



# NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

**The LINK-Letter Vol. 16, No.8 August 2023**

*A monthly report of news from THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER*



**ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE**

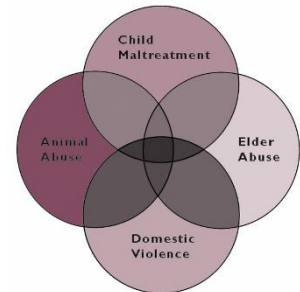


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[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK** **Pioneering Podcast Promotes Pet-Friendly Shelters**

What may be the first podcast to educate the public and violence-prevention professionals as to the need for pet-friendly shelters that protect the pets as well as the human survivors of intimate partner violence is now available. Allie Phillips, who pioneered the SAF-T (Sheltering Animals and Families Together) program and protocols, has announced that the [SAFeTy Chronicles podcast](#) is now live on YouTube.



“I have been wanting to have a podcast for the SAF-T Program that details why pet-inclusive shelters are needed, how and why does animal abuse Link to family violence, the human-animal bond of people and their pets, guest speakers and more! I am not aware of any podcast that is covering this important societal and public health issue,” Phillips tells *The LINK-Letter*.

Rather than hosting an expensive time-consuming podcast on a traditional podcasting site, Phillips opted to host on YouTube Podcast which is very friendly for a non-profit and easy for participants to listen. “I am always listening to YouTube videos and podcasts in my car, so I hope that this is an easy option for you to listen as well!”

***Thank You to Our Generous Supporters!***



This podcast is for anyone who:

- 🐱 loves animals
- 🐱 advocates for people or animals
- 🐱 domestic violence sheltering professionals
- 🐱 child abuse prevention professionals
- 🐱 elder abuse prevention professionals
- 🐱 animal welfare professionals
- 🐱 veterinarians
- 🐱 medical & psychological treatment providers
- 🐱 survivors, and
- 🐱 anyone who wants to know how to help a survivor with a pet.

Phillips assures us that there will be no graphic content ... just strategies and help to raise awareness of how animals can be harmed during family violence incidents. Podcast #1 offers insights into why Phillips created the SAF-T program. [Click here to subscribe](#) to the series of podcasts and to be notified when the next podcast becomes available. “The more people who are aware, the more survivors with pets we can help together,” says Phillips, who also serves on the National Link Coalition’s Board of Directors.

Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T)® is the only global initiative working with domestic violence shelters to create onsite pet housing. The SAF-T Program launched the pet-friendly sheltering movement in 2008. [More than 300 domestic violence shelters](#) in the U.S., Australia, Canada, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Spain are preserving the human-animal bond and helping all family members heal together by providing co-sheltering for people and pets.



## British Columbia Enacts Canada’s First Divorce Settlements Protecting Pets

British Columbia has become the latest jurisdiction to enact legislation allowing courts to award custody of companion animals to a divorcing couple based upon what the court determines to be in the animals’ best interests. **Bill 17** received Royal Assent on May 11.

The measure, the first of its kind in Canada after eight jurisdictions enacted similar laws in the U.S., is groundbreaking in that it defines pets as more than property, which is the category companion animals typically fall under within the law ([See the May 2023 LINK-Letter](#)). In determining whether to make an order respecting a companion animal, the Supreme Court must now consider: the circumstances in which it was acquired; the extent to which each spouse cared for the animal; any history or risk of family violence; a spouse's cruelty, or threat of cruelty, toward an animal; the relationship that a child has with the companion animal; the willingness and ability of each spouse to care for the animal’s basic needs; and any other circumstances the court considers relevant.

The legislation is significant because many domestic violence incidents end up in contentious divorce proceedings regarding which party can claim ownership of the household’s companion animals – many of which were similarly threatened during the abuses. U.S. courts can consider animals’ best interests in divorce settlements in Alaska, California, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Maine, New Hampshire, and New York.

## U.K. Adds Threats to Pets within Definition of Domestic Abuse



### Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The United Kingdom has joined the growing list of countries and 12 U.S. states that recognize that threats or harm to animals constitute acts of coercive or controlling behavior which meet the definition of domestic violence or abuse.

Four years after it was first proposed, Parliament enacted the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) which took effect on April 30, 2021. The law addresses many concerns regarding domestic violence (called “domestic abuse” in the U.K.) including adding “controlling or coercive behavior” to the definition of “abusive” behavior within the definition of domestic abuse.

The supplementary 163-page [Statutory Guidance to the Domestic Abuse Act](#), issued to assist agencies in enforcing the Act with standards and best practices, defines “controlling or coercive behavior” to include “using animals to control or coerce a victim, e.g. harming or threatening to harm, or give away, pets or assistance dogs.”

The Domestic Abuse Act included numerous other provisions, including:

- Creating a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasizing that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, controlling or coercive, and economic abuse;
- Providing for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order;
- Placing a duty on local authorities in England to provide accommodation-based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation;
- Extending the controlling or coercive behavior offense to cover post-separation abuse.

However, neither the domestic abuse protection order nor the domestic abuse refuge (shelter) provisions addressed the inclusion of pets.

In the U.K. there are some 2.3 million victims of domestic abuse a year aged 16 to 74 (two-thirds of whom are women) and more than one in ten of all offenses recorded by the police are domestic abuse related. The cost of domestic abuse was estimated to be approximately £66 billion in England and Wales in 2016-2017.

“Domestic abuse is an abhorrent crime perpetrated on victims and their families by those who should love and care for them. This landmark bill will help transform the response to domestic abuse, helping to prevent offending, protect victims and ensure they have the support they need,” said Victoria Atkins MP, Minister for Safeguarding in introducing the measure.

## Colorado Pet-Friendly Shelters to Continue to Get State Funding

**Colorado HB 23-1107** was signed into law on May 25. The measure, which took effect July 1, will continue to allocate annual funding 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 was set to expire in 2027.

## Pet-Related Coercive Control Found to Exist in the U.K.

A Ph.D. research study submitted to the University of Bristol in the U.K., building on the growing body of research in the U.S., Canada and Australia, adopts a feminist methodology to explore the coexistence of animal abuse and domestic abuse and reports that the British situation closely mirrors that in other countries. Mary Wakeham, CEO of the U.K.'s [Refuge4Pets](#), found compelling evidence that animal abuse in the U.K. is a strategy of coercive control and an act of animal cruelty.



“The oppression of women, children and animals are intertwined in patriarchal systems, and nowhere is this interconnection more apparent than in the co-occurrence of animal abuse and domestic violence and abuse,” she wrote. A humancentric approach dominates definitions and the prevailing public story about domestic violence and abuse across society, focuses on the human survivor in isolation, and undermines the status of the animal and the importance of the animal in the dynamics of abuse.

“We need to extend our construction of domestic violence and abuse to include animals as the silent victim-survivors of domestic violence and abuse. The oppression of animals is compounded by the dominant status of animals in society as ‘less important’ than human beings and ‘property’ that is ‘owned’ by humans,” she added.

This conceptualization of animals is underpinned by the U.K.'s animal welfare legislation “that provides a platform for perpetrators of domestic abuse who abuse animals to justify and continue the abuse of animals often with little consequence or challenge.” Her research highlights the many parallels between the abuse of animals and people in the context of domestic abuse and the implications of the abuse for all victim-survivors – humans and animals.

-- Wakeham, M. (2021, Sept. 28). *Animal abuse as a strategy of coercive control*. [Doctoral Thesis, University of Bristol].



## Sheltering Pet Victims of Domestic Violence Also Earns a Social Value Return on Investment

Providing emergency shelter for the pets of people experiencing domestic or family violence not only maintains inter-species familial bonds and preserves mental health, but also results in a fiscal return on the sheltering agency's investment. These are the findings of a RSPCA NSW study in Australia that reported that for every 1 Australian dollar invested in caring for pets of domestic/family violence victims, the homeless, or people needing sudden hospitalization, the organization received social value worth 8.1 Australian dollars. The most valuable results, the report noted, were people being able to keep their companion animals and improved mental health and well-being. “The study shows the importance of considering companion animals as part of the family unit and supporting people experiencing a crisis to keep their companion animals,” the study concluded.

-- Ma, G.C., Ravulo, J., & McGeown, U. (2023). *Emergency animal boarding: A social return on investment*. *Animals*, 13, 2264. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13142264>

## Pittsburgh Pet-Friendly Shelter Gets Major News Coverage



**Crisis Center North**

Providing direction to victims of domestic violence

Pittsburgh's [Crisis Center North](#) -- one of about 23 domestic violence programs in the country that received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to assist domestic violence victims and their pets with shelter, transitional housing and other needs in the

last several years -- received a rousing shout-out in a June 28 article in the [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#). The article spotlighted a woman who had fled from an abusive relationship with her two children, a dog, and the clothes on her back. When she was denied access to a shelter in her home town she learned about Crisis Center North which welcomed the entire family.

"I had no idea what to do. I was in such stress," said the anonymous woman. "She [the dog] has always been by my side. She could always tell when something was wrong."

Crisis Center North has a Paws for Empowerment program and a pilot program to provide temporary shelter and financial help for abuse victims' pets or therapy animals. "A dog softens people," said Grace Coleman, CEO and president of the crisis center. "Having a dog on your side is powerful."

Since 2011, the program has employed and trained dogs to work with victims in therapy and in court, and serve in the center's public relations campaigns. The center has three "canine advocates," Penny, Ari, and Rune, who are present during victims' counseling sessions and court appearances.

The pilot program has served 113 people fleeing domestic abuse and more than 200 dogs, cats, birds, fish, bearded dragons, rabbits, chickens, and horses. Crisis Center North has also trained more than 349 veterinary staff members about the connection between the abuse of people and animals.



Grace Coleman

Rather than build a kennel, the center rents pet-friendly apartments from area landlords so victims, who can stay up to two years, can be close to family resources. It also works to find farms to board horses, farriers to work on horses, and veterinarians to update animal vaccines.

Today, the anonymous woman works as a hairdresser and home health care worker, and she still has her dog. There still isn't a domestic violence shelter that accepts dogs where she lives. "I wish they would have something like that here," she said. "There's unconditional love from a dog and it really helps you."

"We saw that victims would not leave an abusive situation because they didn't want to leave their pets. We have victims protected by dogs. It's unconscionable to separate them from their pets," said Coleman.

"If an animal isn't safe, a human isn't either," said Coleman, a co-founder of Pennsylvania's Keystone Link Coalition. "I'm just delighted groups are coming together to have these significant conversations."



## New Spanish Laws Address Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence

In the [July LINK-Letter](#), we noted three groundbreaking laws recently enacted in Spain. Núria Querol of Spain's [VioPet](#), which helps domestic violence survivors find shelter for their pets, gave *The LINK-Letter* the specifics of these groundbreaking advancements.

The [Animal Rights and Welfare Law](#), enacted in March 2023, requires domestic violence shelters to accommodate pets. Article 29.4 reads:

“Shelters, refuge centers, care facilities, and, in general, those establishments aimed at assisting people at risk of social exclusion, homeless people, victims of gender-based violence, and anyone in a similar situation, will facilitate the access of these people along with their companion animals to these establishments, unless there is a justified reason expressly stated. In the event that access with the companion animal is not possible, agreements with animal protection entities or animal foster care projects will be promoted.”



Núria Querol

Also in March, the [Spanish Criminal Code](#) was amended to include bestiality and domestic violence coercive-control animal abuse. This reform of the criminal code increases the penalties for mistreatment which can land offenders with up to a year and a half in prison if the animal requires veterinary care. This sentence can be increased to two years if the animal dies, or three years in the event of aggravating circumstances. Article 340 reads, in part:

“It will be punished with a prison sentence of 3 to 18 months or a fine of 6 to 12 months and with the penalty of special disqualification from 1 to 5 years for the exercise of a profession or trade that is related to animals and for the possession of animals which, outside of legally regulated activities, including acts of a sexual nature causes an injury to a vertebrate animal that requires veterinary treatment to restore its health.”

Penalties for animal cruelty can be increased under a variety of aggravating circumstances including: using weapons that could be dangerous to the animal's health or life; committing the act with cruel intentions; committing the act in the presence of a minor or a vulnerable person; and committing the act to coerce, intimidate, harass, or produce psychological damage to someone who is or has been a spouse or a person who is or has been linked to the perpetrator by a similar affective relationship, even without living together.”

Previously, in December 2021, the [Civil Code and Mortgage Law](#) was revised, declaring animals to be “sentient beings” and establishing criteria by which courts may decide custody of animals in divorce settlements based on prioritizing the animals' welfare. Joint custody is not allowed if there are well-founded indications of domestic violence. A history of animal abuse will also be taken into consideration by judges.

During its first year VioPet helped more than 500 survivors of intimate partner violence and 157 animals, Querol said. “We have a network of more than 1,200 foster homes throughout the country. We receive requests for help from victims of child abuse, child-to-parent violence and elder abuse.” VioPet receives an average of three calls per day. 60% of requests for help come from social services, 30% from victims and 10% from law enforcement.

## ***VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK***

### **Connecticut Takes Half-Step in Veterinary Reporting of Animal Abuse**



The State of Connecticut took a partial step in the nationwide movement of mandating or requiring veterinarians to report suspicions of animal abuse. **HB 6714**, signed into law on June 15, will require veterinarians after Oct. 1 to report reasonable suspicions that an animal has been harmed, neglected or treated cruelly due to participation in animal fighting to the local law enforcement agency or animal control officer. Veterinarians who make such reports in good faith are immune from civil liability.

Two similar proposals died in committee. **HB 5851** would have required reporting suspicions of all animal abuse rather than cases resulting from animal fighting, died in committee. **SB 53** would have mandated reporting of suspected malicious and intentional maiming, mutilation, torturing, wounding, or killing of an animal, and permitted reporting of lesser animal cruelty and neglect offenses, with immunity from civil and criminal liability and professional disciplinary action.

With the new law, 22 now states mandate veterinary reporting of some forms of suspected animal maltreatment, and 20 states permit such reporting; 35 states offer practitioners immunity from civil and/or criminal liability and/or disciplinary action.

### **On-site Veterinary Forensics Exams Can Also Address Link Issues**

A new research article from Italy is introducing a suggested form to facilitate the on-site inspection of the scene of an animal dead body, which is crucial for both a correct interpretation of the autopsy results and for the recognition and contrast of crimes against animals and humans, considered an alert sign of antisocial or violent behavior. The multi-disciplinary team emphasize the importance of on-site investigation and evidence collection by veterinarians, and especially veterinary pathologists, rather than relying exclusively on photos and other information from police officers untrained in animal cruelty and Link concerns. On-site inspection is fundamental: to determine the manner, mechanism and cause of death; has an important role in the control of public health including the prevention of zoonoses; helps ensure the safety of people and the biosecurity of the site; and allows quality information to be handed over to experts belonging to other forensic sciences for further evaluation and data interpretation. The proposed form is inspired by the interdisciplinary form developed by the European Council of Legal Medicine as an initial tool to improve a multi-disciplinary activity in close synergy with other forensic experts.

The authors emphasize The Link and express a belief that a close collaboration between human and veterinary forensic medicine professionals can strengthen awareness of the theory of interspecies violence known as The Link. "The use of shared tools and a common nomenclature will contribute to this," they write. "Today we know that well-collected information and samples are fundamental investigative clues and help to reconstruct cases of abuse and violence against humans and animals. A close collaboration between the forensic disciplines is the basis of the concept of One Health in which multiple sectors communicate and work together with a common purpose: the search for truth for the benefit of humans and animals."

-- Marchetti, C., Mastrogioseppe, L., Vanin, S., Cecchi, R., & Gherardi, M. (2023). On-site inspection form in veterinary cases: The Parma veterinary form. *Animals*, 13, 2064. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13132064>

## The Link-Based Rationale for Reporting Suspected Animal Abuse

With eight states still lacking laws that permit or mandate veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse to authorities, we should recall the Legislative Findings enacted in Oregon back in 2010. These findings, [ORS § 686.442](#), which are part of the public record but were not made a part of the reporting statute, read:

**“The Legislative Assembly finds that there is a direct link between the problems of animal abuse and human abuse and further finds that for the purposes of identifying and prosecuting individuals who have committed crimes against animals, preventing further abuse of animals and preventing animal abuse from escalating to abuse against humans, it is necessary and in the public interest to require mandatory reporting of aggravated animal abuse by veterinarians.”**

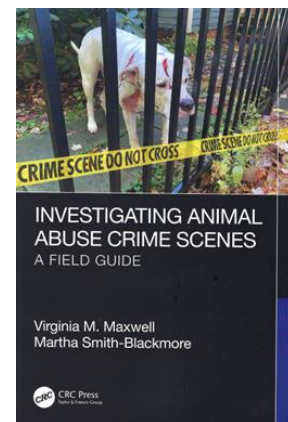


ORS § 686.455 says veterinarians and technicians who know or reasonably believe an animal to be abandoned, neglected or abused may report it to peace officers, animal control officers or humane law enforcement; suspected aggravated animal abuse, which includes maliciously killing or intentionally or knowingly torturing an animal, must be reported. Reporters are immune from civil and criminal liability.

22 states mandate and 20 states permit veterinary reporting of suspected animal abuse; 34 of them offer immunity. States lacking laws are: Delaware, Iowa, Montana, New Jersey, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wyoming.

## Field Guide Helps Investigating, Analyzing and Adjudicating Animal Cruelty Scenes

A comprehensive new field guide helps animal control officers, law enforcement, veterinarians, prosecutors, and other professionals responding to, investigating, analyzing, and adjudicating incidents of animal cruelty, abuse and neglect. *Investigating Animal Abuse Crime Scenes: A Field Guide* details key areas to make such investigations thorough. The 355-page manual covers: the role of ACOs and other first responders; securing and documenting the scene and preserving evidence; investigations involving large animals or large-scale numbers of animals; biological, trace, digital, pattern, toxicology, and chemical evidence; necropsy techniques; neglect and hoarding cases; animal sexual abuse; and animal fighting.



Forensic veterinarian Martha Smith-Blackmore, who serves on the National Link Coalition’s Professional Advisory Board, and Virginia Maxwell, a Forensic Science professor at the University of New Haven, collaborated on the book. Other contributors are Amanda Fitch and Leigh Anne Wilson of the ASPCA.

“Animal abuse is well established as a gateway crime Linked to other forms of antisocial behaviors and broader criminal violence,” they write in introducing the book. The field guide has increased relevance for a growing group of professionals in many disciplines now that “Increased evidence of The Link between animal abuse and criminal behavior has led many states to mandate cross-reporting between agencies overseeing the welfare of families and of animals.”

**-- Maxwell, V.M., & Smith-Blackmore, M. (2023). *Investigating Animal Abuse Crime Scenes: A Field Guide*. CRC Press.**



## ***CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK***

### **Italian Parliament Includes Animal Abuse in Anti-Bullying Bill**



Our counterpart in Italy, [Link Italia](#), tells *The LINK-Letter* that on June 28 the Italian Parliament, for the first time, considered the psychological and social implications of animal abuse in a bill with the aim of protecting minors. The Justice and Social Affairs Committees of the Italian Parliament gave their approval after the first reading of the bill to counter bullying and cyber bullying that incorporates the recognition of the social danger from the abuse and/or killing of animals.

The unified proposal “Regulations regarding the prevention and contrast of bullying and cyber-bullying in minors and their rehabilitation,” requires that “The Public Prosecutor, on notification of a minor under 18 years of age that gives clear signs of misbehavior or in character, as in aggressive and destructive behavior, even in a group, with regard to people, animals and objects, that is detrimental to the wellbeing of others, intervenes with a program of rehabilitation and/or reeducation.”

“Violence must never be underestimated. This is a first positive and fundamental step towards the understanding of the seriousness of animal abuse,” said Francesca Sorcinelli, Link Italia President, who [testified to the Justice Committee](#).

## ***CRIMINAL JUSTICE ... and THE LINK***

### **Canadian Research Study Examines Family Law’s Awareness of, and Responses to, The Link**

What may be the first study of family law professionals in Canada – and perhaps globally – to gauge that sector’s levels of knowledge about the Link and determine what further support they might need to boost that awareness has just submitted its findings to the Department of Justice Canada. [The report](#), available in English and French, suggests that family justice professionals feel overwhelmed with a significant amount of violence in their cases and are uncertain about what to do regarding companion animal issues to serve their clients’ best interests.



Humane Canada’s Violence Link survey assessed participants’ knowledge of the Link between intimate partner violence and animal abuse, the degree to which they observe it in their practice, and the resources available to address these cases. The survey also solicited participants’ perspectives on potential strategies for addressing IPV cases that involve companion animals as well as other recommendations for better serving their clients.

Although 60% of the 348 family lawyers, mediators and court officials who responded agreed that animal welfare is a matter of concern in the context of their job and 89% stated that they were aware of potential or suspected animal abuse in their cases, participants reported knowing relatively little about the Violence Link. While one-third of participants indicated that they had never heard about the animal abuse/IPV phenomenon until participating in the survey, after being given a definition of the Violence Link their most common response in judging how relevant the Link is was a 10 on a scale of 1-to-10.

“Despite research documenting the Link between intimate partner violence and animal abuse, research attention has not been paid to how family law professionals, specifically family lawyers and mediators, encounter and deal with the Violence Link in their practices. Given that family law professionals are often among the first to encounter those aiming to end an abusive relationship, their perspectives are key to understanding how to better serve the victims/survivors impacted by the Violence Link,” the report noted.

Among the study’s key findings and recommendations:

- **There is a need to provide family law practitioners with Link knowledge and resources.**
  - Nearly one- half of participants indicated that there were no resources available for addressing Violence Link cases in their practice.
- **Guidelines should be established for reporting animal abuse that ensure client safety.**
  - Nearly one-quarter of participants did not report the abuse or specifically advised their client not to because they were concerned for their client’s safety
- **Clients should be screened for the presence and abuse of companion animals.**
  - Few reported proactively asking questions about companion animals in the home and were instead made aware of such issues when clients volunteered that information. However, waiting for clients to volunteer this information is problematic, particularly because they may fear being looked down upon for making relationship decisions based on the well-being of their pets. Participants recommended that client intake and other forms should screen for the presence and abuse of pets as well as the presence of IPV. This is particularly crucial when probing about psychological abuse and coercive control.

In the survey and subsequent interviews, several potential strategies were suggested for dealing with the Violence Link, including:

- Clarifying how ownership or guardianship of companion animals should be addressed in family law cases.
- Establishing cross-reporting between animal and human service agencies.
- Legislative amendments that would enable the explicit inclusion of companion animals in protection orders.
- Providing additional services to clients who are experiencing IPV and have companion animals, such as the creation of pet safekeeping programs in domestic violence shelters.
- Educating the judiciary, lawyers, mediators, and the public on the Violence Link.
- Conducting further research on the Violence Link, specifically in the context of family law.

Noting that “the legal system requires significant effort to achieve even slow change,” and that “cultural differences in how people include animals in their lives could be used by government and service organizations to control vulnerable populations using mandated cross-reporting,” the report strongly recommended that any plans to implement mandated cross-reporting include substantial input from stakeholders representing vulnerable communities.

The report concluded with three priorities for further action:

- Educating the judiciary.
- Clarifying how ownership or guardianship of companion animals should be dealt with.
- Enabling the explicit inclusion of companion animals in protection orders.

-- Fitzgerald, A., Coulter, K., Monckton, V., & Thomson, K. (2023). *The Violence Link in Practice: An Empirical Examination of the Implications of the Violence Link for Family Justice Professionals*. Ottawa: Humane Canada.



## Delaware Lawyers Learn About Animal Abuse and Intrafamilial Violence

Following up on the groundbreaking legislation that gave Delaware three new laws that include pets in domestic violence protection orders and divorce settlements and implement cross-reporting of animal abuse ([See the July 2023 LINK-Letter](#)), Judge Jennifer Ranji has published an article describing the work that made these legislative breakthroughs possible.

### The Hon. Jennifer Ranji

Ranji, the domestic violence liaison judge on the Delaware Family Court, describes how an ad hoc committee comprised of child welfare, animal welfare and domestic violence professionals, among others, began meeting two years ago to examine The Link between animal abuse and human violence. The group has since been formalized as the LINK Committee of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council with the goal of identifying legislative and policy changes that use knowledge about The Link to improve system response to intrafamilial violence.

In addition to the successful passage of **Senate Bills 70** and **71**, and **House Bill 95**, the committee is also eyeing additional legislation that would allow caseworkers or law enforcement officers responding to allegations of child abuse to change the timing or type of response if they are aware of claims that the perpetrator also tortured or killed a family pet.

The article appears in the [current issue](#) of *Delaware Lawyer*, published by the Delaware Bar Foundation. The issue focuses on how Family Court and its partners address domestic violence in Delaware.

“The bonds that adults and children have with their pets can provide significant positive benefits for humans and animals,” Ranji concludes. “Unfortunately, it is that very bond that also makes animals effective targets for those attempting to hurt and control their family members. Rather than ignore that sad reality, we must use it to better understand the risks present for families experiencing violence and provide a response that fully addresses the victims’ needs.”

-- Ranji, J. (2023). Domestic violence and animal abuse. *Delaware Lawyer*, 41(2), 12-13.



## Assistance Sought on Diversion Interventions for Animal Cruelty Offenders

The Animals and Society Institute is developing a hybrid self-directed diversion psychoeducational intervention for adults who have abused animals (BARK). As legislation in 34 states mandates or recommends assessment and/or treatment for animal abuse, an evidence-based intervention is sorely needed, according to ASI Treasurer Ken Shapiro. The program will incorporate pre-post validation instruments.

ASI is seeking information about a platform (name, contact, price) to house the program and/or individuals with expertise with this technology. Please respond to Shapiro at [ken.shapiro@animalsandsociety.org](mailto:ken.shapiro@animalsandsociety.org)

## *NEWS from LINK COALITIONS*

### Canadian Violence Link Coalition Publishes Profession-Specific Link Toolkits

Our Canadian counterpart, the Violence Link Coalition, has released a series of [Violence Link Toolkits](#) that include a collection of downloadable profession-specific posters and other materials. The Toolkits were developed to help various professions create awareness of the Violence Link between interpersonal abuse and animal abuse, as well as how to take action. The kits include posters, with powerful graphics and messaging, that can be printed out for the workplace as well as digital files for use on agency websites and social media.



The posters are divided into four main sector categories:

- Law enforcement, including police, prosecutors, the judiciary, law, and policy makers;
- The animal welfare sector, including animal cruelty enforcement personnel and advocates, veterinarians and technicians, and other animal care professionals;
- Social and healthcare workers, including victim services, physicians and hospital staff, the domestic violence sector, eldercare agencies, child advocacy groups, and anti-violence advocates; and
- Educators, including teachers, counselors and other school personnel.

The toolkits' purpose is to remind those working on the frontlines of violence and care that helping to break the Violence Link often just takes one phone call.

## *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, **132 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*



**H.R. 3957, the PUPP Act of 2023 (Providing for Unhoused People with Pets)** would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to make grants to modify and upgrade structures that serve as interim and permanent housing for unhoused individuals with pets, and to provide supportive and veterinary services. It was referred to the House Agriculture and Financial Services Committees' Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy and Poultry.



**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 was held in the House Judiciary and Rules Committee **when the Legislature adjourned.**



**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 and was sent to the Assembly Public Safety Committee.



**Colorado HB 23-1107** will continue to allocate annual funding 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 was set to expire in 2027.) **The bill was signed into law on May 25.**



**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, including: each party's ability to care for it; their attachment to it; and the time spent during the marriage tending to its needs. **It was signed into law on June 27.**



**Delaware SB 70** adds 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 provides 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. **It was signed into law on June 27.**



**Illinois SB 44, SB 1390 and HB 1404** would have amended 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 were in committee when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**Indiana SB 41** would have increased 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 measure died when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**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 have modified 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 **died in committee when the Legislature adjourned.**

 **Nebraska LB 11** would have allowed 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 was in the Judiciary Committee **when the Legislature adjourned.**


 **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 have expanded 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 House Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety **declared it “inexpedient to legislate”.**

 **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 and A 5040** 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 bills passed the Senate and the Assembly and were returned back to the Senate.



**Oregon SB 496A** would have appropriated \$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, where **it died when the Legislature adjourned.**



**Pennsylvania HB 1108,** recognizing that “companion animals are living beings that are generally regarded as cherished family members that offer their owners companionship, security and assistance” and “occupy a special category of personal property which does not include inanimate property,” would allow parties in a divorce settlement to enter into an enforceable contract dictating the possession and care of pets based on which party could provide the best care and social interaction. The bill was approved by the House and sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee.



**Pennsylvania HB 1210** would amend the Domestic Relations title to allow courts to grant temporary ownership rights over companion animals in protection orders and direct defendants from harming, possessing, transferring, or relocating the animal. The bill was approved by the House and sent to the Senate Judiciary 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 in the House Judiciary Committee **when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**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 in the House Judiciary Committee **when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**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 in the House Judiciary Committee **when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**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 were being held for further study **when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**Tennessee SB 568 and HB 467** would have allowed 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. Both bills **died in the House when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**Texas HB 1179** would have required 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. The bill **died in the Senate when the Legislature adjourned.**



**Texas HB 4336** would have deleted the provision permitting courts to prohibit respondents in domestic violence protection orders from possessing firearms. **HB 3996 and SB 1274** would have allowed courts to prohibit alleged offenders from possessing firearms and ammunition, unless they are peace officers or members of the military. Respondents would have been 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 died when the Legislature adjourned.**



**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 signed into law on May 4.**





**Canada Bill C-21** would amend the Firearms Act to prevent individuals who are subject to a protection order or who have been convicted of domestic violence, which includes threats or harm to another person's animals, from obtaining a firearms license. The bill passed the House of Commons and had its 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading in the Senate on June 21 and was referred to the Standing Committee on National Security, Defense and Veterans Affairs.



**British Columbia Bill 17** amends the Family Law and gives divorcing parties options to jointly or exclusively own their companion animals. It allows courts to consider the animals' best interests and the family's history of violence in ordering ownership of the animals as part of a divorce settlement. The bill received Royal Assent on May 11.



### *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. **The bill died when the Legislature adjourned.**

### *Animal Sexual Abuse*



**Connecticut HB 5851** would have defined "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 was in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary **when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**Connecticut HB 6714** defines "sexual contact with an animal" and a new misdemeanor crime of "sexual assault of an animal" which includes sexual contact and creating or distributing photographic images of sexual contact with an animal. Law enforcement and animal control officers can now seize any animal believed to be victimized for veterinary examination and treatment. Convicted offenders would be barred from having any contact with animals for 5 years. **The bill became law on June 15.**



**Kansas HB 2355** would have removed 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 died when the Legislature adjourned.**



**Maryland SB 54 and HB 131** eliminated a statute containing the archaic terminology of "unnatural or perverted sexual practice" referring to oral sex with animals or other persons. Another statute already prohibits "sexual conduct with an animal" in more detail as a felony act of aggravated cruelty to animals punishable by up to three years in prison and/or a \$5,000 fine. It will take effect on Oct. 1. Each bill passed its respective chamber and the measure **became law without the Governor's signature.**





**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 became 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.



**Pennsylvania SB 852** would permit limited access to criminal records of certain individuals convicted of felonies. Individuals convicted of sexual intercourse with an animal within the previous 15 years would not be eligible for such limited access. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary 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 have allowed child vulnerable witnesses to be accompanied by a certified critical incident response therapy K9 team during any criminal proceeding. The bill was in the Senate Judiciary Committee **when the Legislature adjourned.**



**Kentucky HB 321** would have made animal abuse a Class D felony if the act is committed in the presence of a minor child. **The bill died when the Legislature adjourned.**



**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 Judiciary and Senate Codes Committees.



**Texas HB 720 and SB 139** would have allowed therapy or facility dogs to accompany a child or a person with a disability during testimony in certain criminal cases. **The bills died when the Legislature adjourned.**

### *Animal Abuse and Abuse of the Elderly, Disabled and Vulnerable*



**Nevada AB 254** would have expanded 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 was in the Assembly Judiciary Committee **when the Legislature adjourned.**

### *Cross-Reporting*



**Connecticut HB 6714** requires veterinarians to report reasonable suspicions that an animal has been harmed, neglected or treated cruelly due to participation in animal fighting to the local law enforcement agency or animal control officer. Veterinarians who make such reports in good faith are immune from civil liability. **HB 6714 was signed into law on June 15.**



**Connecticut SB 53** would have required 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 have been permitted to report lesser animal cruelty and neglect offenses. In both situations, veterinarians would be immune from civil and criminal liability and professional disciplinary action. **The measure died in committee when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**Delaware SB 71** requires 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 also provides immunity to people who in good faith report suspected animal cruelty. **The bill was signed into law on June 27.**





**Iowa SF 316 and HF 472** would have granted 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, and not be subject to normal confidentiality requirements. The bills passed the House 97-1 and were in the Senate **when the Legislature adjourned**.



**Maryland HB 1192** would have required 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 have been allowed to seize the animals if necessary to protect them. **The bill died in the House Judiciary Committee when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**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.



**Minnesota SF 3324 and SF 3300** would require Office of Animal Protection personnel to report suspected child and elder abuse to the Department of Human Services; child and adult protective services employees would be required to report suspected animal cruelty to the Office of Animal Protection. All reporters would be immune from civil and criminal liability if the report is made in good faith. [The bills](#) are in the Senate Judiciary & Public Safety and House Public Safety & Finance Committees **for the 2024 legislative session**.



**Missouri SB 91 and HB 300** would have required veterinarians, animal control officers and animal humane investigators to receive training and report suspected cases of abuse and neglect of children, the elderly and other vulnerable persons. Certain mental health, educational, protective services, and law enforcement personnel would also have been mandated to report companion animal abuse or neglect to a Missouri Animal Control Association hotline. Failure to report would have been subject to fines and discipline by professional licensing boards. **The bills were in committee when the Legislature adjourned.**



**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 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 have increased 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 was in the House Judiciary Committee **when the Legislature adjourned**.



### *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 10 judicial districts, to equip incarcerated youths with 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 vulnerable animals. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



**California AB 829** would expand mandatory counseling for violations under penal code section 597 to other sections pertaining to serious animal abuse crimes. Courts would be required to consider a mental health evaluation for individuals convicted of serious animal abuse 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 and was sent to the Senate 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 have authorized 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 was in the Senate Judiciary Committee **when the Legislature adjourned**.



**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 **signed by the Governor on May 5**. It became effective July 1.



### *Court-Appointed Advocates for Animals*



**Connecticut HB 6260 and SB 1060** would have expanded 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 died in committee when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**Connecticut HB 5579** would have amended and clarified the pioneering “Desmond’s Law” by allowing a judge to appoint an advocate in egregious animal abuse cases regardless of the species of animal involved. **The bill died in committee when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**Florida HB 989 and SB 1006** would have authorized 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 died in their Judiciary Committees when the Legislature adjourned.**



### **What is The LINK?**

**Legislation...**

**Intervention...**

**Networking...**

**Knowledge...**

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



**Illinois HB 1169** would have amended the Code of Criminal Procedure to allow a court to appoint an 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 was in committee when the General Assembly adjourned.**



**Minnesota SF 3324 and SF 3300** would allow courts to appoint an advocate to represent the interests of the animal from a list of attorneys who have been trained in this procedure and who would serve pro bono. [The bills](#) are in the Senate Judiciary & Public Safety and House Public Safety & Finance Committees **for the 2024 legislative session.**



**Missouri SB 382** would have allowed children or vulnerable persons testifying in judicial proceedings to be accompanied by a certified therapeutic dog. **The bill was in committee when the Legislature adjourned.**



**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 have allowed petitioners to file for a Severe Threat Order of Protection to bar respondents 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 died **when the legislature adjourned.**



**Arizona SB 1086** would have included animal fighting and cockfighting, when committed for financial gain, within the state's definition of racketeering. It was in the Senate Natural Resources and Rules Committees **when the legislature adjourned.**



**Louisiana SB 212** would have authorized 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 died in the Senate Judiciary Committee **when the Legislature adjourned.**



**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 and A 7303** would add animal fighting as a criminal act when referring to enterprise corruption. The bills are in the Senate and House Codes Committees.



**Oregon SB 5506** will appropriate \$457,758 for an animal cruelty resource prosecutor 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 was unknown how long the grant funding will continue. **The provision was signed into law on Aug. 4.**



**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



### Montana Man with Animal Cruelty History Gets 18 Years in Prison for Homophobic Hate Crimes

A Montana man who had spent two years in jail for shooting a Labrador retriever and then decapitating the dog with a chainsaw back in 2006 was sentenced to 18 years in federal prison for a 2020 hate crime and firearms charges. John Russell Howald, 46, was convicted for firing an assault rifle into the home of a lesbian as part of a self-described "mission" to rid a small town of its LGBTQ population (*See the [March 2023 U.S. News & World Report](#)* said that after shooting into the house of the woman, nearly hitting her, prosecutors said Howald started walking into the town of Basin (population 270) to target others he perceived to be lesbian, queer and gay, prosecutors said. He was armed with two AK-style rifles, a hunting rifle, two pistols and multiple high-capacity magazines that were taped together to speed reloading, according to court records. Prosecutors said Howald, who had testified that he is gay, had hoped his planned shooting would inspire similar attacks around the U.S. Howald was already serving a 10-year sentence on state charges of criminal endangerment stemming from the Basin shooting incident.

**John Russell Howald** *LINK-Letter*). He had been indicted in 2021 as part of the U.S. Department of Justice's increased enforcement of hate crimes under U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland. *U.S. News & World Report* said that after shooting into the house of the woman, nearly hitting her, prosecutors said Howald started walking into the town of Basin (population 270) to target others he perceived to be lesbian, queer and gay, prosecutors said. He was armed with two AK-style rifles, a hunting rifle, two pistols and multiple high-capacity magazines that were taped together to speed reloading, according to court records. Prosecutors said Howald, who had testified that he is gay, had hoped his planned shooting would inspire similar attacks around the U.S. Howald was already serving a 10-year sentence on state charges of criminal endangerment stemming from the Basin shooting incident.

## Feuding Chefs Embroiled in Divorce Involving Alleged Killing of Cats



**Elizabeth Johnson & Will Aghajanian in their kitchen**

court filing said she had had cats that died mysteriously and that she witnessed Aghajanian hurt one cat that died the next day and he insisted on keeping its corpse in the house. Aghajanian strongly denied all her claims, calling himself the victim and said she had threatened to kill him and had burned him twice with kitchen implements. In his own restraining order against Johnson he requested custody of two dogs because he loves his pets who are “like children to me.”

Two co-chefs at a highly popular Hollywood restaurant are going through a bitter divorce amidst allegations that Will Aghajanian killed the family’s cats while his wife and business partner Elizabeth Johnson asked for a domestic violence restraining order. The [Los Angeles Times](#) reported that Johnson’s request for a protective order was granted last December and reissued on May 1 to keep Aghajanian away from her out of fear that he might hurt her or someone else, alleging he had assaulted her on numerous occasions. Johnson’s

## Man Charged in Assault and Arson That Killed a Dog

San Diego County, Calif. Sheriff’s deputies arrested Mario “Marina” Milton, 28, on charges that he allegedly beat and stabbed a 52-year-old man with a hockey stick and set the victim’s house in Lemon Grove on fire with a torch, killing a dog. The [Times of San Diego](#) reported that Milton was arrested on charges of arson, assault with a deadly weapon and animal cruelty. The house sustained an estimated \$500,000 in damage to its garage and living room.



**Julia Owens & Josh Hoover**

allegedly found neglected and malnourished dogs and drug paraphernalia. Officers arrested the mother, Julia Owens, 31, and Josh Hoover, 42, who lived in the home.

## Couple Charged with Child and Animal Abuse

A man and a woman in Lexington, N.C., were charged with multiple counts of felony child abuse, felony cruelty to animals, and possession of drug paraphernalia after investigators reportedly found malnourished children and dogs. [WSPA-TV](#) reported that officers conducting a welfare check found two malnourished and physically abused girls, aged 9 and 5, locked in a closet. Officers also

### *Permission to Reprint*

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](http://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.



**Daeyon Ross**

### **Man and Two Dogs Killed in McDonald's Drive-Thru Carjacking**

A Washington, D.C., man was charged with murder and animal cruelty in a July 2 crime spree that included four carjackings across multiple cities. [Newsweek](#) reported that Daeyon Ross, 22, is facing more than a dozen charges which include: stealing a car which he crashed in suburban Prince George's County, Md.; then allegedly killing of a father of four in an attempted carjacking at a McDonald's drive-thru near the crash scene; then killing two dogs belonging to another carjacking victim at the McDonald's; and later attempting to steal another vehicle before engaging in gunfire with officers. Metro police were expected to charge Ross with additional crimes committed in the city before extraditing him to Maryland. Court documents showed that Ross had a bench warrant issued for his arrest for carrying a gun in violation of a probation order, stemming from an armed robbery at age 16 when he held people up at knifepoint on the Metro subway.

### **"Crush Video" Law Used to Charge Man with Abusing Monkeys**

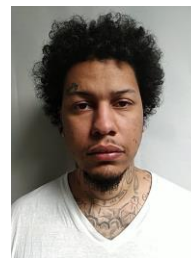
In an unusual prosecution of the federal law prohibiting "crush videos" – where small pets are stomped to death for viewers' sexual gratification – a Prineville, Ore. man has been charged with federal violations for allegedly funding, viewing, distributing, and promoting videos of monkeys being tortured and murdered. [KOIN-TV](#) reported that the U.S. Attorney's Office said David Christopher Noble, 48, conspired with others to administer an online encrypted group chat to share and pay for more than 50 videos depicting juvenile and adult monkeys being tortured, murdered and sexually sadistically mutilated. Noble, who had served six months in military custody after being court-martialed for fraud and an unprofessional relationship, was also charged with illegal possession of a weapon as a dishonorably discharged former U.S. Air Force officer.

### **"You Can Kiss My Ass!" Lands Woman in Jail on Charges of Animal Cruelty and Exposing Herself in Public**

A Dunnellon, Fla. woman who told animal control officers investigating her five stray dogs "You can kiss my ass" was charged with five felony counts of aggravated animal cruelty and indecent exposure for exposing her naked buttocks. The [Citrus County Chronicle](#) reported that Jacqueline Lise Bilodeau, 58, was charged after ACOs found her five dogs loose and fighting in the neighborhood. Officers said all the dogs were severely emaciated and injured in the fight. She reportedly yelled, "You can kiss my ass!" before pulling her pants down, bending over and exposing herself to the officers and a neighbor's 12-year-old daughter. The ACOs also reported finding urine and dog feces through the entire home and the dogs had exposed wounds and no food or water.

### **Felon Charged with Shooting Woman and Dog After Skatepark Skirmish**

A convicted felon was charged with assault, animal cruelty, and wanton endangerment for allegedly shooting a woman and her dog in the parking garage of a children's hospital. [WHAS-TV](#) reported that Treshawn Porter, 28, of Louisville, Ky., shot the woman in the face and neck after she had picked up a family member who had been injured in a fight at a skatepark with a family member of Porter's. Porter allegedly asked her where she was and accosted her in the hospital garage. The woman's dog was shot and treated at Metro Animal Services; the woman was transported to a hospital with gunshot wounds. A youth who was in her car witnessed the shootings but was not injured.



**Treshawn Porter**

## Six Indicted in Cockfights Where a Child Allegedly Attended

Six individuals from Kentucky, Tennessee and Georgia were indicted by a federal grand jury on charges related to three illegal cockfights in 2021-22, including allowing a child to attend an event. The [Lexington, Ky. Herald Leader](#) reported that the weekly events each drew hundreds of attendees to the “Whitesburg Chicken Pit” or the “American Testing Facility.” The venue allegedly had weekly cockfights and featured stadium-style seating; a main fighting pit and several side pits; a concession stand; gambling; and an area for selling cockfighting accessories including gaffs, sharp pieces of metal attached to a rooster’s leg to slash the other rooster. Those indicted were Robert Dwayne Baker, Brandon Honeycutt and Chris Prater, of Kentucky; Virgil G. Saylor and Tina M. Miller, of Georgia; and Henry Locke, of Tennessee. Prater was additionally charged with causing a child under age 16 to attend a cockfight, which carries a maximum three-year sentence. The defendants’ hometowns were not named. It is illegal under federal law to exhibit or sponsor an animal in a fighting venture; to possess, train, sell or buy an animal for the purpose of fighting; to use the mail, Facebook or any communication that crosses state lines to promote an animal fight; to buy or sell gaffs; and to attend a cockfight, according to the indictment.

## Couple Charged with Abusing 6-Year-Old Daughter and 3-Week-Old Puppies

A Brighton, Tenn. couple was arrested and charged with aggravated child abuse and animal cruelty after Tipton County Sheriff’s deputies reportedly found their six-year-old daughter’s arm was intentionally broken and three neglected puppies were found outside their home in a cage. [WMC-TV](#) reported that Samuel Roy, Jr., 39, confessed to investigators that he broke his daughter’s arm through a twisting motion out of anger, and Tiffany Roy, 39, confessed that she knew her husband broke her daughter’s arm but lied to law enforcement, medical staff, and the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services to protect him. At the family’s home, deputies also found three three-week-old puppies outside in a small cage during extremely hot weather, covered in feces, with no food or sanitary water. The puppies were seized by animal control. The couple’s children were placed into relatives’ custody by DCS. “Cases like these are sickening,” said Sheriff Shannon Beasley.



**Samuel & Tiffany Roy**

## 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.**

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

**Aug. 22 – Indianapolis, Ind. (online):** Andrew Campbell will present a [webinar](#), “Stuck in the Middle with You: Risks for Children and Pets in Abusive Homes.”

**Aug. 24 – Portland, Ore. (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 – Boston, Mass.:** Phil Arkow will present “APS Strategies: Addressing Animal Abuse, Hoarding and Elder Abuse Challenges” at the 34<sup>th</sup> [Annual National Adult Protective Services Association](#) conference.

**Aug. 30 – Indianapolis, Ind. (online):** Andrew Campbell will discuss how threats or violence against pets impacts “No Safe Place: How Domestic Violence Psychologically Harms Children” in a [webinar](#).

**Sept. 5 – Des Moines, Iowa:** Phil Arkow 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. 19 – Kansas City, Mo. (online):** Zoë Agnew-Svoboda of BestyBnB will present a [webinar](#) on “Navigating Barriers to Safety and Security: Survivors and Pet Placement Advocacy”.

**Sept. 20 – (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will conduct an interdisciplinary webinar about challenges and opportunities to prevent and protect humans and animals with a panel discussing “Breaking LINKED Cycles of Trauma and Maltreatment”

**Sept. 20-21 – Colorado Springs, Colo.:** Nicole Lopez will describe the Family Justice Center PorchLight Program partnership with the Jefferson County Animal Shelter to help domestic violence survivors and their animals, and Kelly Bremken of the Oregon Humane Society will describe how veterinary social workers in an animal shelter can talk to survivors of intimate partner violence, at the [Animal Welfare Association of Colorado](#)’s 2023 Conference.

**Sept. 22 – Ledyard, Conn.:** Jessica Rubin will discuss “Animal Court Advocacy” and Virginia Maxwell will present on “Crime Scene Forensics” at the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Connecticut Municipal Animal Control Officers Association [Conference](#).

**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. 3-4 – Des Moines, Iowa:** Maya Gupta will lead an ASPCA training on domestic violence and animal cruelty investigations and prosecutions for the [Animal Rescue League of Iowa](#).

**Oct. 3 – Ft. Worth, Texas:** Phil Arkow will present on “The ‘Dark Side’ of the Human-Animal Bond” for the [Human-Animal Relationships](#) anthropology minor at Texas Christian University.

**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. 20 – St. Louis, Mo. (online):** The Missouri Alliance for Animal Legislation will conduct an all-day Safer Together [webinar training](#) on the connections between abuse of animals, children, elders, and vulnerable adults.

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

**Oct. 25-27 – Springfield, Mo.:** “The Link between Domestic Abuse and Animal Cruelty” will be presented at the [Missouri Animal Control Association](#)’s Annual Conference.

**Nov. 8-10 – Ottawa, Ont., Canada (online):** Canada’s Violence Link Coalition will hold its virtual [Canadian Violence Link conference](#) and [Prosecution of Animal Abuse 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. 15-18 – Philadelphia Pa.:** Núria Querol will present “Use of Animals by Terrorist Groups: From Propaganda to Terrorist Attacks,” “Challenges and Limitations of Analyzing Incidents of Animal Cruelty with the NIBRS” and “Attitudes and Dynamics of Victims of Intimate Partner Violence Utilizing an Animal Foster Program” at the [American Society of Criminology](#)’s annual meeting.

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

**Jan. 22-25, 2024 – San Diego, Calif.:** Barbara Boat will present on The Link at the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual San Diego [International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment](#).



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## 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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