



# NATIONAL LINK COALITION

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*Working together to stop violence  
against people and animals*

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## TIMELINE OF KEY DATES IN LINK HISTORY

*(as of April 2022)*

**1181-1226** – St. Francis of Assisi writes, “If you have men who will exclude any of God’s creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men.”

**1259-1265** -- St Thomas Aquinas writes *Summa Contra Gentiles*, warning that cruelty to animals might lead to acts of violence against other human beings.

**1578-1580** – Michel de Monaigne writes *Of Cruelty*, arguing that “Natures that are bloodthirsty toward animals give proof of a natural propensity toward cruelty.”

**1693** – John Locke writes in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* that the custom of tormenting and killing animals hardens children’s minds towards men.

**1751** – William Hogarth’s four-part engravings, *The Stages of Cruelty*, depict animal cruelty leading to human abuse and violence.

**1775-1780** – Immanuel Kant’s *Lectures on Ethics* include “He who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men. We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals.”

**1832** – *Cobb’s Juvenile Reader No. 2*, a typical school textbook of the era, writes that even worms and flies have life and “if we learn to be cruel while boys we shall not grow up to be good men.”

**1874** – Henry Bergh, founder of the nascent American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, intervenes on behalf of child abuse victim Mary Ellen Wilson, leading to the subsequent formation of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and as many as 307 local humane societies and SPCAs including child protection as well as animal welfare work. (The last such dual-purpose program was the Connecticut Humane Society, which did not discontinue its child protection work until 1962.)

**1884** – George T. Angell, who founded the Massachusetts SPCA in 1868, wrote that animal cruelty should be a concern not only for the animals' welfare but also because of its potential for crimes against people. By teaching humane education, "just so soon and so far shall we reach the roots not only of cruelty, but of crime."

**1899** – Boston activist Sarah J. Eddy's book, *Friends and Helpers*, writes that "children must not be permitted to cause pain because of the effect on the children themselves."

**1963** – Psychiatrist J. M. Macdonald identifies a "triad" of antisocial behaviors – arson, bedwetting and animal cruelty – in the early childhood history of some criminals.

**1964** – Anthropologist Margaret Mead writes that "one of the most dangerous things that can happen to a child is to kill or torture an animal and get away with it."

**1971** – Fernando Tapia's research demonstrates that antisocial children known to abuse animals continued to be abusive in later years and confirms that animal cruelty frequently co-occurs with indications of psychological problems and domestic violence.

**1978** – The first article about the Link between child and animal abuse is published in American Humane's magazine.

**1980** – Janet Rowe Walker's study of child protection and SPCA agencies in Bucks County, Pa. reveals overlaps in 9% of the cases, with no communication or data-sharing between the two agencies.

**1980-1985** – Alan Felthous and colleagues compare criminal and noncriminal psychiatric patients and report that more violent and assaultive individuals reported higher rates of substantial cruelty to animals in childhood.

**1982** – Maine becomes the first state to require Child & Family Services workers and humane agents to cross-report suspected animal abuse and child abuse to each other.

**1983** – Minnesota becomes what may be the first state to mandate veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty, abuse or neglect.

**1983** – DeViney, Dickert & Lockwood report that 60% of families in a New Jersey community under investigation for child abuse and neglect also abused or neglected their pets. The co-occurrence was 88% in families marked by physical child abuse. The animal abuse was caused by the male abuser in 2/3 of the incidents, but by the children themselves in 1/3 of the cases. The families tended to utilize veterinary services at rates comparable to non-abusing households.

**1986** – Randy Lockwood & Guy Hodge's landmark *The Tangled Web of Animal Abuse* article in the HSUS News highlights "the link between cruelty to animals and other forms of violent or anti-social behavior."

**1987** – Colorado becomes the first state to specifically name veterinarians as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. Today, 18 states require all residents to report suspected child abuse, but Colorado and California are the only ones to name veterinarians specifically.

**1988** – Animal cruelty is first listed as a criterion for conduct disorder in the *Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders -- III*, but only as a crime against property; this would be revised in the 1994 *DSM-IV* as a crime of violence against others.

**1989** – A retired guide dog named Sheba becomes the first dog to assist child sexual abuse victims in the District Attorney’s office in Queens, N.Y. Similar programs followed suit in Mississippi in 1990, and Washington in 2003, leading to the formation of Courthouse Dogs in 2008 in Washington State.

**1989** – Randy Lockwood writes the first of 3 Training Key monographs on *Cruelty to Animals and Interpersonal Violence* for the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

**1991** – The American Humane Association convenes a Summit Meeting on Collaborative Approaches to the Prevention of Violence to Children and Animals. This evolves into a program bridging AHA’s child and animal protection divisions which is dissolved in 2010.

**1993** – The Latham Foundation creates the Child and Animal Abuse Prevention Project. This leads to the publication of three editions of an interdisciplinary manual for child, animal, elder, and domestic abuse professionals, *Breaking the Cycles of Violence*, and a 1995 video in which Judy Johns emphasizes, “What animals are abused, people are at risk; when people are abused, animals are at risk.”

**1990s** – Link awareness prompts state legislators to redefine animal cruelty crimes as felonies rather than misdemeanors; in 1990, only 4 states had such designations. Today all 50 do, with South Dakota becoming the last in 2014.

**1996** – Scottish veterinary pathologist Helen Munro describes a “battered pet” syndrome in the *Irish Veterinary Journal*.

**1996** – Barbara Boat, Frank Ascione and Randy Lockwood bring the Link concept to the attention of child welfare professionals at the International Conference on Child Exposure to Violence and the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children.

**1997** – Frank Ascione’s study of battered women in Utah domestic violence shelters paves the way for considerable subsequent research identifying animal abuse as a common and overlooked coercive-control tool and barrier for women to escape abusive situations.

**1997** – Maine criminologist Piers Biernie’s article, *Rethinking Bestiality: Towards a Sociology of Interspecies Sexual Assault*, initiates ongoing interest in links between animal sexual abuse and child sexual abuse. By 2022, 48 states came to outlaw bestiality. (As of this writing, New Mexico and West Virginia are the last two states where sex with animals is still legal.)

**1997** – The Humane Society of the U.S. creates its First Strike campaign, drawing attention to The Link between animal cruelty and human violence. The campaign expands internationally to Scotland shortly thereafter.

**1997** – Gary Patronek, Jane Nathanson and colleagues at Tufts University’s Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine create the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium.

**1998** – California becomes the first state to make psychological counseling a condition of probation for animal cruelty offenders.

**1998** – The first compilation of Link literature, *Cruelty to Animals and Interpersonal Violence: Readings in Research and Application*, edited by Randy Lockwood and Frank Ascione, is published by Purdue University Press.

**1998 – 2002** – The Animals & Society Institute develops AniCare and AniCare Child for the assessment and treatment of adult and juvenile animal abusers.

**1999** – The Latham Foundation underwrites publication by Purdue University Press of the first Link textbook, *Child Abuse, Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse: Linking the Circles of Compassion for Prevention and Intervention*, edited by Frank R. Ascione and Phil Arkow.

**1999** – The Arluke, Levin, Luke & Ascione study of animal cruelty offenders in Massachusetts reports the common wisdom of a “graduation hypothesis” – that animal abuse desensitized people and is a springboard for interpersonal violence – is not as common as a “pattern of general deviance” – in which the animal abuse is part of a constellation of antisocial behaviors and often follows other crimes.

**2000** – The Verlinden study reports that 5 of 11 school shooters had alleged histories of animal abuse.

**2000** – Frank R. Ascione writes *Safe Havens for Pets: Guidelines for Programs Sheltering Pets for Women Who Are Battered*, a review of programs in some 40 agencies.

**2001** – Four articles by Munro & Thrusfield introduce veterinarians worldwide to “battered pet” and conditions that suggest non-accidental injury (a term borrowed from the child protection field).

**2001** – Intervet UK hosts the landmark Forging the Link conference, leading to the formation of The Links Group UK. The Royal SPCA and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in the UK meet jointly for the first time since their founding over 150 years earlier.

**2002** – Tammy Fiebelkorn forms New Mexico’s Positive Links coalition, the first statewide Link coalition, and begins hosting a series of annual (later biennial) Link conferences.

**2003** – The first manual on animal abuse and elder abuse, *Creating Safer Communities for Older Adults and Companion Animals*, is published by the Humane Society of the U.S. and the Wisconsin Department of Health & Human Services’ Bureau of Aging and Long Term Care Resources.

**2004** – Debbie Duel writes *Violence Prevention and Intervention: A Directory of Animal-Related Programs*, a guide to more than two dozen Link-related programs, for the Humane Society of the U.S.

**2006** – Maine becomes the first state to enact a law specifically allowing courts to include pets in domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders. As of April 2022, 38 states plus D.C. and Puerto Rico have enacted similar provisions.

**2006** – Randy Lockwood authors *Animal Cruelty Prosecution: Opportunities for Early Response to Crime and Interpersonal Violence* for the National District Attorneys Association’s American Prosecutors Research Institute. The manual is updated by Lockwood and Allie Phillips in 2013.

**2008** – The American Humane Association convenes 25 leaders to a National Town Meeting and Experts Summit in Portland, Maine, to create the National Link Coalition.

**2008** – A unique collaboration between American Humane and the Humane Society of the U.S., in conjunction with the American Bar Association and Action for Child Protection, results in the publication of *A Common Bond: Maltreated Children and Animals in the Home: Guidelines for Practice and Policy*, written by Mary Lou Randour and Howard Davidson.

**2009** – Allie Phillips launches Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T), providing technical assistance to domestic violence shelters seeking to become pet-friendly. As of 2022, over 250 domestic violence shelters in the U.S., plus others in Canada, Australia, The Netherlands, and Spain, are pet-friendly.

**2010** – An Ipsos-Reid market research report on the status of animal shelters in Canada says that shelters' perspectives are evolving; treating symptoms of animal welfare problems such as animal homelessness, abuse and neglect is only a stopgap solution, and to be truly effective the underlying causes of family and community dysfunction must be addressed.

**2010?** -- Nuria Querol i Vinas forms GEVHA – Grupo para el Estudio de la Violencia hacia Humanos y Animales – in Spain to address animal abuse/domestic violence Links. In 2016 GEVHA becomes Observatorio de Violencia Hacia los Animales and launches VioPet for co-sheltering programs for human and animal victims of domestic violence.

**2010s** – AVMA issues a policy statement (2012), expanding on earlier 1995, 2000 and 2009 statements, saying veterinarians have a responsibility to report suspected animal abuse, whether or not such reporting is mandated by law; AVMA backs off in 2019 with a statement merely encouraging states to grant immunity from civil and criminal liability for veterinarians who report. The American Animal Hospital Association (2015) issued a statement supporting the reporting of suspicions. National veterinary associations in Canada, New Zealand and the U.K. follow suit with similar statements calling for reporting of suspected animal abuse and go even further to describe veterinarians as sentinels for possible child and domestic abuse also occurring in the home. (As of 2022, 20 states mandate, and 20 states permit, veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse; 33 of the states offer immunity.)

**2011** – The Animal Welfare Institute launches the Safe Havens Mapping Project, the first online portal for domestic violence survivors trying to locate domestic violence shelters that are either pet-friendly or that have cooperative foster care programs. RedRover, with its SafePlaceForPets.org portal, and Theresa's Fund and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, with the DomesticShelters.org portal, follow suit in 2014.

**2012** – RedRover initiates program of Safe Housing grants for domestic violence shelters to build pet kenneling facilities, and smaller grants to individuals for boarding and veterinary expenses when fleeing domestic violence. RedRover later partners with Purina in the Purple Leash campaign to expand the grant funds available. As of 2022, over \$500,000 has been awarded.

**2012** – The Royal New Zealand SPCA's *Pets As Pawns* report documents the extent of, and motivations for, coercive control animal abuse in that country.

**2012** – Tucson, Ariz. launches what is believed to be the nation’s first Animal Welfare Court dealing exclusively with animal welfare issues.

**2013** – The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children establish a hotline for RSPCA inspectors in the U.K. to report suspected child abuse.

**2014** – The National Sheriffs Association launches the National Law Enforcement Center on Animal Abuse and the National Coalition on Violence Against Animals to train police and sheriffs on responding to animal abuse and its co-occurring crimes against persons.

**2014** – At the urging of Link and law enforcement experts, the FBI adds four types of animal cruelty (simple and gross neglect, physical animal abuse, organized animal abuse, and animal sexual abuse) to its new National Incident Based Reporting System, offering the first effort to quantify the incidence of animal cruelty and neglect nationwide and their co-occurrence with other crimes. The process begins to roll out in 2016.

**2015** – The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys’ Animal Abuse Prosecution project issues a Statement of Principles citing direct Links between animal abuse and interpersonal crimes of violence and encouraging prosecutors to give animal cruelty cases greater priority.

**2015** – Scotland, initiating a national campaign to combat domestic violence, identifies veterinarians as one of the three professions most likely to encounter an abused woman; dentists and beauticians are the other two.

**2016** – Alaska becomes the first state to allow divorce courts to award custody of pets in the animals’ best interests, modeling long-standing provisions for child custody. As of 2022, five other states had enacted similar laws.

**2016** – Connecticut enacts first law allowing courts to appoint pro bono courtroom advocates for animal victims of cruelty.

**2016** – The National Animal Care & Control Association adopts a new guideline calling for animal care and animal control personnel to be mandated reporters of suspected abuse of children, elders and disabled persons.

**2016** – Animal Folks of Minnesota publishes a landmark report to help veterinarians understand that state’s animal cruelty laws and how to respond to suspected animal cruelty cases. The book is subsequently adapted for use in Oklahoma and Massachusetts.

**2017** – The One Welfare program in the UK., paralleling the One Health model in the U.S. which describes a collaboration between human and veterinary medicine as working in animal welfare, human well-being and environmental conservation, includes animal/human abuse with the sphere of activities.

**2018** – The U.S. Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team, comprised of the FBI, Department of Homeland Security, and National Counterterrorism Center, calls animal cruelty, particularly when premeditated, a warning sign for possible terrorism.

**2018** – Congress enacts the Pet And Women Safety (PAWS) Act, authorizing annual funding of up to \$3,000,000 to help domestic violence shelters build facilities so they can accept families’ pets.

**2018** – The Canadian Violence Link Coalition is formed by Humane Canada (formerly the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies).

**2019** – Andrew Campbell’s ongoing research of animal abuse and domestic violence in Indiana reports that the already-significant risk of lethality to first responders in domestic violence cases doubles when animal abuse co-occurs.

**2019** – The National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges and the Animal Legal Defense Fund announce a partnership to increase awareness in the criminal justice sector about how animal abuse impacts people.

**2020** – Ontario enacts law mandating Link training for all law enforcement officers in the Canadian province.

**2020-2021** – Extensive research documents the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on animal abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse concerns and how their Links are exacerbated by lockdowns and quarantine procedures.

**2021** – the National Domestic Violence Hotline and Urban Resource Institute publish the largest national study of women calling the Hotline regarding incidence of animal abuse and their needs for pet-friendly sheltering.

**2022** – The Washington State Supreme Court rules that an act of animal abuse intended to intimidate a spouse or partner can be construed as an act of domestic violence; laws to this effect are in place in 10 states.