



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

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A monthly report of news from THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER



ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE

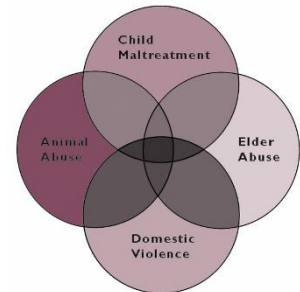


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[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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CHILD WELFARE ... and THE LINK

United Nations Recognizes Children's Rights to be Protected From Animal Cruelty and Domestic Violence

Global recognition of The Link between animal abuse, domestic violence and child welfare took a major step forward in August when the United Nations adopted, at the highest level, a policy decreeing that children are required to be protected from any form of violence – be it domestic or inflicted on animals.



United Nations

The UN Child Rights Committee published a guidance, [General Comment No. 26 \(2023\)](#) on Children's Rights and the Environment. While the majority of its provisions emphasize a Special Focus on Climate Change, the General Comment added one impressive provision that **"Children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals."**

The United Nations already had a long history of recognizing the rights of children around the world to be entitled to special care and assistance and afforded the necessary protection and assistance to fully

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assume their responsibilities within the community, especially in areas marked by emergencies and armed conflict. These provisions have traditionally emphasized the child's right to live and grow up free and safe in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding, and free from discrimination.

But now, for the first time in history, similar to the "One Welfare" concept that coordinates human, animal and environmental well-being, the Link between animal abuse and domestic violence is acknowledged and endorsed by the United Nations. Regrettably, however, the U.S. the only member nation to have signed but has is not ratified the agreement.

The guidance includes multiple rights that must be granted to all children. Article 19, the "Right to Freedom from All Forms of Violence," includes the provision against animal cruelty and domestic violence.

The guidance specifies the legislative and administrative measures nations should urgently implement to address the adverse effects of environmental degradation and climate change on the enjoyment of children's rights, and to ensure a clean, healthy, and sustainable world now and for future generations.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is the body of 18 independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by its States parties. It also monitors implementation of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on involvement of children in armed conflict, the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. The Committee adopted General Comment No. 26 after two rounds of consultation with various countries, national human rights institutions, international organizations, civil society, thematic experts, and children.

The explicit Link reference signifies an important step toward ensuring not only that cruelty to animals is unacceptable and recognizing the adverse impact of animal cruelty on children. It was championed by the [European Link Coalition](#), whose advocacy over several years propelled this agenda forward.



Malcolm Plant

Global reaction was immediate and positive. Malcolm Plant, of the European Link Coalition, expressed his satisfaction with this achievement, stating, "Such interpretation provides NGOs around the world with an authoritative remit to demand governments achieve compliance by introducing policies which address traditions and practices where children are exposed to violence against animals." He added, "This should mean that no child can be taken trophy hunting, attend bullfighting or animal sacrifice festivals. It should also mean creating laws to protect children from violence against animals within their homes."

Andrew Rowan, President and Chief Program Officer of [WellBeing International](#), noted that, "While there is little direct research on the impact of pets on the development of empathy and caring in children, there is growing evidence that there may be adverse consequences for children who witness violence to animals. The development of Link studies and literature examining the impact of violence against animals on the social development of children has led to several initiatives to protect children from witnessing violence against animals."



Andrew Rowan

These have included efforts to prohibit children from attending bullfights or witnessing the culling of stray dogs on city streets. General Comment No. 26 reportedly resulted from an outreach to authorities in Tunisia and Azerbaijan requesting them to prevent children from being exposed to homeless animal management activities (the culling of street dogs) because of possible harmful effects on children.



Les Ward, Managing Trustee of the [Marchig Animal Welfare Trust](#), a global philanthropy based in Scotland, called the development and publication of General Comment 26 a “historic moment” for children and animals. He urged International Animal Welfare Protection Coalition members to follow up by urging governments in their countries to implement the new guidance on preventing children from observing violence against animals.

Les Ward

Louise van der Merwe of South Africa’s [Humane Education Trust](#), said, “This brings the need for animals not to be abused by humans directly into the domain of the Charter on Human Rights and for the first time references animal abuse as a violation of the Rights of the Child. At the highest level, the Link between animal abuse and domestic violence is acknowledged and endorsed. The challenge that lies ahead to implement this understanding is exciting. Laws and regulations must now be developed to protect children from experiencing any violence inflicted on an animal, whether in their home or in society. Without exception.”



Louise van der Merwe



The Hon. John Romero

Children’s Court Judges Need to Address Children's Attachments to Pets

Judges presiding over cases involving child welfare and custody need to be cognizant of children’s emotional attachments to their pets and the impact that animal cruelty may have on that child, both in the short- and long-term. That was the advice presented by The Hon. John Romero at [Positive Links](#) New Mexico’s 2023 Conference on The Link.

Romero, who retired as presiding judge of New Mexico’s Children’s Court Division, 2nd Judicial District and who serves on the National Link Coalition’s Professional Advisory Committee, emphasized that, “If an animal is being hurt there’s a high probability that a child or youth or an adult in that household is also a victim of abuse. There’s a Link there. This could be the tip of the iceberg for what else might be going on in the home.”

Romero noted a child’s emotional ties to their pets can be both good and bad. “It can be a buffering and protective factor but it can also be used by an adult abuser to intimidate and control the children in the home. Fear of the animal being harmed can force a child to keep things quiet and not talk to teachers, school nurses or friends because if they do someone else will suffer.”

Children rank their pets as high as their siblings as sources of emotional support, he said. Children talk to their pets, who help them feel less lonely and more accepted. Children feel that pets are “most likely to be there for you no matter what, even if you get mad at each other. The fact that pets won’t blab your

secrets helps kids feel less lonely and more comfortable. Pets are much more forgiving and accepting that we humans are, sadly.”

He noted that children going into foster care often ask more about what happened to their pets than what happened to their parents, brothers or sisters. The trauma of a child’s being placed in substitute care can be eased somewhat if the child can take a pet with them. However, Romero noted how difficult it is to find acceptable foster families – especially if the youth is a teenager – and asking a family to take in a strange pet as well can be an extreme challenge.

Romero described the increased risk to disabled children whose greater emotional, physical, economic and social demands create additional stressors for their parents. He also emphasized the importance of children’s Links with animals in Native American communities, where rates of pet ownership are higher than national averages and where animals have held important roles in traditional tribal cultures, including identity, spirituality, a reciprocal philosophy of hunting, clan and community identification, storytelling, education, and daily life. Many Native Americans are named for animals and this adds an additional personal significance.

Judges can be active in Link work both on the bench and outside the court. In the courtroom judges can:

- Have the family’s or child’s attachment to a household pet taken into consideration when devising a safety plan and when placing a child outside the home.
- Ask children about their pets and how they are cared for, as children are unabashedly direct when you ask them about this.
- Include pets in family time plans.
- Pursue options to keep the child and pet together during the dependency case process.
- Order a thorough psychological assessment for youths who have been charged with or who have witnessed animal cruelty as there is a high likelihood that they themselves have been abused.

Outside the court, judges can promote collaborations and cross-disciplinary training with veterinarians, law enforcement, animal care and control agencies, and healthcare professionals because the cases they are adjudicating may well be relevant to multiple courts or agencies.

“The impact of cruelty to animals on the child may take place today, tomorrow, or over the rest of the course of that person’s life,” he concluded.

Domestic Violence Advocates and Professionals Sought for Child Abuse Research Focus Group

A team of researchers at Thomas Jefferson University 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 Wycoff 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 session is scheduled for **Friday, Nov. 3**, 12 noon-1 pm EDT for trained domestic violence advocates and service providers who have encountered at least one example of a child harming an animal. To participate, please contact Katharine.Wenocur@jefferson.edu.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ... and THE LINK

Link Featured at National Animal Cruelty Prosecution Conference



The 12th National [Animal Cruelty Prosecution Conference](#) in Milwaukee, Wis. on Oct. 25-27 will feature an extensive array of topics and authorities Linking animal cruelty with crimes against humans. The conference, sponsored by the [Association of Prosecuting Attorneys](#) and the [Animal Legal Defense Fund](#), is intended for prosecutors, law enforcement, animal control officers, veterinarians, and related disciplines. Presentations and speakers include:

- Mark Kumpf, National Link Coalition Board Member: “Justice League: How to Fight Together”
- Diane Balkin, National Link Coalition Board of Advisors, and Melinda Merck, forensic veterinarian: “Mystery Theater: How to Make the Case”
- Maya Gupta and Gale Rasin, National Link Coalition Board of Advisors, and retired Queens County N.Y. Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Chief Nicoletta Caferri: “Mad, Bad and Sad: Get the Most Out Of Your Case with Conditions, providers, Sentencing, and Plea Agreements”
- Kathleen Wood, National Link Coalition Board of Advisors and Nancy Blaney, Animal Welfare Institute: “Legislative Roundtable”
- Nancy Blaney and Mary Lou Randour, Animal Welfare Institute: “NIBRS: Juveniles and Sibling Violence”
- Jeremy Hoffman, Fairfax County, Va. Police Dept.: “Animal Sexual Abuse-Child Porn Link”
- Michelle Welch, Virginia Senior Asst. Attorney General Animal Law Unit: “Case Study”
- Jill Hollander, Atlanta, Ga. Deputy District Attorney: “Elder Abuse”
- April Doherty, Baltimore County, Md. State’s Attorney’s Office, and Gillian Deegan, Botetourt County, Va. Assistant Commonwealth’s Attorney: “How to Build an Animal cruelty Unit... Even If It’s Only You!”
- Speaker to be announced: “Link+: Child Abuse”

Study Cites Gaps in NIBRS System Resulting in Under-reporting of Link Crimes

The addition of four types of animal cruelty (neglect, intentional, animal fighting, and animal sexual assault) to the FBI’s National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) in 2016 ([See the March 2016 LINK-Letter](#)) heralded a new era for gathering nationwide data on animal cruelty cases and the ability to correlate these incidents with other crimes. The rationale for the addition of animal cruelty crimes to NIBRS was the large body of empirical evidence that demonstrates a close association between animal cruelty and other crimes, particularly interpersonal violence.

However, the collection and submission of crime data from local law enforcement agencies to the FBI is voluntary and has faced multiple challenges. The addition of animal cruelty crime as a separate category to NIBRS required the adoption of this change by approximately 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country. Although animal cruelty crime has been added as a separate category, local law enforcement agencies need to act upon the addition of animal cruelty crime as a separate offense by reporting those incidents. Humane law enforcement and animal control officers who are not part of a participating law enforcement agency must create a memorandum of understanding with such agencies in order to have their data submitted. Not all law enforcement agencies are yet convinced that tracking

animal cruelty crimes is important, although that is slowly changing. Because of its relatively new inclusion into NIBRS, many agencies in a NIBRS reporting state are still not reporting animal cruelty crimes. Moreover, as of 2019 not all states were 100% NIBRS compliant and thus cannot report animal cruelty.

A new research paper attempts to take a first look at the effectiveness of the inclusion of animal cruelty into NIBRS by local and state agencies. It analyzes how states and local law enforcement agencies have responded to the addition of animal cruelty crime incidents to NIBRS, noting patterns of adoption in reporting animal cruelty crimes, gaps, and any other factor that provides clarity on the state of the implementation of animal cruelty crime statistics in NIBRS. The paper evaluates the animal cruelty incident rates by population groups established by the FBI and then compares the animal cruelty crime rate to the unique situation in Delaware -- the only state with a centralized reporting agency in its Office of Animal Welfare. This centralization resulted in Delaware -- with a population of under 1,000,000, reporting about 12% of all animal cruelty incidents nationwide in 2019.

The authors conclude that apart from Delaware, most areas of the U.S. do not presently possess sufficient data to inform decisions from law enforcement about the allocation of resources for animal cruelty prevention programs and other forms of interpersonal violence. "The availability of reliable findings on the reality of animal cruelty crime trends throughout the country will take time, but the results from Delaware raise a red flag for law enforcement agencies that, except for Delaware, there has been an under-reporting of animal cruelty crime," they conclude.

"Because animal cruelty crimes are closely associated with other crimes, this under-reporting could have a detrimental effect on the amount of information that could be useful to law enforcement agencies to make decisions about resources and directing policies."

-- Randour, M.L., Kearley, A., & Wireman, M. (2023). Examining law enforcement agencies' responses to the addition of animal cruelty to NIBRS. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-023-09740-w>.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Nebraska Becomes 40th State with Pet Protective Orders

A bill in the Nebraska Legislature that was thought to have been killed in committee when the 2023 legislative session ended was added as an amendment to an omnibus piece of legislation and was became law on June 6. The new law makes Nebraska the 40th state to specifically allow courts to include animals in domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders.



The provisions of **LB 11** were added into **LB 157**. The new law amends Sec. 42-924, the state's Protection from Domestic Abuse Act. Under the new provisions, courts may issue a protection order without bond granting relief that may include directing the petitioner to have sole possession of any household pet owned, possessed, leased, kept, or held by the petitioner, the respondent or any family or household member. The court may also enjoin the respondent from coming into contact with, harming or killing any such pet. Sole possession of any pet shall be valid only for the duration of the protection order or until further order of the court. Petitioners cannot dispose of a pet without the court's order except in cases where humane euthanasia is recommended by a veterinarian. The provisions apply only to common companion animals and exclude commercial livestock.

Best Elements of Pet Protection Orders Described

With 40 states now specifically allowing courts to include companion animals in domestic violence protection-from-abuse orders, several key questions remain unanswered in protecting pets from domestic violence. What are the elements that make a dynamic Pet Protection Order (PPO)? And how many domestic violence survivors are taking advantage of these provisions?

Those are some of the questions that Claire Coughlin, who coordinates the Animal Welfare Institute's [Safe Havens for Pets](#) program, asked participants at the New Mexico [Positive Links](#) 2023 Conference on The Link. Domestic violence survivors with pets "are in a state of crisis and a highly emotional state of affairs and we need to remove as many barriers as possible," she said. "The next vital step after passage of these laws is to ensure that domestic violence survivors and their advocates are aware that these protections exist and how to use them."



Claire Coughlin

Currently, only Maine and New York are believed to track the number of protection orders that have been issued which include provisions for pets. (In the early years of PPOs, Minnesota reported these figures for 2010-2013 ([See the January 2014 LINK-Letter](#)), but we have not been able to obtain Minnesota data from subsequent years.) Coughlin reported a 75% increase in the number of protection orders in New York that include pets.

The best PPOs include the following elements, she said:

- Pets or companion animals are specifically included on the protection order application form.
- A history of prior pet abuse is admissible but not required.
- The order confers custody or possession of the animals.
- Respondents are restrained from accessing, injuring, threatening to injure, or disposing of the pet.
- The duration of the protection order is lengthy or indefinite.
- A case tracking system is required.

"We know that when there's violence in a home it's not directed at just one individual – it's a volatile situation," she added. Consequently, another tool to address The Link is legislation that provides increased penalties for exposing children to animal cruelty. Coughlin cited several examples:

- Additional penalties for animal abuse committed in front of a child (Arkansas, Idaho, Illinois, Oregon)
- More severe punishment if a minor is forced to inflict pain or injury on an animal (Washington)
- Enhanced penalties for engaging in animal sexual assault in front of a minor (Florida, Texas)
- Increased penalty for engaging a minor in animal fighting (Virginia)

Coughlin also emphasized the need for more cross-reporting among agencies responding to animal, child, domestic, and elder abuse. "Identifying family violence earlier makes interventions more likely to succeed."

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

Connecticut Veterinary Foundation Helps Support Pets in Domestic Violence Crises

The Connecticut Veterinary Medical Foundation, the charitable and service arm of the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association, has created a [Companions-in-Crisis Program](#) to provide shelter for animals caught up in domestic violence-related evacuations and other family crises. The program provides safe, confidential and secure temporary shelter for animals when a pet's owner enters an emergency shelter, residential treatment program, medical facility or is otherwise temporarily unable to care for their animals.



The program is a partnership with the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, informing victims how to arrange to safeguard their animals for an indeterminate period while they evacuate to new, safe circumstances. A Memorandum of Understanding outlines program expectations and basic operating guidelines.

The Companions-in-Crisis program has been described as a “witness protection program” for the animals of domestic violence victims. Domestic violence agency caseworkers, upon request of a victim, may contact CIC on the victim's behalf through a dedicated 24-hour telephone line, and begin the placement process. Animals are then secretly relocated to one of more than 60 participating veterinary hospitals across the state for safekeeping.

Confidentiality and safety are the paramount concerns. After relocation, all reports on the status of animals in the program are made through the program director and caseworker only. There is no animal visitation during the emergency shelter period.

Animal hospital owners are responsible for the basic costs of boarding and feeding animals and the CVMF provides funding for any necessary veterinary medical care on a case-by-case basis.

Each request for shelter presents a unique set of circumstances and CIC accepts applications on a case-by-case basis. Eligibility requirements include enrollment or active participation in programs or services provided by a participating social service agency, and compliance with all court orders and/or treatment plans in effect. Referring agencies include: victim advocates and judicial personnel; law enforcement; animal control officers; youth & family service organizations; children's & elderly protective service agencies; and domestic violence or sexual assault crisis service providers. Requests for services by individuals without a referring agent cannot be accepted.

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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.

Houston Humane Society Forensic Veterinarian Featured on TV

“Where veterinarians are right now is where human medicine was in the 60’s and now veterinarians are needing to move forward and start the process of training veterinarian students.”

That’s what Dr. Jennifer Janssen told Houston’s [KPRC-TV](#) in a feature on how the [Houston Humane Society](#) invested in her as the shelter’s first forensic veterinarian in the region. After 13 years as an emergency vet before she saw a need to get her master’s degree in veterinary forensics, Janssen joined the shelter team to help animal investigators get justice for pets all across the sprawling metro region in southeast Texas.



Jennifer Janssen

Her work extends to The Link as well, because many cruelty cases are unfortunately not isolated incidents, she told the station. “Many animal cruelty victims, they have human family members that are also victims of cruelty at the same time and I’ve seen many domestic violence cases along with the animal cruelty cases in my exam room. I’ve seen child abuse, it comes in with the animal abuse.”

Janssen helps animal cruelty investigators on the front lines build a case and hold those responsible accountable. Janssen said because she is the only one of her kind locally, the Houston Humane Society has allowed her to open her doors to all local law enforcement, even if it’s just for a question. Janssen says moving forward, the Houston Humane Society also wants to provide on-scene support for investigations at some of the cruelty scenes.

ANIMAL HOARDING... and THE LINK

Study Examines Scavenging of Human Remains in Dog Hoarding

One of the least understood phenomena of animal hoarding is the occasional situation where hoarders die and their bodies are scavenged by their starving animals. A new research study reviews in detail an incident where 10 small dogs had scavenged for a week on the human remains of their elderly owner, a potential animal hoarder, and how the situation confounded human forensics. Subsequent investigations by the crime scene police, homicide police, and autopsy services were unable to establish or rule out natural death, criminal or suicidal poisoning, zoonotic disease, fatal dog attack, or fatal accidental trauma in the human’s death. The authors discuss the public health, animal welfare and legal issues associated with such incidents and propose that a general protocol be created for future approaches to dog scavenging and suspicious killing of animal hoarders, as well an assessment for the potential adoption or euthanasia of animals owned by hoarders in these circumstances. They suggest that this case may serve as a warning to public services, authorities, relatives, friends, and neighbors on the importance of monitoring hoarding behavior individuals, mostly elderly and those living alone with several dogs under unsanitary conditions.

-- Kmetiuk, L.B., Maiorka, P.C., Beck, A.M., & Biondo, A.W. (2023). “Dying alone and being eaten: Dog scavenging on the remains of an elderly animal hoarder – a case study. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*10:1161935. doi: 10.3389/fvets.2023.1161935.

ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE ... and THE LINK

Passage of New Mexico's Bestiality Law Was a Long, Hard Process



When New Mexico earlier this year finally became the 49th state to outlaw sex with animals ([See the April 2023 LINK-Letter](#)) it was the culmination of a legislative effort several decades in the making. Jessica Johnson Shelton, Chief Governmental Affairs Officer for [Animal Protection New Mexico](#) and its governmental affairs division, [Animal Protection Voters of New Mexico](#) told the [Positive Links](#) New Mexico's 2023 Conference on The Link about "Stopping the Unspeakable" -- how **SB 215** finally became law.

Jessica Johnson Shelton "New Mexico was already an outlier," she said, noting that even Kentucky and Wyoming had finally banned bestiality (a practice which is still legal in West Virginia). "Animal sexual abuse was unaddressed in New Mexico state law, which meant that many incidents went unreported and many reports were going uninvestigated, or offenders were charged instead with incidental crimes such as disorderly conduct or trespassing. There was no real hook for communities, health professionals, law enforcement, and the courts to address the issue at hand."

Enacting the law faced many challenges. Anti-cruelty laws weren't applicable because those statutes require showing demonstrable physical injury or neglect and do not address such issues as possessing, selling, buying, or advertising animals for sexual purposes. Legislators found it hard to support a law where there was limited proof that the practice existed in New Mexico, a situation compounded by the fact that since bestiality wasn't a crime it was impossible to document how many cases there are. Some legislators argued that this was a mental health issue rather than a crime, let alone a felony. Others said having sex with farm animals was a normal rite of passage for boys in an agricultural state.

These arguments were answered with data from the state and nationwide. Legislators were advised that animal sexual abuse is not just animal cruelty but shares many characteristics with other sex crimes and often co-occurs with multiple sex offenses, Shelton said. "It's an act of sexual assault and coercion with offenders behaving like pedophiles or rapists."

Meanwhile, as more states began to outlaw animal sexual abuse there were increasing data about the number of arrests nationwide. Technological advances were making it easier to investigate cases. Criminal prosecutions, rather than psychological interventions, are necessary because there are no effective pharmacological or counseling treatments for zoophilia. And felony-level punishments are appropriate due to the violent and pathological nature of these crimes, and to make New Mexico's laws consistent with those of other states she said.

"The thing that really shot down all their arguments was The Link," she said, citing the National Link Coalition's letter of support for the proposed legislation.

The law, which took effect on June 16, makes engaging in or promoting bestiality a felony or an aggravated felony if a minor child is involved. Offenders make financial restitution to the animal's owners, undergo psychological evaluation, and can be barred from having any contact with animals for 3-15 years.

"This was a collaborative effort that required a lot of work from a lot of different stakeholders," she concluded.

Animal Sexual Abuse – The National Picture
Sex with animals is now outlawed in all states except West Virginia.

Misdemeanor	Felony	Aggravated Felony Enhancement	Law in Animal Cruelty Statutes	Law in Sex Crimes Code	Law in Other Statutes
Alabama				x	
Alaska		2 nd offense	x		
	Arizona	Engaging a minor		x	
Arkansas				x	
California				x	
Colorado		2 nd offense	x		
Connecticut				x	
	Delaware			x	
	D.C.		x		
Florida			x		
	Georgia			x	
	Hawai'i	In presence of minor	x		
	Idaho			x	
	Illinois	In presence of minor		x	
	Indiana		x		
Iowa					Crime Control
Kansas				x	
	Kentucky		x		
	Louisiana				Crimes Against Nature
Maine		3 rd offense	x		
Maryland				x	
	Massachusetts		x		
	Michigan				Crimes Against Nature
Minnesota				x	
	Mississippi				Public Morals
Missouri		2 nd offense		x	
	Montana			x	
Nebraska			x		
Nevada		Animal dies/ injured; prior cruelty conviction			Crimes Against Public Morals
New Hampshire		2 nd offense	x		
New Jersey			x		
	New Mexico	In presence of minor	x		
New York				x	
	North Carolina				Public Morals
North Dakota				x	
Ohio			x		
	Oklahoma				Crimes Against Nature
Oregon			x		
Pennsylvania				x	
	Rhode Island				Crimes Against Nature
	South Carolina				Buggery
	South Dakota	Prior sex crime conviction		x	
	Tennessee		x		
	Texas	In presence of a minor; Prior conviction; Animal dies		x	
Utah			x		
Vermont		2 nd offense	x		
	Virginia				Crimes Against Nature
	Washington		x		
Wisconsin					Public Morals
Wyoming			x		

Building LINK AWARENESS



Link Awareness Raised in Des Moines

"I love the fact that we're talking about partnerships," said Tom Colvin, CEO of the [Animal Rescue League of Iowa](http://www.arliowa.org), in introducing the first of two September workshops at the animal shelter bringing The Link to Des Moines. "Behind every animal there's at least one person," Colvin said, confirming what keynote speaker Phil Arkow of the National Link Coalition indicated was the primary problem facing animal shelters – "the upper end of the leash."

Tom Colvin

Noting that the Animal Rescue League is an "animal" organization that also cares about people, Colvin encouraged the multidisciplinary audience to collaborate for better protection of pets and people. "We have made lots of inroads over the years but there is so much more work to do. We need to form partnerships to do greater good," he said.

Program panelists included Sgt. Paul Parizek of the Des Moines Police Department and Gladys Alvarez, LISW, from the Trauma-Informed Care Project at the Orchard Place Child Guidance Center. Parizek described his first-hand experiences with The Link. "Throughout my entire career, one of two things has happened: whenever there's animal abuse, a crime against a person has happened or a crime against a person will happen."



ARL-Iowa Development Director KC Routos (left), Sgt. Paul Parizek and Gladys Alvarez discuss their perspectives on The Link at the conference

"We all need to work together," advised Alvarez. "The more we can give a uniform message the bigger the impact." She described the devastating impact that animal abuse, domestic violence and other violence have on the children in Orchard Place's system. "They may not have witnessed animal abuse yet, but the threat of animal abuse is real." For children going into foster care who have experienced the loss of nearly everything in their lives, the loss of a pet is particularly troubling.

The group also discussed the feasibility of establishing a Link coalition in Des Moines, and a follow-up workshop on animal cruelty investigation techniques in October sponsored by the ASPCA.



What is The LINK?

Legislation...

Intervention...

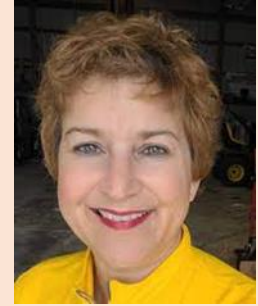
Networking...

Knowledge...

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

Spreading the Word to Other Agencies...

A goal of Link trainings is to encourage participants to reach out to their colleagues and associations. One outcome of the Link presentations in Des Moines was the following letter written by Wendy Ringgenberg, Ph.D., MPH, Vice President of the Homicide Research Working Group in the Iowa Violent Death Reporting System at the University of Iowa. She encourages *LINK-Letter* readers to cut-and-paste from this letter and send it to their state groups. Ringgenberg, who recently took a new position with the State of Iowa in Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning, sent this letter to colleagues at the Iowa Child Death Review Team, the State Medical Examiner, the Medical Director of Iowa Health and Human Services, the Iowa Sheriffs and Deputies Association, the Iowa County Attorneys Association, and the Iowa Chiefs of Police Association:



Wendy Ringgenberg

"I attended a seminar last night and it was well presented and seems to be very important in violence detection and prevention, so I wanted to share. It was presented at the ARL in Des Moines by Phil Arkow who is the person in charge of the National Link Coalition. The "Link" is the link between animal abuse and people violence. The presentation was approximately two hours and provided references to published articles that show if public health and social services connected/communicated with animal welfare, there would be a great opportunity for violence prevention. This is because where there is animal abuse, there is also domestic violence.

"Arkow provided many examples of how social workers and mandatory reporters can ask questions about animals to better understand how animals (and therefore, the family members) are treated.

"Arkow and his group are also working to educate that veterinarians are often the professionals that see violence in animals, and also they are one professional where domestic violence victims are allowed to go. One study that he cited found that in violent homes, upwards of 80% of the homes had both child abuse and animal abuse; 11 times more dog bites per household than the control group; and the animals went to the vet the same amount as the control group.

"Veterinarians also get asked by people planning to commit suicide if they will euthanize all their animals.

"Arkow discussed how there is one number to call for police, or suicide hotline, but there are multiple numbers to call if you witness animal abuse. This leaves the public wondering, "Who do I call to report?"

"Another point was made regarding the importance of companion animals in our homes, and yet there is very little in social services, public health, medical, law enforcement, and medical examiner data that officially tracks existence of and impact of animals in the home. Such as, Does a battered woman stay and continue to be victimized because she doesn't want to leave her pet? Has the violent aggressor killed pets to show their power over the victim? Has cruelty to animals been identified as a behavior observed by family or foster family members and what resources are there to address growing violence in individuals?

"I attended the evening public presentation, but I know that Arkow had presented to a small group of professionals earlier in the day including representatives from domestic violence shelters and law enforcement. I highly recommend this speaker and this introductory presentation.

"Prevention efforts, advisory committees, and decision-making might be lacking without representation from animal welfare groups.

Thanks!

Wendy"

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. Already, 136 bills have been introduced in 2023 in the U.S. and Canada – and 13 have been signed into law. 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.



S. 2734, the PAWS (Pet And Women Safety) Reauthorization Act of 2023 would re-authorize the federal PAWS Act provisions passed in 2019 – making \$3,000,000 available annually to help domestic violence shelters build facilities to accommodate pets and enabling pet protection orders to be enforced across state lines – to be continued from 2024 to 2028. The bill is in the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry



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 animal cruelty penalties from a Level 6 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 provisions allowing courts to direct the care and custody of pets in domestic violence protection 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 157 allows domestic violence victims to file for protection orders that 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 signed into law on June 6.**





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 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-A 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 Senate and was sent to the Governor on Sept. 21.



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



Shubhankar Kawle

Texan Gets 6-1/2 Years for Torturing Ex-girlfriend's Cat

Shubhankar Kawle, 28, of Quinlan, Texas was sentenced to 6-1/2 years in prison after being convicted of severely torturing a cat belonging to a woman he had recently dated. The [Greenville, Texas Herald-Banner](#) reported that the woman's nanny camera had recorded Kawle strangling, beating, throwing, and otherwise abusing "Nimbus" for five hours; she had set up the nanny camera after another cat named "Mango" had been injured and needed to have a leg amputated after it had been left alone with Kawle. Nimbus' injuries were so severe that she had to be euthanized.

Cat Torturer, Would-be Arsonist Receives Longest Sentence in Canadian History

A Calgary, Alta. woman who tortured nine cats, killing seven of them, and told police that she intended to burn down her former residence was sentenced to 6-1/2 years in prison – the longest animal abuse sentence in Canadian history. Aleeta Raugust, 26, pled guilty to nine charges involving animal abuse as well as a charge of threatening to damage property. The sentence eclipsed Canada's previous mark of three years. Canada's [Global News](#) reported that Raugust told investigators and psychiatrists that she recorded the killings and repeatedly watched the videos as they gave her pleasure. She also left some of the bodies of the cats in public places to watch the reactions of those who made the grisly discoveries. "This is a great example of what can be done when agencies and experts with the proper training work together," Sgt. Dennis Smithson of the Calgary Police Service told *The LINK-Letter*.



Aleeta Raugust



Carlos Perez

North Dakotan Charged with Felony Animal Cruelty and Domestic Violence in Torture and Death of Cat

A 23-year-old man in North Dakota was charged with felony counts of domestic violence, animal cruelty and terrorism after he allegedly tortured and killed his ex-girlfriend's cat because she hadn't returned home early enough for him to use her cellphone. [KVLV-TV](#) reported that police accused Carlos Perez, of Fargo, of allegedly striking his girlfriend, sending her a photo of him holding her cat on top of a lit stove burner, bashing the cat's head with a speaker, choking it, then burning one of the cat's paws with a lighter before finally sticking the cat in the microwave and turning it on, ultimately killing it. Perez then reportedly tossed the animal's remains in a nearby dumpster and told her "that would happen to her next."

Perez was also accused of physically assaulting his girlfriend, slapping her in the face, attempting to lock her in a closet, and breaking her cellphone when she tried to call 911. The girlfriend also told police that Perez had intentionally injured her twice in the prior few months, allegedly cutting her with a kitchen knife and punching her in the face. She reportedly said she did not report those instances because Perez had previously threatened to kill her and her family if she did so.

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.

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. 13 – Liskeard, Cornwall, United Kingdom (online): Refuge4Pets will offer a [2.5-hour training course](#) on “Animal Abuse as a Strategy of Coercive Control.”

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. 21 – Alpharetta, Ga.: Claudine Wilkins will present “Vets, Their Roles in Animal Cases and What They Need to Know about Animal Laws,” and Doris Miller will present “Veterinary Forensics in Animal Investigations” at the [24th Annual APAW Expo](#).

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. 14 – Kansas City, Mo. (online): BestyBnB will host a webinar on “Bridging the Gap: Establishing Relationships between Social Services and Animal Welfare.”

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. 15 – Lake Ozark, Mo.: Phil Arkow will present “Animal Abuse, Animal Hoarding and Elder Abuse: Challenges and Strategies for Adult Protective Services” for the [Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services](#).

Nov. 21– Liskeard, Cornwall, United Kingdom (online): Refuge4Pets will offer a [2.5-hour training course](#) on “Animal Abuse as a Strategy of Coercive Control.”

Nov. 22 – Charlottetown, PEI, Canada (online): Monique St. Germain and Debra Danco of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection will present a webinar, “The Link between Child Sexual Abuse and Animal Sexual Abuse,” for [Violence Link PEI](#).

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

Dec. 7 – Liskeard, Cornwall, United Kingdom (online): Refuge4Pets will offer a [2.5-hour training course](#) on “Animal Abuse as a Strategy of Coercive Control.”

Jan. 19, 2024 – Hartford, Conn.: Phil Arkow and Diane Rosell will discuss The Link at the [University of Connecticut School of Law](#).

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 25, 2024 – Des Moines, Iowa: Phil Arkow will present :”Connecting the Dots in Child Abuse and Children’s Advocacy: Animal Abuse as a Risk Factor for Child Maltreatment and Other Family Violence” for the [Blank Children’s Hospital’s STAR Center](#).

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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Animal Legal Defense Fund
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National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life
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