ELDER ABUSE… and THE LINK
Pets Included in California Elders’ Protection-From-Abuse Orders

The State of California has enacted legislation that expands the definition of protective orders for elders and dependent adults to allow protective orders to enjoin a party from isolating the petitioner, in addition to existing provisions prohibiting abusers from harming petitioners’ animals and granting petitioners care, possession or control of their animals. The provisions were included in AB 1243, which was signed by the Governor on Sept. 23. The provisions become effective Jan. 1, 2023.

Existing California law authorized an elder or dependent adult who has suffered abuse, or someone legally authorized to seek relief on behalf of that person, to seek a protective order. The measure adds new provisions enjoining the respondent from preventing an abused person from receiving in-person, telephone or online visits. It would also allow courts to hear allegations that debts were incurred as a result of financial abuse of the elder or dependent adult.

The provisions were added because “the pandemic and resulting stay-at-home orders, as well as older adults’ vulnerability to COVID-19, have amplified the need for further protections, as well as creative ways to ensure older adults remain connected to their communities,” according to the bill’s preamble. It is designed to ensure that perpetrators do not cut off elders’ important familial and social connections.

Sec. 15657.03 of the Welfare and Institutions Code allows courts, on a showing of good cause, to issue an order granting the elder care, possession or control of any animals owned or kept in the residence and to order the respondent to “refrain from taking, transferring, encumbering, concealing, molesting, attacking, striking, threatening, harming, or otherwise disposing of any animal.”

The pet protections are modeled after similar provisions in the 36 states which include pets in protective orders for domestic violence survivors. It is not clear how many other states include companion animals in protection orders for elders and dependent adults.
DOMESTIC ABUSE... and THE LINK

Washington State Supreme Court Rules Coercive Animal Abuse is Domestic Violence

A major decision by the Washington State Supreme Court may pave the way for Washington to become the latest state to enact a law by which animal abuse intended to coerce or control a spouse or partner is defined as domestic violence as well as animal cruelty.

Under Washington law, 17 listed crimes of domestic violence provide additional protections for victims and enhanced sentences. The Supreme Court was asked whether the trial court in an animal cruelty case was correct in concluding that cruelty may be such a crime, a ruling which was overturned by the appeals court. The trial court had also instructed the jury that it could find that the animal cruelty had a destructive, foreseeable impact on persons other than the victim. The Supreme Court affirmed the trial court on both issues.

State of Washington v. Abdi-Iska involved Charmarke Abdi-Iska and Julie Fairbanks. Abdi-Iska had a history of abusing Fairbanks and her dog “Mona”, even threatening to kill them both. Abdi-Iska took Mona for a walk and claimed the dog had escaped from her harness. Fairbanks refused to believe him and panicked when she heard Mona yelping over the phone. Two bystanders witnessed Abdi-Iska beat and kick the dog and called police; one witness testified that the beatings caused her to have panic attacks and flashbacks. Mona died from multiple blunt-force trauma injuries.

Abdi-Iska was charged with first-degree animal cruelty. The state sought to have the attack also categorized as domestic violence and eligible for sentencing enhancers because:

- The crime had a destructive and foreseeable impact on persons other than the victim; and
- His conduct manifested deliberate cruelty or intimidation during a crime of domestic violence.

He was convicted of animal cruelty. The jury allowed for a domestic violence designation due to the nature of their domestic relationship prior to the crime. The trial court sentenced him to 12 months for the animal cruelty plus six months for the aggravator of committing the crime in the presence of others and imposed a no-contact order. Those rulings were vacated by the Court of Appeals.

In a 7-2 ruling, the Supreme Court concluded that animal cruelty may be designated a crime of domestic violence because the state legislature passed its domestic violence act “to recognize the importance of domestic violence as a serious crime against society and to assure the victim of domestic violence the maximum protection from abuse which the law and those who enforce the law can provide.”

“The domestic violence act does not create new crimes, it simply emphasizes the need to enforce existing criminal statutes in such a way that victims of domestic violence are protected,” the court wrote. Although animal cruelty is not specifically among 17 crimes which can be designated domestic violence, that list is explicitly non-exclusive and “animal cruelty is sufficiently similar to the enumerated crimes that the trial court did not err in asking the jury whether, under these acts, it was a crime of domestic violence.” Many listed crimes involve actions against a victim’s property; under Washington law, pets are considered personal property.

The court also held that Fairbanks was a victim, directly harmed by Abdi-Iska’s violent killing of her beloved pet and companion, under a state definition of a domestic violence victim as someone who has...
been subjected to psychological abuse “as part of a pattern of assaultive, coercive, and controlling behaviors directed at achieving compliance from or control over that intimate partner or household member.” The court also held in a 7-2 ruling that committing the crime in the presence of the traumatized innocent bystanders was an aggravating factor.

The court cited Link research and the legislature’s 2008 recognition that “considerable research shows a strong correlation between animal abuse, child abuse, and domestic violence. The legislature intends that perpetrators of domestic violence not be allowed to further terrorize and manipulate their victims, or the children of their victims, by using the threat of violence toward pets.”

Animal Legal Defense Fund attorneys Kathleen Wood and David Rosengard and the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys wrote an amicus curiae brief that was integrated into the opinion.

States Addressing Coercive-Control Animal Abuse

Nine states’ laws define animal abuse intended to control a spouse or partner as domestic violence: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, Tennessee, and Utah, plus Washington D.C. Five other states define such acts as stalking (Maine, Missouri), coercion (Oregon), or fear for one’s property (Mississippi, Texas).

Two bills in Washington would codify the Supreme Court ruling. Washington HB 1901/SB 5845 would add “coercive control,” including harm, threats or physical violence against someone’s pets, to the definition of domestic violence. Related bills are pending in seven other states:

- 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.”
- Illinois HB 4368 and Virginia HB 713 would expand the definition of domestic violence to include “coercive control,” 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.
- 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.
- Utah HB 175 would modify the “emotional distress” related to the offense of stalking to include suffering resulting from harming an animal. (See article below).
- Florida HB 121 would define the 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 or aggravated stalking.
- New Jersey S 1789 would go still further and expand the definitions of domestic violence, child and elder abuse, and abuse of persons with a disability to include acts of animal cruelty against those persons.
**Utah Bill Would Allow Pet Protective Orders, Expand Animal Abuse as Emotional Distress**

One of the most comprehensive bills in state legislation to include pets in domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders is poised to become law in Utah. **HB 175**, sponsored by Rep. Angela Romero (D – Salt Lake City) was unanimously approved and is awaiting enactment into law.

The bill would allow courts to include pets in domestic violence, dating violence, cohabitant abuse, and child abuse protective orders. It would also expand the existing inclusion of “emotional distress” resulting from harm to an animal in domestic violence cases to also include stalking.

Utah would become the 37th state, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, to include pets in domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders.

“What we see here is a significant problem of interpersonal violence,” Humane Society of Utah Advocacy Director Rachel Heatley told a legislative committee, according to *The Deseret News*. Heatley cited the case of a Farmington, Utah man who was arrested in 2021 for abusing several women by torturing their animals – including decapitating a cat and waving its severed head around “to terrify her while he laughed.”

Her testimony was echoed by Abigail Benesh, an attorney with the humane society who cited a “significant correlation” between domestic abuse, animal abuse, elder abuse and child abuse. “Abusers often exploit the emotional attachments that victims have with their pets,” she said. “That has them become pawns in this cruel game of coercion, manipulation and control in order to create an environment of fear and induced compliance.”

Several survivors of domestic violence also testified about their animals being abused. Inguin Tersten said her teenage daughter, who has a brain disease and a spinal cord injury, relies on a service dog that was threatened when they tried to break out of an abusive relationship. “He knew we wouldn’t leave the dog behind because of what the dog does for my daughter,” she said.

Jessica Gonzales testified that her boyfriend would threaten to lock her dog outside in freezing temperatures if she didn’t come home. It took testimony before a grand jury to get her dog back. “If a bill like this would have existed, I probably would have left a lot sooner,” Gonzales said.

**Canadian Parliament Seeks International Input on IPV Dangers**

Link advocates have been invited by the Canadian House of Commons’ Standing Committee on the Status of Women to submit written briefs for the committee’s study on intimate partner violence and domestic violence in Canada. The briefs will focus on several topics including: ways to improve support and protection for women and girls living in unsafe environments; identifying barriers facing women and girls seeking to leave unsafe environments; and international legislative experiences regarding the criminalization of coercive and manipulative behaviors. Written briefs should not exceed 1,000 words and must be submitted by March 17. [Details are available online](#).
**Purple Leash Grants Surpass $500,000; Grant Cycles Expanded**

RedRover and Purina have announced the latest grants in their collaborative Purple Leash Project (See the March 2019 LINK-Letter) which has now awarded 30 grants totaling more than $500,000 to domestic violence shelters to help them become pet-friendly and remove the barrier that prevents women with pets from leaving their abusive situations. Funding will provide pet-friendly upgrades and resources to survivors and their pets at each shelter, including outdoor pet play yards, kennels, supplies and veterinary care.

Shelters receiving the latest round of grants are:

- **Family Violence Prevention Center of Greene County in Greene County, Ohio** will receive $46,055 to build on-site kennels and create an outdoor fenced-in play area. Remaining funds will go toward pet supplies, laundry supplies and air purifiers for bedrooms and their indoor dog room.
- **Sojourner House in Providence County, R.I.** will receive $21,800 to house pets at one of their three shelters and foster care through the Rhode Island SPCA. Remaining funds will be allocated for veterinary care, food, pet deposits, and transportation.
- **YWCA of Bradford in McKean County, Pa.** will receive $19,000 to create a separate building on the property to house pets so that their owners can be close and care for them, all while accommodating survivors who may be allergic to dogs or cats.
- **The Spring in Tulsa County, Okla.** will receive $10,000 to build kennels, a visitation area and an outdoor play area. Remaining funds will go toward a new HVAC system. (The project received extensive newspaper coverage in the Tulsa World.)
- **Services to Abused Families in Culpeper County, Va.** will receive $7,950 to renovate their barn to house dogs and cats and create a bathing station for the pets to stay clean during their stay.

The Purple Leash Project is working toward a goal of helping to ensure that at least 25% of domestic violence shelters are pet-friendly by 2025.

“The Purple Leash Project is focused on easing a survivor’s decision to leave abuse,” said Nina Leigh Krueger, CEO and President of Purina. “Knowing that there are resources available to them and their four-legged family members aids in their decision to leave. By working together with RedRover, we’ve helped to provide more than 33,000 safe nights for domestic abuse survivors and their pets with much more work to be done.”

"We are so grateful for Purina, RedRover and the Purple Leash Project for providing funds that allow us to build a safe haven for animals whose owners are fleeing a domestic violence situation," said Shelley Alcorn, Program Director of the YWCA of Bradford. “We often hear of abusers threatening to harm pets if a survivor chooses to leave. Now, we can ensure the safety of survivors and their animals. Our program team is very excited to begin this adventure as our community can vastly benefit.”

RedRover also announced the expansion of their Safe Housing grant cycles from twice a year to three times a year. The new deadlines to apply for a Safe Housing grant are March 1, June 1, and September 1. Grants of up to $60,000 are offered to nonprofit domestic violence and animal organizations across the U.S. to build or renovate spaces dedicated to housing survivor’s pets, begin a foster program to care for survivor’s pets, pay for temporary boarding for survivor’s pets, or a combination of services that will best serve the community. Grant funds may also be used for routine veterinary care, emergency veterinary care, and pet deposits.
Canadian Pet Protections in Divorce Law Admired in Sweden

A new law enacted in Sweden declares it a crime to allow children to witness domestic violence, but it is unclear whether acts of animal abuse used to coerce and control domestic violence victims would be considered part of that criminal scenario.

SFS 2021:397, enacted in July, 2021 in chapter 4 of the Swedish Penal Code “Brottsbalken”, allows courts to sentence perpetrators to prison terms ranging from six months to four years. The new crime is called “barnfridsbrott”, with “barn” translated as child or children, “frid” meaning peace, and “brott” meaning crime. Children who witness acts of domestic violence are thereby considered victims of crime and become entitled to a range of benefits. An act of domestic violence that involves the intentional destruction of property such as furniture is included.

Helena Striwing, an author and lawyer specializing in animal welfare and a faculty member in Health and Life Sciences in the Linnaeus University Department of Biology and Environmental Science, tells The LINK-Letter that Sweden, like other nations, experiences aggressive parties using threats to damage or kill the family pet as a force to get his (or her) will through. If the aggressive party is the owner of the pet, however, no crime is committed under Swedish law even though animals are legally considered property.

Striwing is hopeful that Sweden can enact a law similar to Canada’s Divorce Act in which the definition of family violence was expanded in 2021 to include threats to kill or harm an animal (See the February 2021 LINK-Letter). Should such a law be enacted in Sweden, children and pets could be transferred out of harm’s way to a safe place.

THE LINK in the LITERATURE

Canadian Study Compares Domestic Violence Link in Shelters and General Population

A new study coming out of Canada is the first to examine whether the relationship between animal abuse and intimate partner violence (IPV) documented in samples of women accessing services from domestic violence shelters across Canada extends to a nationally representative sample of the general Canadian population. Amy Fitzgerald, Betty Jo Barrett, and Allison Gray build upon earlier research (See the August 2020, March 2019 and October 2018 LINK-Letters) and are reporting that women who encountered threats against their companion animals were five times more likely to be abused, and women in shelters were more likely to report threats and abuse of their animals than women in the general population. They cite factors that could contribute to the wide range in numbers of women in domestic violence shelters reporting animal abuse. They also emphasize that not only does this type of animal abuse harm animals, but it has the potential to also harm human victims of abuse. They conclude that actual and threatened abuse of pets by a romantic partner is a significant and sizable predictor of also reporting that partner perpetrated IPV, particularly physical and severe abuse.

“Pets are integral parts of many people’s families and when we don’t think about them we create situations where people aren’t going to be safe. So we need to figure out a way to include them in plans for people who are experiencing violence in their homes. You can’t see what you’re not looking for.”

That was the advice offered by retired Judge Katherine Tennyson on a webinar for the National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges and Animal Legal Defense Fund to introduce court officials to The Link between animal abuse and domestic violence and to consider the types of animal-related relief they can offer in civil protection and other types of court orders.

Tennyson was part of a trio of judicial authorities who presented “Animal-Related Relief in Protection from Domestic Abuse” to 54 participants. She described how abusers use their victims’ emotional attachments to their companion animals to intimidate and control them, how victims delay leaving out of fear for their animals’ welfare, and how COVID has increased the risk factors for domestic violence victims and their animals. “There is a Link and we need to be paying attention to it and we need to know what our options are,” she said.

She encouraged judges to train their staffs and all people charged with bringing information to a judge to include information about any issues impacting animals in the case. Advocates, guardians ad litem, attorneys, and help center staffs need to be aware of The Link so they can address the needs of the entire family, she said.

“You are the finder of facts,” she advised, suggesting that judges ask questions about any animal issues, especially if testimony offers a platform which the judge can follow up on. While a judge’s first priority is to provide a fair hearing for everyone, judges should always have in the back of their mind consideration for the safety of humans and pets in the home.

Judges need a “fundamental understanding that pets are a barrier for people seeking safety, and one of our higher duties as a judicial officer is to ensure that everyone is safe when we send them out into the world,” she said.

Her words were echoed by Stephanie McDonald, Directing Attorney, and Amy Buchanan, Staff Attorney, for the Family Law Self-Help Center in Legal Aid of Southern Nevada. McDonald reviewed ordinances and statutes from across the U.S. that give courts authority to protect human and animal victims in civil protection orders, and state laws which define animal cruelty as an act of domestic violence.
Buchanan, noting that domestic violence issues “are fairly complex and unfortunately very prevalent,” added that it is highly likely that there will be pets in a household marked by domestic violence. Judges should be prepared to ask a lot of questions to identify who in the home is at risk of harm, what they can do to safeguard pets and people, and whether a pet has been harmed or is a child’s emotional comfort in making child placement decisions.

Animals need to be included in custody disputes and protection orders. They should also be familiar with local resources such as domestic violence shelters that are pet-friendly or have pet foster-care programs, Buchanan said.

Judges should review pet issues periodically in domestic cases, and inquire if there are any pets or concerns about their care and maintenance even if there are no claims of abuse, said Tennyson. “Pet issues can arise at any stage in the process and when it does come up take it seriously.”

Judges need to protect victims’ safety, prevent crimes and break the cycles of violence. “If you’re not thinking about it, you’re not seeing it,” Tennyson concluded.

**ALDF Video Promotes Courtroom Advocates for Animals**

The [Animal Legal Defense Fund](https://www.aldf.org) has produced a seven-minute video describing “The Case for Courtroom Animal Advocates.” The video, narrated by actress Anjelica Huston, describes the history of “Desmond’s Law” in Connecticut and similar procedures in Maine in which pro bono lawyers and law students can advocate for animal victims in criminal cases. The video is particularly timely, with bills currently in state legislatures in New Jersey, New York and Florida proposing similar programs. The video describes “clearly established Links between humans harming animals and humans harming other humans.”
**LAW ENFORCEMENT... and THE LINK**

Kentucky Bill Would Require Link Training for Peace Officers

A bill in the Kentucky General Assembly would take the dramatic step of requiring all peace officers in the state to receive training on responding to animal abuse and on its Link to certain human crimes.

**Kentucky HB 450**, sponsored by Rep. Tina Bojanowski (D-Louisville), would require the Kentucky Law Enforcement Council to approve mandatory training subjects to be taught in law enforcement basic training courses, and for the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet to provide that training. All certified peace officers would be required to complete this training at least once every two years.

The measure would require peace officers to receive training on the identification, investigation, response, and reporting of animal abuse violations. It would also require training on The Link between animal abuse and certain offenses against people: abuse, neglect and sex crimes affecting 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.

The new provisions would be in addition to existing courses required in the training curriculum, including abuse, neglect and exploitation of the elderly; domestic violence; child physical and sexual abuse; lethality and risk issues; HIV/AIDS; bias-related crimes; and human trafficking.

**Online Course Offers Animal Control/Link Training for Law Enforcement**

The National Animal Care & Control Association has created an [online certification course](#) specifically for law enforcement officers as a guide to not only respond to crimes against animals, but also to be alert to clues that could protect a child from further abuse, a woman from experiencing more IPV, an elderly person from living through more neglect, or see the indicators of an animal fighting ring – which inevitably leads to many other crimes. “Animal Care & Control for the Law Enforcement Officer” emphasizes that from officer-involved shootings of dogs, to recognizing a suspect is also a dogfighter, to noticing that both children and animals are being neglected in a home, sworn law enforcement officers see clues every day, and if animals are at risk or being harmed, usually humans are too. The course is a guide for law enforcement in situations when they have to interact with animals, how to be more observant and recognize clues that will let them know to investigate further or know when it’s time to bring in outside experts in the community.

The course lasts 20 hours and there is a one-year time frame for completion. Students completing the course will receive a Certificate of Completion which can be submitted to their own agency, POST or other governing body for CEUs. The course also may address local or state Dog Encounters Training.

Topics covered include: responding to animal abuse; basic investigations; breed identification and behavior; large animal and equine cruelty; dangerous dogs and aggressive dog behavior; dog- and cock-fighting; animal hoarding; and search warrants and affidavits procedures.
VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK
New Textbook Guides Collaborative
Link-Based Approach to Animal Cruelty Cases

A new book is providing experts who respond to animal cruelty cases -- veterinarians, law enforcement agencies, animal care and control organizations, and prosecutors – with important multi-disciplinary tools that emphasize The Link, the veterinarian’s role, and the significance of collaboration when dealing with complex animal cruelty cases.

Animal Cruelty Investigations: A Collaborative Approach from Victim to Verdict provides a framework and a practical guide to every phase of animal cruelty investigations. An extensive library of checklists, form templates, specific case protocols, and lists of available resources empower professionals to respond to animal cruelty cases confidently and effectively.

Coauthored by Kris Otteman, of the Oregon State University College of Veterinary Medicine, and Linda Fielder and Emily Lewis of the Animal Legal Defense Fund, the book includes chapters on “The Veterinarian is an Important Partner in Animal Cruelty Investigations” and “The Link between Animal Cruelty and Crimes Against Humans.” It covers forensic examination and necropsy, crime scene response, report writing, guides for testimony, and specific case protocols for common animal cruelty scenarios.

The book also helps animal shelters navigate the challenges of holding animals in protective custody, housing unusual species, and placing evidence animals in foster care. Law enforcement agencies will learn useful techniques for search and seizure protocols, witness interviews, search warrant execution, evidence collection and handling, and chain of custody; all with a focus on animals as both victims and evidence.

Prosecutors will be guided through the steps necessary to utilize veterinarians’ findings during trial and gain insight into issues to be considered when reviewing search warrants, filing charges, proposing plea agreements, and filing pre-conviction forfeiture motions.


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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.
Animal Abuse Reporting Protocol Published
The Animal Emergency & Referral Center of Minnesota, based in St. Paul and Oakdale, has created an excellent protocol for veterinarians reporting suspected animal abuse. The policy and procedures guide includes:

- a protocol, specific to its clients in Minnesota and neighboring Wisconsin;
- a collection of animal abuse definitions and resources, including a city-by-city list of animal control and police contacts;
- and a form for reporting suspected animal abuse, which includes: information about the pet owner and the person suspected of abuse; reasons for the report; photos of any injuries; results of the animal’s physical exam; the name of the agency in Minnesota or Wisconsin where the report was sent; and who completed the report.

The National Link Coalition has added the AERC protocol to our growing list of veterinary hospital policies and procedures for reporting suspected animal abuse, available for free download on our website.

Colleen Crockford, AERC Director of Social Work Services, tells The LINK-Letter, “In researching the resources and processes in Minnesota and Wisconsin, I learned what a fractured and confusing system we have for such reports. It is my hope that we can one day have a centralized way of reporting that is easily understood and accessible.”

Veterinarians are mandated to report suspected animal abuse in both Minnesota and Wisconsin.

INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS
New York Proposal Would Create Statewide Animal Abuse Reporting Hotline
In our National Directory of Abuse Investigation Agencies, residents of New York State have one hotline to report suspected child maltreatment, two hotlines to report elder abuse, and one hotline to report domestic violence. We’ve identified at least 77 different numbers to call to report suspected animal abuse.

That confusion could be eased dramatically with the passage of A 5642. That bill, sponsored by Karl Brabenec (R – Orange/Rockland Counties) and currently in the Assembly Governmental Operations Committee, would require the New York Attorney General to establish a 24-hour toll-free animal abuse hotline which could be operated by a nonprofit organization specializing in animal protection. The Attorney General would also have to make reasonable efforts to inform the public about the hotline, which would then refer reportable incidents to the appropriate state or local law enforcement or SPCA agency.
Youths’ experiences of deliberately harming animals – or even of witnessing animal abuse – has been found to be a risk factor for school-based violence, bullying, and later acts of criminal behavior. Including humane education content within anti-bullying interventions has been proposed as a way to reduce multiple risk factors including youths’ empathy deficits (See the April 2017 LINK-Letter).

At least one humane education program has taken this message to heart. The Wayside Waifs animal shelter in Kansas City, Mo., has created a No More Bullying!® campaign for elementary schools based on the Link premise that “hurt people hurt animals and people.” Citing research that people who have been abused by other people often abuse animals, and that people who abuse animals often abuse people, the humane education initiative promotes social and emotional development in students as a way “to break the perpetual cycle of human and animal abuse.”

Specific No More Bullying! curriculum units are available for purchase for use in 3rd, 4th and 5th grades. They include facilitator’s guides, lesson plans, pre- and post-tests, companion animal assessments, animal welfare information, student journals linked to Common Core activities, and other supporting materials. Each unit consists of five hour-long grade-specific lessons.

Social emotional learning is the process through which children (and adults) acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to: understand and manage their emotions; set and achieve positive goals; feel and show empathy toward others; establish and maintain positive relationships; and make responsible decisions. Researchers evaluating the effectiveness of the program in 2019 reported that student participants showed significant improvements in empathy, self-awareness and self-management in alignment with the CASEL competencies for social and emotional learning.
THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

As the 2022 legislative season gains momentum, growing awareness of The Link between animal abuse and human violence has already resulted in 119 bills being introduced in state legislatures and the U.S. Congress. Here are the ones that we know of so far; please let us know of any others:

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, where the measure died. **SB 344** and **SB 513** 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 3rd-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 “evincing a depraved mind.” The bill was approved by the House Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee and was sent to the Justice Appropriations Subcommittee.

**Hawai‘i SB 2396**, recognizing that children residing in homes marked by domestic violence are also psychologically harmed and more likely to externalize antisocial behaviors, would grant children standing to file a petition for an order of protection or temporary restraining order (which includes provisions that protect pets). The bill is in the Senate Judiciary 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. The bill was approved by the House and is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

**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.” The bill is in the House Committee on Courts and Criminal Code.

**Iowa SF 512/HF 825** would amend the law that allow pets to be included in domestic violence protection orders and consent agreements to remove current provisions that domestic abuse or sexual abuse must occur before the court issues a consent agreement. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

**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. It was approved by the House and sent to the Senate Committee on Committees.

**Kentucky HB 709** would deny offenders convicted of first-degree abuse of a dog or cat from being released on probation until they have served at least 50% of their sentence if the animal abuse was committed as part of domestic violence or in the presence of a minor child; such acts of animal cruelty would be classified as Class D felonies. 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 have allowed 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 died in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

**New Jersey S 1789** would expand the statutory definitions of domestic violence, child and elder abuse, and abuse of persons with a disability to include acts of animal cruelty against those persons’ animals. The bill is in the Senate Environment & Energy 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 A3724 would amend existing provisions which allow courts, during a divorce proceeding, to award custody of pets in the animals’ best interests to also allow courts to require the parties to properly care for animals prior to the court’s determination of ownership of the animals. The bill is in the Assembly Judiciary 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.

Oklahoma SB 1446 would expand the definition of “domestic abuse” to include “coercive control,” defined as unreasonably engaging in numerous acts including committing or threatening to commit cruelty to an animal that intimidates a family or household member. The bill was approved by the Senate Judiciary 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 HB 7573** would allow a person who possessed a pet while cohabiting with another person to seek equitable relief relating to contested ownership of the pet; district courts could consider the well-being of the pet in making a determination of ownership. The court could not award joint ownership, visitation privileges or financial support and could award ownership to an animal welfare organization if the court found that neither of the previously cohabiting parties could provide a safe and appropriate living environment for the pet. 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.

**Rhode Island H 7360** would modify the definition of domestic abuse to include “coercive control” of another person, a pattern of behavior that unreasonably interferes with a person’s free will and personal liberty, including committing or threatening to commit cruelty to animals that intimidates. The bill was in the House Judiciary Committee but was then withdrawn at the sponsor’s request.

**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 the Senate 26-0 and is awaiting being signed into law.

**Virginia HB 713** would define “coercive control” for the purpose of issuing family abuse protective orders as a pattern of behavior that unreasonably interferes with a person’s free will and personal liberty, including committing or threatening to commit cruelty to animals that intimidates the other party. The bill was continued to 2021 in the House Courts of Justice.

**Washington HB 1901/SB 5845** would add “coercive control,” including harm to someone’s pets, including by physical violence, to the definition of domestic violence. The bill passed the House and is in the Senate Ways & Means Committee.

**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.

**California AB 2275** would change provisions regarding mandated reporters, which include animal control and humane society officers and veterinarians. Current law makes the intentional failure to report suspected child abuse or severe neglect a misdemeanor. The bill would instead make the failure to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect a continuing offense until discovered by a law enforcement agency.
Florida HB 121 would define the 3rd-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 “evincing a depraved mind.” The bill is in the House Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee.

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

Kentucky HB 709 would deny offenders convicted of first-degree abuse of a dog or cat from being released on probation until they have served at least 50% of their sentence if the animal abuse was committed as part of domestic violence or in the presence of a minor child; such acts of animal cruelty would be classified as Class D felonies. The bill is in the Committee on Committees.

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 Jersey S 1789 would expand the statutory definitions of child and elder abuse, domestic violence and abuse of persons with a disability to include acts of animal cruelty against those persons’ animals. The bill is in the Senate Environment & Energy Committee.

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.
Oklahoma SB 1713 would expand existing domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders to also include petitions filed by or on behalf of victims of child abuse. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

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.

Washington HB 1292 would create a new crime of “providing harmful material to a minor” which would include bestiality, excretory functions, or sexual acts that are violent or destructive, including but not limited to human or animal mutilation, dismemberment, rape, or torture. The bill is in the House Committee on Public Safety.

Animal Abuse and Elder/Disabled Abuse

Florida HB 121 would define the 3rd-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.

New Jersey S 1789 would expand the statutory definitions of elder abuse, abuse of persons with a disability, domestic violence, and child abuse to include acts of animal cruelty against those persons’ animals. The bill is in the Senate Environment & Energy 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 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 has been referred for interim study.

**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 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 1st-degree misdemeanor to a 3rd-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.
Idaho SB 1325 would replace the archaic law against “the infamous crime against nature committed with mankind or with any animal” with a more contemporary crime of “sexual abuse of an animal,” punishable by up to 5 years in prison and registry as a sexual offender. No convicted offenders could be released on parole without a psychiatric or psychological examination and risk assessment. Offenders could be barred from operating a child day care facility. The bill was approved by the House and is in the Senate Judiciary, Rules & Administration Committee.

Kentucky HB 709 and SB 125 would allow peace officers and animal control officers to seize victims of animal sexual abuse. HB 709 is in the House Committee on Committees and SB 125 was approved by the senate and sent to the House Committee on Committees.

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/HB 672 would update the law against “carnally knowing any brute animal” to a more modern “sexual abuse of animals,” a Class 6 felony, and bar offenders from owning animals for up to five years. Offenders could be ordered to obtain psychiatric or psychological counseling and treatment. HB 672 was approved by both the Senate and House and sent to the Governor.

**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.

Alaska HB 51 would allow criminal courts to impose a sentence above the presumptive range if aggravating factors, including a history of repeated instances of cruelty to animals, are present. the bill would add the defendant’s targeting the victim due to that person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or citizenship. The bill is in the House State Affairs Committee.

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 peace 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.

Wisconsin SB 536/AB 540 would prohibit offenders convicted of homicide, felony battery, sexual assault, and controlled substance felonies from possessing, controlling or residing with a dangerous dog. The bill passed the Senate 20-12 and is in the House.

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 and A 1558 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 respective Agriculture Committees.

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.

Cross-Reporting

Connecticut SB 235 would require veterinarians to report to local law enforcement agencies when they treat dogs that they believe have been used in animal fighting. The bill is in the Joint Committee on the Environment.

Iowa SF 2135, HF 2429 and HF 623 would grant veterinarians immunity from administrative, civil and criminal liability, and remove the normal confidentiality requirements, for making good-faith reports or assisting in the investigation of suspected animal maltreatment or rescuing a threatened animal. SF 2135 and HF 2429 are in the Senate Judiciary Committee; HF 623 passed the House and is in the senate Agriculture Committee.

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.

Missouri SB 1182 would mandate veterinarians, animal control officers and animal humane investigators to report abuse and neglect of children, the elderly and other vulnerable persons. Certain mental health, educational, protective services, and law enforcement personnel would be mandated to report companion animal abuse or neglect to a hotline established by the Missouri Animal Control Association. Newly-mandated reporters would receive one hour of training within the first 60 days of employment to recognize the signs of abuse or neglect. The bill is in the Senate Seniors, Families, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee.

New Jersey A 2709, citing Link research, would require DCF child abuse and neglect investigators to report suspected neglect or cruelty of livestock and non-livestock animals, with good-faith immunity from civil and criminal liability and administrative sanctions. The bill is in the Assembly Human Services Committee.
New Jersey S 1789 would require veterinarians, veterinary technicians, domestic violence investigators, employees of the Department of Children & Families, employees of the Department of Human Services, Division of Aging, police officers, and caregivers at residential health care facilities to report suspected animal cruelty to an appropriate law enforcement officer with civil and criminal immunity for reporting in good faith. The bill is in the Senate Environment & Energy Committee.

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.

New York A 5642 would require the Attorney General to establish a 24-hour toll-free animal abuse hotline and make reasonable efforts to inform the public about the hotline, which would then refer reportable incidents to the appropriate state or local law enforcement or SPCA agency. The bill is in the Assembly Governmental Operations Committee.

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/S 2211 would create a two-year pilot program to 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 was reported out of 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.

Rhode Island S 2227/HB 7678 would authorize the potential appointment of pro bono attorneys and supervised law students to act as animal advocates in cruelty and abuse cases, at the court’s discretion, to serve the interests of justice. S 2227 is in the Senate Judiciary Committee; HB 7678 is being held for further study.
THE LINK... IN THE NEWS

Mother and Friend Charged with Child Abuse; Animal Hoarding Possible

A Nevada mother of two children and her friend were arrested after police said they forced the children to live in a “deplorable” basement apartment covered in animal feces that they shared with 34 dogs. Lisa Arnold, 29, and her friend Christa Garcia, 46, of Lemmon Valley, were charged with child abuse and endangerment by the Washoe County Sheriff’s Office. The children, aged 7 and 9, appeared to have multiple bites and scratches in various stages of healing covering their bodies. Deputies reportedly found a deflated air mattress covered in dog feces which was the children’s bed. The children were placed into emergency care with family and Washoe County Regional Animal Services rescued all the dogs, which ranged in size and breed from Chihuahuas to pit bulls. Charges of animal hoarding were reportedly being considered.

Utah Man Charged with 13 Counts of Rape, Assault and Animal Torture

A man who Farmington, Utah police said suffers from manic episodes and erratic behaviors and has exhibited a pattern of “extreme violence” was charged with 14 counts of rape, assault and animal torture for allegedly abusing three women and their cats. KSL-TV reported that Caden Michael Biesinger, 20, was arrested following an investigation that began when one of the women told police Biesinger had physically abused her and killed four of her cats during a two-month period by throwing them against a wall or the ground or beating with a mallet. She said he had also duct-taped her dog’s four paws together and choked it. A second woman told police a similar story involving her being beaten and sexually abused and Biesinger waterboarding a cat, slamming its head into the floor and locking it in a plastic box with cold water for hours. The third woman’s affidavit said he had used a hatchet to decapitate a cat and laughed as he played with the severed head.

Man Charged with Animal Cruelty in Domestic Threat Incident

Police in Middletown, Conn. arrested Michael Bolton, 28, on charges of animal cruelty and domestic-related threatening for allegedly abusing a 14-week-old puppy and threatening to kill the dog if the female complainant didn’t come to his house. A Police department press release said Bolton was being held on a $50,000 bond; Animal Control took the dog from his residence for treatment and safety.
N.J. Web Designer Charged with Killing Salesman and His Dog

Donovan G. Hollingsworth, 25, of Evesham Township, N.J., was being held on charges of first-degree murder and illegal possession of a weapon, plus possible animal cruelty charges, for allegedly stabbing a salesman and the victim’s dog during an altercation. The Burlington County Prosecutor’s Office said Collingsworth, a web designer, allegedly stabbed Thomas Pierson III, 26, and Pierson’s Cane Corso “Django” during an altercation in an apartment. Authorities did not say how the altercation started but the two were apparently friends on Facebook.

Belgian Narcotics Raid Nabs Father and Son on Animal Welfare Charges

Belgian police searching for drugs in an apartment in Brussels arrested an unnamed father and his son on narcotics and animal welfare violations after they discovered 37 marijuana plants and a collection of dozens of poisonous spiders, scorpions and desert-dwelling lizards. The Associated Press reported that in addition to the cannabis plants and 228 grams of marijuana, police found 52 tarantulas, a python, three scorpions, four turtles, two bearded dragons, and 16 beetles.

Man with Children, Cats, Handgun, and Narcotics Passes Out at Gas Pump

A man who was found passed out at a gas station pump with two children, two cats, numerous syringes, and a loaded illegal handgun was arrested on numerous charges. Washington County, Ky. Sheriff’s deputies, responding to a report of a suspicious vehicle that had been parked at the gas pump for several hours, found Kevin McCutcheon, of Sellersburg, Ind., reportedly under the influence of a controlled substance. WLWT-TV reported that two children, ages 9 and 11, and two cats were in the back seat. McCutcheon was arrested on multiple narcotics charges, wanton endangerment and possession of a handgun by a convicted felon. The children, whose relationship to him was unknown, were turned over to Child Welfare until a grandmother picked them up. There was no information on the status of the cats.

Pit Bull Breeder Acquitted of Starving Dogs to Death, Faces Five Years in Prison for Destroying Landlord’s House

The former president of a Connecticut pit bull rescue group who had been charged in 2018 with starving five pit bulls to death (See the February 2019 LINK-Letter) was acquitted on animal cruelty charges because the judge said the prosecutors had not proven that the remains of the dogs – just skin and bones – were the result of starvation. However, Holly Lueders, 34, of Fairfield, Conn. will be sentenced on April 6 on her felony conviction of criminal damage to property for trashing her landlord’s foreclosed home with refuse, feces, needles and drug paraphernalia, along with the dead dogs, that reportedly will cost $160,000 to clean up. The Connecticut Post reported that Superior Court Judge Peter McShane acknowledged that while the death of the dogs was tragic and emotional, the state had failed to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Lueders had “intentionally and maliciously” killed the dogs as required under the law. Lueders faces up to five years in prison on the criminal damage charge. Lueders had also been charged in 2019 with assault, threatening and disorderly conduct following a domestic dispute; it was unclear what the status of those charges was.
Sheriff’s Deputy Shoots Wife, Son and Dog Before Committing Suicide

An Onondaga County, N.Y. Sheriff’s deputy is believed to have shot his wife, son, and the family dog before turning the gun on himself and committing suicide. The Syracuse Post-Standard reported that there were no signs of a struggle in the shootings of deputy Isaac Eames, 48, of Clay, N.Y., his wife, Karen, 46, their son, Troy, 21, and the dog. Troy Eames and the dog died and Karen Eames, who was able to call 911, was reported recovering but in serious condition. Investigators had no clear-cut motive for the shootings.

Florida Murder-Suicide Claims Lives of Three People and Two Dogs

Police in Port St. Lucie, Fla., are investigating an apparent murder-suicide where an unnamed man fatally shot two people and two dogs before turning the gun on himself. Treasure Coast Newspapers reported that police said the 52-year-old man killed a 33-year-old man and a 53-year-old woman and the two dogs before shooting himself. The names of the victims, and their possible relationships with each other, were not immediately clear. Detectives reportedly found a suicide note and believe depression could have been a motivating factor.

Kansas City Mother Charged with Decapitating Son and Dog

Jackson County, Mo. prosecutors said their breath was taken away when officers responding to a woman’s 911 call found the body of a decapitated 6-year-old boy near the kitchen and a decapitated dog in the basement. The Kansas City Star reported that Tasha Haefs, 35, allegedly called 911 telling authorities that she believed the devil was trying to attack her. Officers arriving at the gruesome scene reportedly found her on the kitchen floor, singing loudly, wearing a black dress, with blood on her hands and feet. She allegedly admitted killing the boy, Karvel Stevens, who was her son. She was charged with first-degree murder and armed criminal action.

Relatives said Haefs had spent years working through drug addiction, depression and severe trauma. The newspaper reported numerous warning signs that may have been missed. She had grown up in foster care and in the homes of friends and relatives while her mother spent time in Iowa state and federal prisons on narcotics charges. Both fathers of Karvel and two older siblings are currently in prison. Haefs had earlier brushes with the law in Iowa on narcotics and traffic offenses and feared losing parental privileges.

Domestic Dispute Call Leads to Discovery of Animal Hoarding

Police in Omaha, Neb. responding to a domestic violence disturbance of a man reportedly using a crowbar-type weapon to break several windows in a home stumbled onto a grisly scene of 128 severely neglected animals – 40 of which were already dead and decomposing – inside the waste-saturated home. The Omaha World-Herald reported that Tramaine L. Thomas, 35, and Sierra L. Lang, 30, were charged with 33 felony and misdemeanor counts of animal abuse and neglect. Nebraska Humane Society investigators described the home as being in a state of “extreme filth” and that multiple rooms had carpets that were completely saturated with animal waste. Many living and dead animals were kept in cages and the bodies of some dead animals were reportedly stored in a basement freezer.
New Zealand Girl Testifies of Animal Abuse Threats in Sexual Abuse Case
A teenage girl who alleges months of physical and sexual abuse by her father told a court in New Zealand that he hit her dog, held a machete to its neck and threatened to kill the animal. In a recorded police interview played to the Napier District Court, the unnamed girl said that she had a panic attack while he was hitting the dog and yelled at him to stop it. “He told me he was going to kill [the dog] then and there and he held the machete right up to his neck and said he was going to cut it, cut his head off,” she said. “I couldn’t do anything to help him.” The dog remained at the father’s house when the girl moved out. The father, who could not be named in New Zealand media for legal reasons, has pleaded innocent to 28 charges including rape and other sexual offenses against a minor. He has also denied charges of animal abuse and supplying the girl with cannabis and magic mushrooms.

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.

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 19th Hawai’i International Summit.


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.


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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phil Arkow, Coordinator</th>
<th>Mark Kumpf, CAWA</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Director, National Law Enforcement Center on Animal Abuse Dallas, Texas</td>
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