



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

The LINK-Letter Vol. 16, No.9 September 2023

A monthly report of news from THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER



ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE

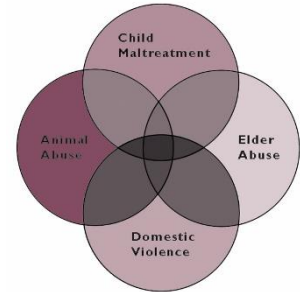


www.NationalLinkCoalition.org

[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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SOCIAL WORK... and THE LINK

Kentucky Conference to Introduce Animal Welfare Issues to Social Workers

What is believed to be the [first conference in Kentucky](#) to train social workers on the significance of the human-animal bond and animal abuse will be held on Thursday, Oct. 5 in Lexington. *Making A Difference 2023: Reimagining Animal Welfare* will be a full day of information-sharing, conversation and networking, complete with an Expo Hall where nonprofit organizations can reserve tables to share their mission and work, and attendees can discover new ideas, common ground, volunteer opportunities, and kindred spirits. The conference has been approved for six hours of CEUs by NASW-KY and registration is only \$35 for the day, including lunch.



Vicki Deisner (left) & Joye Keeley

The Making a Difference Now conference is unique in that it is the first colloquium in the Kentucky area designed to bring together the human services and animal welfare communities to discuss the many intersections human and animal suffering, and to discover ways they can work together to maximize resources and help everyone more. Speakers will include Link advocates Joye Keeley and Vicki Deisner.

Thank You to Our Generous Supporters!



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

RedRover Launches “25 by 2025” Campaign

Continuing its extensive work in ensuring that more pet-owning survivors will escape abuse when more shelters accept pets, RedRover® and Greater Good Charities have officially launched the [25 by 2025 campaign](#), powered by PetSmart Charities, and supported by Purina. This national initiative has a goal of enabling 25% of domestic violence shelters in the U.S. to become pet friendly by the year 2025.

“We firmly believe that no survivor should have to choose between their own safety and the well-being of their cherished pets,” Katie Campbell, RedRover’s Director of Collaboration and Outreach, said at the formal announcement of the campaign at the 49th annual National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) training event. “The 25 by 2025 campaign represents a critical step towards creating a more compassionate and inclusive environment within domestic violence shelters, where survivors and their pets can heal and rebuild their lives together.”



Members of the 25 by 2025 launch team show off their “Pets Are Family” T-shirts at the NOVA conference in New Orleans

Every year, countless survivors of domestic violence face a heartbreaking decision: whether to leave their pets behind or remain with abusers. Many of these pets have themselves been targeted with threats or abuse which further compromises the human family members’ abilities to escape. While some 300 domestic violence shelters are already pet-friendly, assisting 25% of the nation’s shelters to offer co-sheltering options will reduce immense emotional distress caused by having to make unimaginable sacrifices and enable many more survivors to escape with their beloved companions,

The 25 by 2025 campaign is working closely with domestic violence shelters, advocates and supporters nationwide to help raise awareness about the need for more pet-friendly shelters. By providing resources, education and links to funding, the campaign empowers shelters to create pet-friendly spaces that support the safety and well-being of both survivors and their pets.

At the NOVA conference, Campbell helped drive home the message through her presentation, “The Power of Pets: How Pet-Friendly Domestic Violence Shelters Aid Healing, Build Morale and Support Fundraising.” “Pets Are Family” T-shirt giveaways and sponsorship of Pet Partners’ Therapy dogs helped to raise additional awareness.

Attendees often showed RedRover personnel photos of their pet family members and shared stories about survivors who have faced the difficult decision between safety and their pets. They described the impact that pets have on survivors’ lives, how difficult it can be for a survivor to leave an abuser without their pet, and how hard it is to not have resources to offer for the pets of survivors. “They left our table knowing that we are committed to keeping survivors and their pets together,” said Campbell.

Animal Safekeeping Program Resource Guide Published

Canada's [Saskatchewan SPCA](#), which launched a province-wide pet-safekeeping program for the pets of domestic violence survivors in 2017 ([See the September 2017 LINK-Letter](#)) has announced the publication of a new resource to help other animal welfare organizations establish similar programs.

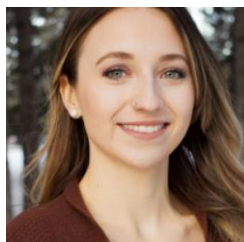


Developing an Animal
Safekeeping Program:
A Resource Guide

Developing an Animal Safekeeping Program: A Resource Guide provides guidance, foundational knowledge, and context behind the “why” and “how” an animal safekeeping program may work within an animal shelter, boarding facility, veterinary clinic, or foster-based setting, explains Laura Zmud, SPCA Family Ties Coordinator.



“The purpose of an animal safekeeping program is to assist pet-owning victims and survivors of interpersonal violence in leaving violent relationships by providing temporary, safe, and confidential housing for their animals. For anyone experiencing violence, leaving a violent home is not easy to do; for a survivor who has a pet, the decision to leave can be even more difficult,” she says. “Pets in a violent home can experience violence directly, and be used as a tool to control, intimidate or threaten a victim of interpersonal violence. Far too often, victims and survivors of violence delay leaving a violent home as they are concerned about the welfare of their pets left behind.”



Laura Zmud

Animal safekeeping programs offer a safe alternative to remaining in a situation that is dangerous for both the victim and the pet. While animal safekeeping can be needed for a variety of reasons such as owner hospitalization, instability in housing, arrest or brief incarceration, house fire, or other personal crises, the Guide is specific to animal safekeeping for small companion animals leaving a violent home. Zmud explains. “There are unique considerations for this situation that may not be applicable to all safekeeping situations such as safety and confidentiality measures.”

Topics covered in the Guide include:

- Overview of IPV in Canada and Saskatchewan
- Incorporating trauma-informed care into your organization
- Working within our professional scope
- Current safe options in Saskatchewan
- Considerations for developing a safekeeping program
- Key safety and confidentiality measures
- Specific considerations for foster-based and shelter-based programs

The complete Guide is available upon request by reaching out to Laura Zmud, our Family Ties Coordinator, at laura@saskspca.ca.

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

AVMA Conference Featured Four Link Workshops

The [2023 AVMA Convention](#) in Denver, which attracted over 7,500 participants, included four workshops addressing veterinarians' responsibilities and responses to recognizing and investigating cases of suspected animal abuse.

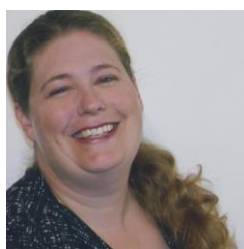
Nicole Forsyth and Amanda Landis-Harris presented a workshop, **Beyond Mandatory Reporting: Developing Protocols for Early Detection of Abuse**. They noted that between 42.8% and 86% of veterinarians know about The Link between animal abuse and human abuse but most practitioners report not having enough training in recognizing abuse or how to intervene and report, and that as many as one in three women and one in four men experience domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime. Given those numbers, they emphasized that it is likely that veterinary professionals will come into contact with those impacted by domestic violence, but fear over what to do or say in these cases may lead veterinary professionals to ignore early warning signs.



Nicole Forsyth, left, & Amanda Landis-Harris

They emphasized how developing staff training and protocols on how to share observations about client behavior and how to intervene and respond safely and connect with community organizations may help survivors leave their abuser earlier, preventing both human and animal abuse. They presented an understanding of the role pets play in domestic violence to help veterinarians identify the more subtle potential signs of abuse. They outlined ways to support clients, their pets and the community and offered a case study as a potential model of how to work with community experts to set up processes for screening, capturing observations, communicating, and managing risk.

From 2006-2023, Forsyth was President & CEO of [RedRover](#), a national nonprofit that brings animals out of crisis and strengthens the bond between people and pets through grants to domestic violence organizations and animal shelters to help care for the pet victims of abuse. Landis-Hanna, DVM, is the Founder of [Landis-Hanna Consulting](#) and has practiced small animal and exotic medicine, shelter medicine, and relief medicine over the last 21 years.



Allyne Moon

Allyne Moon, RVT, CCFP, Membership Secretary at the Southern California Veterinary Medical Association, presented three workshops addressing the use of veterinary forensics in investigating cases of suspected animal abuse. **Forensic Exam of the Live Patient** offered a step-by-step discussion of the live patient examination focusing on procedure, documentation and sampling methods. **Forensic Necropsy: How Credentialed Veterinary Technicians Can Make a Difference in Animal Cruelty Cases** gave a step-by-step guide to the forensic necropsy from an RVT method of practice focusing on procedure, documentation and sampling methods. In **Forensic Photography: Pictures that Speak for Those Who Can't**, Moon gave a discussion of forensic photographs, how they differ from everyday or professional photographs, and the tools and methods needed to obtain them.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ... and THE LINK

Study Describes Nation's First Court-Appointed Animal Advocate Law

The first empirical study to evaluate the effect of courtroom animal advocates – court-appointed volunteer attorneys and supervised law students who advocate for animal victims in cruelty cases – has been published.



Jessica Rubin (left) and Tara Cooley

Jessica Rubin and Tara Cooley of the University of Connecticut School of Law describe how Connecticut pioneered court animal advocate programs (CAAP) with the passage of “Desmond’s Law” in 2016 in response to increased acceptance of the Link between violence to animals and violence to humans. At the time, prosecutors filed an average of 304 animal cruelty cases each year, but 80% of cases were dropped or dismissed, invariably after the defendant completed a pre-trial diversionary program. “This dismissal rate suggests that animal cruelty cases and anti-cruelty laws may sometimes receive inadequate attention or resources,” they wrote, claiming that Desmond’s Law – and similar procedures in other states – represent a novel approach to help mitigate under-enforcement of anti-cruelty laws nationally.

The law is aimed at:

- Ensuring that animal cruelty victims receive protection;
- Advancing justice by ensuring that valid cases are not dropped, holding offenders accountable and preventing future cruelty;
- Equipping courts with necessary information;
- Providing meaningful opportunities and training for lawyers and law students; and
- Encouraging courts to treat animals as crime victims.

CAAPs serve as a special master, victim advocate and case manager to sort through the complexities often underlying these cases.

Researching animal cruelty case files from the state’s Judicial Branch and the university’s law school, they noted that while Desmond’s Law is still relatively new and there is a need for educational outreach regarding its implementation, courts are increasingly using CAAPs. There was no discernible association between the use of CAAPs and convictions or incarceration. When defendants were convicted, the presence of advocates may have had a stabilizing influence on sentence durations. The presence of advocates had a significant influence upon courts imposing probation terms that address the complexities of cases for both defendants and animals. There was a small increase in defendants being ordered to make restitution to municipalities for costs of animal care and rehabilitation.

The report concludes with observations and challenges regarding the law’s use and recommendations for further study, including: having more complete and detailed reporting in animal cruelty cases; establishing a central entity to administer the program and train CAAPs; and conducting similar studies in other states.

-- Rubin, J., & Cooley, T. (2023). *An empirical study of the nation’s first court animal advocate law. Quinnipiac Law Review, 41(2), 175-235.*

Prosecutors Invited to Participate in Research Study

The ongoing tension between those who criticize the criminal justice system and the demand that crimes against animals be taken more seriously is the focus of a new doctoral research study under way. Bridget Nicholls, a Sociology Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology & Criminology at the University of Windsor in Ontario, is seeking input from public and crown prosecutors in both the U.S. and Canada who work in the field of animal legal advocacy and protection. Her research will bring together a document analysis of relevant emerging animal policies with the primary perspectives and experiences of prosecutors in both nations. In particular, the project seeks to build an understanding of the criminal justice system and the role of law and legal actors in human-animal welfare.



Bridget Nicholls

The research aims to:

- Assess the origins and impacts of animal anti-cruelty prosecutions.
- Examine the effectiveness of dedicated (i.e., U.S.) and self-dedicated (i.e., Canada) animal cruelty units.
- Understand what ideological, social and political priorities shape and are shaped by the official discourses relevant to animal harms/crimes.

In exploring the translation of policy into practice, this research hopes to provide an understanding of how penal interventions are being used with animal abuse and neglect cases tried in the criminal courts in Canada and the United States, Nicholls tells *The LINK-Letter*. She hopes to connect with public and private crown/prosecutors who are engaged in the field of animal law to participate in this research project via an interview.

Nicholls was recently appointed Associate Fellow to the Oxford Centre of Animal Ethics. She also works part-time with the [Animal and Interpersonal Abuse Research Group](#), a group dedicated to improving outcomes for people impacted by the co-occurrence of animal and interpersonal violence.

Those who are interested in participating can email Bridget at nicho11q@uwindsor.ca and they will receive information on how to schedule an interview.

Oregon Statewide Prosecution Program Gets Financial Boost



Oregon's provisions to support a statewide prosecution program focused on animal cruelty cases (*See the [February 2017 LINK-Letter](#)*) received a significant boost on Aug. 4 when **SB 5506** was signed into law. Since 2017 the program has appropriated money from the General Fund to the Department of Justice to support a position dedicated exclusively to assisting local district attorneys and law enforcement with the prosecution of cases involving the "detriment or risk of detriment" to animals.

A provision incorporated into an omnibus spending measure appropriates \$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 would continue

The Criminal Justice Division provides investigative, trial, training and legal advice to support Oregon's District Attorneys and law enforcement agencies.

Virginia and Washington State are believed to be the only other states with a prosecution unit, based out of the Attorney General's office, with statewide powers to investigate and prosecute animal cruelty offenses.

Building LINK AWARENESS

Link Awareness is Building in Iowa

Des Moines, Iowa is becoming active in building awareness of the significance of animal cruelty and its intersections with human violence with three training workshops scheduled in the city this Fall.

On Sept. 4, National Link Coalition President & Secretary Phil Arkow presented two training workshops at the [Animal Rescue League of Iowa](#). "Connecting the Dots in Law Enforcement and Mental Health" attracted a small but dedicated group of law enforcement officers, social workers and therapists who learned how focusing on animal abuse issues can help prevent crimes against people. Panelists included Gladys Alvarez, LISW, discussing the Trauma Informed Care Project at Orchard Place's Child Guidance Center, and Des Moines Police Sgt. Paul Parizek.

Later that evening, more than 60 members of the general public came to the ARL-Iowa shelter to hear Arkow discuss a more generalized program about his The Link is "Creating Safer Communities Through Species-Spanning Partnerships." The National Link Coalition thanks the ARL-I for its support in organizing and hosting these sessions.

On Oct. 3-4, Maya Gupta, Senior Director of Research for the ASPCA, other ASPCA staff and Wayne County, Iowa Sheriff Keith Davis will come to Des Moines for a free two-day Comprehensive Animal Cruelty Hands-On Training [Workshop](#) called Iowa C.A.R.E.S. (Comprehensive Animal Cruelty Response, Education and Support). In this highly interactive and hands-on workshop for law enforcement, prosecutors, veterinary professionals, and animal rescue and sheltering organizations, attendees will act as active participants as they work through an animal cruelty case from start to finish. Attendees will learn key skills of investigation, seizure, evidence documentation, testimony, legal disposition, sheltering, care, and placement. Register before Sept. 18 at <https://www.aspcapro.org/iowacares>



IOWA C.A.R.E.S:
Animal Cruelty Investigation Workshop
Comprehensive Animal Cruelty Response, Education and Support

October 3-4 | Free | Holiday Inn Des Moines Airport, Iowa

Comprehensive Animal Cruelty Hands-On Training Workshop

In this two-day workshop for **law enforcement, prosecutors, veterinarians, and rescue and sheltering organizations**, you will learn how to:

- Identify the various forms of animal cruelty
- Work through a case from start to finish (investigation, seizure, evidence documentation, testimony, disposition, sheltering, care, and placement)
- Establish connections with local and other resources to help foster community collaboration to mitigate and prevent cruelty before it starts

Additional Information

- Continuing education (CE) credits may be available
- Breakfast included
- Limited funds available for attendees 75+ miles from Des Moines (details on registration page)

REGISTER TODAY!
[aspcapro.org/iowacares](https://www.aspcapro.org/iowacares)



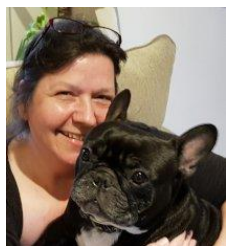
CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK

Scottish Charity Fosters Compassion Among Abused and Neglected Youths

A unique charity in Scotland is bringing rescued animals to abused and neglected children as a way to foster compassion among vulnerable children who, due to their own difficult starts in life, may have started to show worrying behaviors towards animals. Through animal themed workshops and activities, [Fostering Compassion](#) is aiming to redirect these disturbing behaviors into caring, compassionate and nurturing behavior, therefore helping to reverse the negative cycle of abuse that so often exists where maltreatment of children or animals is present.



Fostering Compassion Founder & CEO Lesley Winton described the program in the Summer 2023 issue of the Latham Foundation's [Latham Letter](#). She described the organization's humane education programs that share the stories of rescued domestic and wild animals in such a way that the children draw parallels between their circumstances and those of the animals.



Lesley Winton

"Through sharing the stories of the animals, the children gain a greater understanding of their own circumstances and this often provides a platform for the children to open up about their own abuse and neglect," she wrote.

"The concept of the Link - the recognized connection between animal abuse, child maltreatment, domestic abuse and elder abuse -- and the strength of the human-animal bond strongly underpin all of our work," she added. "Often if animal abuse exists in a household the chances are child abuse is also present and vice versa."

Winton noted that children who are subjected to abuse and neglect often struggle to show compassion towards animals and others. They may take their frustrations out on animals as a "pecking order" develops or because they may be mirroring behavior that has been inflicted upon them. The result can be a perpetual cycle of abuse.

Fostering Compassion began in 2013 with just ten children from five families in the East Lothian area of Scotland. By the end of 2022 over 1,000 children have participated in the program with demand for services increasing annually, especially since the pandemic.

Evaluations have reported that participants exhibit increased feelings of self-esteem, self-worth and self-confidence, a better understanding of their emotions and behavior, improved compassion, empathy and prosocial behaviors, and an increased sense of empowerment, she wrote.

Working with rescued animals "allows the children to see the animals as sentient beings with feelings just like them. This in turn helps to change worrying behavior into caring and compassionate behavior."

Child Welfare Professionals Sought for Child Abuse Research Focus Group



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 a virtual focus group to explore their experiences with children who have harmed animals. Participation is voluntary and participants will be compensated for their time.

The Zoom videoconference session is scheduled for:

- **Friday, Sept. 29**, 12 noon-1 pm EDT for child welfare professionals, employed by a local or state jurisdiction or an adoption agency, who have direct contact with children and families involved in the child welfare system, and who 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.

THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS and THE LINK



Position Opening: Animal Abuse Offender Diversion Program Overseer

With 34 states now mandating or recommending assessment and/or treatment for animal cruelty offenders, the Animals & Society Institute is announcing a project-based job opening for an individual to oversee the development, implementation, and validation of their BARK (Behavior, Accountability, Responsibility, Knowledge) psychoeducational diversion program. The remote, part-time contractor position will pay \$20,000 to:

- refine and complete the existing draft version of BARK;
- oversee formatting the intervention for delivery on an electronic platform;
- train mental health providers in its use;
- and oversee the collection and analysis of validation data.

The individual must be a doctorate or master's-level licensed mental health provider with three years' direct clinical experience using contemporary approaches (e.g., Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Motivational Interviewing) and experience in program implementation and evaluation. Preferred qualifications include: experience working with criminal justice system-involved populations; familiarity with the literature on the relationship between animal abuse and human violence; and experience working with and creating hybrid on-line based delivery programs.

Apply to Ken Shapiro (ken.shapiro@animalsandsociety.org) with CV and letter of interest.

NEWS from LINK COALITIONS

The National Link Coalition Acknowledges our Supporters

The National Link Coalition, a nonprofit charitable organization, gratefully appreciates our support from major contributors who are helping us to continue to educate and advocate for a better world for vulnerable people and animals. Their gifts help us prevent animal cruelty, domestic violence, child abuse and elder abuse through greater recognition of how these forms of family violence are Linked:

Your Part-Time Controller:

Building a Better Nonprofit World, One Accounting Department at a Time

[Your Part-Time Controller](#), a corporation that provides outsourced accounting and controller services to over 500 nonprofit organizations nationwide, is a corporate sponsor. Their generous financial contribution is helping us to maintain and expand our operations.

Established in Cherry Hill, N.J. in 1993, Your Part-Time Controller has expanded over the past 30 years and now maintains offices in Philadelphia, Houston, Phoenix, New York, Washington, Boston, Delaware, and central New Jersey. The firm works both on-site and remotely to provide accounting and bookkeeping services to build better accounting departments so their nonprofit clients can build a better world.

By specializing exclusively in the nonprofit sector, YPTC manages the back-office finance and accounting details so nonprofit executives can sleep better at night and spend more time focusing on their critical missions. YPTC works with nonprofits for one reason and one reason only: like their clients, they want to give something back to society.

Please Have your CEO, CFO or President [contact YPTC](#) about how a part-time controller can help your organization make a difference – and please tell them the National Link Coalition referred you to them!



The ASPCA:

Building a Better World by Treating All Animals with Respect and Kindness



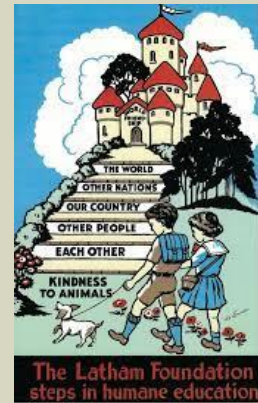
Since 2011, the [American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#) has quietly been underwriting the work of the National Link Coalition. As the first humane society to be established in North America and one of the largest in the world, the ASPCA was founded in 1866 on the belief that animals are entitled to kind and respectful treatment at the hands of humans and must be protected under the law. Headquartered in New York, the ASPCA maintains both a strong local presence and an anti-cruelty mission that extends nationwide with more than two million supporters.

The ASPCA's many programs include: protecting animals from harm through community engagement and preventative action; animal cruelty investigations; disaster relief and large-scale animal rescues; encouraging the public to recognize and report animal cruelty; animal cruelty recovery, veterinary care and behavioral rehabilitation; advocacy for animal cruelty legislation; support of veterinary forensics; and protection of farm animals and horses. ASPCA funding has been supporting the National Link Coalition's general operations.

The Latham Foundation:

Building a Better World Through Universal Kinship and Respect for All Life

Founded in 1918 by brother-and-sister Milton and Edith Latham of Oakland, Calif., the [Latham Foundation](#) for more than a century has pioneered the fields of humane education, the human-animal bond and The Link. Its legacy of cruelty prevention and personal responsibility is based on the premise that kindness to animals leads to kindness to other people, our country, other nations, and the world. Its pioneering work is exemplified by Latham's catalog of many dozens of humane education films, the *Brother Buzz* TV program, its flagship *Latham Letter* magazine, and publication of such materials as *Breaking the Cycles of Violence* and *Child Abuse, Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse: Linking the Circles of Compassion for Prevention and Intervention*. These have inspired many to pursue programs recognizing that when animals are abused people are at risk, and when people are abused animals are at risk.



Today, the Latham Foundation has transitioned from an operational foundation producing humane educational publications and resources to a grantmaker supporting humane education and animal-assisted activities. Its grant to the National Link Coalition will be used to further these aims with a focus on outreach to first responders, the military and veterans.

We thank these generous organizations for their support and encourage our *LINK-Letter* readers to join us in our mission. Your gift to the National Link Coalition helps us to educate and advocate – locally, nationally and globally – for greater recognition that animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse are all Linked. Founded in 2008, the National Link Coalition is the only national organization working to prevent animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse. As the National Resource Center on The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence we train multi-disciplinary professionals, showcase spectacular programs, publicize progressive legislation, and promote cutting-edge research to foster collaborations that create safer communities by recognizing that when animals are abused, people are at risk, and when people are abused, animals are at risk.

Your gift helps us prevent animal cruelty, domestic violence, child abuse and elder abuse and create a safer world. [Please click here](#) to make a secure and tax-deductible contribution.

DONATE

Join Us In Our Mission!

DONATE

If you would like to join us in our education and advocacy to promote greater professional and public understanding of, and response to, The Link between animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse, please consider partnering with us! It is through the generosity of our donors that we are able to continue our trainings, publications, compilation of resources and research, and reporting on Link legislation. Your gift helps us prevent animal cruelty, domestic violence, child abuse and elder abuse and create a safer world. [Please click here](#) to make a secure and tax-deductible contribution.

THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

Only a few state legislatures are still in session, but 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, 135 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 willfully, maliciously and repeatedly follows or harasses another person and who makes a credible threat with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear for the safety of that person's pet, service animal, emotional support animal, or horse. 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.



Massachusetts H.3856 would expand the definition of “abuse” to include “coercive control” which would include “committing or threatening to commit cruelty to animals that intimidates the family or household member.” The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



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.**



What is The LINK?

Legislation...

Intervention...

Networking...

Knowledge...

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



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.



New York A 7903 and S 7608 would enable veterinarians to receive up to three hours of continuing education credit for providing pro bono veterinary care services to individuals in domestic violence and homeless shelters. The bills are in the Assembly Higher Education and Senate Rules Committees.



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. Such information would have to be readily available at prosecutors’ offices to persons applying for protective orders. The bill was approved by the House but **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 2nd 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.**

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 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," **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. 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 and were in the Senate State Government Committee **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 would have required 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 have included veterinarians among the mandated reporters. They would have been 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 have been 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 failed to make a report would have been subject to discipline by his or her professional licensing board, as well as a fine. **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**.

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**.

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 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.**



Illinois HB 1169 would have amended 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 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 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 was held in the House Judiciary and Rules Committees **when the legislature adjourned.**



Arizona SB 1086 would include 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.

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THE LINK... IN THE NEWS

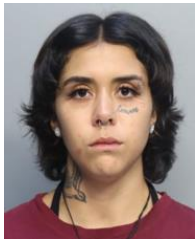
Hunter and Girlfriend Get Prison Sentences in Wife's Murder

A past president of Safari Club International who murdered his wife during a 2016 trophy-hunting safari in Zambia so he could collect her \$5 million life insurance policy and continue an extramarital affair with his mistress ([See the February 2022 LINK-Letter](#)) was sentenced to life-plus-20 years in prison and fined \$6.8 million. The [New York Times](#) reported that Lawrence Rudolph, 68, a dentist who split his time between his Phoenix home and businesses in Pittsburgh and Miami, was also found guilty of mail fraud for cashing in nine of his wife's insurance policies. Rudolph's girlfriend, Lori Milliron, 64, who had also been his dental hygienist, had previously been sentenced to 17 years in prison and fined \$250,000 as an accessory after the fact and for perjury.



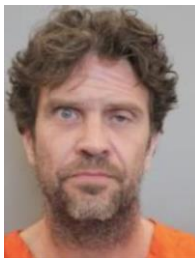
Lawrence Rudolph

Woman Accused of Disemboweling Puppy, Threatening Owner with Same



Yadelin Marin

A Miami, Fla. woman has been charged with second-degree animal cruelty and misdemeanor battery in connection with a July 12 incident described by police as a "horrific scene" in which she allegedly killed a man's puppy by disemboweling it and then threatening to do the same thing to its owner. [WBFS-TV](#) reported that Yadelin Marin, 19, was being held without bail in the Miami-Dade jail. Police said the owner of the puppy had been told by a friend that his pet dog had been disemboweled in the bathroom; when he walked into the bathroom, he saw Marin sitting in the bathtub and told the victim he would be next. Investigators did not provide information about the relationship between the dog's owner and the woman or say what led to the attack on the dog.



Justin Belton

Man with Stalking and Harassment Histories Can't Get Lawyer in Gruesome Puppy Mutilation Case

The animal cruelty charges filed against a Houston, Texas man – who previously faced charges for stalking and harassment – were so gruesome that multiple defense attorneys passed on representing the client. [Law & Crime](#) reported that the Harris County District Attorney's Office said that two attorneys on the on-call list declined to take the case, resulting in a need to reschedule the arraignment of Justin Reilly Belton, 44. Belton was to be charged in connection with six puppies he allegedly brought to an animal hospital, four of which were missing either legs or paws. One pup had to be euthanized and the others were all in critical condition. Belton previously faced a 2012 case for stalking an ex-girlfriend who broke up with him, and a 2016 harassment case for reportedly sending a former employee annoying emails and following her home. The 2016 case was later dismissed.

Man Arrested for Criminal Abuse Also Charged with Stabbing Cat

A man whom Knox County, Ky. sheriff's deputies had arrested on charges of criminal abuse was re-arrested three days later on charges of allegedly stabbing a cat, and other charges may be filed involving the stabbing of the cat owner's dog. The [sheriff's department reported](#) that Gabriel Messer, 20, of Barbourville was identified by his tattoos on a social media video depicting two males hurting the cat. A juvenile who filmed the incident said Messer claimed he was only trying to put the cat "out of its misery."



Gabriel Messer

Man Charged with Cruelty and Kidnapping in Burning of Family Dog



A Fillmore, N.Y. man who was hosting several guests at his home was charged by police with burning his dog to death because it was annoying him during the party – and then tied a guest who tried to intervene to a chair and forced him to watch the animal die. The [Buffalo News](#) reported that state police troopers called Jeremy Vankuren’s activities “a very deviant act and it’s not something that people should look at lightly.” Vankuren, 33, was charged with kidnapping and felony animal cruelty. Police said that instead of listening to his friend, Vankuren threw his pit bull, who was 13 or 14 years old, into a burning barrel in the backyard and ratchet-strapped the guest to a chair where he remained tied up for several hours. State Police spokesman James O’Callaghan noted that the allegations against Vankuren are disturbing because people who abuse animals often go on to harm humans, too. “I mean, most people, they lose their pet after owning it a couple years, it’s like losing a family member,” he said. “So for someone to take their own pet and burn it alive, while also tying someone else down to a chair, it does make you curious as to what is the possibility of this person doing something else?”

Man Accused of Decapitating Girlfriend’s Pet Duck to “Send a Message”



In a grotesque incident that the Genesee County, Mich. sheriff called “domestic violence at an epic level,” a 49-year-old man was arrested for allegedly using his bare hands to rip the head off of his girlfriend’s pet duck to “send a message” following an argument. Michael Lee Humphries, of Clio, was charged with felony counts of maiming/torturing/killing an animal and resisting an officer, and one count of domestic violence. He is also facing a habitual offender status due to a 2019 conviction for aggravated stalking.

Michael Humphries Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson alleged, in a [video](#) posted to the GCSO Facebook page, that Humphries threw the duck’s corpse into a 5-gallon bucket and forced his girlfriend’s head into the bucket with the body. “Michael Lee Humphries ripped the head off of a companion domesticated animal for one purpose and one purpose alone — psychological domination and intimidation of a domestic violence victim. That’s the only reason,” said Swanson.

“There’s this explosion of violence. The violence takes over. There’s that direct connect, that I’ve said many times before, between animal abuse, neglect, torture, and maiming and violence against vulnerable adults, vulnerable child, the elderly, the addicted,” Swanson added.

Man Charged with Strangling Dog if His Wife Didn’t Come Back to Him

Prosecutors in Yakima County, Wash. charged a man with first-degree animal cruelty, alleging he strangled his estranged wife’s dog in a domestic violence incident. The [Yakima Herald-Republic](#) reported that Anthony Leroy Curtis, 56, was also charged with harassment after a friend of Curtis’ wife told sheriff’s deputies that Curtis was texting his wife and threatening to hurt their dog if she did not come back to him; one of the texts included a photo of the dog dangling from a cord. His wife said that Curtis told her he would torture the dog and kill it if she didn’t comply, according to a court affidavit. Curtis has prior assault and reckless endangerment convictions in Yakima County District Court.



Anthony Curtis

Two Canadians Convicted of Sex Crimes Against Family Members and Bestiality

Ontario Father Who Committed Bestiality and Offered His Daughter for Sex Sentenced to 25 Years in Prison

A 60-year-old man in Port Colborne, Ont., Canada who committed bestiality and sexually assaulted his children for years – including a daughter with special needs who he pimped out to other men for sex in exchange for alcohol – was found guilty on 33 charges and was sentenced to 25 years in prison. The charges included incest, sexual assault, failure to provide the necessities of life, and bestiality.

The [St. Catharines Standard](#) reported that the man – who was not named in order to protect the identities of nine victims who include his children and their friends – was one of multiple people arrested in a series of investigations launched in 2018 after a community services worker reported concerns about sexual and physical abuse of siblings. While most of the children left home when they were in their mid-teens, one daughter with developmental disabilities stayed behind. The court was told the woman functions at the level of a 7-or-8-year-old with deficits exacerbated by the alcohol and drugs her father gave her when he pimped her out to other men. Four other Port Colborne men, ranging between 53 and 81 years of age, were previously convicted of sex-related offenses in relation to the case.

B.C. Grandfather Convicted of Sex Crimes and Bestiality

In remote Fort St. John, B.C., Canada, a 78-year-old man identified only as “Mr. M” in order to protect his victims’ identities, was found guilty of four counts of invitation to sexual touching and one count of bestiality involving his three granddaughters who were between the ages of 4 and 11. The incidents occurred between 2004 and 2013 and the victims, who are now adults, testified that the sexual abuse caused depression and repressed anger and frustration. The [Alaska Highway News](#) reported that Mr. M faces up to 14 years in prison when he is sentenced on Oct. 14.

Australian Charged with Domestic Violence and Killing Rabbits

An Australian man who was charged with animal cruelty and serious domestic violence offenses after allegedly punching, slapping and choking a woman he knew and killing rabbits out of “frustration” has been refused bail. Moustafa Jawad, 21, from Chester Hill, N.S.W., was charged with 33 offenses after a 20-year-old woman was allegedly assaulted and threatened with physical violence on multiple occasions. The [Australian Broadcasting Corp.](#) reported that the charges included eight counts of assault occasioning bodily harm, four counts of intentionally recording intimate images without consent, and three counts for torturing, beating and causing the death of an animal. Police said Jawad filmed the woman during an intimate act without her consent and then threatened to release the video, and also allegedly killed the rabbits “after he became frustrated with the animals.” A police search warrant at the residence found a number of dead pet rabbits and a rabbit carcass in the unit’s freezer. Two rabbits that were found alive in a cage were turned over to the RSPCA.

Child Rescued from Home with Dead and Starving Dogs



Rebecca Halbach & Brandon Leconey

Police in Evesham Township, N.J., arrested a man and a woman and rescued a child from a “despicable” home that was filled with dozens of dead and starving animals. The [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) reported that Rebecca Halbach, 35, and Brandon Leconey, 32, were charged with animal cruelty and endangering the welfare of a child. Police said they found more than 30 dead dogs throughout the home, plus 14 living dogs and numerous cats and rabbits. Nine dogs were transported to a veterinarian, with several in extremely poor health. Police said that as many as 100 dogs may have died in the home, many of which are suspected to have been buried on the property. Additional charges may be filed as the investigation continues. The child was placed in the care of the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency.

Police Kill Man Suspected of Shooting His Mother and Two Dogs

Police in San Diego were investigating a shooting in which a 43-year-old man suspected of killing his 74-year-old mother and two dogs was fatally shot by responding officers in a fiery standoff. Police saw the woman and one dog in a driveway suffering from apparent gunshot wounds. When officers moved in to help, the suspect opened fire on them from inside the house. the [San Diego Union-Tribune](#) reported. Officers later used a police vehicle which provided some cover and allowed them to get to the injured woman, who was suffering from gunshot wounds to her upper body and leg, while the suspect continued to shoot at police. Officers assisted the woman until paramedics arrived, but she died before she could be taken to a hospital. A SWAT team was called in to assist, and several nearby homes were evacuated while officers attempted to get the man to surrender, officials said. At one point, he set fire to the garage. The man refused to cooperate with officers and, later, while the man was outside of the residence armed with a rifle, an officer fatally shot him. Several firearms including a rifle, shotgun and handgun were found in the home, police said. A second dog that had been killed was subsequently found. The names of the victims were not released pending notification of next of kin.

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.

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. 20-21 – 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 34th Annual Connecticut Municipal Animal Control Officers Association [Conference](#).

Sept. 29 – Oct. 1 – Toronto, Ont., Canada: The [Canadian Animal Law Conference](#) will include presentations on pet custody laws and the latest trends in animal law and policy.

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 and other ASPCA staff will conduct a 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. 4 – New York City, N.Y.: “Removing Roadblocks to Safety: Human-Animal Co-living Enhances Shelter Access and Healing” will be one of several panel discussions at the Urban Resource Institute’s [Blueprint for Change](#) symposium.

Oct. 5 – Lexington, Ky.: Making a Difference Now will host an [all-day conference](#) for Kentucky Social Workers on “Reimagining Animal Welfare.” Speakers will include Joye Keeley and Vicki Deisner.

Oct. 7-8 – Edinburgh, Scotland: Fostering Compassion will hold the [Compassion Always Conference](#), which will include presentations on “Reversing the Cycle of Abuse.”

Oct. 11-13 – Charlottesville, Va.: Jeremy Hoffman will present “Paraphilia: A Case Study in Animal Crushing”, and Michelle Welch will present several programs, at the Virginia Animal Control Association [conference](#).

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 12th 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 – (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.”

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. 15-18 – 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 on community violence for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

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

March 28, 2024 (online): Katie Campbell will present “The Power of Pets: How Pet-friendly Domestic Violence Shelters Aid Healing, Build Morale, and Support Fundraising,” in a [webinar](#) for the Justice Clearinghouse.

April 23-25, 2024 – San Diego, Calif.: Phil Arkow will be a keynote and workshop speaker at the 24th Annual International Family Justice Center [Conference](#).

July 16, 2024 – (online): Phil Arkow will present “The Missing LINK in Social Work: Addressing Animal Abuse to Improve Delivery of Services to Vulnerable Victims” in a webinar for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

Nov. 19, 2024 – (online): Phil Arkow will present “Connecting the Dots in Military and Civilian Families: Animal Abuse’s Links to Other Family Violence” in a webinar for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).



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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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