as a victim in an appropriate way,” Goetschel said, the change would mean animals had “their own legal voice in criminal procedures.”

### **National Link Coalition Cited in Domestic Violence Awareness Article**



The National Link Coalition was cited extensively in an [online article](#) by DomesticShelters.org drawing additional attention to how animal abuse puts domestic violence survivors at increased risk. “Animal Abuse: A Serious Red Flag for Domestic Violence” was

published on Jan. 16. Contributing writer Stephanie Thurrott interviewed National Link Coalition Coordinator Phil Arkow for the article, which featured information on the statistics of multi-species family violence, risks for children who harm animals, how abusers threaten animals to make it harder for their partners to leave, and what survivors with pets can do. DomesticShelters.org maintains a list of all domestic violence programs in the U.S. and Canada, provides information on resources, and offers information on The Link between domestic violence and animal abuse.

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

As the 2022 legislative season opens, we're awaiting what we anticipate will be another round of intriguing Link-related bills introduced across the U.S. Here are the ones that we know of so far; please [let us know](#) of any legislation not included in this list:

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

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



**Arizona HB 2365** would allow victims to petition a court to issue a severe threat order of protection against an individual who committed cruel mistreatment of an animal; such an order would prohibit the respondent from possessing a firearm.



**California AB 258** would require emergency shelter and transitional housing programs for the homeless to allow residents to keep pets. The Assembly Judiciary Committee approved it and sent it to the Appropriations Committee. **SB 344** would require the Department of Housing and Community Development to develop and administer a program to award grants to shelters for the homeless to provide shelter, food and basic veterinary services for residents' pets. It passed the Senate and the Assembly Committee on Housing & Community Development and was sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. (It is not clear whether these bills would cover homeless persons who are fleeing domestic violence.)



**District of Columbia B24-0560** would modify the pure property disposition of a pet in a divorce so that the court could assign sole or joint ownership of a pet based upon the care and best interest of the animal. The measure is in the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.



**Florida HB 121** would define the 3<sup>rd</sup>-degree felony crime of aggravated animal cruelty to include causing great bodily harm, permanent disability or death to an animal while perpetrating sexual battery, domestic violence, aggravated stalking, aggravated child abuse, or aggravated abuse of an elderly or disabled person. Aggravated animal cruelty would also pertain to the unlawful killing an animal belonging to another family or household member and "evinced a depraved mind." The bill is in the House Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee.



**Illinois HB 1907** would require the Department of Human Services to establish a grant program, incorporating third-party funding and services, for counties with populations greater than 200,000 to support domestic violence shelters and service programs that assist domestic violence survivors' pets. The bill is in the House Rules Committee.



**Illinois HB 4368** would expand the definition of domestic violence abuse to include "coercive control behavior," a pattern of behavior that unreasonably interferes with a household member's free will and personal liberty, including committing or threatening to commit intimidating cruelty to animals. The bill is in the House Rules Committee.



**Indiana HB 1137** would provide that orders for protection (which include protecting pets from the respondent) would be enforced indefinitely if the respondent is required to register as a lifetime sex or violent offender.



**Indiana HB 1370** would require the state Office of Judicial Administration to establish a domestic violence registry for individuals convicted of domestic violence or who is subject to an order of protection; Indiana includes acts of cruelty to a family member’s animals as a “crime of domestic violence.”



**Kentucky HB 319** would include violence against an animal when used as coercive conduct within the definition of “domestic violence and abuse” and “dating violence and abuse” and allow judges in both types of cases to aware possession of a shared domestic animal to the petitioner. The bill is in the Committee on Committees.



**Maine LD 1696** would expand Maine’s statutes (the oldest in the U.S.) allowing courts to direct the care, control and custody of pets in protection-from-abuse orders to further prohibit defendants from possessing any dangerous weapons if the defendant’s abuse includes killing or threatening to kill any animal in the household. The recodified statute is based upon the recognition of domestic abuse as a serious crime against the individual and society that produces an unhealthy and dangerous family environment that is not conducive to healthy childhood development. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.



**Massachusetts S.939/H.1820** would expand existing provisions that prevent respondents in a domestic violence protection order from harming, taking or disposing of household animals to also include protective orders issued in sexual assault harassment cases. The bills are in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.



**Mississippi SB 2022** would allow courts in issuing protection orders to order respondents to not harm, abuse, transfer, or dispose of any companion animal, and to grant possession of companion animals to the petitioner. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



**New York A1353** would make it a crime to unjustifiably injure or kill a companion animal to threaten, intimidate or harass another family member. The penalty would be increased if the act occurs in the presence of a child. The bill is in the Codes Committee.



**New York A510/S3039** would expand existing domestic violence pet protection orders to allow courts to grant petitioners exclusive care, custody and control of animals and to order respondents to stay away from the animals or take, transfer, harm, or conceal the animals. The bills are in the Assembly Judiciary and Senate Children & Families Committees.



**New York A3985 (“Bella’s Law”)** would require the Office of Children & Family Services to investigate possible domestic violence or abuse for persons who have been accused of animal abuse. The bills passed the Senate and Assembly and are back in the Senate.



**New York A8865** would expand provisions in residential programs for domestic violence provisions which allow them to have service animals and therapy dogs to also include companion animals. The bill is in the Assembly Social Services Committee.

 **Pennsylvania HB1031** would amend the Protection from Abuse Act to allow courts to grant temporary ownership rights over companion animals in protection orders and direct defendants from possessing, contacting, attempting to contact, transferring, or relocating companion animals or entering the property of anyone sheltering the animal. Final agreements would allow courts to direct defendants to not abuse, harass, stalk, threaten or use physical force against the animal. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.

 **Pennsylvania HB 1903** would allow courts to issue an Extreme Risk Protection Order barring an individual from possessing a firearm upon a finding that the person presents a substantial risk of suicide or death or serious bodily injury to another person; factors which may be used to determine the individual's risk include a history of domestic violence or animal cruelty. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.

 **Rhode Island H7087** would create a custody procedure for domestic companion animals in divorce and separation proceedings based on the best interests of the animal. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.

 **Rhode Island H7088** would expand the existing law, which allows family courts to include household pets in domestic violence protection orders, to allow courts to award custody of the pets to the plaintiff and to order an enforcement remedy of a restraining order or other injunctive relief if necessary. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.

 **Utah HB 175** would modify the definition of "emotional distress" related to the offense of stalking to include suffering resulting from harming an animal, and include pets in dating violence and cohabitant abuse protection orders. The bill passed the House 69-2 and was sent to the Senate Rules Committee.

 **Washington HB 1901** would add "coercive control," including harm, threats or physical violence against someone's pets, to the definition of domestic violence. The bill is in the House Committee on Civil Rights & Judiciary.

### *Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment*

 **U.S. H.R. 763**, the Child and Animal Abuse Detection and Reporting Act, would amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to require that data collected by the federal government from state child protection agencies include information about animal abuse as a risk factor for child abuse. The bill is in the House Education and Labor Committee.

 **Arizona HB 2324** would make it a Class 1 misdemeanor to allow a minor to attend an animal fight or cockfight or any facility where preparations are being made for an animal fight or cockfight. The bill is in the House Rules Committee.

 **Florida HB 121** would define the 3<sup>rd</sup>-degree felony crime of aggravated animal cruelty to include causing great bodily harm, permanent disability or death to an animal while perpetrating aggravated child abuse, sexual battery, domestic violence, aggravated stalking, or aggravated abuse of an elderly or disabled person. Aggravated animal cruelty would also pertain to the unlawful killing an animal belonging to another family or household member and "evinced a depraved mind." The bill is in the House Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee.



**Florida HB 435** would make it a 3<sup>rd</sup>-degree felony to cause or allow a minor under age 18 to attend an animal fight. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.



**Massachusetts H.1716/S. 943** would expand the power of Department of Children & Families employees and contractors to report suspected animal abuse over a longer period of time. Current law allows such cross-reporting only during their specific 10-15 day investigation or evaluation timeframe. The bills are in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.



**New York A474 and A3726** would increase prison terms for aggravated animal cruelty committed in the presence of a child in order to minimize psychological damage to a still-developing minor's sense of judgment and ethical conduct. **A474** is in the Agriculture Committee and **A3726** is in the Codes Committee.



**New York A1353** would make it a crime to unjustifiably injure or kill a companion animal to threaten, intimidate or harass another family member. The penalty would be increased if the act occurs in the presence of a child. The bill is in the Codes Committee.



**New York A748 and S 4130** would define the releasing or failure to control an animal so as to prohibit an agent of a residential facility operated by children and family services as second-degree assault. The bill is in the Assembly and Senate Codes Committees.



**New York A1816**, recognizing the adverse impact animal fighting can have on a child's emotional development and potential for antisocial behavior, would make it a misdemeanor to knowingly cause a minor child to attend an animal fight. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.



**North Carolina H 544** would make it a felony to permit a person under age 18 to attend or participate in any dog- or cock-fighting. The bill passed the House and is in the Senate Committee on Rules and Operations.



**Pennsylvania SB 78** (Kayden's Law – Preventing Abuse in Child Custody Proceedings), in noting that domestic abuse against a partner, spouse, child or pet can be part of a pattern of emotional and psychological abuse, would allow courts to include a person's prior conviction for animal cruelty or animal fighting to be considered in determining custody of the child and whether the person posed a threat of harm to the child. The bill passed the Senate and is in the House Judiciary Committee.



**Pennsylvania HB 1836** would add to the Crimes Code a new crime of "child torture," which would include physical or sexual abuse, unreasonable confinement or restraint, starvation, and "terrorizing or threatening death or harm to the child, a loved one of the child or a pet or loved object of the child for the purpose of causing significant emotional distress." It was laid on the table in the House Judiciary Committee.

### *Animal Abuse and Elder/Disabled Abuse*



**Florida HB 121** would define the 3<sup>rd</sup>-degree felony crime of aggravated animal cruelty to include causing great bodily harm, permanent disability or death to an animal while perpetrating aggravated abuse of an elderly or disabled person, sexual battery, domestic violence, aggravated stalking, or aggravated child abuse. Aggravated animal cruelty would also pertain to the unlawful killing an animal belonging to another family or household member and “evincing a depraved mind.” The bill is in the House Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee.



**Illinois HB 4368** would expand the definition of abuse of a disabled adult to include “coercive control behavior,” a pattern of behavior that unreasonably interferes with a household member’s free will and personal liberty, including committing or threatening to commit intimidating cruelty to animals. The bill is in the House Rules Committee.



**Pennsylvania HB 1681** would impose a 25-year ban on offenders convicted of sexual intercourse with an animal from employment working with care-dependent adults. Facilities covered by the employment ban would include residential care homes, long-term nursing homes, home health care agencies, hospices, adult daily living centers, personal care homes, assisted living residences, and any other public or private organization that uses public funds to provide care to care-dependent individuals. The bill is in the House Committee on Aging and Older Adult Services.

### *Animal Sexual Abuse*



**Colorado Ballot Initiative 16, proposed for 2022, “Protect Animals from Unnecessary Suffering and Exploitation” (PAUSE)**, would amend bestiality statutes to criminalize safe and common artificial insemination of dogs, horses and livestock as a “sexual act with an animal.” Colorado veterinarians and animal welfare groups are opposed to the proposal.



**District of Columbia B24-0560** would close a loophole in the law and would prohibit sexual contact between a person and an animal, including the advertisement, offer of sale, or dissemination of photographs or video footage of bestiality. The bill is in the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.



**Florida HB 341/SB 692** would amend the definition of “sexual bestiality” to replace “vagina” with “genitals” when describing illegal sexual contact with an animal. The bills are in the House Criminal Justice & Public Safety Subcommittee and the Senate Criminal Justice, Rules, and Children, Families & Elder Affairs Committees. **SB 878** would replace “vagina” with “female genitals”; it is in the Senate Committee on Children, Families & Elder Affairs. **SB 420** would increase the penalty for sexual activities involving animals from a 1<sup>st</sup>-degree misdemeanor to a 3<sup>rd</sup>-degree felony and clarify that oral sex with an animal is prohibited. It is in the Judiciary, Criminal Justice and Rules Committees. **HB 435** would further expand the definition of “sexual contact with an animal” to include actions for the purpose of abuse or financial gain as well as sexual gratification and prohibit the filming, distribution or possession of pornography with an animal; convicted offenders could be barred from being around animals for 5 years following conviction. It is in the Criminal Justice & Public Safety Subcommittee.

 **Maryland SB 22** would repeal duplicative Criminal Law statute §3-322, a prohibition against having sex with animals, as similar prohibitions exist in §10-606 as Aggravated Cruelty to Animals. The bill is in the Senate Standing Judicial Proceedings Committee.

 **Missouri SB 980** would add causing injury or suffering to a female dog, causing injury to the sexual organs of a female dog, and needlessly causing pain during artificial insemination of a female dog to the definition of animal abuse.

 **New York A614** would make sexual contact with animals a felony if serious injury or death to the animal occurs, require offenders to relinquish all animals, bar them from future possession of animals, and undergo psychological evaluation. It is in the Agriculture Committee.

 **Oregon Ballot Initiative 13, proposed for 2022,** would add breeding domestic, livestock and equine animals to the definition of sexual assault of an animal.

 **Virginia SB 249** would increase the crimes related to sexual conduct with an animal to a Class 6 felony and prohibit convicted offenders from owning any animals for up to five years. Offenders could be ordered to obtain psychiatric or psychological counseling and treatment. The bill is in the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources.

### *Animal Hoarding*

 **New Hampshire HB 366** defines animal hoarding and sets forth a provision for a person charged with animal hoarding to be given a psychiatric evaluation. The bill is in the House Environment and Agriculture Committee.

 **New Jersey S 1144** 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.

 **New York A1229** would create a violation of companion animal hoarding and allow courts to order mental health evaluations and prohibit possession of animals as penalties to give law enforcement needed tools for early intervention before a situation becomes a full-blown cruelty case. The bill is in the Agriculture Committee.

 **West Virginia HB 2095** would define animal hoarding as the possession of a large number of companion animals, the failure to provide adequate food, water, shelter, veterinary care and humane care, and the inability to understand the conditions of the animals and the deleterious impact on the animals and the owner's health and well-being. Animals found living under these conditions would be confiscated and turned over to an animal shelter for proper care and relocation. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.

## *Animal Abuse and Other Crimes*



**U.S. H.R. 1016**, the Animal Cruelty Enforcement (ACE) Act, introduced because of cited Links between animal cruelty and violence against humans, would enhance enforcement of federal anti-cruelty laws, such as interstate trafficking of fighting animals, by creating an Animal Cruelty Crimes Section at the U.S. Department of Justice's Environmental and Natural Resources Division. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law.



**Illinois HB 3531** would expand criminal code prohibitions of violent video games to include games in which a character kills or causes serious physical or psychological harm to an animal. Psychological harm would be defined as including depictions of child abuse, sexual abuse, animal abuse, domestic violence, and violence against women. The bill is in the House Rules Committee.



**Kentucky HB 450** would require peace officers to receive law enforcement training on the identification, investigation, response, and reporting of animal abuse violations and on The Link between animal abuse and offenses against people, including: abuse, neglect and sex crimes against a minor; child pornography; abuse, neglect and exploitation of a vulnerable adult; and domestic and dating violence and abuse. The bill is in the Committee on Committees.



**New York S197/A1633 ("Kirby and Quigley's Law")** would expand aggravated animal cruelty to include harm to a pet during the commission of a felony. The bills are in the Senate Agriculture and Assembly Codes Committees.



**New York A99** would make the release of or failure to restrain an animal so as to prevent a police officer or peace officer from performing his or her duties an assault in the second degree on a police officer. The bill is in the Assembly Codes Committee,



**New York A558** would prohibit individuals convicted of serious felony offenses against animals from possessing firearms. The bill is in the Assembly Codes Committee.



**New York A2661/S6112** would define animal fighting as a criminal act when referring to enterprise corruption. The bills are in the Assembly and Senate Codes Committees.



**New York A7267** would require the prosecutor in each county to appoint an assistant district attorney to oversee the prosecution of crimes against animals. The bill is in the Local Governments Committee.



**Pennsylvania HB 1570 ("Cash's Law")** would allow courts to add a sentencing enhancement in cases of burglary or criminal trespass where a domestic animal is harmed or killed in the course of that crime. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



**Pennsylvania HB 1903** would allow courts to issue an Extreme Risk Protection Order prohibiting persons from owning or controlling a firearm upon a finding that the person presents a substantial risk of suicide or death or serious bodily injury to another person. A history of animal cruelty and/or domestic abuse are among the factors the court may consider in determining whether to issue an ERPO. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



**Utah HB 112** would change “dog” to “animal” in statutes prohibiting the training or exhibition of animals for fighting other animals, and repeal the cock fighting statute. The bill is in the House Rules and Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice Committees.

### *Cross-Reporting*



**Massachusetts H.1716/S.943** would remove the 10-day time limit within which social services workers may report suspected animal abuse and allow them to report at any time. The bills are in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.



**New York A 5780 and S 7401** would permit mandated reporters of child abuse to report suspected animal cruelty, with immunity from civil and criminal liability for good-faith reports. The bills are in the respective Children and Families Committees.

### *Psychological Evaluation of Offenders*



**Mississippi SB 2261** (“Buddy’s Law”) would require youths who have been adjudicated as delinquent for committing cruelty against a domesticated dog or cat to receive psychiatric evaluation and counseling or treatment. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



**New Jersey S 1144** 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 1153 (“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 S230** would require courts to order psychiatric analysis and evaluation of animal abusers and to unseal the records of juvenile animal abuse offenders. **S229** would require courts to impose psychiatric evaluations for defendants convicted of aggravated animal cruelty. **A 8443** would require courts to order a mental health evaluation for persons convicted of animal fighting or aggravated cruelty to animals. The bills are in the Agriculture Committee.



**New York A524, S1257 and S1259** would prohibit persons convicted of “Buster’s Law” (aggravated cruelty to animals) from owning pets unless authorized by a court order after appropriate psychiatric or psychological testing determined the person showed clear and convincing evidence of capable and sound mental capacity and ability to properly care for the animal. The bills are in the Assembly and Senate Agriculture Committees.

### *Court-Appointed Advocates for Animals*



**Florida S 172** would allow for the appointment of an advocate for “the interests of an animal” in civil and criminal court proceedings regarding the welfare, care or custody of an animal. Advocates could be appointed upon the court’s initiative or upon request from a list of designated attorneys and certified legal interns provided by the Animal Law Section of the Florida Bar Association. The bill has been referred to the Agriculture, Judiciary and Rules Committees.



**Illinois SB 153** would allow courts to appoint attorneys or law students as special advocates to assist the court in prosecution of cases involving the injury, health or safety of a cat or dog and represent the interests of justice. Advocates could monitor the case and attend hearings; consult with persons and review records relevant to the conditions of the cat or dog or the defendant's actions; and present information and recommendations to the court. The bill is in the Senate Rules Committee.



**New Jersey A 1965** would allow courts to appoint a pro bono attorney or law student special advocate to represent the best interests of, and justice for, animals in cruelty cases. It is in the Assembly Judiciary Committee.



**New York A 5315/S 3525-A** would allow courts to appoint volunteer lawyers and law students to advocate for animals' interests and to help ensure the well-being of living animal victims in civil and criminal animal welfare proceedings. The bills are in the Senate and Assembly Judiciary Committees.



To subscribe to The Link-Letter (*it's free!*)  
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*Please tell us what organization(s) you're with  
 and where you're located.*

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

### **Father Charged with Child Neglect and Animal Cruelty**

West Virginia State Police and Mercer County Animal Control officers responding to an animal abuse complaint in Princeton, W. Va. reportedly found seven dogs – two of them dead – and an 11-month-old boy living in unsanitary conditions. Brian Joseph Pendergrass, 18, was charged with child neglect and animal cruelty. The *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* reported that police said that all of the dogs, both living and dead, appeared to be in poor health and possibly malnourished and that the home's interior was saturated with dog feces and urine, soiled baby diapers and blood. The boy, said to be Pendergrass's son, was reportedly found in a small closed-off room with no heat. Child Protective Services was contacted.



**Brian Pendergrass**

## Dentist Charged in Shooting of Wife While on African Hunting Safari



**The Rudolphins with trophy kill**

A Pennsylvania dentist suspected of killing his wife during a 2016 hunting safari in Zambia so he could collect her \$5 million life insurance policy and continue an extramarital affair with his mistress was charged with mail fraud in the alleged slaying. [NBC News](#) reported that Lawrence Rudolph, 67, who split his time between his Phoenix home and businesses in Pittsburgh and Miami, was suspected of killing Bianca Rudolph with a single shotgun blast to her heart. Both Rudolphins were said to be expert hunters and Bianca’s goal during the trip was to kill a leopard; Lawrence had posted Facebook images of himself in 2011 proudly displaying a ram, elk and hippopotamus he had apparently killed.

Friends told authorities that Lawrence had gone on several vacations to Cabo San Lucas with the woman, who was his practice manager, did not want to divorce Bianca because he feared losing his money, and that Bianca would not divorce him because she was Catholic. FBI investigators said they did not believe the 5-foot-4 Bianca could have shot herself with a 3-foot-7 shotgun. The charge relates to alleged fraud of one of the life insurance companies.

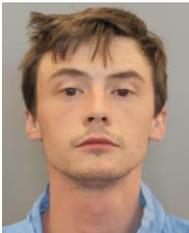


**Brandon Combs**

## Kentucky Man with Criminal History Charged with Burning Dog

A Lexington, Ky. man with a prior history of purse-snatching and violation of an emergency protective order was charged with a felony count of animal torture for allegedly setting a dog on fire on Christmas Eve. [WLEX-TV](#) reported that Brandon Combs, 35, was charged with intentionally setting “Lillah” on fire, possibly using diesel fuel or gasoline. She was found after police got a report of a loose dog that looked like she had been burned and smelled of gasoline. Combs reportedly claimed the dog walked through spilled diesel fuel and then walked into a wire which sparked the fire, but camera footage reportedly contradicts his story. Lillah was rescued by Lexington-Fayette Animal Care & Control and is reportedly recovering. Combs’ earlier charges had been dismissed.

## Houston Man Suspected in Patricide, Carjacking, Robbery, and Stabbing K-9



**Ryan Mitchell Smith**

A Houston, Texas man who works for a crime scene cleanup company was arrested after bonding out of jail for a robbery attempt during which he allegedly attempted to carjack a vehicle, stole a phone charger, and stabbed a K-9 with a butcher knife during a foot pursuit. Houston police had taken Ryan Mitchell Smith, 26, back to his father’s home, but grew concerned when the father could not be found. Investigators later approached Smith, who took off in his father’s truck and crashed the vehicle and evaded capture on foot. Investigators later discovered the father’s body in the garage.

Smith was being questioned in the death of his father. The [Daily Beast](#) reported that the K-9, a SWAT-team Belgian Malinois named “Nate,” was reportedly recovering from his wounds.

## Florida Man Accused of Online Blackmail and Child Porn Including Bestiality



**Shane Penczak**

Shane Patrick Penczak, 45, of North Port, Fla. was charged with multiple felony counts after he allegedly posed as a young girl in online gaming platforms in order to blackmail a 13-year-old boy and force the boy to make and send him sexually explicit photos and videos including having sex with his dog. Posing as the teenage girl, Penczak reportedly convinced the victim to take a nude picture of himself and send it. After the victim complied, he allegedly told the boy that he was going to post the nude photograph on public platforms unless the victim did exactly as he was told.

Coercive acts allegedly went on for months, until the crimes were reported to police in Winslow Township, N.J., where the boy lived. Police investigators said Penczak allegedly had six different images on his computer depicting sexual abuse of children believed to be between the ages of 8 and 12. The investigation is continuing as authorities believe there may be more victims. “The details of this case are heinous,” [North Port police](#) said. “Mr. Penczak portrayed himself as a young female on gaming platforms, enticing his victim to perform sexual acts and then blackmailing him into performing more egregious acts.” Penczak was being held without bond in the Sarasota County Jail.

## Child Pornography Investigation Leads to Animal Cruelty Charges

An investigation into online child exploitation resulted in the arrest of an East Windsor, N.J. man on charges of child pornography and animal cruelty. Detectives from the Mercer County prosecutor’s Internet Crimes Against Children Unit, working on a tip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, arrested Mitchell Richtman, 31, according to the [Mid-Jersey News](#). Child pornography with children as young as 5 years old and videos of Richtman performing sexual acts on a horse were allegedly found in a search of electronic devices.



**Mitchell Richtman**

## ***LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES***

**NOTE: The pandemic has caused most in-person trainings to be canceled, rescheduled or converted into virtual formats. Click on the underlined hyperlinks for more detailed information.**

**Feb. 17-18 – Columbus, Ohio:** Phil Arkow will present “Recognizing, Recording and Reporting Suspected Animal Abuse and Neglect” and “All in This Together: Pooling Limited Shelter Resources to Help People and Animals,” and Anna Garrett will present on “Animal Cruelty and Violent Crime in Ohio” for the [Midwest Veterinary Conference](#). Several additional programs will train veterinarians, their staffs, and humane agents on recognition of equine and farm animal cruelty.

**March 1 (online):** Zoë Agnew-Svoboda of BestyBnB will present a [webinar](#) on “Safety Planning with Survivors of Domestic Violence and Their Pets.”

**March 2 (online):** Maya Gupta will present “The Link between DV, Animal Welfare and... Homelessness?” at My Dog is My Home’s [Co-Sheltering Conference](#) .

**March 3 – Myrtle Beach, S.C.:** A panel discussion will discuss “A Case Study: Animal cruelty and Violent Offenders” at the [Carolinas Unite](#) Animal Welfare Professionals Conference.

**March 4-5 – Orlando, Fla.:** The Florida Department of Children & Families will review procedures under Florida’s new cross-reporting law in a presentation on “Cross Reporting: New ACO Required Training.” and Mary Lou Randour will present on the FBI’s National Incident-Based Reporting System. Daniel Ettinger will present on “The Relationship between Animal Abuse and Family Violence.” Amina Chardhry will present on “Family Violence and Animal cruelty: How Shelters Can Help Survivors of Family Violence by Providing a Safe Haven for Pets.” All of these are at the [Florida Animal Control Association Conference](#).

**March 15 (online):** Ken Shapiro and Kimberly Spanjol will offer a 6-hour CE webinar on “The Identification, Assessment and Treatment of Adults who Abuse Animals: The BARK Diversion Program.” Register at [Core Learning, Inc.](#)

**March 28 – April 1 – Honolulu, Hawai’i:** Paul Needham will include Link issues in presentations on “APS Ethics and Hoarding: Weighing the Ethical and Practical Issues of Hoarding,” and “Risk Factors and Challenges Concerning Elder Abuse and Neglect” at the Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma’s 19<sup>th</sup> [Hawai’i International Summit](#).

**April 6 – 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 21 – Wilmington, Del.:** Phil Arkow, Diane Balkin and Rosa Figarola will join a multidisciplinary team in an all-day, multidisciplinary Link training for the [Delaware Family Courts system](#).

**May 3 (online):** Phil Arkow will present “The Forgotten Partner in Responding to Animal Abuse: The Veterinarian” for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#) webinar series.

**May 4 (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](#)

**July 19 (online):** Emily Lewis will present “The Complexities of Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse: for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#) webinar series.

**Aug. 1-4 – Denver, Colo.:** Phil Arkow will present “The Animal-Human Violence Link: How Pet-Inclusive Victim Assistance Can Better Protect Vulnerable Family Members” at the National Organization for Victim Assistance’s [48<sup>th</sup> Annual Training Event](#).

**Nov. 10 (online):** David Rosengard of the Animal Legal Defense Fund will present “Courtroom Animal Advocate Programs” for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#) webinar series.





## 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,  
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**Lesley Ashworth**

Former Director, Domestic Violence/Stalking Program,  
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Retired Chief Deputy District Attorney, Denver, Colo.  
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