



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

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A monthly report of news from THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER



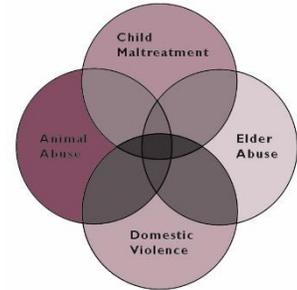
ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE



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[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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DOMESTIC ABUSE... and THE LINK

Kentucky Calls Coercive Animal Abuse Domestic/Dating Violence, Allows Courts to Award Pet Custody in Protective Orders



Reps. Ryan Dotson (left) & Walker Thomas

After an eight-year battle, Kentucky has become the 38th state to address the safety of pets in domestic violence protective orders, and the 11th state to specifically define coercive acts of animal cruelty as domestic and/or dating violence with the passage of **HB 319**. The bill was signed into law on April 8 after passing the House by a vote of 95-0 and the Senate 35-1. The new law defines violence against an animal when used as coercive conduct within the definition of “domestic violence and abuse” and “dating violence and abuse”.

While the new law does not specifically allow courts to enjoin a respondent from harming or taking any animals belonging to the petitioner or anyone else in the household, as the 37 other states (plus Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico) with Pet Protection Orders do, it allows judges in both types of cases to award possession of a shared domestic animal to the petitioner. Existing law, however, prohibits the adverse party from “disposing of or damaging any of the property of the parties,” which would theoretically include companion animals which are considered property under the law.

The bill was shepherded by Rep. Ryan Dotson (R – Clark/Fayette Counties) and Rep. Walker Thomas (R – Caldwell/Christian/Trigg Counties) with 18 co-sponsors. Similar bills that had been introduced in 2013, 2015, 2020, and 2021 died in previous legislative sessions.

“Passing HB 319 demonstrated the overwhelming support of this General Assembly to stand with our most vulnerable victims of domestic violence and their beloved pets which are a huge part of our family dynamics,” said Dodson. “For years I’ve worked to bring attention to The Link between animal abusers and domestic violence victims in Kentucky,” said Thomas. “Statistics have proven human victims are the targets of such abuse even though the helpless pets are the physical victims.”

Washington Adds Pet Threats to Domestic Violence Coercive Control

Following closely on the heels of a landmark Washington State Supreme Court ruling that declared that animal cruelty may be designated as a crime of domestic violence ([See the March 2021 LINK-Letter](#)), the Washington State Legislature has codified the concept with a new law that defines harm to a domestic violence victim's pets as within the definition of "coercive control."

HB 1901 was signed into law on March 31 and makes Washington the 12th state plus the District of Columbia to statutorily include intimidating or coercive animal abuse within the definition of domestic violence. The law amends RCW 7.105.010 to define coercive control as:

"a pattern of behavior that is used to cause another to suffer physical, emotional, or psychological harm, and in purpose or effect unreasonably interferes with a person's free will and personal liberty. In determining whether the interference is unreasonable, the court shall consider the context and impact of the pattern of behavior from the perspective of a similarly situated person. Examples of coercive control include, but are not limited to, communicating, directly or indirectly, the intent to harm the other party's children, family members, friends, or pets, including by use of physical forms of violence."

This recognition of the impact of animal abuse on domestic violence survivors was included in bills were enacted earlier this year in Kentucky and Utah. Similar language is included in bills still under consideration in Illinois, New Jersey, and Oklahoma. A similar bill in Rhode Island was withdrawn at the request of its sponsor, and one in Virginia has been deferred until 2023 for action.

\$700,000 Grant to Help Arizona Pet Survivors of Domestic Violence

The [Arizona Humane Society](#) has been awarded a \$700,000 state grant for its Project Away From Home that provides temporary foster care for pets belonging to domestic violence survivors and others facing housing instability. The grant is part of a larger \$1.27 million grant to protect pets when owners are facing instability and during natural disasters and to connect at-risk youth with educational programs involving animals.



The grant, announced by [Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey](#) during a tour of the humane society's campus in Phoenix, is partly in response to the organization's rescue efforts last year for pets impacted by devastating wildfires and flooding. The grant includes:

- **\$700,000** for Project Away From Home to assist pet owners experiencing domestic violence, financial crises, housing instability, or emergency hospitalization until they get back on their feet.
- **\$370,000** for Disaster Response & Emergency Rescue to fund a pop-up shelter, kenneling system and rescue truck for holding animals during disasters.
- **\$200,000** for educational programming to reach 2,000 at-risk and special need youth with hands-on learning experiences and career opportunities with animals.

Urban Resource Institute Receives Banfield Foundation \$65,000 Grant

The Urban Resource Institute's PALS ([People and Animals Living Safely](#)) program – the largest co-living program in the U.S. for human and animal survivors of domestic violence – has received a \$65,000 grant from the [Banfield Foundation](#) to construct an outdoor pet park at URI's newest family shelter, Brighter Days. The shelter is the seventh pet-friendly shelter among URI's 14 domestic violence shelters in New York City since PALS was created in 2013 to address the gap in services for survivors with pets seeking safety (*See the [June 2013 LINK-Letter](#)*). The latest funding brings Banfield's total financial support to the PALS program to \$132,000.

Brighter Days was completed in March, 2022 with 45 pet-friendly apartment-style units, expanding the capacity of the PALS program to 545 total units in URI shelters. Construction of the pet park, which will enhance the healing environment and comprehensive services for people and pets to heal together, will begin this Spring. In a survey conducted by URI and the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 91% of survivors reported that the presence of their pets was a significant factor in helping them heal



A mural at one of Urban Resource Institute's pet parks (*See the [June 2021 LINK-Letter](#)*).

To add to the visual appeal of the Banfield Foundation Pet Park, local artist Elijah Minton was commissioned to create a hopeful, whimsical and uplifting mural on the wall surrounding the area to amuse and inspire the residents. Minton created similar murals in three other URI pet-friendly shelters.

“Having safe shelter and access to an outdoor space where families can play freely and without fear is essential, especially when a pet is involved. Access to a pet park and playground is so important when thinking about how families interact, bond, and begin to rebuild their lives,” said Kim Van Syoc, Banfield Foundation Executive Director. “This is exactly why we are so proud to once again partner with Urban Resource Institute to help create a safe space for people and pets to live together and play together — and mostly importantly, heal together.”

“The URI People and Animals Living Safely Program addresses a critical need in services for domestic violence survivors — the accommodation of pets. Keeping families and pets together empowers survivors to leave a dangerous situation knowing their entire family can stay safely together, and it enhances the healing process for all,” said Nathaniel M. Fields, CEO of URI. “It is through generous donations from funders like the Banfield Foundation that we are able to continue to expand our services, increase our capacity and impact, and support survivors and their pets.”

OVC Announces 20 Grants for Domestic Violence Victims with Pets

The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Victims of Crime has announced a deadline of June 13 to accept proposals for its 2022 [Emergency and Transitional Pet Shelter and Housing Assistance Grant](#) Program. The program will fund five grants of up to \$400,000 each and 15 grants of up to \$100,000 each to fund shelter and transitional housing and other assistance to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking and their pets. Awards will be for a 36-month period of performance, beginning on Oct. 1.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE... and THE LINK



Judge Jennifer Ranji

Delaware Judges, Legislators to Address Link Issues

Over 100 Delaware judicial officers, attorneys, social services providers, and state legislators learned about The Link between animal abuse and human violence at an all-day CLE training – and left with plans for a collaborative meeting to move forward with new organizational policies, programs and state legislation.

“The crossover is clear,” said Family Court Judge Jennifer Ranji, describing The Link. “This is the beginning of a dialogue on issues that other jurisdictions have already done. What we’re talking about today is incredibly important to the families we work with and to fulfill our mission of achieving the best for families and society.”

“I’ve gotten a lot out of today,” said Sen. Stephanie Hansen, one of five state legislators attending the conference at the Delaware State Bar Association, which promoted the event with a clever announcement about how “DSBA has gone to the DOGS!” Animal cruelty legislation is tough to get through a state legislature, she said, because it pits advocacy groups against each other in knockdown-dragout fights. “It becomes a battle of the advocates. But once you have an issue like this that you can take to this level, when you understand the connection with domestic violence and the attention of the courts, you bring it up to a different level. It becomes a legitimate public health issue that we can talk about.



Sen. Stephanie Hansen

“I’m excited about today,” Hansen added. “There’s data showing how animal abuse impacts families and it’s a bellwether. When you get the executive and judicial branches, DSCYF, and the animal advocacy groups all together, it’s no longer a battle of the advocates. You just lightened your lift tremendously.”

The training, organized by Ranji, the DSBA and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, featured four national speakers – Diane Balkin and Martha-Elin Blomquist of the NCJFCJ, Mary Lou Randour of the Animal Welfare Institute, and Phil Arkow of the National Link Coalition – among seven panels of 20 Delaware officials. They represented such interests as legal services, homeless populations, animal protection, family courts, youth rehabilitation, attorneys specializing in divorce and custody proceedings, family services, and child advocates.

Visiting pets from the Brandywine SPCA provided much-needed “fur fixes” from the intense discussions of family violence – and all of the puppies were adopted by meeting participants.

A half-day planning session is scheduled for June 2 to create a working plan to assimilate the information learned, assess the needs and opportunities of the state and the organizations represented, and address potential legislation to move the Link agenda forward in Delaware.

Topics that were considered at the session included:

- Delaware’s unique system of having a state Office of Animal Welfare to centralize all animal cruelty investigations and reporting.

- How children’s emotional attachments to their pets aren’t temporary or ephemeral, and abuse of their animals – especially when combined with other traumas in a child’s life – can have long-term consequences.
- Finding safe havens for the pets of children going into foster care.
- Including pets in protection-from-abuse orders, as 38 other states have already done.
- Routinely adding questions about the presence and welfare of pets in child abuse and domestic violence report lines and screenings, since in many cases victims are so traumatized by their own abuse they fail to see the animal welfare issues unless they are specifically asked about it.
- The limited case law on how courts should address how someone’s “soon-to-be-ex-spouse” may use that person’s emotional attachment to the pet as leverage and a negotiation point in a divorce settlement’s contentious disposition of pets and property.
- Challenges of enacting animal welfare laws in an environment where many people are passionate about the cause but many others are indifferent; cases generate high social and mainstream media attention; and legislatures, investigators, prosecutors and courts are already over-burdened and under-resourced.
- Increasing opportunities for therapy dogs in courtrooms and for co-sheltering the pets of people who are homeless.
- Whether the sanctity of attorney-client confidentiality can be waived if the attorney learns of an animal cruelty crime the client committed.
- The gaps in existing risk assessment forms that fail to include questions about animal cruelty.
- How to counsel a domestic violence victim who is afraid to report the abuse for fear such reporting would endanger her even more.



Sen. Kyle Evans Gay noted that upon becoming a legislator she was very shocked at how contentious animal welfare bills can be. “But if we believe that Delaware should be a safe place for all, then that should include everyone, including our pets,” she said.

“I have learned more today than in any seminar in the past four or five years,” said Tania Marie Culley of the Office of the Child Advocate. “We need to continue this dialogue.”

Sen. Kyle Evans Gay

THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS... and THE LINK

Participants Sought for Research Study on AAT with Abused Youth

A Ph.D. student at the University of Utah College of Social Work is recruiting mental health therapists who have provided Animal-Assisted Therapy to children who have experienced abuse or neglect to participate in a study. Allison O’Connor is seeking participants who can take part in 60-90 minute telephone or Zoom interviews. Participants will receive a \$60 gift card. The goal of the study is to better understand the perspectives of clinicians providing AAT to youth who have experienced abuse or neglect by a caregiver and to articulate the impact of resources and services that may be available to maltreated youth. To participate, contact O’Connor at 801-455-6142 or [email her](#).

THE LINK in the LITERATURE

ASPCA Offering Seed Grants for Research on Cruelty and Psychological Trauma



The ASPCA is inviting proposals for two types of multi-disciplinary research grants, from universities and institutions working in such fields as criminal justice, law, public policy, public health veterinary medicine, psychology, sociology, social work, and animal behavior.

The 2022 [Cruelty Research Seed Grants](#) will be one-year grants, typically \$10,000-\$15,000 with a maximum of \$25,000. The grants are designed to promote the growth of high-quality research that advances anti-cruelty public policy, program initiatives and responses by key professional audiences, including animal welfare organizations, legislators, government agencies, veterinarians, law enforcement, prosecutors, and social services professionals. Applications from researchers who are in the early stages of their careers are strongly encouraged. Applications will be accepted until Aug. 1. [Details are available online.](#)

One 2022 [Psychological Trauma Seed Grant](#) of up to \$20,000 is being offered for research that informs the documentation of animal cruelty and neglect in the absence of physical trauma. Of particular interest is research that focuses on objective metrics such as biomarkers, composite markers and quantifiable behavioral markers. Applications will be accepted until Aug. 1. [Details are available online.](#)

Latin American Link Review Calls for One Health/One Welfare Work

One of the few research reviews to emerge from Latin America is reporting how animal abuse is widely recognized as both a risk factor for and a potential consequence of interpersonal violence. In children, especially, factors such as dysfunctional families, antisocial personality, physical, psychological, or intimate abuse, and frequent exposure to domestic aggression or animal abuse have been confirmed as factors that can predispose young people to perform acts of animal cruelty. The authors, who come from universities in Mexico, Colombia and Brazil, emphasize that an interdisciplinary One Health or One Welfare approach, incorporating physicians, veterinarians, other health care professionals, social workers, and humane education, is critical for the recognition, management, and prevention of domestic violence involving both humans and other animals. The review of 179 literature references describes animal cruelty as an indicator of domestic violence, the neurobiology of empathy and of violence, risk factors for the development of animal cruelty in children, bestiality, and international approaches to animal protection laws. Better protections for animals can be achieved with veterinarians taking an active role to address the problems from a perspective based on medical knowledge and animal welfare science.

-- Mota-Rojas, D., Monsalve, S., Lezama-García, K., Mora-Medina, P., & Domínguez-Oliva, A., et al. (2022). Animal abuse as an indicator of domestic violence: One Health, One Welfare approach. *Animals*, 12, 977. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani12080977>

Australian Study Reports High Correlations of Animal Abuse and IPV

An Australian systematic review of the literature focused on animal cruelty in abusive adult intimate partner relationships looked at a specific focus on the prevalence, motivations, and impact of animal abuse on victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) and the pets involved. The findings showed that the prevalence of animal abuse is high in households with IPV (range: 21% – 89%) and that there is a significant relationship between IPV and animal abuse. Both are often perpetrated concurrently, with animal abuse used as a mechanism to control the partner and facilitate IPV. Animal abuse affected a victim’s decision to leave the abusive relationship and seek support and had an ongoing psychological impact on both animal and human victims. The authors concluded that their findings have practical implications for organizations, professionals and researchers working in the field of intimate partner violence and animal abuse.

-- Cleary, M., Thapa, D.K., West, S., Westman, M., & Kornhaber, R. (2021). *Animal abuse in the context of adult intimate partner violence: A systematic review. Aggression and Violent Behavior, 61, 101676.*

Trauma-Informed Practice for Animal Shelters Similar to Child Welfare and Domestic Violence Workers

A study of how animal protection workers react to the emotionally challenging situations that can adversely impact their mental health compares their experiences to similar common secondary trauma and compassion fatigue experienced by other service providers, including those working in child welfare and domestic violence. It recommends implementing trauma-informed practices applying a One Welfare framework that acknowledges the Links between animal and human abuse and neglect. The study notes that poor well-being in one sphere contributes to poor well-being in other spheres. Seizures and surrenders of animals are directly related to the poor well-being of the animal as a result of abuse or neglect, but often include the poor well-being of the guardian. An individual and organizational trauma-informed approach acknowledges that trauma is a common experience; embracing this approach is a way to avoid causing more harm and more trauma to others, and to prioritize well-being for everyone involved, the authors write.

-- Stevenson, R., & Morales, C. (2022). *Trauma in animal protection and welfare work: The potential of trauma-informed practice. Animals, 12, 852. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani12070852>*



What is The LINK?

Legislation...
Intervention...
Networking...
Knowledge...

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

ANIMAL SHELTERS... and THE LINK

Audit of Louisiana’s Animal Shelters Cites Need for Improvements Based on The Link



A performance audit on the State of Louisiana’s role in animal welfare and control activities is recommending expanding and strengthening its role to better ensure the humane treatment of animals in facilities, and providing better training for law enforcement and prosecutors regarding animal cruelty and abuse and their linkage to other violent crimes. This lack of training “could result in a failure to protect not only abused animals, but also the families and communities in which these animals live,” the report reads.

“More needs to be done to improve the investigation, prosecution, and prevention of animal cruelty and abuse,” concludes the 58-page report, issued in 2021 by Louisiana Legislative Auditor Mike Waguespack.

The audit was conducted “because the humane care and treatment of companion animals, such as dogs and cats, when they are in the custody of animal shelters and other facilities, is important to the public and to public health and safety.” The audit concludes with an appendix on The Link between animal cruelty and abuse to domestic violence, at-risk youth, child abuse and neglect, elder abuse and neglect, and other criminal activities.

“A large and growing body of research has documented the co-occurrence of animal cruelty and interpersonal violence, particularly domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse. The underlying conditions that create the opportunity for animal cruelty to occur (e.g. stress, deprivation, aggression, mental illness, prior victimization, drug and alcohol use) mirror the risk factors for interpersonal violence,” the audit concludes.

“According to the National School Safety Council, the U.S. Department of Education, the American Psychological Association, and the National Crime Prevention Council, animal cruelty is a warning sign for at-risk youth. When children are cruel to animals, it is not necessarily an exploratory stage of development: it could be the earliest stages of a conduct disorder, a gang initiation ritual, an act of revenge, peer pressure, or a way for an abused child who feels powerless to exert control over his or her own victim and gain a sense of power. Exposing children to animal cruelty may desensitize them against all forms of violence.”

It adds, “Animal fighting in particular has been linked to gang, weapons, human trafficking, gambling, and narcotics offenses. Therefore, reporting, investigating, and prosecuting animal cruelty can help remove dangerous criminals from the street.”

Issues cited in the audit include:

- No single state entity has sufficient regulatory authority over animal welfare and control.
- Animal control shelters are not required to follow the state’s Minimum Standards for Animal Shelters. In addition, these standards do not align with nationally-recommended practices.
- Louisiana lacks consistent and reliable sources of funding for animal welfare and control.
- 11 parishes provide no animal shelters, despite state law requiring them to do so.
- The extent to which animal cruelty exists in Louisiana is not fully known because the data on animal cruelty and abuse is not centralized or readily available to the public. Lack of local ordinances related to companion animals also inhibits prosecution of such cases.

ELDER ABUSE... and THE LINK

Collaboration in Houston to Help Vulnerable Adults and Animals

A Letter of Cooperation between the [Houston SPCA](#), [Harris County Resources for Children and Adults](#), and the [Harris County Attorney's Office](#) was signed on March 9 to solidify the Texas agencies' commitment to sharing specialized resources to help the most vulnerable adults and animals in dire need of assistance, such as cases of animal hoarding, in one of the nation's most populous counties.

The proactive measure will improve response time for HCRCA and the Houston SPCA when an urgent rescue requires the need for mutual services such as adults who can no longer care for themselves and the animals in their care. The Harris County Attorney is vital to this collaboration that will allow both agencies to provide their specialized services more efficiently from the initial report to the response and rescue.

The idea for the collaboration came about when HCRCA and the Houston SPCA managed some cases that involved adults and animals in need of urgent care. The Harris County Attorney's Office can now provide a legal process by which both these specialized services can work expeditiously together.



Christian Menefee

"I'm grateful for this partnership that will help assist both people and animals in caring for their well-being. This collaboration creates a rapid response process to help some of our most vulnerable people and pets," said Christian Menefee, Harris County Attorney.

as important, the continuum of care," said Adam Reynolds, Chief of Animal Cruelty at the Houston SPCA.

"Collectively, we now have additional efficiencies in place for all who are working in the field to expedite the special assistance needed for adults and their animals, and just as important, the continuum of care," said Adam Reynolds, Chief of Animal Cruelty at the Houston SPCA.



Adam Reynolds



Joel Levine

"The seniors and vulnerable adults we serve are incapacitated and unable to care for themselves, so this partnership will provide their pets with the necessary veterinary and wellness services they deserve," said Joel Levine, Executive Director of Harris County Resources for Children and Adults.

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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.

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

UK Link Guidance Expands Focus on Suspected Domestic Violence

[The Links Group UK](#) has updated its pioneering Link guidance for veterinarians with a new, third edition that features an extended focus on responding to suspected domestic violence as well as possible animal abuse.

[Suspected Abuse of Animals and People: Guidance for the Veterinary Team](#), originally published in 2012 and updated in 2013, is meant to be used in conjunction with a sister publication, *Domestic Abuse Awareness: Guidance for Veterinary Practice Managers and Employees*.

The 36-page Guidance includes: an overview of The Link and its relevance to veterinary personnel; the scope and forms of domestic abuse in the UK and how animal abuse fits within the Power and Control Wheel model; signs of non-accidental injury (NAI) in animals and indicators in presentation, history, clinical findings, and client and animal behavior that should raise the veterinarian's index of suspicion regarding possible abuse; procedures to follow when NAI is suspected; and the process to report allegations under the RCVS's Code of Professional Conduct.

It also includes a section on how veterinary staff should respond when a client reveals domestic abuse and how to establish a protocol for the practice to deal with this eventuality. The "ARDR" process (Ask, Reassure, Document, Refer/Report) is similar to the process recommended for cases of suspected animal abuse. It includes similar suggestions when abuse of children or elders is suspected and contact information for UK domestic and child abuse resources and crisis lines.

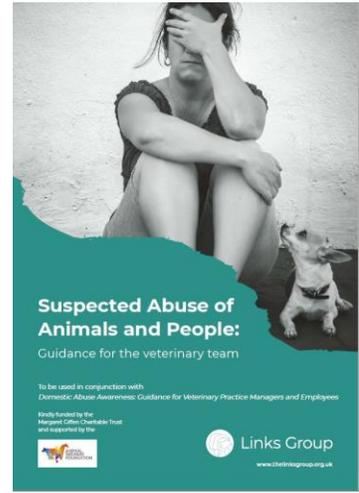
"Situations can be complicated; the facts surrounding abuse are not easy to contemplate or to deal with, but by reporting a concern to the relevant agency, you and your team could help change, or save, someone's life. Abuse of an animal may be the index case – the first to be presented from a violent household, or it may be part of a wider jigsaw of reports building a bigger picture of an abusive situation where both people and animals need help," the Guidance concludes.

"By recognizing animal abuse, and by looking beyond the animal, to a person who may also be suffering, the vet team is well-placed to grasp the 'golden moment', to offer compassion and kindness, to ask if things are OK, to signpost to help, or to report a concern."

Canadian Veterinary Journal Reviews Animal Abuse Reporting Issues

A new article in the *Canadian Veterinary Journal* describes the mandatory reporting of possible animal abuse as an extension of older child welfare and elder abuse reporting laws that reflect a society's commitment to an enhanced legal framework to protect the vulnerable.

In reviewing the history of mandatory reporting, the article notes that the question of which situations reasonably trigger an obligation to report is not well-documented in the literature. It presents a case example to demonstrate evidence-based (analytical) and affective (intuitive) components inherent in making the decision. The need to incorporate an intuitive component, a rapid recognition of information



clusters indicating a specific diagnosis, is necessary given the absence of a more evidence-based, analytical medicine paradigm.

“When immediate recognition fails, the fallback option is the analytical approach to clinical diagnosis, namely formation of a differential diagnosis list and selective further discriminatory testing,” the authors write.

The article reviews the variations in language in Canadian provinces’ animal welfare acts, comparisons with pediatricians’ experiences and reluctance to report suspected child abuse, and particular issues in reporting in rural societies where the literature on Non-Accidental Injury in companion animals has not widely addressed farm animal protection.

Mandatory reporting laws “are evolving and flexible instruments of social policy, whether the vulnerable individual is a non-human animal, a child, the elderly, or other valued individual unable to protect themselves from avoidable harm. Mandatory reporting statutes communicate the intent of society to maximize early detection and prevention of injury to the vulnerable,” write the authors, noting that responsible reporting and improved animal welfare is contingent on making veterinarians more competent and more confident in reporting.

-- Will, D.D., & Whiting, T.L. (2022). Animal protection reporting requirements of Canadian veterinarians: Example case. *Canadian Veterinary Journal*, 63(3), 301-306.

Six-Step Process for Responding to Suspected Abuse Published

A six-step process to help innovative veterinary practitioners to become as proactive in responding to suspected animal maltreatment as physicians have long been accustomed in preventing suspected child abuse has been published. Author Phil Arkow, National Link Coalition Coordinator, writes that the six steps help remove personal, professional, peer, and organizational normative barriers, paralleling earlier processes in the human medical fields.

The six steps are:

- Step 1** – Build awareness that animal abuse is a significant professional concern.
- Step 2** – Assist practitioners in resolving contentious ethical dilemmas.
- Step 3** – Provide guarantees of legal protection.
- Step 4** – Provide training to identify clinical indicators of abuse as a differential diagnosis.
- Step 5** – Develop standardized practice management responses that balance the interests of the practice, staff, clients, patients, and other animals in the household.
- Step 6** – Know how to report.



The article also includes sidebars on veterinary responses to suspected child and elder abuse, domestic violence and the veterinarian, and how these responses are part of a One Welfare approach.

-- Arkow, P. (2022). Veterinary responses to suspected family violence. *Innovative Veterinary Care Journal*, 12(2), 40-48

INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS

Six-Part Webinar Series Introduces Humane and Human Services to Each Other



The Saskatchewan SPCA in Canada is continuing its outreach programming (*See the [April 2022 LINK-Letter](#)*) with a free six-part [Violence Link webinar series](#) that explores the complex relationships between animal abuse and violence towards people. The series is organized by the One Health Education Committee to help improve the quality of life of animals and humans by providing education for animal welfare and human services professionals.

The series kicked off on May 3 with Jo-Anne Dusel of the Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services in Saskatchewan (PATHS) presenting “Domestic Violence: What to Know, Say and Do.” Upcoming webinars in the series are:

- **May 12 – Saskatoon, Sask., Canada (online):** Holly Schick of Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism will present a webinar on “[Older Adult Abuse](#)”.
- **May 17 – Saskatoon, Sask., Canada (online):** Mitch Paton of Child and Family Programs will present a webinar on “[Child and Family Programs Overview](#)”.
- **May 19 – Saskatoon, Sask., Canada (online):** Don Ferguson of Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan will present a webinar on “[Animal Abuse and the Violence Link](#)”.
- **May 26 – Saskatoon, Sask., Canada (online):** Margaret Doyle of VCA Canada Riverbend Animal Hospital will present a webinar on “[The Link between Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Violence as Well as Other Criminal and Antisocial Behaviors](#)”.
- **May 31 – Saskatoon, Sask., Canada (online):** Monique St. Germain and Debra Danco of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection will present a webinar on “[Animal Sexual Abuse in the Context of the Production of Child Sexual Abuse Material: A Review of ‘Multiple Offender’ Cases](#)”.

“Love Shouldn’t Hurt” Webcast features The Link

National Link Coalition Coordinator conducted a 25-minute video podcast for Project SARAH (Stop Abusive Relationships At Home) for Jewish Family & Children’s Services of Southern New Jersey. The video, hosted by Project SARAH Coordinator Hilary Platt, is part of the “Love Shouldn’t Hurt” educational series and discusses The Link between animal abuse and human violence. It is [available online](#).



THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

As the 2022 legislative season rolls along, growing awareness of The Link between animal abuse and human violence has already resulted in **141 bills** introduced in state legislatures and the U.S. Congress – **8 of which** have already been signed into law! Here are the ones that we know of so far; please [let us know](#) of any legislation not included in this list:

Current Link Bills We're Watching:

Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders



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



California 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.)



Colorado HB 22-1041 was signed into law on March 24. It adds animal control officers and State Bureau of Animal Protection employees to the "protected persons" who, if they are victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, can petition to have their personal information removed from official records to reduce an imminent and serious threat to the safety of the person or the immediate family.



Colorado SB 22-183 would create a \$35 million Crime Victim Services Fund to award grants to non-governmental or Indian tribe domestic violence and sexual assault programs and coalitions that provide services to crime victims, including attending to the needs of animal companions. The measure passed the Senate and is in the House Appropriations Committee.



Delaware HB 264 would allow a person who has been the victim of non-consensual sexual conduct or sexual penetration, including with an animal, to apply for a sexual violence protective order if the person has a reasonable fear that the perpetrator will harm the petitioner in the future. A sexual violence protection order would be available only for victims lacking a family or dating relationship with the perpetrator, as they can already request a protection from abuse order. The bill is in the House Appropriations Committee.



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 died in the Justice Appropriations Subcommittee. It would have defined 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 "evinced a depraved mind."



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 cleared the Senate and is in the House Health, Human Services and Homelessness 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 was signed into law on March 18. It provides that orders for protection (which include protecting pets from the respondent) will be enforced indefinitely if the respondent is required to register as a lifetime sex or violent offender.



Indiana HB 1370 died when the legislature adjourned. It would have required 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 already includes acts of cruelty to a family member's animals as a "crime of domestic violence."



Iowa SF 512/HF 825 would amend the inclusion of pets in domestic violence protection orders and consent agreements to remove provisions that domestic abuse or sexual abuse must occur before the court issues a consent agreement. The bills have passed both the House and Senate.



Kentucky HB 319 was signed into law on April 8. It includes violence against an animal when used as coercive conduct within the definition of "domestic violence and abuse" and "dating violence and abuse" and allows judges in both types of cases to award possession of a shared domestic animal to the petitioner.



Kentucky HB 709 died in committee. It would have denied offenders convicted of first-degree abuse of a dog or cat from being released on probation until they had 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 have been classified as Class D felonies.



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 passed the House and Senate and was sent to the Governor.



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 died in the Senate Judiciary Committee. It 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.



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 bill is in the Assembly Children & Families Committee.



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 has passed the House.



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 House Judiciary Committee requested it be held for further study.



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 House Judiciary Committee requested it be held for further study.



Rhode Island H 7360 was withdrawn at the sponsor’s request. It would have modified 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.



Utah HB 175 was signed into law on March 22. The measure modifies the definition of “emotional distress” related to the offense of stalking to include mental or psychological suffering resulting from harming an animal, and includes pets in dating violence and cohabitant abuse protection orders.



Virginia HB 713 was deferred until 2023 when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have defined “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.



Washington HB 1901 was signed into law on March 31. The new law adds “coercive control,” including harm to someone’s pets, including by physical violence, to the definition of domestic violence. It takes effect July 1, 2022.



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.



H.R. 4159/S.2121, the Courtroom Dogs Act, would develop best practice guidelines for the use of dogs in federal courts and grand jury rooms to provide support for defendants, complainants and witnesses. The bills are in the House and Senate Judiciary Committees.



Arizona HB 2324 was signed into law on April 14. It makes 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.



California AB 2274 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 allow a case involving the failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect to be filed within one year, and not later than four years, after the offense. The bill is in the Committee on Public Safety.



California AB 2085 would change existing law, which requires professionals, including animal control and humane society officers, who re mandated to report suspected child abuse and neglect, to report only suspected child abuse and “severe” neglect. “Severe neglect” would be defined as willfully causing or permitting harm or injury to a child or putting the child in imminent danger. The bill was approved by the Committee on Public Safety and referred to the Appropriations Committee.



Florida HB 121 died in the Justice Appropriations Subcommittee. It would have defined 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 “evinced a depraved mind.”



Florida HB 435 died in the House. It would have made it a 3rd-degree felony to cause or allow a minor under age 18 to attend an animal fight.



Kentucky HB 709 died in committee. It would have denied offenders convicted of first-degree abuse of a dog or cat from being released on probation until they had 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 have been classified as Class D felonies.



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 died in committee when the legislature adjourned. It would have made it a felony to permit a person under age 18 to attend or participate in any dog- or cock-fighting.



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 died in committee when the legislature adjourned. It would have created 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.

Animal Abuse and Elder/Disabled Abuse



Florida HB 121 died in the Justice Appropriations Subcommittee. It would have defined 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.”



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 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 SB 692 would amend the definition of “sexual bestiality” to replace “vagina” with “genitals” when describing illegal sexual contact with an animal. The bill has passed the House and the Senate. **SB 878 died in the Criminal Justice Committee.** It would have replaced “vagina” with “female genitals”; **SB 420 died in the Judiciary Committee.** It would have increased 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. **HB 435 died in the House.** It would have further expanded 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 have been barred from being around animals for 5 years following conviction.



Idaho SB 1325 became law on March 22. It replaces 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 can be released on parole without a psychiatric or psychological examination and risk assessment. Offenders can be barred from operating a child day care facility.



Kansas HB 2009 and HB 2223 would continue to define sex with animals as “sodomy,” but remove sex with an adult member of the same sex from the definition of sodomy. The bills are in the House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice.



Kentucky HB 709 and SB 125 died in committee. They would have allowed peace officers and animal control officers to seize victims of animal sexual abuse.



Louisiana HB 142 would allow individuals to sue for damages commercial entities that publish or distribute pornographic materials harmful to minors, including depictions of bestiality. The bill is in the House Committee on Civil Law and Procedure.



Maryland SB 22 died in committee. It would have repealed 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.



Missouri SB 980/HB 2446 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. The bill is in the Senate Agriculture, Food Production and Outdoor Resources Committee.



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.



Pennsylvania SB 354 would add “sexual intercourse with animals” to the definition of “sexual violence” awareness programs that institutions of higher education and private licensed schools must teach. The bill is in the Senate Education Committee.



Virginia SB 249 was signed into law on April 11. The new law modernizes the prohibition against a person who “carnally knows any brute animal” into a more contemporary prohibition of “sexual abuse of animals,” a Class 6 felony, and prohibits convicted offenders from owning any animals for up to five years. Offenders could be ordered to obtain psychiatric or psychological counseling and treatment.



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 died in committee when the legislature adjourned. It would have defined 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.

Psychological Evaluation of Offenders



Mississippi SB 2261 died in the Judiciary Committee. "Buddy's Law") would have required youths who have been adjudicated as delinquent for committing cruelty against a domesticated dog or cat to receive psychiatric evaluation and counseling or treatment.



New Jersey S 1144 would establish the crime of animal hoarding and require mental health counseling for all adult and juvenile animal cruelty and hoarder offenders. It 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 Judiciary Committee



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.



Louisiana HB 842 would grant veterinarians and veterinary technicians immunity from civil and criminal liability for reporting, in good faith, suspected animal cruelty or neglect and for releasing confidential information. The bill passed the House and is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Massachusetts S.2672 would permit child protection workers and personnel protecting elders and the disabled to report suspected animal abuse at any time, rather than just during the course of their investigations and evaluations. The bill is in the Senate Ways & Means Committee.



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.

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 various aggravating factors are present. Existing law includes a history of repeated instances of cruelty to animals as an aggravating factor; 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.



Georgia SB 512 died when the legislative session ended. It would have added cockfighting to provisions of the law outlawing gambling on dog fights and create a “misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature” to allow a minor child to attend an animal fight.



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 died in committee. It would have required 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.



Louisiana SB 327 would allow a district attorney to obtain a court warrant to search for and seize any firearms belonging to a person who recently committed acts of animal cruelty where there is probable cause to believe that the person poses a risk of imminent personal injury to himself or to another person. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Minnesota HB 208 would establish a Minnesota Companion Animal Board to protect and promote the welfare, social well-being, and physical and mental health of companion animals; one member would “represent public human health and welfare issues and the relationship between companion animal and human health and welfare.” It is in the Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee.



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

 **New York A999/S7876** would prohibit the release of or failure to control an animal with the intent of preventing a police officer or peace officer from performing his or her lawful duties, as assault on a police officer in the second degree, a Class C felony. The bills are in the Assembly and Senate Codes Committees.

 **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 2328** would expand the state’s annual grants to local law enforcement agencies to enforce illegal gambling to include investigations of animal fighting and possession of animal fighting paraphernalia. The bill is in the Committee on Gaming Oversight.

 **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.

 **Pennsylvania SB628** would make it a Second Degree felony to seriously injure or kill a police animal while perpetrating or being an accomplice to a felony crime. The bill is in the senate Judiciary Committee.

 **Pennsylvania SB 814** would make it a felony to harm or kill a police animal while evading arrest or attempting to escape detention for an underlying felony or misdemeanor. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

 **South Carolina S378** would require offenders who harm or injure a police dog or horse in the performance of its duties to make full-cost restitution to the law enforcement agency for the replacement of the animal and be subject to increased fine and imprisonment penalties and/or 500 hours of community service with an animal-related organization. The bill was approved by the Senate and is in the House Judiciary Committee.

 **Utah HB 112 died when the legislature adjourned.** It would have changed “dog” to “animal” in statutes prohibiting the training or exhibition of animals for fighting other animals, and repeal the cock fighting statute.

 **Wisconsin SB 536/AB 540 died.** The bills would have prohibited offenders convicted of homicide, felony battery, sexual assault, and controlled substance felonies from possessing, controlling or residing with a dangerous dog.

Court-Appointed Advocates for Animals



Florida S 172 died in the Judiciary Committee. It would have allowed the appointment of an advocate, upon the court's initiative or request, from a list of attorneys and certified legal interns provided by the Animal Law Section of the Florida Bar Association, for "the interests of an animal" in civil and criminal court proceedings regarding welfare, care or custody.



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 passed the Senate and is in the House 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 living animals' interests and to help ensure their well-being 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. The bills are in their respective Judiciary Committees.

THE LINK... IN THE NEWS

Physical Therapist Gets 4 Life Sentences for Killing Family and Dog

A former physical therapist from Connecticut who was being sought by federal agents when his family, including their dog, living in Celebration, Fla., hadn't been seen for weeks (*See the [February 2020 LINK-Letter](#)*) was convicted on April 14 of killing his wife, three children, and the family dog. The [Orlando Sentinel](#) reported that Anthony Todt, 46, was convicted on all counts of murdering his wife Megan, 42, his 13-year-old son Alek, 11, his 4-year-old daughter, Zoe, and the dog in what prosecutors said was a crime of trying to gain complete control over the lives of his wife and kids. The judge sentenced Todt to four life sentences without the possibility of parole for the murders plus a year of incarceration for killing the dog. Todt at one point blamed Megan for feeding the children a poisoned dessert before killing herself, but forensics suggested the victims had been stabbed, a finding that were difficult to determine with certainty because the bodies had decomposed for the three weeks that Todt remained in the house with the bodies. Todd allegedly told detectives that if people "based upon their beliefs they bring their children into this world, they should just decide when they leave."



Anthony Todt



Man Pleads Guilty to Killing Ex-Girlfriend’s Pets, Faces Prison

A New Jersey man who pleaded guilty to animal cruelty and attempted burglary for killing his ex-girlfriend’s pets (*See the [November 2021 LINK-Letter](#)*) is facing three to seven years in a New York State prison. Matthew Savinovich, 27, described by

Matthew Savinovich Putnam County, N.Y. officials as “a predicate felon with an extensive criminal record,” systematically and brutally slammed his ex’s two Chihuahuas into a wall and crushed her pet ferret by dropping a mattress and box spring on top of it. The [Hudson Valley Post](#) reported that Putnam County SPCA Chief Ken Ross said the arrest and conviction “is extremely important. People who abuse and kill animals become desensitized to taking a life. Studies show that people who kill animals will go on to commit crimes against humans.”

Foster Parents, Child/Animal-Abusing Teen Convicted in Child’s Murder



Cole, Williamson, and Mwangi

Logan Mwangi, a 5-year-old foster child in Cardiff, Wales who was murdered by his mother, stepfather and another 14-year-old foster child, was the victim of death threats by the 14-year-old who was called a “monster” who harmed animals. [The Guardian](#) reported that the older boy’s foster parents had found knives hidden behind pillows and had warned social services that the teen was fascinated with killing, had threatened to kill Mwangi, had once harmed a neighbor’s dog, and stomped on a young girl’s toes after she had had a foot operation. Court testimony revealed that Angharad Williamson, John Cole and the teenage boy were convicted of murder after Mwangi had been the victim of gruesome injuries from a brutal beating after being confined in a dark dungeon-like bedroom for months. They conspired to clean up the death scene and lead police off the track before the boy’s body was found dumped in a river. “He had a cruel streak in him,” the teen’s foster mother reportedly said. “He would go for the weak and vulnerable. Children or animals – it didn’t matter.”

Iowa Man Charged with Killing Cats to Control and Torture Girlfriend

Capri Rogers, 33, of Sioux City, Iowa, was arrested on charges of abusing his live-in girlfriend for over a month by assaulting and raping her and killing her two cats “as means of control and torture,” according to court documents. [KCAU-TV](#) reported that the violence against the woman escalated from being punched in the head to strangulation, rape, and having a .22-caliber revolver shot into the mattress near her head. After being treated in a hospital for a broken ankle and cranial surgery, she returned home where Rogers allegedly killed her two cats in front of her and warned her that if she left him or told anyone she would end up like her cats. Police found a shotgun and revolver and 140 spent shell casings in the home of Rogers, a convicted felon from a 2008 robbery who is prohibited from possessing firearms.



Capri Rogers

Three People and Family Dog Killed in Apparent Murder-Suicide

Police in Overland Park, Kansas investigated an apparent murder-suicide in which three people and the family dog were found shot and killed. The [Kansas City Star](#) said authorities identified the bodies of Johnny Hill, 71, Susan Hill, 64, and Desiree Hill, 34. Police have not said who they suspect was the shooter. The investigation was triggered when Susan Hill’s sister was unable to contact any family members and asked for a welfare check.



Susan Freudenthal

Woman Charged with Using Cat to Scratch Girlfriend’s Face

Susan Freudenthal, 53, of St. Petersburg, Fla., was charged with domestic battery for allegedly scratching her girlfriend in the face with the couple’s cat. WFLA-TV reported that court documents alleged the couple got into a heated argument, during which Freudenthal took their cat, held it up to her girlfriend’s face and swore on the cat’s life that she was not cheating. Jail records said it was her second arrest for domestic battery since March 2021.

Three Charged in Shooting Dog that Attacked their Duck

Three residents of Salisbury, Mass. were charged with misleading a police investigation, firearms offenses, and animal cruelty in the alleged shooting of a neighbor’s dog that escaped and attacked their duck. [NBC10 Boston](#) reported that Emily Meattley said her 4-year-old daughter accidentally let their two dogs out; after wandering into the neighbors’ yard, one came back but “Zoe,” a Siberian husky, never returned. When she went looking for Zoe she heard a gunshot. Police said Jacob Dow, 28, allegedly shot Zoe, buried her in the back yard and denied it. He was arrested on charges including maliciously killing a pet, animal cruelty, firearms offenses and misleading a police investigation. Authorities also charged Donald Dow, 29, with weapons offenses and misleading the investigation, and George Dow, 77, of Seabrook, N.H., with misleading a police investigation.

Ex-con Charged with Child & Animal Porn, Weapons Offenses

A convicted felon in Frederick, Md. is facing 16 counts of child pornography, aggravated cruelty to an animal and possession of illegal weapons after sheriff’s deputies allegedly found videos of child pornography and him performing sexual acts on his dogs. Jason Havel, 42 was the subject of a five-month-long investigation that uncovered the alleged evidence on his three cell phones, according to a Facebook announcement from the [Frederick County Sheriff’s Office](#).



Jason Havel



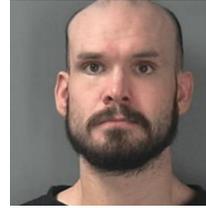
Eric Lee Elliott

Texas Man Charged with Murder over Stray Dog Complaint

A long-festering neighborhood dispute about dogs running loose has led to the shooting death of a Cleveland, Texas man and his neighbor being charged with the murder. According to the Liberty County Sheriff’s Office, Eric Lee Elliott, 70, was doing yard work when a dog belonging to William Womack, 60, got into his yard. Elliott reportedly told Womack’s step-daughter that if they did not keep the dog out of his yard he would shoot the dog, [KTRK-TV](#) reported. Womack walked across the street to talk to Elliott, who allegedly then kicked Womack in the leg, shot him once in the stomach with a .45 caliber handgun stuck in his waist, and then put the gun in his truck and continued with his yard work as if nothing had ever happened, according to eyewitnesses. Womack was pronounced dead at a local hospital.

Accused Man Re-Arrested for Allegedly Drowning Puppies

Five days after Connor Lappin, 29, of Bloomington, Ind., was arrested and charged with felony intimidation and misdemeanor battery in an unrelated case, he was re-arrested for allegedly drowning two puppies in his bathtub. The [Bloomington Herald-Times](#) reported that Lappin told police he had drowned the pups before eventually pouring bleach on them and burying them in two different wooded areas, and blamed his actions on his use of methamphetamines.



Connor Lappin

Minnesota Murder-Suicide Claims Four Family Members and Dog



The Barry family, left, and Brandon Cole-Skogstad

Police in Duluth, Minn. are investigating an apparent multiple homicide/suicide in which the family dog was also killed. The [Duluth Police Department](#) said that Brandon Taylor Cole-Skogstad, 29, of Hermantown, killed his aunt, uncle and two cousins and the dog before taking his own life. After a welfare check about an individual experiencing a mental health crisis failed to locate Cole-Skogstad, who had said that he intended to hurt himself and other family members, Duluth police were dispatched to the home of the Barry family. The victims, believed to have been shot while they slept, were identified as Sean, 47; Riana, 44; Shiway, 12; and Sadie, 9. Cole-Skogstad reportedly described the two young girls as “angelic” in a since-deleted Facebook post.

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Sheriff Seeks Suspect in Rape and Shooting Her Dog as They Escaped

Authorities in Genesee County, Mich., posted all-points bulletins and social media alerts seeking a suspect, Daquantae Lamar Johnson, 24, of Flint, who was believed to be armed, dangerous and still at-large after allegedly raping a woman and shooting her dog to death while she escaped. [WWJ Newsradio](#) reported that Johnson and the victim had a fight on Easter Sunday. When Johnson wouldn't allow her to leave, he allegedly pistol-whipped and raped her. She threw her dog out of a window and jumped out herself, lifted the dog over a fence, and recorded a video on her cell phone. While she walked away with her dog, Johnson reportedly followed them, assaulted her again and shot the dog in the back of the head. The arrest warrant lists six felony and two misdemeanor charges which could result in Johnson, a habitual offender, receiving multiple life sentences. A bystander helped the woman bury the dog by the side of the road where they placed the dog's leash over the makeshift grave.



Daquantae Johnson

Florida Men Jailed for “Atrocious” Child and Animal Pornography



Jay Goebel, left, and Philip Vanermine

Hillsborough County, Fla. Sheriff's detectives, responding to information from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, uncovered what Sheriff Chad Chronister told the [Tampa Free Press](#) was “atrocious behavior” of alleged child and animal pornography. Philip Vanermine, 42, and his significant other Jay Goebel, 30, of Tampa, were charged after images and videos of child pornography and sexual acts with an animal were allegedly found on their cellphones and social media accounts. Animal control officers removed five dogs, seven cats, three snakes, and 11 cockatiels from their residence.

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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.

May 12 – Saskatoon, Sask., Canada (online): Holly Schick of Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism will present a webinar on “[Older Adult Abuse](#)” as part of the Saskatchewan SPCA’s 6-part Violence Link webinar series.

May 17 – Saskatoon, Sask., Canada (online): Mitch Paton of Child and Family Programs will present a webinar on “[Child and Family Programs Overview](#)” as part of the Saskatchewan SPCA’s 6-part Violence Link webinar series.

May 18 (online): Phil Arkow will present “The Link in ‘Covidian Times’: An Aberration or the New Abnormal?” at the 15th Annual International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association [conference](#).

May 19 – Saskatoon, Sask., Canada (online): Don Ferguson of Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan will present a webinar on “[Animal Abuse and the Violence Link](#)” as part of the Saskatchewan SPCA’s 6-part Violence Link webinar series.

May 24 – Villanova, Pa.: A workshop on “Children, Families and Pets: Considerations for the Needs and Safety of Vulnerable Victims” will be held at the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys’ 4th National [Domestic Violence Prosecution Conference](#).

May 24 (online): RedRover and Greater Good Charities will host a free one-day [training workshop](#), “Don’t Forget the Pets: Housing People and Pets,” exploring ways to create and sustain pet co-housing programs for people and pets in crisis.

May 25 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

May 26 – Saskatoon, Sask., Canada (online): Margaret Doyle of VCA Canada Riverbend Animal Hospital will present a webinar on “[The Link between Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Violence as Well as Other Criminal and Antisocial Behaviors](#)” as part of the Saskatchewan SPCA’s 6-part Violence Link webinar series.

May 31 – Saskatoon, Sask., Canada (online): Monique St. Germain and Debra Danco of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection will present a webinar on “[Animal Sexual Abuse in the Context of the Production of Child Sexual Abuse Material: A Review of ‘Multiple Offender’ Cases](#)” as part of the Saskatchewan SPCA’s 6-part Violence Link webinar series.

June 7 – Kansas City, Mo. (online): BestyBnB will present a [webinar](#) on “Pets and People: Safe, Together, Connected.”

June 16 – Chicago, Ill.: Linda Fielder, Emily Lewis and Kris Otteman will present “Animal Shelters and Veterinarians as Collaborative Partners in Animal Cruelty Response and Prevention”, and Leslie Irvine will present “Lessons Learned from Homeless Pet Owners,” at the Association for Animal Welfare Advancement’s [Spring Conference](#).

June 22 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

June 27 – Harrisburg, Pa. (online): Andrew Campbell will conduct a webinar sponsored by the [Keystone LINK Coalition](#) and the Pennsylvania General Assembly’s Animal Protection Caucus.

July 4 – Lisbon, Portugal: Laurentina Pedroso will present “The Connection between Domestic and Animal Violence” at the [Zoobiquity Conference: Female Health Across the Tree of Life](#)”

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

July 25 (online): RedRover and Greater Good Charities will host a free one-day [training workshop](#), “Don’t Forget the Pets: Housing People and Pets,” exploring ways to create and sustain pet co-housing programs for people and pets in crisis.

July 27 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

July 30 – Philadelphia, Pa.: Nicole Forsyth and Amanda Landis-Harris will present “The ‘Link’, One Welfare and Trauma-Informed Care at the [AVMA Convention](#).

Aug. 3 – Denver, Colo.: Phil Arkow will present “The Animal-Human Violence Link: How Pet-Inclusive Victim Assistance Can Better Protect Vulnerable Family Members” at the National Organization for Victim Assistance’s [48th Annual Training Event](#).

August 24 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

Sept. 28 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

Oct. 26 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

Nov. 4 – Virginia Beach, Va.: Phil Arkow will present at a statewide [conference on domestic violence](#) for Virginia judges.

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

Nov. 23 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

Dec. 28 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.



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



ABOUT THE NATIONAL LINK COALITION



The National Link Coalition is an informal, multidisciplinary collaborative network of individuals and organizations in human services and animal welfare who address the intersections between animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment and elder abuse through research, public policy, programming and community awareness. We believe that human and animal well-being are inextricably intertwined and that the prevention of family and community violence can best be achieved through partnerships representing multi-species perspectives.

Members of the National Link Coalition Steering Committee

Phil Arkow, Coordinator

Chair, Animal Abuse & Family Violence Prevention Project,
The Latham Foundation
Etowah, N. Car.

Lesley Ashworth

Former Director, Domestic Violence/Stalking Program,
Columbus City Attorney's Office/Prosecution Division
Boone, N. Car.

Diane Balkin, J.D.

Retired Chief Deputy District Attorney, Denver, Colo.
Denver, Colo.

Barbara W. Boat, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Univ. of Cincinnati College of Medicine
Exec. Director, Childhood Trust, Cincinnati Children's Hospital
Cincinnati, Ohio

Kristin Burki, M.S., AP.S.W.

Director, National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life
Madison, Wis.

Steve Dale

Nationally Syndicated Radio Host and Author
Chicago, Ill.

The Hon. Rosa C. Figarola

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

Maya Gupta, Ph.D.

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

Joey Orduna Hastings

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

Helen Holmquist-Johnson, MSW, Ph.D.

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

Kendall Houlihan

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

Mark Kumpf, CAWA

Director, Detroit Animal Care & Control
Detroit, Mich.

Randall Lockwood, Ph.D.

Consultant, ASPCA
Falls Church, Va.

Paul Needham

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

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

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

Allie Phillips, J.D.

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

Gale Rasin, J.D.

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

Chelsea Rider, J.D.

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

The Hon. John J. Romero, Jr.

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

Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM

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

John Thompson

Executive Vice President
Small & Rural Law Enforcement Executives Association
Alexandria, Va.

Kathleen Wood

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