



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

The LINK-Letter Vol. 16, No. 4 April 2023

A monthly report of news from THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER



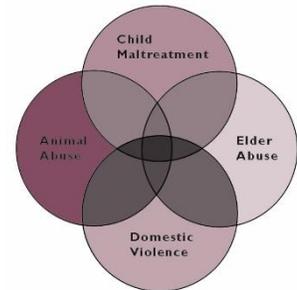
ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE



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[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Three Key Link Bills Introduced in Delaware

Three key components of legislation affecting the welfare of animals and people in domestic violence situations have been introduced into the Delaware General Assembly. The comprehensive package is the result of several months' worth of work by key stakeholders in the state.

Judge Jennifer B. Ranji of the Family Court of the State of Delaware tells *The Link-Letter* that on March 3, the Legislative Committee of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council approved three pieces of proposed legislation, which were introduced on March 28:

- **Adding abuse of pets to the protection-from-abuse statute** and allowing the court to award pets as part of the relief. **SB 70**, sponsored by Sens. Nicole Poore & Stephanie Hansen & Rep. Krista Griffith, would add engaging in cruelty to or inflicting or attempting to inflict physical injury to a companion animal to the definition of abuse for protection-from-abuse proceedings. The Act would provide specific authority for the Court to include provisions in a protection-from-abuse order that grant a petitioner exclusive care, custody, or control of a companion animal and order a petitioner to stay away from the companion animal. Currently, 38 states have similar pet protection orders in place.
- Requiring law enforcement, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Family Services to **cross-report animal abuse** when learned of in the course of a child welfare investigation. **SB 71** is also sponsored by Sens. Hansen and Poore and Rep. Griffith. Existing statutes declare that DFS's purposes include promoting the safety of children and the integrity and preservation of their families, coordinating community resources, providing assistance or services to children and families identified to be at risk, and preventing and remedying child abuse and neglect. The bill would extend those purposes in implementing the roles of law enforcement, the Department of Family Services and the Department of Justice in the child protection system. The bill would require all three agencies to report any suspected animal cruelty to the Office of Animal Welfare. Delaware is the only state with a statewide Office of Animal Welfare that



Sen. Nicole Poore



Sen. Stephanie Hansen

coordinates all animal cruelty reports throughout the state. A person who in good faith participates in making a report to or notifying the Office of Animal Welfare or another law enforcement agency of suspected animal cruelty would have immunity from any civil or criminal liability.

- Adding the awarding of **possession of pets in a divorce settlement** to the property division statute. **HB 95**, also sponsored by Sens. Hansen and Poore and Rep. Griffith, states that if the court finds that a companion animal of the parties is marital property, it shall award ownership of and responsibility for it to one or both of the parties and may include responsibility for veterinary or other extraordinary expenses. Upon a substantial change of circumstances, either party could petition the Family Court to be awarded sole ownership based upon the welfare of the animal and the totality of the circumstances. In issuing such an order, the Court would take into consideration the well-being of the companion animal, considering factors such as:
 - The ability of each party to own, support, and provide necessary care for the animal;
 - The attachment between the companion animal and each of the parties;
 - The time and effort each party spent with the companion animal during the marriage tending to the companion animal’s needs.



Rep. Krista Griffith

“The property division proposal is pretty interesting; we added some pieces that I haven’t seen in other jurisdictions’ statutes, including factors to consider when determining the pets’ well-being and how/when ownership can change. It also includes language providing for an order that divides costs related to pet ownership,” said Ranji.

Presently, Alaska, California, Illinois, Maine, New Hampshire, New York and the District of Columbia allow courts to award custody of companion animals in a divorce or annulment settlement in what the court considers to be the animals’ best interests. Similar bills are currently being considered in Tennessee and Rhode Island and the Canadian province of British Columbia.

Meanwhile, Ranji tells *The LINK-Letter* that the Chief Judge was asked to choose a family law related topic for a presentation at the Delaware Bench and Bar conference in June, and he decided that there will be a presentation on the LINK. The Bench and Bar is an annual mandatory CLE program for all of Delaware’s judicial officers – court personnel actually have to get permission from the Chief Justice if they cannot attend. “It has lots of workshops and this would be one of them, so it gives the chance to spread the word beyond even the family court judges and practitioners,” she added.

URIPALS Seeks Program Coordinator



The Urban Resource Institute, which operates nine pet-friendly domestic violence shelters in the boroughs of New York City, is seeking a [full-time Program Coordinator](#) to run day-to-day operations of the People and Animals Living Safely (PALS) program. PALS is a groundbreaking program, and the largest of its kind in the U.S., that offers a range of comprehensive services including intervention, counseling, advocacy, education, and coordination to meet the human and animal welfare needs of domestic violence victims and their pets. (See the [September 2022 LINK-Letter](#)). The salary range is \$45,000 - \$50,000. A job description is [posted online](#).



Amy Bogardus

New York Attorneys Get Guidance on Helping Domestic Violence Survivors with Pets

An article published by the New York State Bar Association provides information and practical suggestions on what attorneys can do to best serve the protective needs of clients and their pets when domestic violence and pet abuse intersect. Amy Molloy Bogardus, Crime Victim Legal Network Regional Attorney Coordinator with Empire Justice Center in Rochester, N.Y., writes that an attorney’s journey begins “by developing an empathetic understanding of the bond between your clients and their pets and the ways partners exploit that bond as a power and control tool.

“Harming the family pet can be a way for the partner to instill fear, to foster coercion and to compel secrecy from victims, and when a partner gives away or kills the pet, victims are taught that they can just as easily be killed or seriously injured as well,” she writes. “A victim’s inability to bring his or her pet to a residential domestic shelter may intensify the risks and negative consequences associated with domestic violence, all of which can affect your client’s decision making.”

She recommends adding several pet-related questions to client intake forms that “can quickly identify the existence of animals and gain valuable insight and information into your client’s situation and the actual challenges they are navigating.” The simple open-ended question, “Do you care for or reside with an animal?” can trigger a battery of 13 additional factual areas worthy of further exploration that could impact the attorney’s legal strategy.

She advises that attorneys can help clients obtain relevant veterinary records, develop relationships with victim advocates and other service providers, identify pet-friendly shelter options, and develop a safety plan that includes their pets.

While recognizing that animals are not considered “persons” under New York law, Bogardus notes that they are sentient beings that have been afforded many special protections by the state legislature.

These legal tools include:

- Orders of protection that include pets;
- Codification of a best-interest analysis by courts to determine possession of pets within domestic relations matters;
- Co-habitation access for clients’ animals in residential domestic violence shelters;
- Protection of pets during the execution of an eviction warrant;
- Filing charges for animal cruelty which could impact the abusive partner and the client’s petition; and
- Securing medical records from veterinarians who are now mandated to report suspected animal cruelty.

“Through the collaborative efforts of many individuals and various volunteer and professional organizations, New York State continues to enact legislation to end the Link between domestic violence and animal abuse. When you incorporate these tools into your legal strategy, you increase the likelihood of achieving your client’s goals, providing holistic representation and creating helpful case law,” she concludes.

-- Bogardus, A.M. (2022, Dec. 1). What lawyers can do when pet abuse and domestic violence intersect. New York State Bar Association [website].

<https://nysba.org/what-lawyers-can-do-when-pet-abuse-and-domestic-violence-intersect/>

Survey to Examine Court Professionals' Awareness of The Link



While there have been a considerable number of studies surveying domestic violence shelters and survivors about their awareness of The Link between animal abuse and family violence, there has not been much research exploring the degree to which family justice system professionals are aware of The Link. To correct this gap, [Humane Canada](#) is partnering with University of Windsor researcher Amy Fitzgerald to survey Canadian family lawyers, mediators and court support workers. The two-phase study, involving an online questionnaire and follow-up virtual interviews, is believed to be the first of its kind in Canada and globally.

The need for the study was prompted in part by amendments in 2021 to Canada's Divorce Act that created a definition of family violence which includes threats of harm or actual harm to an animal as an element. (Twelve U.S. states and the District of Columbia have similar legislation.) The study will also help inform Bill C-233 in Canada's Parliament which seeks to amend the Judges Act to establish continuing education for judges on sexual assault law, intimate partner violence and coercive control in intimate partner and family relationships.

Canadian groups that provided input into the survey mechanisms included the Indigenous Bar Association, the Black Female Lawyers Network, the National Association of Women and the Law, and the Federation of French-Speaking Common Law Associations.

LAW ENFORCEMENT ... and THE LINK

Small & Rural Law Enforcement Group Creates Animal Cruelty Committee

The Small & Rural Law Enforcement Executives' Association has launched an [Animal Cruelty & Humane Law Enforcement Committee](#) which will develop training materials, resources, advocacy and other programs to assist law enforcement officials in small, rural and tribal areas to better investigate, enforce and prosecute animal cruelty cases. A focus of the committee will be to inform these officials that animal abuse is not only a crime of violence against animals, but is often Linked with crimes against human members of their communities.



Teena Stoddart

The need for such outreach is particularly acute in rural areas and small towns where there are few designated humane law enforcement officials, so animal cruelty cases often default to the police or sheriff's office for whom animal welfare concerns are usually not a priority. The situation in tribal areas is even more acute with animal care and control programs being virtually nonexistent.

The committee currently consists of 20 international authorities representing police and sheriff's departments, Link organizations, animal legal defense, prosecutors, humane organizations, animal services, and veterinary medicine. The committee "is very much a team effort. We're going to do great things," says chair Teena Stoddart of Violence Link Consulting in Ottawa, Ont., Canada.

"This group is a brain trust," says John Thompson of the SRLEEA. "The value of this committee is that small and rural areas are where we have all of our problems. If kids go to cockfights on Saturday nights instead of football, how do we change that culture?"

CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK **Link Textbook Covers Prevention and Intervention for Children and Youth Exposed to Animal Violence**

The pioneering Link work in Scotland between the Scottish SPCA and the University of Edinburgh addressing the impact of animal abuse on children has taken an expanded focus with the publication of a long-awaited cross-disciplinary textbook. [Understanding Animal Abuse and How to Intervene with Children and Young People](#) is a practical guide for professionals who work with people and animals that offers a positive, compassion-based and trauma-informed approach to understanding and intervening in animal abuse.

The book, edited by Gilly Mendes Ferreira of the Scottish SPCA and professor Joanne Williams at the University of Edinburgh, provides an accessible cross-disciplinary synthesis of current international evidence on animal abuse and a toolkit to help professionals understand, prevent and intervene in cases of animal abuse.

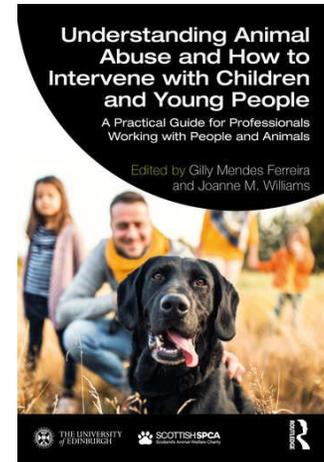
Numerous Link authorities contributed 10 chapters to the book, synthesizing the latest research on children, young people and animal abuse, exploring the Link between animal abuse and other forms of abuse, and outlining legal perspectives on animal abuse.

The second half of the book presents a practical toolkit for professionals, offering guidance and strategies for the prevention of and intervention in cases of animal abuse. Many professional perspectives, including veterinary medicine, education, psychology, social work and law enforcement, are presented. A final chapter proposes new directions for research, policy and practice.

Included in the book are:

- Animal abuse: A concern for all, by Mendes Ferreira and Williams.
- Psychological risk factors for animal harm and abuse among children and young people, by Williams and Laura M. Wauthier.
- The links between animal abuse and domestic violence/abuse, by Phil Arkow.
- Defining animal cruelty within an international framework, by Angus Nurse.
- Investigating animal abuse and the importance of sharing intelligence, by Mike Flynn and Mendes Ferreira.
- What to do about animal cruelty from a veterinary perspective, by Freda Scott-Park.
- What parents and professionals working with children and young people can do about animal abuse, by Williams.
- Interventions for intentional and unintentional abuse towards animals, by Mendes Ferreira.
- A toolkit for evaluating animal welfare education interventions, by Janine C. Muldoon and Williams.
- Animal Abuse: What we know, what we can do, and what we need to know, by Williams and Mendes Ferreira.

-- Ferreira, G.M., & Williams, J.M. (Eds.). (2023). *Understanding Animal Abuse and How to Intervene with Children and Young People: A Practical Guide for Professionals Working With People and Animals*. Routledge.



ELDER ABUSE... and THE LINK

Elder Abuse Linked with Animal, Sibling and Domestic Abuse



Irene Hanson Frieze (left), Christina Newhill, and Rachel Fusco

neglect. Neglect is probably the most common form of elder abuse, especially if self-neglect is included.

A research article connects Links between elder abuse and neglect, sibling aggression, and pet abuse and their relationship to intimate partner violence. Psychologists and social workers at the Universities of Pittsburgh and Georgia write that family abuse of older adults can take the form of physical violence, emotional abuse, financial abuse or neglect.

Older adults are at greater risk of abuse from a family member because of not wanting to be placed in an assisted living or nursing care facility and being willing to accept an abusive caretaker to avoid this. Effects of abuse range from injury, loss of money, emotional distress, and health issues.

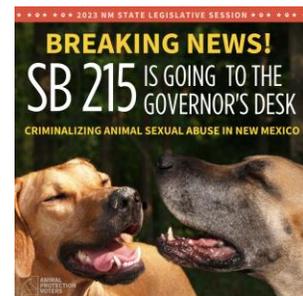
They describe physical, emotional or sexual sibling aggression as being quite common to the point where for many families it is a norm, particularly in families with parental IPV or other child maltreatment. They describe how pets are important to many people and how abusers may threaten or actually harm pets as a form of controlling their partner. Abused women may hesitate leaving their abusive partner because of fears their pet may be harmed or even killed if left in the home. They describe shelters that are beginning to respond to this need by offering emergency housing for pets.

-- Frieze, I.H., Newhill, C.E., & Fusco, R. (2020). *Other forms of family violence: Elder abuse, sibling abuse, and animal cruelty*. In I.H. Frieze, C.E. Newhill & R. Fusco (Eds.), *Dynamics of Family and Intimate Partner Violence* (pp. 223-261). Springer. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-42608-8_7

ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE... and THE LINK

New Mexico Becomes 49th State to Ban Sex with Animals

After a vigorous campaign spearheaded by [Animal Protection Voters of New Mexico](#), the State Legislature unanimously passed **SB 215**, creating two new felony crimes of bestiality and aggravated bestiality. Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed the bill into law on March 30, making New Mexico the 49th state to enact laws banning sex with animals. It takes effect June 16.



The law makes it a 4th-degree felony to commit bestiality; coerce or solicit someone else to commit bestiality; or sell, buy, offer or possess an animal for bestiality. It upgrades the violation to a 3rd-degree felony if done in the presence of a child or involves a child as a participant. Those convicted of these crimes won't be able to live or work around animals for a period of time and may be ordered to undergo mental health treatment or pay for the cost of caring for animals harmed by their crime.

West Virginia remains the only state where sex with animals is still legal; that state legislature has adjourned for this session, meaning possible reform is at least another year away. Numerous studies have Linked animal sexual abuse and the prevalence of online animal pornography with child sexual abuse and child pornography.

VETERINARY MEDICINE ... and THE LINK

Social Determinants of Health Seen as Also Affecting Animal Welfare

In the [January 2023 LINK-Letter](#), we invited veterinary clinics to volunteer to pilot-test a modified version of the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) questionnaire to help identify clients' unmet health-related social needs that can adversely affect their welfare and that of their animals. A new research paper, citing how neighborhoods with higher violent crime rates have a higher reported incidence of animal abuse, dangerous animals and illegal dog fighting, and how the presence of pets is often a barrier preventing abused women from escaping domestic violence, takes an extensive look at the role of SDH on animal welfare as well as the more widely known impacts on human functioning.

A team of Australian researchers adapted a five-part SDH model to illustrate how the social determinants of health in human pet owners may influence animal welfare outcomes. "It is highly plausible that if the SDH for humans were improved, so too would animal welfare," they write.

"Studies focusing on the link between human social vulnerability on dog intake to an open shelter found that when humans and dogs share the same social and physical environments, the same vulnerabilities can be found across both population groups. As such, companion animals that show signs of social and physical neglect are likely to be an extension of the same challenges faced by their guardian. Communities that experience socioeconomic challenges and are socially vulnerable are at a high risk of companion animal abandonment. To enable companion animal guardians to achieve positive welfare outcomes, both the guardian and the animal risk factors need to be understood and integrated as one key focus area to develop clear strategies to prevent relinquishment," they add.

"To achieve positive welfare outcomes, both the guardian and the animal risk factors need to be understood and integrated."

The five interconnected domains of the SDH model, and their applicability to animal welfare, are:

- **EDUCATION:** Factors such as literacy, language, vocational and higher education underpin the ability to understand how to train an animal, resolve behavioral challenges, and provide preventative health such as vaccinations.
- **HEALTHCARE:** The availability and coverage of health-related services, cultural and linguistic competency, the quality and affordability of care, and health-related conditions of pet owners, such as allergies, are primary reasons for relinquishing animals to shelters.
- **ENVIRONMENT:** Because humans and pets live together and share the same environment, animal welfare is compromised by challenges facing low-socioeconomic communities, including accessing affordable veterinary and grooming services, limited transportation options, safe access to green spaces for pet exercise and enrichment, and restrictive housing policies. Pet ownership is called the biggest barrier for owners trying to exit homelessness.
- **SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY:** The reduced presence of supportive social support networks in low-income areas factors into the overall context of enabling positive welfare outcomes for pets.

Limited social support can delay pet healthcare treatment due to financial constraints, the ability to be culturally aware and a lack of translation services.

- **ECONOMIC STABILITY:** Pet owners with little disposable income often find it difficult to obtain adequate food, veterinary care and grooming for their animals. “Most companion animal guardians have little understanding of the costs associated with both human and veterinary care, so they tend to be predisposed to the view that the cost of veterinary care is too high. Pet insurance has been viewed as expensive,” they add.

“The proposed integrated framework considers the interconnection between the social determinants of health, One Health, One Welfare and the five domains of animal welfare, providing a model for a more comprehensive approach to better outcomes for companion animals, their guardians and the community,” they conclude. Examining animal welfare in the SDH context of humans’ well-being can “achieve long-term success in keeping companion animals and their guardians healthy and happy together.”

-- McDowall, S., Hazel, S.J., Chittleborough, C., Hamilton-Bruce, A., & Stuckey, R., et al. (2023). The impact of the Social Determinants of Human Health on companion animal welfare. *Animals*, 13(6), 1113. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13061113>

SOCIAL WORK ... and THE LINK

Veterinary Social Work Position to Coordinate Link Coalition in Houston

The [Houston Humane Society](#) is seeking to join the growing ranks of animal shelters employing a Veterinary Social

Worker but with a unique twist: the primary responsibility of the new position will be to coordinate and facilitate the growth of the [Southeast Texas Link Coalition](#) (See the [April 2022 LINK-Letter](#)).



The Veterinary Social Worker will also focus on increasing access to client support services, educational programming and outreach initiatives. The position will also train staff on grief and trauma responses, identifying clients’ barriers and unmet needs, and coordinate with colleges to provide internships for social work students. Research opportunities are available for data collection and analysis of current programming outcomes and animal abuse to support future funding sources. Starting salary is \$50,000 per year. A full job description and application information is [available online](#).

Veterinary Social Worker Sought to Address Link Issues

[Mission Animal Hospital](#), in Eden Prairie, Minn. (a suburb of Minneapolis) is seeking to hire a Veterinary Social Worker whose responsibilities will include providing guidance to staff and clients about the connection between human and animal violence and developing a database of community resources to assist clients in need. The full-time position will also provide pet loss counseling to clients; create staff trainings on emotional intelligence, client relations and de-escalation; and develop wellbeing, stress management and mental health resources for staff. The nonprofit hospital is dedicated to meeting the needs of the community and providing affordable veterinary care to pet owners most in need. A full job description is [available online](#).



THE LINK in the LITERATURE

Multi-disciplinary Approach Needed to Resolve Animal Abuse and Socioeconomic Vulnerability

Recognizing that poor human well-being commonly coexists with inadequate animal welfare, that in many countries there is poor communication between human and animal welfare services, and that animal maltreatment often indicates a human welfare problem, Brazilian researchers studied Links between socioeconomic vulnerability and incidents of animal abuse. They concluded that addressing the needs of human and animal victims necessitates a multi-disciplinary approach.



Stefany Monsalve

Using a One Welfare model which allows intervention to resolve problems related to the human-animal-environment interface, the Animal Welfare Division of Pinhais, Brazil recorded demographic profiles of 45 pet owners and their socioeconomic vulnerability during dog and cat abuse investigations. Economic disadvantage was the most prevalent of four socioeconomic vulnerabilities, including family violence, substance abuse and fragile family bonds. Cases with violence or substance abuse were prioritized, as violence causes suffering for the victims and studies have shown a connection between animal abuse and interpersonal violence and substance abuse is associated with violence, they wrote.

42% of families with socioeconomic vulnerability had not previously participated in social programs. In all families who were already being assisted by the Department of Social Assistance, pets were found to be suffering neglect and, to a lesser extent, physical aggression. However, Department social workers do not routinely ask their clients about issues relating to animal welfare. The results support the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to improve the well-being of families with dogs and cats.

“Animal welfare specialists recognize that underlying causes such as community and family dysfunction and violence must be addressed if animal welfare problems are to be resolved. Additionally, animal welfare professionals and veterinarians have a responsibility to protect, not only the health and safety of the animals under their care, but arguably also the health and safety of the human population,” they wrote.

The authors noted that animal welfare investigators have unique opportunities to enter families’ residences and observe not only the home environment of the dogs and cats, but also to assess the socioeconomic context of the household and the presence of persons with mental or physical disabilities. “This suggests that pet owners and their neighbors may consider animal welfare officials as professionals able to help with the socioeconomic problems of families. The early identification of socioeconomic vulnerability is fundamental in reducing the consequences to the individuals involved in cases of domestic violence. The inclusion of violent families in social programs has been shown to be linked to a decrease in fatal child maltreatment.”

“Animal health and welfare professionals have traditionally worked independently of the other health and social care professionals. The One Welfare approach highlights the importance of collaboration between animal welfare professionals, including veterinarians, social workers and human healthcare providers, to improve the health and welfare of people and animals,” they concluded.

-- **Monsalve, S., Hammerschmidt, J., Ribeiro, M., Caleme, M.V.D., & Marconin, S., et al. (2023, March 2). A One Welfare approach to identify socioeconomic vulnerability in families during investigations into companion animal abuse in Pinhais, Brazil. *Animal Welfare*, 32, E27. doi:10.1017/awf.2023.18**

ASPCA Announces Research Funding Opportunities

The ASPCA has announced several opportunities for speakers and research funding in animal welfare:

ASPCA-AAWA Research Forum: Abstracts are due **May 12** for the 3rd annual virtual Research Forum, to be held November 1 in partnership with the Association for Animal Welfare Advancement. If your research has direct, practical implications for improving the welfare of animals in shelters and/or communities, submit your proposal for a 30-minute live virtual presentation plus Q&A. Click the “Submit a proposal” link on the event page above. If you would simply like to attend (which is free, and open to all), you can sign up on the event page to be notified when registration opens later this year.

ASPCA Research Grants: \$400,000 of research funding is available for the topics of access to veterinary care, applied animal behavior, animal cruelty, and psychological trauma. Applications are due **July 31**.

The ASPCA **Open-Access Publishing Fund**, designed to support the broad dissemination of high-quality research in animal welfare by covering article processing costs in open-access journals, remains open for applications on an **ongoing basis**.

NEWS from LOCAL LINK COALITIONS

Keystone Link Training Reaches 130 Child Protection Workers



KEYSTONE LINK
BREAKING CYCLES OF ABUSE

The [Keystone Link Coalition](#) in Pennsylvania on March 2 conducted a webinar for 130 participants that included the full staff of the Berks County Children and Youth Services

Agency. Alexis Pagooulatos and Sgt. Hayden Carroll of the Berks Animal Rescue League, and Cathleen Palm of the Center for Children’s Justice and the Keystone Link Coalition, each presented a PowerPoint. The training addressed: the data, research and foundations underlying The Link; how to identify animal abuse; factors that cause or contribute to people abusing animals; traumas associated with witnessing animal abuse; and how to handle cases involving animal abuse.

SafePet Ontario Reports Increased Need for Services



SafePet
ONTARIO

[SafePet Ontario](#) – the Toronto-based network that provides pet safekeeping for individuals in Canada fleeing family violence and human trafficking (*See the [April 2022 LINK-Letter](#)*) – reports that 2023 is already starting out to be a busy year. Executive Director Hayley Glaholt tells *The LINK-Letter* that requests for services have increased dramatically

over the past year; 25 requests were received in January and February. The organization has also seen a significant increase in requests from clients who have three dogs. The organization is seeking additional foster families to handle what has become a waitlist for pets needing temporary housing.

Glaholt also reports that SafePet Ontario has been busy educating frontline professionals about The Link to get multiple sectors working together with a common goal. Recent Link trainings were conducted for: the Ontario Police College’s domestic violence investigations’ quarterly course; the Barbara Schlifer Clinic in Toronto; Victim Services in Middlesex-London and the Durham Region; and My Sister’s Place in Alliston. Future trainings are scheduled for the Toronto Police College’s human trafficking course.

BUILDING LINK AWARENESS

Japanese Manual and Documentary Address Impact of Crush Videos

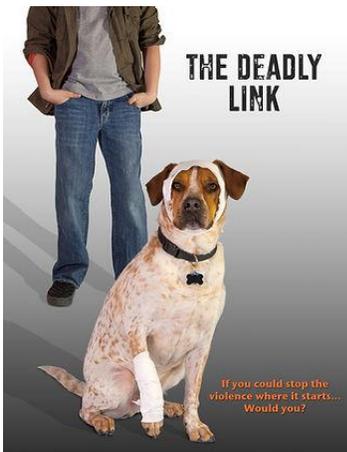


A Japanese researcher has published a manual about the adverse impact of children’s exposure to videos depicting animal cruelty, and is planning to extend this work with a documentary film on the origins of the PACT Act in the U.S. Takahiro Inoue has been working for three years to create a law that would prohibit the production and distribution of animal “crush” videos in Japan, similar to the PACT Act that was passed in the U.S. (*See the [January 2018 LINK-Letter](#)*). He is traveling to the U.S. in April to conduct interviews for his documentary.

Inoue leads the Network for Banning Animal Abuse Videos in Japan. The Network has just published an 18-page Japanese-language report, with extensive citations from American and Japanese research, on the impact of witnessing animal abuse. It is available digitally as a pdf for [download](#).

The report, published in Japanese, is a highly technical one that specializes in discussing the impact of exposure to animal abuse and the social implications of academic studies in this specific subject area. It is one of the few such technical reports globally that fully focuses on the impact of exposure to animal abuse.

“Crush” videos, which depict people deliberately harming animals, are often viewed by persons for sexual pleasure and are Linked with child and animal pornography. They were outlawed in the U.S. in 2010. That law was expanded in 2018 with passage of the PACT (Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture) Act which prohibited the acts of cruelty themselves, regardless of whether a video was produced, and cracked down on interstate transfer of crush videos and animal pornography.



Link Documentary Heading to Film Festivals

The long-awaited *Deadly Link* documentary (*See the [November 2012 LINK-Letter](#)*) is about to be showcased around the country. Producer Nina Knapp, who has been working on the video since 2012, tells *The LINK-Letter* that the production is being submitted to several film festivals. Knapp has asked *LINK-Letter* readers to [advise her](#) of any additional film festivals where the film could be submitted.

Until the film is available for widespread public screenings, a [four-minute trailer](#) has been posted on YouTube to raise interest in the full film and to educate the public to the realities of The Link. The trailer includes a dramatization of what The Link looks like in an abusive household and excerpts of interviews with four Link authorities.

Phil Arkow describes the historical belief in animal abuse being a strong predictor of human violence, particularly among children who commit or witness acts of animal cruelty. He describes The Link as getting community agencies out of their “silos” and Linking their work to prevent violence against all members of the household, which “will be much more effective, much more cost-effective, and ultimately solve some of the problems of violence that we see.”

Diane Balkin describes The Link as being both the connections between animal abuse and violence against humans, but also “the Link among all the agencies and individuals that are involved in the safety of our communities.”

Barbara Boat remarks that the same behavior that harms an animal is the same behavior that harms a human. Tamara Ward notes that statistics show that kids who come from violent homes often go on to become violent abusers.

THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

The 2023 state legislative season is in full swing and the impetus for introducing bills addressing animal abuse’s Links with human violence shows no signs of letting up after 2022’s record 19 laws being passed among 148 bills and ballot initiatives in 36 states and the District of Columbia. Already, **114 bills have been introduced** in 2023. Please join us in following their progress and alert us of any additional bills we may have missed!

Bills We’re Watching:

Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders



California SB 89 would expand the definition of stalking to include putting another person in fear that their pet, service animal, emotional support animal, or horse would be killed or injured. The bill is in the Senate Committee on Public Safety.



Delaware HB 95 requires the Family Court to award possession and provide for the care of companion animals when dividing marital property after considering the well-being of the companion animal. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



Delaware SB 70 would add engaging in cruelty to or inflicting or attempting to inflict physical injury to a companion animal to the definition of abuse for protection-from-abuse proceedings. It would provide specific authority for the Court to include provisions in a protection-from-abuse order that grant a petitioner exclusive care, custody, or control of a companion animal and order a petitioner to stay away from the companion animal. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Illinois SB 44, SB 1390 and HB 1404 would amend the Domestic Violence Act clarifies provisions that require respondents to a domestic violence order of protection – which can include provisions that protect household pets – to surrender any firearms. The bills are in the Senate Assignments and the House Rules Committee.



Indiana SB 41 would increase the penalty for animal cruelty from a Level 6 felony to a Level 5 felony if the act was committed with the intent to threaten, intimidate, coerce, harass, or terrorize a family or household member. The bill is in the Senate Committee on Corrections and Criminal Law.

 **Massachusetts H.1702 and S.1019** would expand existing laws that allow courts to include animals in domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders to also include the statutes covering stalking harassment. The bills are in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.

 **Massachusetts H.1542, H.1547 and S.1077** would add “coercive control,” including committing or threatening to commit cruelty to animals that intimidates the family member, household member, or former partner, to the definition of abuse. The bills are in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.

 **Massachusetts S.1019** would expand existing provisions allowing courts to direct the care and custody of pets in domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders, and to order defendants to not harm the animals, to also include victims of harassment. The bill is in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.

 **Missouri SB 382** would modify the definition of “shelter for victims of domestic violence” to include those shelters which also accept companion animals and would allow residents up to a \$1,000 credit against their state tax liability for converting real estate property into such a pet-friendly shelter. The bill is in the Senate Agricultural, Food Production and Outdoor Resources Committee.

 **Nebraska LB 11** would allow domestic violence victims to file for protection orders that would allow courts to direct the care, custody and control of household pets and enjoin the respondent from coming into contact with, harming or killing household pets. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.

 **New Hampshire HB 549** would expand existing provisions in RSA 173-B:1, which include acts of animal cruelty within the definition of domestic violence abuse, to also include “committing or threatening to commit cruelty to animals that intimidates the family or household member” within the definition of coercive control. The bill is in the House Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

 **New Jersey A4229/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 bills are in the Assembly Agriculture & Food Security and Senate Environment & Energy Committees.

 **New Mexico SB 18** would have renamed the Family Violence Protection Act the “Protection Against Abuse and Violence Act,” would have allowed courts to include animals in orders of protection, and would have included “harm or threatened harm to an animal to intimidate, threaten or harass a person” within the definition of abuse. **The was in the Judiciary Committee when the Legislature adjourned.**

 **New Mexico SB 291** would have appropriated \$350,000 to the Children, Youth & Families Department to support program work for domestic violence victims and their animals. The bill passed the Senate Health & Public Affairs Committee but **died when the Legislature adjourned.**



New York A 39 and S 5309 would provide further protection for pets in domestic violence protection orders by authorizing the court to order a party to either relinquish a companion animal or to refrain from any contact with it. The bills are in the Assembly Judiciary and Senate Children & Families Committees.



New York A483 would amend the penal law to create new crimes of animal cruelty when a companion animal is intentionally injured or killed in order to intimidate, threaten or harass a family member; it would be a Class D felony, or a Class C felony if committed in the presence of a minor child. The bill is in the Assembly Codes Committee.



New York A 1276, “Bella’s Law,” based on the premise that “animal cruelty is a serious problem and that individuals who harm and abuse animals are statistically more likely to engage in domestic violence and child abuse,” would require animal cruelty investigators to inform the Office of Children and Family Services who must further investigate the accused individual and coordinate its findings with the referring or prosecuting agency. The investigation would determine whether the accused or investigated party has any associated family or domestic violence. CFS would not be notified if it would jeopardize an ongoing investigation or the safety of an individual, or if it is clear the accused has no family members. The bill is in the Assembly Children & Families Committee.



New York A 5504 would require every county in the state to have sufficient residential and non-residential domestic violence services and care for victims and their children. Residential shelters’ programs could include therapy dogs and companion animals as well as service animals. The bill is in the Committee on Social Services.



New York S 5935 would order the Office of Court Administration to issue free wallet-sized laminated “Hope Cards” to petitioners who have been granted a final order of protection. Hope Cards would contain information about the respondent and any other individuals or companion animals covered under the protection order, and be as valid as a paper order of protection. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Oregon SB 496A would appropriate \$6,000,000 in one-time, General Fund moneys for grants to domestic violence and emergency shelters to provide support for residents’ pets. The bill passed the Senate Committee on Housing and Development and was referred to the Joint Ways and Means Committee.



Rhode Island H 5705 would allow district courts to consider the well-being of a pet in seeking equitable relief relating to a determination of contested ownership of the pet. Unlike other states with similar laws addressing pets in divorce settlements, the Rhode Island court could not award joint ownership, visitation privileges or financial support, and could award ownership to an animal welfare organization if the court found that neither of the previously cohabiting parties could provide a safe and appropriate living environment for the pet. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



Rhode Island H 5918 would allow courts to award sole custody of pets in divorce and separation proceedings based on the best interests of the animal. It would not apply to service animals. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



Rhode Island H 5114 would expand existing domestic abuse protection orders, which currently allow courts to provide for the safety and welfare of all household animals and pets, to also allow courts to award plaintiffs custody of pets including the enforcement remedy of a restraining order or other injunctive relief if necessary. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



Rhode Island H 5919 and **S 813** would add “unnecessary cruelty”, “malicious injury to or killing of animals,” and “abandonment of animals” to the statutory definition of domestic violence. In situations where both animal abuse and domestic violence occur, the penalties for violation would include those described in both the domestic violence and animal cruelty statutes. The bills are in the House and Senate Judiciary Committees.



Tennessee SB 568 and **HB 467** would allow courts in a divorce or annulment action to provide for the sole or joint ownership of any pet or companion animal owned by the parties, taking into consideration the well-being of the animal. **SB 568** passed the Senate and was sent to the House; **HB 467** failed in the House Children & Family Affairs Subcommittee of the Civil Justice Committee



Texas HB 1179 would require the Attorney General and the State Bar of Texas to develop information to be provided to the public about the provisions that pets and assistance animals may be included in protective orders. Such information would have to be readily available at prosecutors’ offices to persons applying for protective orders. The bill is in the House Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence Committee.



Texas HB 4336 would delete the provision permitting courts to prohibit respondents in domestic violence protection orders from possessing firearms. **HB 3996** and **SB 1274** would allow courts to prohibit alleged offenders from possessing firearms and ammunition, unless they are peace officers or members of the military. Respondents would be allowed to petition for an Extreme Risk Protection Order based on the belief that the respondent’s possession of firearms poses an immediate and present danger of injury or death. (Texas protective orders already include provisions protecting pets.) The bills are in the House Select Committee on Community Safety and the Senate State Affairs Committee.



Virginia HB 713 would make it a Class 1 misdemeanor for a person to engage in coercive control of a family or household member. Acts of coercive control would include committing or threatening to commit cruelty to animals that intimidates the other party. The bill also includes coercive control in the definition of “family abuse” used for the basis of the issuance of family abuse protective orders. The bill is in the Committee for Courts of Justice.



Washington HB 1562, citing extreme risk of intimate partner homicide by abusers who have access to firearms, would declare individuals who have been convicted of animal cruelty in the second degree, domestic violence, coercion, stalking, or cyberstalking guilty of the crime of unlawful possession of a firearm. The bill is in the Committee on Civil Rights & Judiciary.

Animal Hoarding



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.



West Virginia HB 3345 would have created a new crime of hoarding of animals, defined as possessing “a large number” of companion animals with inadequate food, water, shelter, protection from the weather, and veterinary care, and displaying an inability to recognize, or has a reckless disregard for, the animals’ conditions. Offenders could have been fined \$500 and have their animals confiscated. **The bill died in the Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee.**

Animal Sexual Abuse



Connecticut HB 5851 would define “bestiality” to include brutalizing animals by sexual assault with an object, coercion of others to have sex, and the creation and distribution of pornographic images of prohibited sexual contact with an animal. The bill is in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.



Connecticut HB 6714 would define “sexual contact with an animal”, and a new crime of “sexual assault of an animal” which would include sexual contact and creating or distributing photographic images of sexual contact with an animal. Law enforcement and animal control officers could seize any animal believed to be victimized for veterinary examination and treatment. The bill is in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.



Kansas HB 2355 would remove sodomy between consenting members of the same sex from the crime of criminal sodomy; sodomy between a person and an animal would remain a crime of criminal sodomy. The bill is in the House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice.



Maryland SB 54 and HB 131 would replace the archaic terminology of “unnatural or perverted sexual practice” with “any other sexual conduct that is a crime.” Current statutes put animal sexual abuse in the same category as homosexual behavior; it is not clear whether the change in language would have the effect of making bestiality legal. Each bill passed its respective chamber and has been referred to the other chamber’s Judiciary Committee.



New Mexico SB 215, the Animal Sexual Abuse Act, will establish crimes of bestiality and aggravated bestiality, with felony-level penalties upon conviction. Those convicted of these crimes will be registered as sex offenders, will be banned from keeping or caring for animals, and may be ordered to submit to psychological assessment and counseling. **The bill was signed into law on March 30. It becomes effective June 16.**



New York A 1865 would make sexual conduct with an animal that results in the animal’s injury or death a felony. Convicted offenders would be required to: relinquish and permanently forfeit custody of all animals; be barred from working or volunteering in a place with unsupervised access to animals; and reimburse animal shelters and veterinarians for costs of care and treatment. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment



Georgia HB 217 and **SB 255** would add cockfighting to the state's dogfighting prohibitions and make it a "misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature" or a felony to permit a minor child to attend a dog- or cock fight. The bill is in the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.



Kansas SB 239 would allow child vulnerable witnesses to be accompanied by a certified critical incident response therapy K9 team during any criminal proceeding. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Kentucky HB 321 would make animal abuse a Class D felony if the act is committed in the presence of a minor child. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



Massachusetts S.90 and **H.198** would give the Department of Children & Families the right to request that pre-adoptive parents or foster parents provide a behavior/temperament assessment, histories of dangerous incidents, spay/neuter status, the number of animals in the home and their housing conditions, and/or veterinary records of any animal maintained on the premises; DCF could not restrict placement of a child solely based on the presence of any particular breed of dog in the home. The bills are in the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.



New Jersey A 4229/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 bills are in in the Assembly Agriculture & Food Security and Senate Environment & Energy Committees.



New York A483 would amend the penal law to create new crimes of animal cruelty when a companion animal is intentionally injured or killed in order to intimidate, threaten or harass a family member; it would be a Class D felony, or a Class C felony if committed in the presence of a minor child. The bill is in the Assembly Codes Committee.



New York A 394 and **A 1430** would increase the penalties for acts of aggravated animal cruelty when committed in the presence of a child. The bills are in the Assembly Agriculture and Judiciary Committees, respectively.



New York A 444 would establish a misdemeanor crime of knowingly causing a minor to attend an animal fight. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.



New York A 3346 and **S 3170**, "Kyra's Law," would allow courts to consider a person's threats to harm or kill emotional support or comfort animals among the risk assessment criteria in determining that person's visitation and custody rights in a child abuse proceeding. The bills are in the Assembly and Senate Judiciary Committees.



Texas HB 720 and **SB 139** would allow therapy or facility dogs to accompany a child or a person with a disability during testimony in certain criminal cases. **HB 720** is in the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee; **SB 139** is in the Senate Criminal Justice Committee.

Cross-Reporting

 **Connecticut HB 5851, HB 6714 and SB 53** would require veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse to appropriate authorities, with civil immunity for reports made in good faith. The bills are in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary and the Joint Committee on Environment.

 **Connecticut SB 53** would require veterinarians who have reasonable cause to suspect that an animal is the victim of malicious and intentional maiming, mutilation, torturing, wounding, or killing to report the case to the Commissioner of Agriculture or his appointed designee. Veterinarians would be permitted to report lesser animal cruelty and neglect offenses. In both situations, veterinarians would be allowed to testify and would be immune from civil and criminal liability and professional disciplinary action. The measure, introduced “to protect the health of animals and afford protection to veterinarians who report cases of suspected aggravated cruelty and neglect to the state,” would take effect Oct. 1. The bill is in the Senate Environment Committee.

 **Delaware SB 71** would require law enforcement agencies, the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, and the Department of Justice to report suspected animal cruelty to the Office of Animal Welfare that is discovered while performing their responsibilities in child welfare cases. It would also provide immunity to people who in good faith, report suspected animal cruelty. The bill is in the Senate Health & Social Services Committee.

 **Iowa SF 316 and HF 472** would grant veterinarians immunity from administrative, civil or criminal liability for reporting alleged animal abuse in good faith to a peace officer or aiding investigation and court proceedings. They would not be subject to normal confidentiality requirements. Knowingly making a false statement or providing false information would subject the veterinarian to disciplinary action, civil liability, and criminal charges. The bills passed the House 97-1.

 **Maryland HB 1192** would require humane officers to investigate cases of suspected animal cruelty committed by a minor and authorize them to coordinate with social services entities to conduct evaluations, monitoring and support of the minor child. Humane officers would be allowed to seize the animals if necessary to protect them. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.

 **Massachusetts S.82** would require animal control officers, who are already mandated to report suspected child abuse, to complete an evidence-based training, approved by the Office of the Child Advocate, on child abuse and sexual abuse. Current law only states that mandated reporters must complete training. The bill is in the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.

 **Missouri SB 91** would require veterinarians, animal control officers and animal humane investigators to report suspected cases of abuse and neglect of children, the elderly and other vulnerable persons. **HB 300** would also include veterinarians among the mandated reporters. They would be required to receive one hour of training within the first 60 days of employment to recognize such signs of abuse or neglect. Certain mental health, educational, protective services, and law enforcement personnel would similarly be mandated to report cases of companion animal abuse or neglect to a hotline established by the Missouri Animal Control Association and receive similar training. Mandated reporters who fail to make a report would be subject to discipline by his or her professional licensing board, as well as a fine. **SB 91** is in the Senate Health & Welfare Committee.



New Jersey A 4229/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 bills are in the Assembly Agriculture & Food Security and Senate Environment & Energy Committees.



New Jersey A 4936 would require employees of the Division of Children Protection and Permanency who investigate child abuse and neglect and have reason to believe that an animal has been subjected to, or who witness an act of animal abuse, cruelty, or neglect, to report the suspected or witnessed act of animal abuse, cruelty, or neglect. Nothing in the bill requires an employee to report such an act. Employees who make a report, provide records or information relating to the report, or who testify in any judicial proceeding arising from the report, would be immune from liability for any actions taken in good faith. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture and Food Security Committee.



New York A 3908 and S 5947 would require any person charged with enforcing laws prohibiting cruelty to animals to cause a report to be made when, in the performance of his or her duties, such person has reasonable cause to believe that abuse or maltreatment of a child has also occurred; a person charged with the responsibility of filing a report of child abuse or maltreatment would also be required to file a report of suspected animal cruelty. The bills are in the Assembly and Senate Children & Families Committees.



New York A 5405 would cause the Attorney General to establish a 24-hour toll-free animal abuse hotline and inform the public of its existence. Hotline personnel would transmit reports received to appropriate law enforcement or animal protection organizations. The bill is in the Committee on Governmental Operations.

Psychological Evaluation and Therapeutic Interventions for Offenders



U.S. H.R. 56, the RAISE Act (Reforming Alternatives to Incarceration and Sentencing to Establish a Better Path for Youth Act of 2023) would have the Bureau of Prisons establish a two-year pilot program, in at least 10 judicial districts, to equip incarcerated youths with the skills to provide therapy and training to animals seized by federal law enforcement and to organizations that provide shelter and other services to abandoned, rescued or otherwise vulnerable animals. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



California AB 829 would expand current mandatory counseling for violations under penal code section 597 to several other sections pertaining to serious animal abuse crimes. It would require the court to consider a mental health evaluation for individuals convicted of serious animal abuse as defined by California law, with the option, depending on the results of the evaluation, of requiring treatment. The bill still allows judges to order those convicted of lesser animal abuse crimes to complete an education-based course. The bill is in the Assembly Committee on Public Safety.



Massachusetts S.1142 would allow courts to order psychiatric, psychological or mental health evaluations and treatment for animal abuse offenders. Completion of counseling, anger management, humane education or other treatment programs designed to address the underlying causative factors for the violation could result in any imposed fines being suspended. The bill is in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.



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** and **A 4540 (“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 A 433, A 1507 and S 294 (“Buster’s Law”) would require courts to order psychiatric or psychological testing to determine whether an animal cruelty offender is capable of providing humane care before issuing an order prohibiting the possession or ownership of a companion animal. The bills are in the Assembly and Senate Agriculture Committees.



New York S 299 and A 390 would require offenders convicted of aggravated cruelty to animals to undergo psychiatric evaluation and appropriate treatment for mental illness. The bills are in the Senate and Assembly Agriculture Committees.



Pennsylvania HB 530 would require persons convicted of animal cruelty to attend and complete violence prevention counseling. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



Tennessee SB 183 and HB 398, recognizing that “cruelty to animals by a child often leads to further criminal activity, sometimes homicidal activity by the child as he or she ages,” would require juveniles who commit aggravated animal cruelty under certain circumstances to receive mental health evaluation and treatment. **SB 183** passed the Senate 33-0 and was sent to the House; **HB 398** is in the House Criminal Justice Committee.

Court-Appointed Advocates for Animals



Connecticut HB 6260 and SB 1060 would expand the court advocate program to permit the court to appoint an advocate on behalf of any animal owned or kept by a person in a proceeding regarding the welfare or custody of the animal. The bills are in the Committee on Judiciary.



Connecticut HB 5579 would amend and clarify the pioneering “Desmond’s Law” by allowing a judge to appoint an advocate in egregious animal abuse cases regardless of the animal involved. The bill was sent to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees.



Florida HB 989 and SB 1006 would authorize courts to appoint attorneys or law school interns to serve as a separate advocate in the interests of justice to represent animals’ interests in civil and criminal animal welfare proceedings. The bills are in the House Judiciary Committee and the Senate Judiciary, Criminal Justice and Rules Committees.



Illinois HB 1169 would amend the Code of Criminal Procedure to allow a court to appoint a licensed attorney or law student as a special advocate to represent the interests of justice regarding the health or safety of a cat or dog in the prosecution of a case involving the animal's injury, health or safety. The bill passed the House Executive Committee.



Missouri SB 382 would allow children or vulnerable persons testifying in judicial proceedings to be accompanied by a certified therapeutic dog. The bill is in the Senate Agricultural, Food Production and Outdoor Resources 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 and is in the Senate Environment and Energy Committee.



New York A 111 and S 1659 would create court-appointed attorney and law student advocates for animals in civil and criminal animal welfare cases, to represent the interests of the animal. The bill is in the Assembly Judiciary Committee.

Animal Abuse and Other Crimes



Arizona HB 2184 would allow petitioners to file for a Severe Threat Order of Protection, which would prohibit a respondent from gaining access to firearms, if the respondent poses a credible threat of death or serious injury to self or others or cruel mistreatment of an animal. The bill is in the House Judiciary and Rules Committees.



Arizona SB 1086 would include animal fighting and cockfighting, when committed for financial gain, within the state's definition of racketeering. It is in the Senate Natural Resources and Rules Committees.



Maine LD 1121 would transfer training of municipal animal control officers from the Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry to the Commissioner of Public Safety. After completing basic training, officers would have to complete an advanced training program that would include animal hoarding and animal cruelty with respect to domestic violence. The bill is in the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.



New Jersey A3841 would prohibit offenders convicted of animal cruelty from possessing a firearm or being issued a permit to purchase a handgun. The bill is in the Assembly Judiciary Committee.



New York A 340 would include felony animal cruelty offenses among the crimes which would prohibit possession of a firearm. The bill is in the Assembly Codes Committee.



New York A 1639 would require the district attorney in each county to appoint at least one assistant district attorney to be responsible for overseeing the prosecution of animal cruelty crimes. The bill is in the Assembly Local Governments Committee.



New York A 1844 would move the state's anti-cruelty statutes from the Agriculture and Markets Law to the Penal Law. The bill is in the Assembly Codes Committee.

 **New York S 96** would enact “Kirby & Quigley’s Law” expanding the definition of aggravated cruelty to animals to include harm to a companion animal during the commission of a felony. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

 **New York S 5337** would add animal fighting as a criminal act when referring to enterprise corruption. The bill is in the Senate Codes Committee.

 **Oregon SB 696** would appropriate General Fund money for an animal cruelty-focused attorney in the Department of Justice’s Criminal Justice Division. Oregon already has a successful statewide animal cruelty prosecution program through the Division, but the position is grant-funded and it is unknown how long the grant funding will continue. The Senate Judiciary Committee recommended its passage and referred it to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means.

 **Pennsylvania HB 642** would allocate \$2,000,000 per year to local law enforcement agencies to investigate and enforce violations of gambling and animal fighting laws. The bill is in the House Committee on Gaming Oversight.



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THE LINK... IN THE NEWS

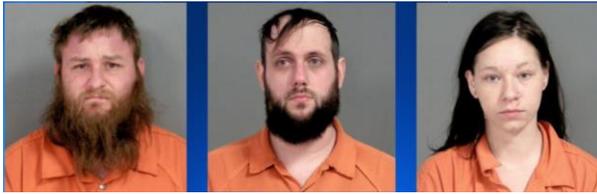
Man Who Beat Woman and Killed Her Dog Gets 25-57 Years in Prison



Kevin Jara Sanchez

A Towanda, Penna. man who beat a woman viciously enough to send her to the hospital and brutally beat her dog (*See the [June 2022 LINK-Letter](#)*) was sentenced to 25-57 years in state prison. Kevin Jara Sanchez had pled guilty to felony counts of aggravated assault, animal cruelty, and illegal possession of a firearm, [WETM-TV](#) reported. Due to the violent nature of the offenses, he is ineligible for any programs that might lower his sentence. Sanchez had broken eight of the woman’s ribs, shot at her, threw a knife at her, and threatened to kill her multiple times. He also shot the woman’s dog before stuffing it in a wood stove and burning it. He had previously been convicted of aggravated assault and was legally designated as not allowed to possess a firearm.

Michigan Sheriff Charges Three More with Felonies in Crackdown on Animal Torture and Link Crimes



Nicholas Jaco (left), Jeffery Meadows and Cheyenne O'Berry

Law enforcement officials in Genesee County, Mich. appear to be on a passionate crusade to crack down on Link-related animal cruelty with the most recent felony charges filed against two people for allegedly making a “crush” video in what Sheriff Chris Swanson called “beyond disturbing.” [WWJ radio](#) reported that Jeffery Meadows, 32, of Pontiac, and Cheyenne O’Berry, 28, of Flint were charged with the offense, which has been illegal under federal law since 1999 in legislation co-sponsored by Michigan U.S. Sen. Gary Peters. O’Berry was also charged with using a computer to commit a crime.

In a passionate press conference, Swanson described “crush” videos as being typically filmed with unclothed women with a bare heel or wearing stilettos using their foot to crush the skull of a small animal. The Sheriff’s department obtained video from 2021, allegedly filmed by Meadows, of O’Berry allegedly stomping on a white rat on a glass table top while a cell phone underneath captured the images. When deputies raided the house they found young children and other pets.

“Just when you think you’ve seen it all... today you’re going to see something even we haven’t seen,” Swanson said, warning the public. “When you torture, kill, abuse, or starve an animal in this county you’re going to be held accountable.” He described “crush” videos as being sold on the Internet. “They sell it to the most darkest, deviant, sexually predatory people on the planet, who buy these crush videos because of a sexual fantasy.” Filmmakers “monetize these tortures to make money and to feed the viciousness of the consumer on the back end, wherever they may be.”

Swanson used the press conference to also announce the filing of felony charges against Nicholas Jaco, 34, a veteran who apparently decided he no longer wanted to take care of his service dog, a German shepherd named “Tink,” and allegedly left it to starve to death in its cage over a two-week period.

Earlier this year, Swanson brought felony charges of torturing a domestic animal with the intent to threaten, coerce or control a victim against Eric Savela, who reportedly has an eight-year history of domestic violence ([See the March 2023 LINK-Letter](#)).

Kentucky Cockfighter Gets 15 Months in Prison for Trying to Bribe Sheriff

In an ongoing crackdown on cockfighting in Kentucky, U.S. District Judge David L. Bunning sentenced Cruz Alejandro “Alex” Mercado-Vazquez, 43, of Maysville, Ky., to 15 months in federal prison for trying to bribe a sheriff to get protection for a cockfighting operation. The [Lexington Herald-Leader](#) reported that Mercado-Vazquez offered Mason County Sheriff Patrick Boggs at least \$16,000, including 40-50% of the gate fees and concession stand revenues on a continuing basis for weekly cockfights, to look the other way and tip him off about investigations. Instead, Boggs contacted the FBI and aided the investigation. Mercado-Vazquez was among more than 15 Kentuckians charged in federal court in 2022 in connection with cockfighting.

Louisiana Sheriff Notches Fourth Recent Case of Child and Animal Pornography



Nathan Mann

The Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office's aggressive investigation of child pornography has notched the third and fourth recent cases of child pornography linked with animal pornography in Bossier City, La., Nathan T. Mann, 35, was charged with a whopping 106 counts of possessing pornography involving juveniles and 3,248 counts of sexual abuse of an animal. [KSLA-TV](#) reported that Bossier Parish Sheriff's deputies received a cyber tip regarding the images, which were allegedly found on his electronic devices during a search. Mann was being held on \$1,000,000 bond in the Bossier Parish Maximum Security Facility.

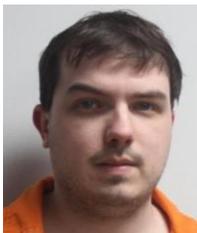
Last December, charges against Jacob Cade Robinson, 18, also of Bossier City, were upgraded after a digital forensic examination of his electronic devices allegedly found 2,400 images depicting child sexual abuse and three videos depicting the sexual abuse of an animal, the [Bossier Press-Tribune](#) reported. Of the 2,400 child sexual abuse images, 352 were identified as victims ranging in age from infants to prepubescent juveniles, according to reports. Robinson was being held on a bond of \$24,030,000.



Jacob Robinson

The most recent arrests came four years after former Bossier City police officer and K9 handler Terry Yetman, 43, was charged with 71 counts of child and animal pornography and sexual abuse and was sentenced to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to six of the counts ([See the December 2021 LINK-Letter](#)).

In April, 2022, Michael Lofton, 35, also of Bossier City, who had previously been arrested on 13 counts of child pornography and 20 counts of animal sexual abuse, was charged with an additional 39 counts of child pornography and 104 counts of animal sexual abuse ([See the April 2022 LINK-Letter](#)). It is unclear whether the four cases are part of the same investigation. Since last April the Sheriff's office has also charged six other men with more than 1,100 counts of possessing or distributing images depicting child sexual abuse.



Noah Tomlin

Meanwhile, in an apparently unrelated case, Noah Tomlin, 23, of Alexandria, La., was arrested and charged with allegedly sexually abusing a pit bull. Tomlin reportedly approached a chained pit bull in a residential neighborhood and allegedly forced the dog to perform oral sex on him. Authorities were notified after a video of the incident was posted online, according to [KALB-TV](#).

Student Suspected of Stabbing Teacher May Have Also Killed Cats

Japanese police authorities are investigating whether a 17-year-old high school student who has been arrested in connection with the stabbing of a teacher may also be responsible for killing cats at five different locations between Feb. 13-26. The [Mainichi Shimbun](#) newspaper reported that the youth, who was not named, hinted that he may have abused multiple animals. Saitama Prefectural Police arrested the youth at the scene of the stabbing on March 1 at Toda Municipal Misasa Junior High School on suspicion of attempted murder. The youth reportedly told police, "I wanted to kill someone. It didn't matter who."

Hunter Charged with Shooting Two German Shepherds



Michael Konschak

A New York hunter was charged with several hunting and criminal violations for crossing into Connecticut and allegedly shooting two pet German shepherds whose bodies he later took to a taxidermist, claiming he had shot two coyotes. [WVIT-TV](#) reported that Michael Konschak, 61, of Carmel, N.Y. is accused of killing and skinning the dogs in Ridgefield, Conn. while hunting with a crossbow. The 9-year-old dogs, “Leiben” and “Cimo,” had escaped from the family’s yard after a bear damaged the chain link fence. The taxidermist, who said he was 98% sure they were not coyotes and might be German shepherds, told police he gave Konschak an excuse that he had no room to store the animals and hoped he would go away. Konschak was charged with tampering with evidence, forgery, interfering with an officer, and violating wild game and archery hunting regulations. He was denied an application for accelerated rehabilitation, a Connecticut diversion program for first-time offenders.



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LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

NOTE: More and more trainings are being converted back into live rather than into virtual formats. Click on the underlined hyperlinks for more detailed information.

April 16 – Tokyo, Japan (online): Sakiko Yamazaki will present “The Association between Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence: Protecting the Human-Animal Bond from Violence” in a [webinar](#) for the Animal Literacy Research Institute and the Japanese Association for the Promotion of Canine Good Citizens.

April 17 – Santa Rosa, Calif.: Phil Arkow will present a Link training and facilitate the formation of a [Sonoma County Link Coalition](#).

April 19 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will host a training with the American Academy of Pediatrics.

April 20-21 – Minneapolis, Minn.: Lesley Winton will present “Sharing the Stories of Rescued Animals with Care-Experienced Children to Foster compassion and Help Reverse the Cycle of Abuse,” and Caroline Griffin will present “It’s Cool to be Kind” at the Association of Professional Humane Educators’ [annual conference](#).

April 25 – Kansas City, Mo. (online): BestyBnB will host a [webinar](#), “Bridging the Gap: Establishing Relationships Between Social Services and Animal Welfare.”

April 26 – Edinburgh, Scotland (online): [Gilly Mendes Ferreira](#) and Jo Williams will conduct a webinar announcing their new Link-themed book, *Understanding Animal Abuse and How to Intervene with Children and Young People: A Practical Guide for Professionals Working With People and Animals*.

April 27 – Sacramento, Calif. (online): [Don't Forget the Pets](#) will hold a training workshop on how to create and sustain pet housing programs for survivors of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness.

May 2 – Denver, Colo.: [Don't Forget the Pets](#), Red Rover and Greater Good Charities will hold a training workshop on how to create and sustain pet housing programs for survivors of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness.

May 3 – Edinburgh, Scotland (online): [Gilly Mendes Ferreira](#) and Jo Williams will conduct a webinar announcing their new Link-themed book, *Understanding Animal Abuse and How to Intervene with Children and Young People: A Practical Guide for Professionals Working With People and Animals*.

May 4 – Glenwood Springs, Colo.: [Don't Forget the Pets](#), Red Rover and Greater Good Charities will hold a training workshop on how to create and sustain pet housing programs for survivors of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness.

May 5 – New York City, N.Y. (online): Phil Arkow will present “How Pet-Inclusive Social Work Can Improve Delivery of Services to Vulnerable Victims” to a [graduate social work class](#) at New York University.

May 5-6 –Portland, Ore. (online): The Animal Legal Defense Fund will offer a free two-day [Animal Law Symposium](#) that will discuss: collaborative programs that enhance animal cruelty investigations and prevention; novel approaches to sentencing of animal cruelty offenders; Connecticut’s pioneering Courtroom Animal Advocate program; and animal cruelty case victories for justice and jurisprudence.

May 10 – Alexandria, Va. (online): Phil Arkow will present “Connecting the Dots: Animal Abuse’s Links to Other Family Violence in Military and Civilian Families” for the National Organization for Victim Assistance’s [National Victim Assistance Academy](#).

May 10-13 – Phoenix, Ariz.: The [International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association](#) will hold its 16th Annual Conference.

May 17 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

May 18 – Sacramento, Calif. (online): [Don't Forget the Pets](#) will host a guest presentation from Samantha Hinchey, Manager of Domestic Violence Initiatives for the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, titled “Asking the Question: Benefits of Including Pets on Hotlines, Helplines, and Intakes.”

May 23 – Kansas City, Mo. (online): [BestyBnB](#) will host a webinar to help domestic violence agencies also address survivors’ pet’ needs, “Pets and People: Safe, Together, Connected with BestyBnB.”

May 26 – Lisbon, Portugal (online): Phil Arkow will conduct a Link webinar for Portuguese prosecutors and judges on behalf of the [Provedor do Animal](#) .

June 2 – Lisbon, Portugal: The República Portuguesa [Provedor do Animal](#) will conduct a conference on The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence featuring Phil Arkow, Allie Phillips, Marie-Jose Enders-Slegers and Mary Wakeham.

June 15-18 – Edinburgh, Scotland: The 32nd Annual Conference of the International Society for Anthrozoology ([ISAZ](#)) will include presentations on “One Welfare Phoenix Project: The Links between Animal and Human Abuse and Neglect,” by Rebecca Garcia Pinellos and Gilly Mendes Ferreira, and “Animal Crime in Context: An Examination of Community-Level Correlates of Animal Welfare Offenses and Violent Crime in Finland,” by Keri Burchfield, Fred Markowitz and Tarja Koskela.

June 21 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

June 22 (online): Emily Lewis of the Animal Legal Defense Fund will present “Stand Up for the Animals with a Case You Can Stand Behind” to explain how to give prosecutors what they need in a program for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#) Webinar Series.

July 19 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

July 31 – Aug. 2 – Petersburg, Va.: Randy Lockwood and Michelle Welch will be among several presenters on The Link at the [Small & Rural Law Enforcement Executives Association](#) conference and training event.

Aug. 1-2 – Franklin, Tenn.: Michelle Welch will present “Be the Superhero for Animals: How to Testify Effectively in Animal Cruelty Cases and How to Prepare Winning Prosecution Cases” at the Animal Care & Control Association of Tennessee [Conference](#).

Aug. 16 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

Aug. 24 (online): Linda Fielder of the Animal Legal Defense Fund will present “Lessons from the Field: How One Community Transformed Its Response to Animal Cruelty through Collaboration” for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#) Webinar Series.

Aug. 28-30 – Boston, Mass.: Phil Arkow will present “Animal Abuse, Animal Hoarding and Elder Abuse: Challenges and Strategies for Adult Protective Services” at the 34th [Annual National Adult Protective Services Association](#) conference.

Sept. 5 – Des Moines, Iowa: Phil Arkow and Randy Lockwood will present at a Link training organized by the [Animal Rescue League of Iowa](#).

Sept. 18-19 – Albuquerque, N. Mex.: [Positive Links NM](#) will hold its Conference on The Link.

Sept. 20 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

Oct. 3 – (online): Kathleen Wood and Katherine Yousouf of the Animal Legal Defense Fund will present “The Importance of Pre-Sentence Evaluation in Animal Cruelty Cases” in a [Justice Clearinghouse](#) webinar.

Oct. 4 – Ft. Worth, Texas: Phil Arkow will present “Child Abuse Prevention and the Animal Abuse/Human Violence Link” for the [Alliance for Children](#).

Oct. 18 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

Nov. 15 – (online): Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

Nov. 28 – (online): Andrew Campbell will present a webinar on the impact of animal abuse in family violence for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

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The news contained in *The LINK-Letter* are intended to disseminate as widely and as freely as possible information about the connections between animal abuse and interpersonal violence. Permission is hereby granted to re-post these articles in other newsletters, websites, magazines, and electronic publications provided that appropriate credit is given to the National Link Coalition and with hyperlinks to www.nationallinkcoalition.org.

For Additional Information

Just click on the [blue underlined hyperlinks](#) in these articles and it will take you to other websites with additional information about that topic.



ABOUT THE NATIONAL LINK COALITION



The National Link Coalition is a multidisciplinary 501c3 nonprofit 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.

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