



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



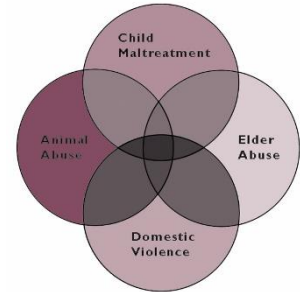
ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE



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[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK



B.C. Legislature Considers Canada's First Divorce Settlement Pet Agreement

Because a significant number of domestic violence incidents end up in divorce, and the question can be contentious as to which party can claim ownership of the household's companion animals – many of which were similarly threatened during the abuses – seven American jurisdictions now allow courts to award custody based upon the animals' best interests. In a groundbreaking move, the Canadian province of British Columbia is now proposing similar legislation.

Atty. General Niki Sharma B.C. Attorney General Niki Sharma has introduced several amendments to the province's Legislative Assembly which would amend the Family Law. **Bill 17** is groundbreaking in that it seeks to define pets as more than property, which is the category companion animals typically fall under within the law. Two key sections potentially impact pets in these households.

Section 92 refers to property division agreements by giving the parties options to jointly own, share possession of or give exclusive ownership or possession of a companion animal to one of the spouses. Section 97 goes further, paralleling the American states' models, by giving direction to the province's Supreme Court certain factors respecting companion animals that they must consider when making an order. These include: the circumstances in which the animal was acquired; the extent to which each spouse cared for it; the willingness and ability to continue to care for the animal; any history or risk of family violence, cruelty or threats of cruelty toward an animal; and the relationship that any child involved has with the animal.

Sharma told the [Canadian Press](#) that the proposed amendments "better reflect the priorities and values of people today, including making sure the important role pets play in families is considered in the separation process." B.C. Animal Law specialist V. Victoria Shroff added that the changes reflect how pets are valued as unique family members by society, rather than inanimate property like furniture.

Courts can consider animals' best interests in divorce settlements in Alaska, California, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Maine, New Hampshire, and New York.



Researchers Propose Considering Pets as Sentient Victims of Domestic Violence

While 38 U.S. states allow courts to include pets in domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders and 12 states define animal abuse applied in a coercive control context to also be considered an act of domestic violence, Australia legislation has not been as progressive. A recent law journal article proposes enacting laws in Australia that recognize such animals as sentient victims of domestic violence. This would enable courts to make orders protecting these animals, which would safeguard their welfare and ensure that people with whom they live who are also experiencing domestic violence can escape without worrying about the fate of their animals.

The authors note that awareness of the incidence and impact of domestic violence has increased in recent decades, along with community and legal recognition of the interests of animals. However, streams of jurisprudence addressing these issues have only partially influenced one another. “While in most Australian jurisdictions animal cruelty can constitute domestic violence, abused companion animals have not been accorded the legal status of victims,” they write. Such recognition would convey the seriousness of animal cruelty and might increase support for and awareness of programs for rehoming abused animals, and training of people involved with animals to identify and report animal abuse, they conclude.

-- Kotzmann, J., Bagaric, M., Wolf, G., & Stonebridge, M. (2022, April). Addressing the impact of animal abuse: The need for legal recognition of abused pets as sentient victims of domestic violence in Australia. *University of New South Wales Law Journal*, 45(1), 184-208.

Purple Leash Project Video Describes Need for Pet-Friendly Shelters



The [Purple Leash Project](#), a collaboration between Purina and RedRover to fund and support domestic violence shelters in accepting survivors’ pets ([See the March 2022 LINK-Letter](#)), has published a [YouTube video](#) that describes the significance of pet-friendly shelters. The video features not only statistics about the need for more such shelters but also two emotional heartfelt interviews.

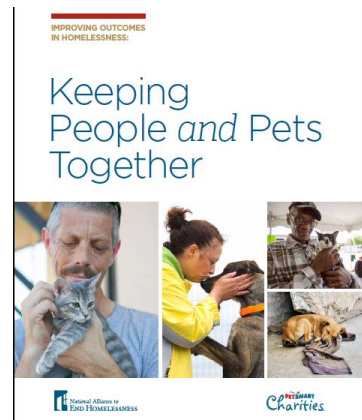
In one interview, Angie, a domestic violence survivor, relates how heartbroken she was at not being able to bring “Princess” with her when she made her escape. In the other, mental health therapist Ruth notes how many women choose to stay in an abusive home just so they can keep an eye on their pets. However, in pet-friendly shelters, “Pets are so healing because they offer our clients companionship, security, unconditional love, and a sense of familiarity when oftentimes they have experienced a tremendous amount of loss,” she says.

“Only 15% of domestic violence shelters accept pets,” the video concludes, “a number that we have the power to change.”

Manual Guides Shelters for the Homeless to Become Pet-Friendly

The success of over 300 domestic violence shelters that have modified their facilities and programming to accommodate the pets of survivors – as well as the hundreds of other collaborative programs offering off-site foster care for these pets – combined with the reality that many domestic violence survivors become homeless has helped drive a new initiative to make more shelters for the homeless pet-friendly. A new 34-page manual has been published to guide these agencies in policies and procedures.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness and PetSmart Charities published [*Improving Outcomes in Homelessness: Keeping People and Pets Together*](#) based on responses from 346 Continuums of Care (CoCs) and emergency homeless shelters. The survey found that although there are no national data on the number of homeless people with pets, approximately 10% are seeking services for themselves and their service animals, emotional support animals or pets.



“The human-animal bond is so strong that many people experiencing homelessness will not live separated from their pet, and consequently cannot or do not access services like emergency shelter if their pets cannot accompany them,” they write. “A formal, system-wide strategy to collect data is key to understanding how many people experiencing homelessness have pets, how to determine their associated housing and service needs, and the scale of this need.”

The manual consists of three parts:

- An overview of an effective and coordinated response system between animal welfare and homeless shelters;
- Steps that homeless service providers can take to improve agency-wide culture and effectiveness in serving people experiencing homelessness with pets; and
- Recommendations for outreach workers, case managers, program managers, and facilities staff to improve outcomes of people experiencing homelessness with pets when accessing services.

The manual showcases several examples of pet-friendly domestic violence and homeless shelters and street outreach programs, including: Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa, Calif.; the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Cincinnati; the San Diego Housing Commission and Veterans Village of San Diego; and the Street Outreach Animal Response (SOAR) Initiative in Indianapolis.

“The idea of keeping people and pets together, regardless of living situation, is a recent thought model in animal welfare, a field that traditionally created extremely high expectations for pet ownership. Advances in the study of the human-animal bond and the relationship with the human homeless populations have led to collaborative programming aimed at keeping people and pets together. These larger, coordinated systems provide outreach, shelter, and temporary housing for people with pets, and in doing so improve outcomes for all involved,” they note.

“As fewer animals enter the animal welfare system and collaboration across sectors continues, modern animal shelters now have programming that provides diverse preventative resources. Homeless response providers can work with these agencies to remove the barriers to pet-friendly services in their own programs, and to create a collaborative environment that advances the mission of both agencies.”

Australian Survey Confirms Animal/Domestic Abuse Barriers

A recent survey from the state of New South Wales in Australia confirms findings from similar studies in other countries that the fear of harm to pets is a significant barrier that keeps abused woman and their children trapped in homes marked by domestic violence.



Domestic Violence NSW's [survey](#) of 100 domestic and family violence workers across the state in July 2020 reported:

- 42% of workers said victims they supported had delayed leaving a perpetrator for more than a year due to barriers in accessing support related to their animals. This was due to a lack of animal-friendly emergency, crisis, medium and long-term housing, and the victim's lack of funds to pay for boarding for animals.
- 55% of workers had supported victims who disclosed that a perpetrator killed an animal or multiple animals.
- 85% of workers stated that victims feared separation from the animals, and some workers noted animals can prevent suicide and self-harm.

Monique Dam, Advocacy and Prevention Manager at Domestic Violence NSW, said, "Animals and people experiencing violence should be supported to stay together wherever possible, because this helps everyone to heal and recover and separation can be re-traumatizing."

The study was issued as the New South Wales government announced the availability of funding to allow animals to be accommodated in refuges or animal shelters, and a review of law and policy in this area. DVNSW's submission to the review called for more supports for animals and people experiencing domestic and family violence to ensure their safety and wellbeing, and options for people in rural and regional areas with larger animals like horses.

"Government and the domestic violence and animal welfare sectors need to work together to understand the violence perpetrated against animals and people and how to improve their safety," said Dam.

BestyBnB Announces Expansion from KC into OKC



[Besty BnB](#), which launched collaborative programs with seven domestic violence agencies in Kansas City in 2021 to support pet owners needing help from multiple service providers in order to keep pets and people connected ([See the February 2022 LINK-Letter](#)), has announced it is expanding its services to Oklahoma City. The expansion will allow new partners, including the Oklahoma Humane Society, the Homeless Alliance and Oklahoma City's Family Justice Center's Animal Advocacy Program, to expand their pet fostering networks and allow owners to have direct, secure, and confidential communication with the Pet Caregiver to remain engaged in their pet's care and maintain the vital human-animal bond.

BestyBnB developed a robust and user-friendly platform where domestic violence shelters can refer survivors to an approved list of pet caregivers. They partnered with seven shelters and a variety of animal agencies in the Kansas City region to create an efficient central hub where collaboration can take place. In addition to the pioneering on-site co-sheltering program at the Rose Brooks Center, all seven shelters now offer at least an off-site foster care option.

CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK

Humane Law Enforcement and Mental Health Professionals Sought for Child Abuse Research Focus Groups



Katharine Wenocur, left, & Kirby Wyckoff

A team of researchers at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia are conducting a study to learn more about how various professionals respond when a case of childhood animal cruelty becomes known. Katharine Wenocur and Kirby Wyckoff are seeking participants for two virtual focus groups to explore their experiences with children who have harmed animals. Participation is voluntary and participants will be compensated for their time.

The first two Zoom videoconference sessions are scheduled for:

- **Tuesday, May 30, 12 noon – 1 pm EDT for animal control professionals, humane law enforcement** or others who investigate animal cruelty cases. Participants must have encountered at least one example of a child harming an animal in their professional capacity.
- **Wednesday, May 31, 12 noon-1 pm EDT for mental health professionals.** Participants must have a master's degree or higher in a mental health discipline and directly treat children and adolescents and have encountered at least one example of a child harming an animal in their professional capacity.

To participate, please contact Katharine.Wenocur@jefferson.edu. Please forward this information to additional colleagues who meet the criteria for the study.

Cross-Training Increased 51% in Connecticut Following Training and Inter-Agency Partnerships

In recognition of April as being both Child Abuse Awareness Month and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month, Connecticut Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz issued a press release featuring several state and federal officials and animal welfare advocates discussing the connection between animal cruelty, child maltreatment and other forms of interpersonal violence.



Lt. Gov. Bysiewicz

Mounting evidence from researchers indicates a strong correlation between animal abuse, child abuse, intimate partner violence, and elder abuse, the release noted. Officials highlighted the prevalence of maltreatment types across Connecticut and coordinated agency responses for protection including state statutes enacted in 2011 implementing cross-reporting of child maltreatment and animal abuse between the Department of Children & Families and the animal control officers under the aegis of the Department of Agriculture ([See the December 2013 LINK-Letter](#)).

“The overlap of child abusers and animal abusers is significant. I am thankful for the leadership and partnership of the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Agriculture in addressing these horrific offenses with a proactive, collaborative response. Our administration will continue to work with agencies to report, condemn, and prevent mistreatment and abuse,” she said.



Sen. Richard Blumenthal

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal added, “Animal cruelty is hideously inhumane and a significant signal of child abuse and domestic violence. These intertwined scourges must be stopped. Protecting children and animals from abuse requires action, not just words— strong laws and strict enforcement.”

“Research tells us there’s an inherent connection between violence toward children and animal cruelty: when animals are abused, children and adults are at risk; when adults and children are abused, animals are at risk. Cross-reporting is the gateway, a bridge, that allows us to be proactive about addressing The Link through training, education and collaboration. We are grateful to be part of this team effort with the Department of Agriculture and our advocacy partners,” said DCF Commissioner Vannessa Dorantes.

Expanded in 2014, DCF staff and state, regional, and municipal animal control officers cross-report to each other when they reasonably suspect that animal cruelty or child abuse and neglect have occurred ([See the July 2014 LINK-Letter](#)). As a result of education and training efforts by both state agencies, there has been a noticeable 51% increase in animal cruelty reports between 2019 and 2021.

“We have seen demonstrated increases in animal cruelty reports over the past few years, due in part to increased education and outreach, which serves as a reminder of the importance of the cross-reporting requirements to ensure the wellbeing of children who may also be present in those environments,” said Agriculture Commissioner Bryan P. Hurlburt. “This would not be possible without the animal control officers working to ensure the safety of animals and collaboration with our partners at DCF.”



Commissioner Dorantes

Education and awareness about The Link is being offered statewide and a comprehensive cross-reporting training was developed for community providers and DCF staff. Additionally, [Paws for Kids](#) , a partnership between DCF and the animal advocacy community, is promoting child and animal well-being through education, cross-reporting efforts, marketing, and establishing Animal Assisted Interventions for DCF children with trauma.

Another partner, [Desmond’s Army](#) Animal Law Advocates, is a group of volunteers committed to impacting animal welfare legislation and raising public awareness regarding the connections between animal abuse and domestic and social violence. “We have noticed an increase of the use of the cross-reporting law in the past year. Approximately 40% of the cases we see are animal cruelty cases involving domestic violence. Sadly, those are only the reported cases,” said Robin “Zilla” Cannamela, President and Co-Founder of Desmond’s Army.

“The Connecticut Humane Society was founded by a high school student 142 years ago as a means for serving children and pets in need, and is now the oldest and most comprehensive animal welfare organization in the state. Today, we are grateful to bring awareness to animal cruelty and how this connects to many other forms of cruelty, often, unfortunately affecting children as well,” said James Bias, Executive Director. “CHS is proud to work with other great community leaders to highlight the need for a collaborative response to these problems.”



James Bias

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

Ohio Veterinary Hospital Takes Proactive Stand in Reporting Abuse

While many private veterinary facilities have been reluctant to get involved with potential cases of animal cruelty, at least one hospital in Ohio is taking a very proactive stand and actually encouraging the public to contact them when suspicions of animal abuse arise.



The West Park Animal Hospital in Cleveland features an [entire web page](#) describing the “Subtle (and Not So Subtle) Signs of Animal Abuse”. But noting that while people are outraged by these cases, which often are “happening right under our very noses,” the veterinarians at the practice emphasize the importance of reporting it. “Animal abuse can be a touchy issue, but it should always be taken seriously,” they write, asking readers to contact the hospital immediately if they see or suspect any signs of animal abuse. They also suggest contacting the local authorities, which include the Cleveland Animal Protective League or local police.

“While it may seem difficult to report a case of animal abuse, especially if it involves someone you know, remember that you may be the only chance a pet has at finding safety and a better life.”

“Young children can inadvertently hurt a pet, which is why it’s important to educate them on proper handling techniques and how to respect animals in general. If you know or suspect an older child is intentionally harming a pet as a means of coping with trauma or intense emotions, please seek professional help right away,” they advise.

“Educating the next generation is one of the most effective ways to prevent animal cruelty. Instilling a sense of empathy and highlighting the value of life is essential when it comes to protecting the most vulnerable members of society,” they conclude.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ... and THE LINK

NCJFCJ Spotlights New Bench Guide for Virginia’s Judges



The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges has spotlighted the Link-themed [bench guide](#) for judges in Virginia (*See the [December 2022 LINK-Letter](#)*) in the latest issue of their magazine for court professionals. The [Spring issue of In Session](#), features the article, authored by Jaime Clemmer and Judges Lee Chitwood and Constance Frogale.

The article, “Virginia Judges Have a New Tool for Addressing The Link Between Domestic Violence, Child Abuse, Elder Abuse, and Animal Cruelty,” includes a moving testimonial from Frogale describing the Link cases she has encountered in 18 years on the bench and how these incidents prompted her to initiate Link

training for attorneys and guardians ad litem. These trainings, in turn, led to the bench guide to help practitioners and judges recognize the signs of animal cruelty and its connection to domestic violence.

LAW ENFORCEMENT ... and THE LINK

National Agencies Cite The Link in Protesting Oklahoma Plan to Decriminalize Cockfighting

Two bills in the Oklahoma State Legislature that would allow counties to hold special elections to roll back penalties for cockfighting to a misdemeanor with a meaningless fine have apparently failed to be enacted, thanks to public outcry and the attention of several national law enforcement, prosecution and humane groups protesting the bills for their adverse impacts on animals and people.



The [Small & Rural Law Enforcement Executives Association](#) (SRLEEA) issued a statement opposing Oklahoma **SB 1006** and **HB 2530**. Representing law enforcement in the small, rural and tribal communities where cockfighting is more prevalent, SRLEEA said, “Animal fighting is a crime of violence, injuring and killing thousands of animals per year. Recognizing animals’ capacity to suffer, every state’s criminal code and the federal government address animal fighting at the felony level. Given the seriousness of the offense, and its link to other crimes as well as to zoonotic diseases, it would be inappropriate to treat it as a misdemeanor. Moreover, the recidivism rate is much greater when not

handled appropriately.

“There is a direct relationship between the criminal acts of animal fighting and other serious felonies, such as illegal firearms and gambling, drug distribution, money laundering, aggravated assaults, child pornography, child abuse and neglect, human trafficking, and gang activity,” the SRLEEA statement continued. “Animal fighting creates and perpetuates a climate of violence, fear, and intimidation affecting not only those involved, but also witnesses and the larger community. Therefore, animal fighting and its associated activities, including the trafficking of animals, being a spectator to a fight, and allowing minors to be present at fights are rightly recognized as warranting felony-level penalties to hold perpetrators fully accountable for the damage they cause to their communities.”

“One of my biggest concerns is for the children who attend animal fighting events,” said SRLEEA President Retired Sheriff Mike Brown. “Studies have shown that exposing children to violence, including witnessing animal abuse, can have significant negative effects on their mental health and well-being and many are likely to develop attitudes and beliefs that support violence and cruelty towards animals, which can carry over into other aspects of their lives.”

Sheriff Vanessa Crawford, SRLEEA Board Chair, said, “Animal fighting is a barbaric and cruel practice that not only harms animals but also has far-reaching negative consequences for our communities. Individuals who engage in animal fighting are more likely to engage in other forms of violence, including domestic violence.”

The SRLEEA added that law enforcement agencies have identified animal fighting as a gateway to other serious criminal activities. This Link between animal fighting and other forms of violence is often part of larger criminal enterprises, with individuals also involved in such illegal activities as drug trafficking, gambling, and illegal firearms possession.

The [Association of Prosecuting Attorneys](#) (APA) submitted its Statement of Principles on Animal Fighting, recognizing animals' capacity to suffer, every state's criminal code and that the federal government punishes animal fighting at the felony level.



"There is a direct link between the criminal acts of animal fighting and other serious felonies, such as illegal firearms and gambling, drug distribution, money laundering, aggravated assaults, child pornography, human trafficking, and gang activity. Experts recognize the need for higher penalties for animal fighting and its associated activities, including the trafficking of animals and being a spectator to a fight. Holding those perpetrators to felony-level penalties would assign more accountability for the damage they have caused to their communities," said APA.

"Animal fighting is a crime of violence, injuring and killing thousands of animals per year. It is a crime that warrants felony accountability. Animal fighting perpetuates a climate of violence, fear, and intimidation to both those involved as well as witnesses and the larger community."



The [Humane Society of the U.S.](#) issued a statement noting that although cockfighting was made a felony in Oklahoma in 2002 and that a 2022 poll showed 91.3% of Oklahomans strongly opposed any reduction in penalties for animal fighting, lobbyists for the cockfighters were actively promoting **SB 1006** and **HB 2530**.

"Animal fighters are most often associated with other felonious activities such as child abuse, drug trafficking and human trafficking. Lowering penalties for one activity only entices more people to take the risk," said the HSUS statement, adding that law enforcement raids have unearthed ties to drug cartels, organized crime, illegal narcotics, illegal gambling, firearms, and sex and human trafficking. "Cockfighters frequently involve children of all ages in organized cockfights where they are exposed to a range of criminal activity and where animal cruelty is normalized and celebrated. Children exposed to this kind of activity learn to disrespect the law and have become targets of abuse themselves in some cases."

As a result of public pressure, both bills appear to be dead. **SB 1006** passed the Committee on Tourism & Wildlife 8-2 but went no further. **HB 2530** passed the House 51-42 and was sent to the Senate Rules Committee, which declined to hear the bill before the committee's deadline. However, Link and law enforcement advocates were closely watching several other bills which might get these bills' provisions tacked on in surreptitious amendments.

(Editor's Note: See related article [Linking cockfighting with multiple homicides on Page 25 in the Link in the News section.](#))

Nine-Point Plan Guides Police in Helping People and Animals

A [nine-point plan](#) to help law enforcement officials, others engaged in public protection and community decision makers to prevent abuse of animals and people has been published. [Teena Stoddert](#), of Canada's Violence Link Consulting service, and [Mark Randell](#), of the UK's Naturewatch Foundation, designed the plan as a simple and effective toolkit that is generic enough to be useful in any community in any country.



Teena Stoddert and Mark Randell

The plan includes these steps:

1. Animal crime reports should be recorded and referred to someone with experience in The Link to determine any additional threats and the scope of the investigation.
2. Officers at an animal crime scene should consider what other violent crimes may be present, and should consider the welfare of any animals at a human crime scene.
3. Officers should advise a domestic violence victim about facilities that are available to care for her pets or farm animals until she has a safe place to live.
4. Court briefings and sentencings should consider whether any animals were threatened or harmed as part of coercive control in family relationships.
5. Persons who abuse animals sexually should be referred to qualified investigators and additional consideration should be given to the welfare of children and animals in the household.
6. Detectives investigating online child pornography must be trained to also look for animal pornography.
7. Individuals who deliberately abuse animals should be referred to police officers trained in The Link.
8. Officers or detectives investigating a Link case should contact local animal care or control agencies to learn if the suspect has been involved previously in any animal abuse cases.
9. Police should receive training in investigating animal fighting.

THE LINK in the LITERATURE

Slaughterhouse Work Linked with Criminal Behaviors

A question is often asked as to whether there is a Link between animal abuse committed in a permitted industrial context, such as meatpacking plants, and acts of interpersonal violence. A recent literature review of 14 studies reported that slaughterhouse employees have a higher prevalence of mental health issues and some association with increased crime levels, particularly general antisocial behavior and sexual offenses but not violent crimes. The findings from the review found that slaughterhouse workers have a higher prevalence rate of mental health issues, in particular depression and anxiety, in addition to violence-supportive attitudes. Workers employ a variety of both adaptive and maladaptive strategies to cope with the workplace environment of authorized mass killings of animals and associated stressors. Though there is some evidence that slaughterhouse work is associated with increased crime levels, the research reviewed showed a Link between slaughterhouse work and antisocial behavior generally and sexual offending specifically. There was no support for such an association with violent crimes.

-- Slade, J., & Alleyne, E. (2021). The psychological impact of slaughterhouse employment: A systemic literature review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 24(2), 429-440. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211030243>

NEWS from LOCAL LINK COALITIONS

National Link Coalition Gains Nonprofit Status



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

*Working together to stop violence
against people and animals*

Since the [National Link Coalition](#) was organized in 2008, we have functioned as a very informal network of individuals and organizations representing diverse human and animal interests working together to create safer families and communities. Over the past 15 years,

with this formula of collaboration among health and social services professionals, violence prevention and victim services advocates, law enforcement, academicians, animal care and control organizations, and the criminal justice system, we have seen remarkable successes with such notable achievements as:

- Felony-level animal cruelty laws in all 50 states
- Animal sexual abuse banned in 49 states
- Over 300 pet-friendly domestic violence shelters
- 38 states allow animals to be included in domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders
- Over 2,100 references in our bibliography of Link literature
- A National Directory of Abuse Investigation Agencies with contact information in over 6,500 communities
- Dozens of prosecutors offices and law enforcement agencies establishing animal cruelty task forces and specialized prosecution units
- Four types of animal cruelty being documented and Linked to other crimes by the FBI
- Dozens of training programs offered annually to a wide range of professional and public audiences
- A Free monthly *LINK-Letter* with a circulation of over 5,100 individuals in all 50 states and 55 countries.

With 15 years of experience and progress, we felt it was time to take the next step forward in our remarkable evolution, and in February 2023 we were formally incorporated as a nonprofit organization in North Carolina and in March we received our federal tax exemption as a 501c3 national nonprofit. This new designation will allow us to continue our work but also to be able, for the first time, to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions.

Our current organizational leadership remains the same, except instead of a Steering Committee we now have a small Board of Directors and a larger Professional Advisory Committee.

“This is a very exciting time for a dynamic organization in a rapidly expanding field,” said Phil Arkow, President and Secretary. “This more formal recognition enhances our credibility and reach even further and will enable us to grow as awareness of The Link between animal abuse and human violence continues to grow exponentially. We thank all of the individuals and organizations who have helped us achieve so much over the past 15 years and look forward to their continued support.”

Tax-deductible contributions may be sent to:

**The National Link Coalition
c/o Lesley Ashworth, Treasurer
379 Hidden Pond Road
Boone, N.C. 28607**

BUILDING LINK AWARENESS

UK Link Awareness Campaign to be Featured at Hogarth's House

In 1751, famed London painter and social critic William Hogarth published the groundbreaking "Four Stages of Cruelty" engravings depicting The Link between animal abuse and human violence through the experiences of a fictional Tom Nero whose youthful animal cruelties led to an adult life of crime.



On June 7, London's Naturewatch Foundation will [host an event](#) for professionals at Hogarth's House in Chiswick to celebrate the work of Hogarth and explore why the human-animal violence Link has still not been fully recognized in England and Wales for the part it plays in domestic relationships, families and communities. A series of renowned guest speakers will discuss this topic as well as legal processes and policing strategies to better protect animals and people.



"The Link between animal cruelty and human violence is nothing new. The debate surrounding the correlation has been going on for over 250 years," said the Foundation in announcing the event.

The Naturewatch Foundation's work around the world aims to show communities that when animals are safe from cruelty, it helps people too. "When violence against an animal is inflicted, either on purpose or recklessly, then society has a responsibility to consider what other dangers they may pose."

Mark Randell, "Protect Animals, Protect People" campaign manager for the Naturewatch Foundation, tells *The LINK-Letter* that the UK's College of Policing has launched a DARA (Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment) process whereby all police officers and others in public protection complete a form to assess risks at domestic violence incidents.



Mark Randell

The DARA Question #1 incorporates whether the abuser hurts animals. Police have not yet been trained on this critical Link component of domestic abuse and Randell will be conducting trainings to close this gap.

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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.

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, 122 bills have been introduced in 2023 in the U.S. and Canada. 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



Arizona HB 2184 would allow courts to issue an ex parte Severe Threat Order of Protection that would prohibit the respondent from possessing a firearm based upon the respondent's credible threat of death or serious physical injury to self, others, or the cruel mistreatment of an animal. The bill is in the House Judiciary and Rules Committees.



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 passed the Senate Committee on Public Safety and was referred to the Appropriations Committee.



Colorado HB 23-1107 would continue to allocate \$7.5 million annually indefinitely to the state domestic violence and sexual assault services fund for governmental and nonprofit agency programs that provide services for crime victims, including attending to the needs of companion animals. (The fund is currently set to expire in 2027.) The bill is in the House Appropriations Committee.



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 passed the Senate unanimously and is in the House.



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.



Nevada AB 51 would have expanded the existing law, which includes “injuring or killing an animal” within the definition of domestic violence, to include “attempting to” injure or kill an animal. **The provision was deleted** in a Judiciary Committee amendment as the remainder of the bill was sent to the Senate.



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 to become 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 bill 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 being held for consideration 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 was being held for further study 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 was being held for further study 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 was being held for further study 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 33-0 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 was approved by 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 have made it a Class 1 misdemeanor for a person to engage in coercive control of a family or household member, including committing or threatening to commit cruelty to animals that intimidates the other party. It also would have included coercive control in the definition of “family abuse” used for the basis of the issuance of family abuse protective orders. The bill was in the Committee for Courts of Justice **when the Legislature adjourned.**



Washington HB 1562 prohibits individuals who have been convicted of animal cruelty in the second degree, domestic violence, coercion, stalking, or cyberstalking or violation of a protection order, from having unlawful access, control or possession of a firearm for five years. The bill's preambles states, "The strongest predictor of future violence is prior violent behavior, including perpetration of domestic violent misdemeanors," and calls cruelty to animals a "particularly strong risk factor." The bill passed the House and Senate and was sent to the Governor on April 19.



British Columbia Bill 17 would amend the Family Law and give divorcing parties options to jointly or exclusively own their companion animals and allow courts to consider the animals' best interests and the family's history of violence in ordering ownership of the animals as part of the divorce settlement. The bill had its Third Reading on April 3.

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 was reported favorably out of 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. It would take effect on Oct. 1. Each bill passed its respective chamber and the measure was sent to the Governor on April 5.



New Mexico SB 215, the Animal Sexual Abuse Act, would establish crimes of bestiality and aggravated bestiality, with felony-level penalties upon conviction. Those convicted of these crimes would be registered as sex offenders, would be banned from keeping or caring for animals, and may be ordered to submit to psychological assessment and counseling. The bill passed the Senate and House unanimously and **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 have added 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 bills died when the Legislature adjourned.**



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 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.

Animal Abuse and Abuse of the Elderly, Disabled and Vulnerable



Nevada AB 254 would expand existing domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders that protect animals to allow courts to issue temporary protection orders for vulnerable adults, including persons over age 60, or who have developmental disabilities, mental illness, physical or mental limitations, or who are in long-term care or receiving in-home nursing services. The bill is in the Assembly Judiciary Committee.

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.**

Cross-Reporting



Connecticut HB 5851 and **HB 6714** would require veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse to appropriate authorities, with civil immunity for reports made in good faith. **HB 5851** is in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary; **HB 6714** was reported favorably out of the Judiciary Committee and sent to the House.



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 Joint Committee on the Environment.



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 passed the Senate unanimously and is in the House.



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.



Oregon HB 3539 would increase the penalty for mandated reporters' failure to report suspected child abuse, including animal control officers, from a violation to a Class A misdemeanor. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.

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 passed the Assembly Committee on Public Safety and was referred to the Appropriations Committee.



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.



Nevada SB 359 would authorize juvenile courts to order a child who is adjudicated delinquent for killing or possessing certain animals to attend or participate in counseling or psychological treatment if the child is unable to pay the usual fine because of financial hardship. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.




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 the House 92-0 and was sent to the Governor on April 24; **HB 398** is in the House Rules 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 is in the House Rules 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.



Louisiana SB 212 would authorize the seizure of firearms from persons who make threats of violence or who pose a risk of imminent harm, based on criteria that include recent acts of animal cruelty. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Maine LD 1121 would have transferred 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 had to complete an advanced training program that would include animal hoarding and animal cruelty with respect to domestic violence. **The bill passed the House but died in the Senate.**



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.

THE LINK... IN THE NEWS

Briton Gets Two Years in Prison for Frenzied Attack on Girlfriend and Her Cat



Shane Corbett

A manipulative bully who claimed he had killed his girlfriend's cat before launching a frenzied and determined attack on her was sentenced to two years in prison for the ongoing violence he had inflicted on her over a 10-year relationship. Shane Corbett, 53, of Manchester, UK, inflicted an attack on Danielle Whitfield, 39, that included punching, kicking and stamping on her, destroying her home by urinating on her carpet and smashing her belongings, taking her keys and her shoes so that he could control her whereabouts, and throwing away food for and then killing her cat, "Salem". This was the final act that caused her to leave, as she was afraid to return home to see what had been done to the animal.

The [Metro](#) news agency reported that Corbett told authorities he would get angry, aggressive and violent after Whitfield underwent a spinal operation which meant she was barely able to walk. Corbett has a history of violence, including 40 previous offenses relating to assault, drug offences, theft and damage. In imposing the sentence, which included a five-year no-contact restraining order, Judge Alexandra Simmonds told Corbett that his actions in telling her that he had killed her cat, causing her to fear going home, were cruel and bullying.

Canadian Gets Eight Years in Prison for Shooting Two and Killing Dog



Terry St. Hill

A Chatham, Ontario man who pled guilty in a Canadian court to killing a dog and discharging a firearm was sentenced to eight years in prison and banned from owning animals for life. Terry St. Hill, 22, had been originally charged with three counts of attempted murder after firing a gun at three people and a dog. Two people were hurt and the dog was killed. The [Stratford Beacon Herald](#) reported that St. Hill was under two weapons bans and on parole when he and four others confronted the victims over a dispute that began online. "It is fortunate that Mr. St. Hill is such a poor shot," said Ontario Court Justice Pail Kowalyshn in noting the outcomes of the shootings could have been worse. He called the killing of the dog "cowardly and callous" and added "harming animals amounts to hurting everyone."



What is The LINK?

Legislation...

Intervention...

Networking...

Knowledge...

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

Two Charged with Murders at Hawaiian Cockfight

A mass shooting at a Hawai'i cockfight left two people dead and three others wounded. The [Honolulu Star-Advertiser](#) reported that Jacob "Hotboy Jakes" Borge, 23, was charged with 11 counts of murder, attempted murder and firearms offenses. Petitions for the same charges were filed against a juvenile, Shaedan-Styles McEnroe-Keaulii, age 16. The clandestine midnight incident in a remote rural area of Oahu was under investigation as police looked into whether rival factions were warring over who might have tipped off the U.S.

Department of Justice about an ongoing federal drug case. Although dogfighting is a felony in Hawai'i, cockfighting has been only a misdemeanor since 1884, due to what islanders call a cultural heritage, especially among the state's large population of Filipinos. Cockfights where 10 or more birds are involved may be prosecuted as a felony.



Jacob Borge, left, and
Shaedan-Styles McEnroe-Keaulii

Woman with Emaciated Dogs Charged with Felony Child Abuse



Colleen Lagines

After the Bedford County, Va. Sheriff's Office and Department of Social Services were called to investigate why an 18-year-old autistic student was not attending school, Colleen Lagines, 38, was charged with four counts of felony child abuse and neglect in an incident also involving badly emaciated and dead animals. [WDBJ-TV](#) reported that deputies found the home "heavily overgrown," with sounds of barking dogs coming from inside the home, along with "extreme odors." Investigators determined Lagines had allegedly abandoned two children at the house. The children, including the 18-year-old, were placed in a safe location by Social Services. Animal Control took the surviving animals to a veterinary clinic for assessment and care. The investigation was said to be ongoing and it was not clear if animal cruelty charges were also filed.

Teen in Domestic Violence Case Charged with Arson, Animal Cruelty, and Killing Half-Brother

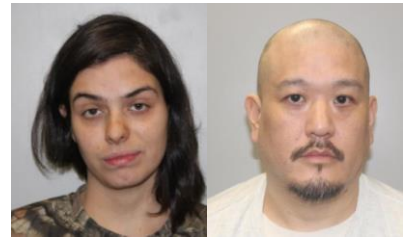
A 19-year-old teen in Carroll County, Miss., who was out on bond for a domestic violence charge, was charged with homicide, arson and felony animal cruelty for allegedly killing his half-brother. [WLBT-TV](#) and the Greenville, Miss. [Delta News](#) reported that Thomas Perry III, of Vaiden, Miss., was being held on a \$1.2 million bond in the murder charge for the death of his half-brother Orlando "King" Pittman, age 6. Perry was also charged with arson and felony aggravated animal cruelty. Court records said the young half-brother was stabbed to death before Perry allegedly stuffed his body in a closet and set the apartment on fire.



Thomas Perry, left, & Orlando Pittman

40+ Dogs at Home Where Abused Child Suffered Severe Frostbite

A Russell County, Va. couple who were charged with felony child abuse after a child who had reportedly been kept in a trailer for months was so frostbitten that he had to have part of a leg amputated also had more than 40 dogs on their property. [WJHL-TV](#) reported that Rebecca Bremner, 32, and Michael Park, 43, both of Castlewood, were arrested on Jan. 19. Park was extradited back to Virginia from North Carolina. The Russell County Sheriff's Office said Bremner refused to release the dogs, who seemed to be healthy and well cared for. Russell County Animal Control and other local agencies were preparing to care for the dogs if necessary.



Rebecca Bremner & Michael Park

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.

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 10-12 – 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 18 (online): The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys will present Laura Niestat’s [webinar](#), “It Was An Accident! Or Was It? Distinguishing Non-accidental from Accidental Trauma in Animal Cruelty.”

May 22 – Lisbon, Portugal (online): Phil Arkow will conduct a Link webinar for Portuguese law enforcement officers on behalf of the [Provedor do Animal](#) .

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 24 – Lisbon, Portugal (online): Phil Arkow and Martha Smith-Blackmore will conduct a Link webinar for Portuguese veterinarians on behalf of the [Provedor do Animal](#) .

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

May 31 – Louisville, Ky.: Joye Estes will present on “Breaking Down Silos: Identifying Links between Interpersonal Violence, Animal Abuse and Substance Use” at the Kentucky Judicial Commission’s [Mental Health Summit](#).

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 5 – Bloomington, Ill.: Vicki Deisner will present “The Link between Domestic Violence, Homelessness and Pet Ownership” at the 22nd Annual [Prairie States Animal Welfare Conference](#).

June 7 – London, U.K.: The Naturewatch Foundation will [host an event](#) for professionals at Hogarth’s House to celebrate the work of William Hogarth and explore why the human-animal violence Link has still not been fully recognized in England and Wales.

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 18 – Kansas City, Mo. (online): BestyBnB will host a [webinar](#) on “Safety Planning with Survivors of Domestic Violence and Their Pets.”

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. 2 – Abuja, Nigeria (online): Phil Arkow will present on “The Dark Side of the Human-Animal Bond” at the 2023 [Dogalov](#) Animal Assisted Interventions and Assistance Animals Conference for Africa.

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. 11-15 – Grand Ronde, Ore.: Deputy District Attorney Jake Kamins will offer training on how to prepare for prosecuting animal cruelty cases among speakers at the 2023 Oregon Animal Control Council [Annual Training Conference](#) & Awards Banquet.

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. 2-3 – Washington, D.C.: The National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges and the Animal Legal Defense Fund will present the [Judicial Institute](#) on the Human-Animal Bond and the LINK Between Animal Cruelty and Interpersonal Violence: Issues in Family Law Cases.

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.

Oct. 25-27 – Milwaukee, Wis.: The [Association of Prosecuting Attorneys](#) and the [Animal Legal Defense Fund](#) will hold the 12th Annual National Animal Cruelty Prosecution Conference.

Nov. 14 – (online): Kathleen Wood and Katherine Youssouf of the Animal Legal Defense Fund will present “The Importance of Pre-Sentence Evaluation in Animal Cruelty Cases” in a [Justice Clearinghouse](#) webinar.

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](#).



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 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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