



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

The LINK-Letter
Vol., 17, No. 1
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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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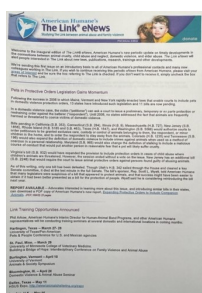


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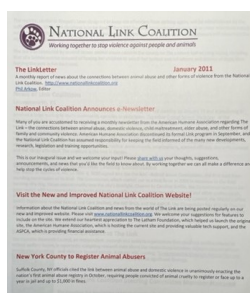
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Welcome to the New Look of the LINK-Letter

After 15 years of what had become a fairly predictable and highly efficient format for conveying all the rapidly-developing news about The Link, we felt it was time to refresh our look a bit. With the start of a new year and our new status as an official nonprofit organization, we've decided to brighten things up. We hope you like the new format: please let us know what you think!



The first issue of The LINK-Letter in April 2007 was a modest 2-page sheet published by the American Humane Association while we were still an AHA program.



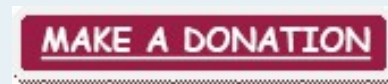
In January 2011, after we had established ourselves as an independent organization, we began self-publishing The LINK-Letter. Our first issue had 5 pages of news — a figure that soon increased regularly to 30.

Phil Arkow, Editor
The National Link Coalition
16 Grasshopper Drive
Etowah, NC 28729
<https://NationalLinkCoalition.org>
arkowpets@snip.net

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2023 — A Year of Notable Link Legislation

The 2023 state legislative sessions continued an ongoing and accelerated process in which legislators and advocates from multiple professional interests recognize that more progress can be achieved by emphasizing that animal cruelty — while harmful to the animals — also has an adverse impact on human health and safety. We saw 137 Link-related bills introduced in U.S. state and Canadian provinces, the U.S. Congress and Canada's Parliament; 15 of them, or 11%, were signed into law by year's end. Several more are still pending in legislative bodies with biennial sessions. See our summary on Pages 14-15 of the great progress we continued to make in 2023.



The National Link Coalition is the only international educational and advocacy organization working to prevent animal cruelty, domestic violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse by showing how they intersect.

As the international resource center on The Link between animal cruelty and human violence we train multidisciplinary professionals, showcase programs, and publicize legislation and 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.

CHILD WELFARE... and THE LINK

Two Studies Explore Significance of Pets For Children Experiencing Domestic Violence

A new multi-national research study exploring relationships with pets among children experiencing domestic violence recommends that professionals working with such children recognize the significance of the human-animal bond, the barrier that animal abuse poses to leaving abusive situations, and the power of pets to help build children's resilience.

Jane E.M. Callaghan and her colleagues at universities in Scotland, Italy and Greece interviewed 22 children aged 9 to 17

drawn from a larger study on how children cope with domestic violence. They uncovered five dominant themes in these children's lives:

- **Part of the family** explores how children position animals as relational beings who occupy an important place in their lives;
- **Caring for animals** considers children's reciprocal caring relationships;
- **Listening and support** details how children interact with animals to allow themselves to feel more heard and supported;
- **Control and abuse** considers children's experiences of perpetrators' use of companion animals as part of a pattern of abuse and control;
- **Disruption, uncertainty and loss** discusses how children feel and relate to their animals when leaving situations of domestic abuse.

"While children and young people can often experience animals as supportive and comforting, there is a more challenging aspect for children who experience domestic abuse," they write, citing several incidents depicting how both overt and oblique references to abuse of pets is a manipulative tool used to extend power and control over children.

"Our research adds weight to arguments that inadequate support for pets may act as a barrier to leaving and staying out of abusive relationships," they write, calling for greater inclusion of families' pets and animal-assisted therapies in domestic violence shelters. "Lack of institutional protection for pets can hence further victimize young and adult victims who care and worry about their pets left behind, especially if left with perpetrators," they write.

"There is clear value in recognizing the possible role of pets in recovery from domestic abuse, and professionals supporting children after domestic abuse should consider relationships with pets as one of the potential relational resources children have available," they advise. A child's bond with a pet "assumes an even greater importance as victims live in constant and intense stress and fear both before and after fleeing."

They encourage professionals working with these victims to begin including awareness of human-animal bonds in the family dynamics. Thinking about pets as part of the family encompasses broader and more complex and subtle emotional and relational issues



Jane E.M. Callaghan

"Our research adds weight to arguments that inadequate support for pets may act as a barrier to leaving and staying out of abusive relationships."

related to their relevance in children's lived experiences before and after fleeing domestic violence. "Our research has shown that children have strong relational bonds with their companion animals, who they see as an important source of emotional support, comfort and safety. This provides evidence to support the speculation that companion animals might play a role in building resilience."

They also describe pets as potentially embodying a positive model of caring for children, a chance to give and receive love and to develop trust. "Such trusting and unconditionally loving relationships can be lacking in the everyday life of children living with domestic abuse, and it is important that such bonds are maintained and supported when adult and child survivors leave abusive relationships."

-- [Callaghan, J.E.M., Fellin, L.C., Mavrou, S., Alexander, J.H., & Deligianni-Kouimtzi, et al. \(2023, November\). Part of the family: Children's experiences with their companion animals in the context of domestic violence and abuse. *Journal of Family Violence*. DOI:\[10.1007/s10896-023-00659-8\]\(#\)](#)

Childhood exposure to intimate partner violence has long been associated with serious psychological outcomes including increased odds of developing callous-unemotional traits and behaviors. Recent studies suggest that concomitant exposure to animal cruelty may increase this risk but that even under these circumstances, bonds with companion animals may still be a protective factor that buffers the adverse impact of IPV on child adjustment. Jennifer L. Murphy, an Assistant Professor of Social Work at the university of Texas at Arlington, and colleagues conducted a cross-sectional study of 204 children aged 7-12. They evaluated to what extent, children's exposure to IPV and their callous-unemotional and empathic-prosocial traits vary as a function of their positive engagement with pets and exposure to animal cruelty. When high levels of positive engagement with pets was present, IPV was negatively associated with callous-unemotional traits, but the reverse was true at low levels of positive engagement with pets. Evidence of moderation by animal cruelty was not supported. The study's findings suggest that children who form close relationships with their pets in the context of intimate partner violence appear to derive important support from these animals, and that safeguarding the well-being of these animals may be critical to children's long-term emotional health.



Jennifer L. Murphy

-- [Murphy, J. L., Voorhees, E., Van, O'Connor, K. E., Tomlinson, C. A., Matijczak, A., & Applebaum, J. W., et al. \(2022\). Positive engagement with pets buffers the impact of intimate partner violence on callous-unemotional traits in children. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37\(19–20\), <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211028301>.](#)



We Hate to Have to Ask...

... but we need your help to keep the LINK's news, trainings, information, and systems-changing strategies flowing freely. Together, we can drive sustainable change that protects animals, and their people and communities, from violence, abuse and neglect. Please [click here](#) to donate safely and securely.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Australian State Mulls Adding Animal Cruelty To Definition of Family Violence

Citing “The Link between violence towards animals and humans,” legislators in the Australian state of Victoria will support a motion put forward by Animal Justice party MP Georgie Purcell to investigate changing the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 to include an animal cruelty offense. Such a legislative change would bring Victoria into line with 12 U.S. states and the Australian state of New South Wales, which in 2020 made harming or threatening animals a form of intimidation under family violence legislation.



MP Georgie Purcell

The [Guardian Australia](#) reported that perpetrators of family violence use overt threats and actual harm to animals as a mechanism to attain and maintain control of their family.

In one Victorian study, 53% of family violence survivors said their partner had hurt or killed one of their pets. In its submission to the Victorian government’s royal commission into family violence, the RSPCA said in many cases animals were abused as a method of controlling partners while in the home, or they might be starved, abused or neglected when the victim fled.

The RSPCA said one in three women delay leaving situations of family violence due to concerns about leaving their beloved pets behind. This is exacerbated by the fact that most domestic violence refuges or crisis accommodation options will not house companion animals.



SAFE PETS SAFE FAMILIES

Jennifer Howard, who founded [Safe Pets Safe Family](#), which supports domestic violence victims with pets in South Australia, welcomed the government’s commitment to the proposal. “If we can’t get the animals out of the home at the same time, so many of our clients end up putting themselves at risk because they go back to the property,” Howard said.

“I’ve heard all sorts of horrible threats from clients saying their perpetrator will kill or hurt their animals if they don’t go back. It gives perpetrators a source of control against victims when animals are left behind,” Howard added.

“Usually for kids, animals are their first best friend, and if kids are in a family violence situation, I guarantee you those pets are by their side, huddled up and shaking.”

The proposal was included in a bill in the Victoria Parliament which would make non-fatal strangulation a stand-alone offense, an action described as the “reddest of red flags” by Attorney General Jaclyn Symes. She cited research that survivors of strangulation by a current or former partner are seven times more likely to be seriously injured or murdered by that partner. It is already an offense in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Queensland.

Homeless Shelter Celebrates First Anniversary

In addition to the nearly 300 domestic violence shelters that now accept pets, a small but growing number of shelters for the homeless — many of whom are domestic violence survivors — are also becoming pet-friendly. One of the newest is Breaking Bread, in the Philadelphia suburb of Upper Darby, which opened in December 2022. With 17 beds and a waitlist of 150 individuals, CEO Stephanie Sena told [WHYY News](#) she is hoping to expand the shelter in 2024. The interview featured two residents, Chuck Jones and his Labrador retriever “Midnight.”



Chuck Jones & “Midnight”

A Chronological History of Pet Protection Orders

Beginning in the 1990s, domestic violence shelters began raising awareness that significant numbers of abused women were being denied access to safety because shelters were not equipped to accept companion animals who could help the entire family heal together. This began a movement, called [SAF-T™](#), of assisting shelters with the logistical, legal and other obstacles to become pet-friendly. Today, some 300 shelters worldwide now accept pets.

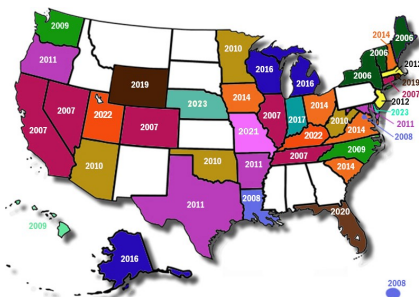


Susan Walsh

The next stage in this evolution was legislative, as domestic violence agencies came to realize that the threat of harm or the actual hurting and killing of animals was intimidating domestic violence victims from leaving their abusers. Traditional protection-from-abuse orders — which enjoined abusers from harming the petitioner’s “property” — did not specifically include companion or livestock animals which, while legally considered “property,” were rarely considered by the courts.

The issue received national awareness in April 2006 when the New York *Times* reported how Susan Walsh, a 50-year-old wife of a farmer in Ellsworth, Maine, testified before the Maine State Legislature. “It wasn’t just the cats and dogs,” she said. “It was the sheep and the chickens. I was terrified for their welfare. I knew if I were to leave, he wouldn’t hesitate to kill them. He had done it before.”

Maine quickly enacted what became the first law in the U.S., and possibly the world, allowing judges to specifically include animals in protection orders. Later in the summer of 2006, Vermont and New York followed suit. Seventeen years later, with the addition of Nebraska and Delaware in 2023, 40 states plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia have enacted similar provisions in what we call Pet Protection Orders (PPOs).



The National Link Coalition has its sights on the 10 remaining states in hopes that some of them will enact this simple, species-spanning legislation in 2024 and the coming years.

When Were PPO Laws Enacted?

- 2006:** Maine (April)
Vermont (May 22)
New York (August)
- 2007:** Colorado (May 7)
Nevada (May 15)
Tennessee (May 17)
Connecticut (May 31)
Illinois (Aug. 17)
California (Sept. 11)
- 2008:** Louisiana (June)
Puerto Rico (August)
District of Columbia (Dec. 5)
- 2009:** Washington (May 11)
Hawaii (June 26)
North Carolina (Aug. 5)
- 2010:** Oklahoma (April 16)
Arizona (May 7)
Minnesota (May 10)
West Virginia (May 13)
- 2011:** Arkansas (Mar. 31)
Texas (May 31)
Oregon (June 7)
Maryland (?????)
- 2012:** New Jersey (Jan. 17)
Massachusetts (Aug. 2)
- 2014:** Virginia (March 3)
Iowa (April 25)
South Carolina (June 6)
New Hampshire (July 21)
Ohio (December)
- 2016:** Wisconsin (March 1)
Michigan (May 3)
Alaska (Oct. 17)
- 2017:** Indiana (April 21)
- 2019:** Wyoming (March 8)
Rhode Island (June 28)
- 2020:** Florida (June 18)
- 2021:** Missouri (June 29)
- 2022:** Utah (March 22)
Kentucky (April 8)
- 2023:** Nebraska (June 6)
Delaware (June 27)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Love and Devotion – and a Journey to The Link

*There are many ways by which people discover not only the amazing healing power of companion animals but also the “dark side” of the human-animal bond: The Link between animal abuse and human violence. Kendra Coulter, a professor in management and organizational studies at Western University’s Huron University College in Ontario, author of *Defending Animals*; *Finding Hope on the Front Lines of Animal Protection*, and a member of the National Link Coalition’s Professional Advisory Committee, had the following op-ed published in the December 16 *Globe & Mail*. We thought we’d share her touching story with LINK -Letter readers:*

“In 2012, a young female German shepherd dog available for adoption caught my attention. It was the look in her eyes, in particular: They were soulful, yet uncertain. I learned from the rescuers that she had been badly abused. She had been beaten and deprived of both food and water; she had not been taken for walks or allowed to play with toys. When my spouse and I went to meet her, she instantly clung onto our other rescue dog, Buster, and cried like she was in a state of primal terror when we left at the end of the initial visit. Something about us, and Buster’s presence in particular, seemed to make her feel safe.

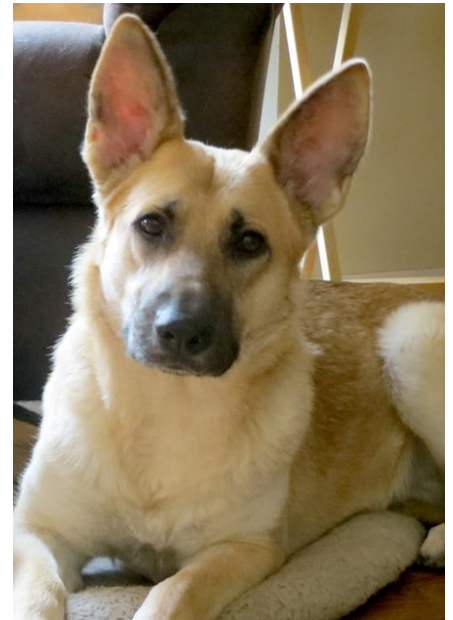
“We adopted her and named her Sunny.

“Sunny’s body healed more quickly than her mind. The trauma she experienced left permanent wounds, but she chose to display her fierce loyalty and mighty spirit, a profound demonstration of trust we committed to honoring every day. Her generosity, devotion and decision to embrace a life beyond fear inspired me to initiate a multi-dimensional process of discovery. I did not know that Sunny’s story would magnify largely unseen facets of people’s and animals’ shared pain.

“As an academic researcher, I had been studying the realities and ethics of human-animal work relationships, but I decided to begin analyzing animal protection specifically and in depth. Through years of interviews, field research and job shadowing with cruelty investigators and many other front-line workers, careful observation at conferences and training sessions, and analysis of policies, laws, legal cases, investments and statistics, I have learned more about illegal and perfectly legal animal cruelty than I ever would have dared to imagine.

“The bodies of abused animals provide evidence of what was done to them. Forensic veterinarians methodically study animals’ wounds and scars in search of answers. The behavior of abuse survivors provides other clues. We surmised that Sunny was beaten by a broad-shouldered man with a beard based on her reactions to similar individuals. And her stress responses when people argued loudly also suggested that she was not the only victim.

“Many people now know that serial killers and other perpetrators of mass violence may begin by harming animals before expanding to humans. This pattern reveals what is called the human-animal violence link, but the connections are even more widespread and destructive. People and animals are often abused simultaneously in the same home. Animal cruel-



ty and neglect can be a gateway or window that exposes many shapes and shades of suffering.

“University of Windsor researchers found that in a sample of Canadian domestic-violence shelters, 89% of women who had pets reported that the abuser had threatened to harm or actually hurt their animal, a pattern not unique to Canada. Many victims delay leaving or stay in abusive relationships out of fear for the safety of their animals. Animals are frequently abused in front of children and are used as pawns and proxies to control and terrorize human victims; our love for them can be weaponized so that the women stay, come back, or act in particular ways. At the same time, animals can provide life-saving motivation that helps people try to stay alive and get help – to become not only a victim, but a survivor.

“Empirical evidence and statistics are crucial for law enforcement, protective-services agencies and gender-based violence organizations, as well as policy makers. The numbers help demonstrate unequivocally that animal protection is not a distraction from people’s safety, but rather directly connected to it.

“Within Sunny’s story is another powerful truth. It was the woman in the family who took Sunny to the vet, repeatedly. It was the woman who ultimately surrendered Sunny to the rescue group. By combining this information with Sunny’s behavior and the facts of the human-animal violence link, I believe the woman was also being abused. She may not have been able to free herself, but she saved Sunny.

“It was Sunny’s story that inspired me to spend years not only researching but also writing about animal protection, including [a book](#). The first image inside its pages is a beautiful photo of Sun-

ny. She was always with me as I wrote, living proof of the compassion and solidarity that make animal protection possible and so meaningful.

“But this past October, one week after the book’s release – mere hours after the last launch event – we suddenly had to say goodbye to Sunny. She lived to see a major pinnacle of the work she ignited, and then she was gone – almost as if the larger purpose of her time on Earth had been achieved. Sun-

“I do not know where the woman whose courage freed Sunny is, or how she is doing; I never will. I hope she is safe and happy. A devastating truth is that many victims of abuse cannot save themselves or their animals, and this struggle – that burden – is not theirs alone. They need us all to keep working and caring, to see and hear them, to treat victims and survivors with dignity while also working to prevent harm before it happens. We are all responsible and connected by threads of vulnerability and strength.

“People and animals are often abused simultaneously in the same home. Animal cruelty and neglect can be a gateway or window that exposes many shapes and shades of suffering.”

ny will always be the soul of the book and an embodiment of the hope that is cultivated in the diverse landscapes of animal protection. This is not the end of her story, or of the promise of animal protection.

“This woman’s unheralded act of bravery and the diligent work of the rescuers made it possible for Sunny to have a life filled with joy: one that inspired me to use my skills and voice in the service of animals and animal defenders. We are linked not only by violence but also by the power of love. And that is immeasurable.”

Canada Enacts Extreme Risk Protection Orders Which Also Protect Pets

Following the trend in multiple jurisdictions seeking to enact “Extreme Risk Protection Order” provisions that would bar domestic violence offenders from gaining access to firearms — a particular risk for domestic violence victims — Canada’s Parliament received Royal Assent on Dec. 15 for [Bill C-21](#). The measure amends the Firearms Act to prevent individuals who are subject to a protection order or who have been convicted of domestic violence from obtaining a firearms license.



Canada’s Constitution includes threats or harm to another person’s animals within the definitions of acts of family violence. The new law also contains provisions to revoke an individual’s license if there is reasonable grounds to suspect that they engaged in an act of domestic violence or stalking or if they become subject to a protection order.

VETERINARY MEDCINE... and THE LINK

French Veterinarians, Legislators and Judges Considering Responses to Suspected Link Violence

While no French studies have correlated animal abuse and domestic violence, French veterinarians, judges and legislators are beginning to discuss their role when encountering suspected violence.



Anne-Claire Gagnon

French TV network [BFMTV](#) reported that Anne-Claire Gagnon, a veterinarian and founding president of the French Link coalition, Association contre la Maltraitance animale et Humaine ([AMAH](#)), is advocating that veterinarians should be trained in welcoming the voices of women and children, similar to the protocols put in place for human medical professions.

“When an animal arrives with burns or trauma, you have to systematically question, ‘How did it happen at home?’” she explained. Since 2021, a law aimed at combating “animal abuse and strengthening the Link between animals and men” allows veterinarians to lift professional secrecy in the event of suspicion of violence, in order to report to the prosecutor. Training veterinarians in intra-family violence will add “one more link in the protection chain around the family.”

This need for training was echoed by Judge Clement Bergère-Mestrinaro, president of the Justice Court of Sens. “Justice has made progress on domestic violence. Now we need to think in terms of intra-home violence, including that not exclusively directed against family members, and in this case, that which can be directed against animals.” Animal abuse may indicate all forms of violence that could be committed in a home, the judge said.

The judge also stressed the importance of prevention and how harming an animal can be a means of blackmail or reprisals to punish a spouse. “Someone who hits his dog could very well attack his wife and his children.” Bergère-Mestrinaro wants to allow family court judges to decide on the custody of animals, so victims do not feel compelled to remain because of threats or violence that may be carried out against the pet.



Clement Bergère-Mestrinaro



Arnaud Bazin

These Link initiatives are also supported by Senator Arnaud Bazin, a veterinary surgeon. The Member of Parliament wants to extend the conditions for triggering of orders to protect victims of domestic violence by including violence against pets as an additional indicator of a context of violence within the home.

Gagnon noted that other countries are far ahead of France regarding Link issues. “It’s been 25 years since Canada, England, the United States, or the Netherlands have been very aware of the issue of the Link. The fact is that there is only one violence,” she said. She intends to train her veterinary colleagues to detect domestic violence. In some cases, animal violence may even be considered “one of the symptoms of domestic violence or child abuse,” she argued.

“The identification of violence against animals must go hand in hand with the identification of domestic violence or abuse, in particular against children,” she concluded.

Veterinarians Urged to Respond to Online Child and Animal Sexual Abuse



While there is already a disturbing lack of knowledge among veterinary professionals regarding how to deal with suspected animal sexual abuse – especially when co-occurring with child sexual abuse – among family members, an even more pernicious form of child and animal sexual abuse perpetrated online poses even more dilemmas for the profession.

That's the conclusion of a commentary that describes a new form of child and animal sexual abuse which involves perpetrators who are unknown to the victims using technology to coerce children into sexual activity with animals. The article builds upon existing studies that reported that while 81% of veterinary professionals viewed animal sexual abuse knowledge as important, 88% believed they did not have adequate information on the topic.

Genevieve Bloxson and Gemma McKibbin, of the Department of Social Work at Australia's University of Melbourne, describe how perpetrators use social media sites to identify and communicate with vulnerable children. These perpetrators then provide children with links to unmoderated chat sites where the perpetrators portrays themselves to be under the age of 18. Children are manipulated to turn their webcams on, with the belief they are in a private conversation with a peer.

Perpetrators then share previously recorded videos of children undressing and engaging in sexual activity while sending messages that match what is happening in the video, cementing the illusion that the perpetrators are other children livestreaming. Next, the perpetrators request the victim to undress and engage in sexual activity, including coercing them with threats to engage sexually with their household pets. "The sadistic, strategic and intentional abusive actions by these perpetrators are a form of sextortion," they write.

The authors emphasize that pediatricians receive training to enhance their capacity to respond to child sexual abuse, but veterinarians receive insufficient professional development opportunities relating to child and animal sexual abuse.

"The sadistic, strategic and intentional abusive actions by these perpetrators are a form of sextortion."

They conclude that this type of child and animal sexual abuse warrants further research to generate early identification and assistance to help children and animals support their healing process. Further, they encourage further exploration of the role of multiagency work involving veterinary medical professionals, police and child protection to achieve the best outcomes for victim children and animals.

— Bloxson, G., & McKibbin, G. (2023). Perpetrators using technology to sexually exploit children and animals: An emerging form of sexual abuse. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 10:1285463. doi: 10.3389/fvets.2023.1285463



CRIMINAL JUSTICE... and THE LINK

Oregon Fully Funds Statewide Animal Cruelty Prosecutor



Jacob Kamins

Jacob Kamins, Oregon's Deputy District Attorney for animal cruelty cases, has been named the new Assistant Attorney General in the Oregon Department of Justice to assist statewide on animal cruelty investigations and prosecutions. The move makes Oregon the fourth state — joining Virginia, Georgia and Washington — to have a fully funded government prosecutor of animal cruelty.

In 2013, Oregon became the first state to create a statewide animal cruelty prosecution position. The position was a joint effort of the Animal Legal Defense Fund, the Oregon District Attorneys' Association, and the Benton County District Attorney's Office where Kamins was based. "Since

then, I've personally prosecuted hundreds of animal cruelty cases in 24 of Oregon's 36 counties, have assisted prosecutors, investigators, and animal rescuers on hundreds of other cases, and have trained thousands of investigators, attorneys, and animal rescuers on how to best approach these cases," Kamins tells *The LINK-Letter*.

Although the position has been a great success, the contractual and grant-funded nature always made it something that could disappear at any time. In 2023, Kamins was successful in helping to enact [SB 5506](#) which created the fully-funded state position ([See the September 2023 LINK-Letter](#)).

Kamins previously worked as a Deputy DA at the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office. He received his BA from Brandeis University, and his JD from Lewis & Clark Law School.

News from LINK Coalitions

South Korea Joins the National Link Coalition

The latest national animal protection organization to join the National Link Coalition is the [Korean Animal Welfare Association](#). Based in Seoul, KAWA is the largest nonprofit organization for animals in Korea. The association works to reduce the use of animals and to restrict the kinds of animals used by human beings. They advocate for the renovation of animal protection laws, encourage the rescue and adoption of abused animals, and conduct research and investigation of animal welfare issues.



Dr. Hye-Won Lee tells *The LINK-Letter* that, "We are very interested in preventing animal cruelty and domestic violence and we want to join the National Link Coalition. We hope that we can represent the Link Coalition in Korea and do a lot of work to prevent cruelty in Korea."

Over the years, several national animal welfare organizations have introduced a Link focus into their work. These include such organizations as Humane Canada (the Canadian federation of humane societies), the New Zealand SPCA, the Scottish SPCA, and the Association contre la Maltraitance Animale et Humaine (AMAH) in France. The National Link Coalition was initially formed as a program under the American Humane Association here in the U.S. Meanwhile, other nation-wide Link coalitions have emerged in Sweden, Italy, the U.K., Spain, Germany, and Australia.

The National Link Coalition has been encouraging animal welfare associations around the world that the most effective way to enact animal protection laws is to show legislators that animal abuse also hurts people, because legislators do not care for animals as much as they care about human safety. The results of our work in the U.S. have been dramatic and we are encouraging other countries to take this approach as well.

THE LINK... in the LITERATURE

Crimes Against Wildlife and Animal Hoarding Increasing in Brazil

A new study of the profiles of crimes against animals and offenders in Recife, Brazil is reporting that the number of such crimes has been increasing constantly and cites Link research about animal hoarding and the pathology of veterinary forensics. 326 incidents were evaluated and the variables analyzed included cases per year, municipality, and registered reports per species/category involved, the type of infraction, gender and age group of the offenders, and occurrences by neighborhood in the city of Recife. Offenders were predominantly found to be men aged 20-59 years. The incidents were related to mistreatment, with wild birds being the main victims. Based on the data obtained, the researchers emphasize that attention should be drawn to the need for discussion and action aimed at environmental education and animal protection, as well as the strategic guidance of police actions.

-- Monteiro, L.M. Farias Filho, A.V.M., Silva, A.P., Barretto, M.L.M., & Oliveira, A.A.F. (2023). Panorama dos crimes contra a fauna na Região Metropolitana do Recife-PE, Brasil. [Portuguese] (Overview of crimes against wildlife in the Metropolitan Region of Recife-PE, Brazil.) *Revista Brasileira de Criminalística*, 12(5), 39-46.

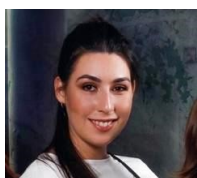
Purina Research Grant to Explore The Link

[Purina has announced](#) that it has selected four scientists who will each receive a \$30,000 grant through its bi-annual Purina Sponsorship for Humane-Animal Bond Studies. The grants, which will further expand research into the human-animal bond, includes one grant with a particular Link focus.

Magdalena Żebrowska, MSc, PhD, from the Medical University of Vienna, Austria will use the grant to study “Attachment to Pets Among Women with a History of Childhood Abuse.” The study will examine the attachment that middle-to-older age women with a history of child abuse have to pets to better understand if the attachment acts as a buffer to protect survivors of child abuse from psychological and social disorders. She hopes this study will shed light on the crucial role of pet attachment on the well-being of survivors.



Magdalena Żebrowska



Link One of Six Themes Driving Facebook Criticism of Animal Welfare Law Enforcement

The recognition of the risk that animal cruelty offenders would be violent in the future toward humans or other animals was one of six major themes that emerged in an Australian content analysis of social media discourse and how these themes impact community expectations for animal welfare law enforcement. A content analysis of 1,723 Facebook posts and comments found that 10.4% of postings focused on “offenders are a danger to society” and “the Link between animal and human violence.” Both of these subthemes focused on a future risk to people, with statements like “future serial killers” and “they will move on to humans next” expressing an urgency to act now to prevent further cruelty escalating to humans. The six themes, all of which were scathing of the legal system with a particular focus on failings of the animal welfare law justice system, also included: failure of the court system; failure of the legislation; failure of the government; mistrust of the media; and emotive reactions. Noting that the overwhelming disparagement of animal law enforcement was not directed at any one particular area but rather considered the entire system to be “broken,” Rochelle Morton and colleagues at the University of Adelaide concluded that the influence of this type of social media discourse could be a contributing factor to elevated community expectations around animal welfare law enforcement.

— Morton, R., Ngai, K., & Whittaker, A.L. (2023). “Commenting” on animal cruelty: A content analysis of social media discourse on animal law enforcement in Australia. *Anthrozoös*, 36(4), 685-702.

THE MILITARY... and THE LINK

Military Families Have Increased Risk for Link Violence

With studies reporting that a woman in the U.S. military is more likely to be killed by a fellow soldier than to die in combat, and with numerous surveys reporting high incidence of female veterans having been sexually assaulted, the Department of Defense launched a series of initiatives addressing the issue. These include establishing Family Advocacy Programs on military installations to connect service members with victim advocates or get help with child or domestic abuse issues; and moving the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault away from the victims' unit commanders, who may have been the perpetrators, to independent prosecutors outside the victims' chain of command.

But these innovations — like so many others in human services and victim advocacy — neglected to include the risk of animal abuse and its Link to other forms of family violence. The Link, so prevalent in civilian families, can have additional complications in military households.

These are the premises behind the first of a two-part series in the Latham Foundation's Fall 2023 Latham Letter. National Link Coalition President & Secretary Phil Arkow describes how unique factors in military life make female spouses of service members, in particular, are more isolated and potential "soft targets" for family violence:

- There's a reason spouses are called "dependents": they literally depend on the male service member for housing, health care, insurance and money.
- Frequent relocations make establishing long-term social connections difficult.
- Most intimate partner violence offenders tend to be young men, who are disproportionately over-represented in the military population.
- Many spouses are reluctant to report sexual assaults for fear it will impact the service member's rank, pay and retirement benefits.
- Military brides from other countries may have lan-



guage and cultural barriers that inhibit their willingness to report abuse.

- Military personnel have access to large numbers of military and personal firearms.

PETS IN THE MILITARY

Only a handful of studies have examined the significance of the human-animal bond among military families. Although some of these studies are 30 and 40 years old, they demonstrate that military families' relationships with their companion animals mirror those in the civilian population:

- 93% of military personnel had pets when they were growing up.
- 99% felt their children should have pets.
- 66% visit a veterinarian at least twice a year.
- 34% celebrate their pets' birthdays.
- 72% of families take their pets with them when transferring to a stateside base; 49% do when shipping overseas.
- Pets provide particular emotional support and comfort when the active service member is deployed away from home.
- 96% of families experienced temporary or chronic sadness when forced to leave a pet behind during a relocation.

Meanwhile, not surprisingly, military families experience higher rates of exposure to trauma, physician and sexual abuse, and PTSD than their civilian counterparts. But military and civilian families have similar experiences in reacting to the loss of a special pet, being hurt or frightened by an animal, witnessing or perpetrating violence against animals, and having sexual interactions with animals, he writes.

Part 2 of the series will examine how the military has been responding to these dynamics.

- Arkow, P. (2023). *The Link in military families: Part I: Increased risks of human and animal abuse in military households. The Latham Letter, 44(4), 11-13.*

“Pets offer companionship, an outlet for affection, security, and constancy for families. It is reasonable to suspect that these attributes become intensified when the military service member must leave the spouse for extended periods.”

ANIMAL HOARDING... and THE LINK

New Mexico Animal Hoarding Cases Also Impact Human Well-Being



**ANIMAL
PROTECTION
NEW MEXICO**

Noting that “animal hoarding is often the manifestation of a longstanding psychological problem, and evidence has shown a low potential for rehabilitation,” Animal Protection New Mexico has published a [blog](#) that advises its readers to report suspected cases of animal hoarding to appropriate authorities and to be wary of hoarders posing as a rescue group. “Individuals suffering from Hoarding Disorder are often in denial and fail to grasp the suffering they are causing and that conditions are not just bad for the animals; they are bad for the people involved too,” they wrote.

“Animal hoarding is a huge problem in New Mexico and nationwide, with suspected hoarders living in nearly every community,” they wrote, citing over 100 calls about animal hoarding coming to the APNM Cruelty Hotline since 2015. Many cases did not result in investigations and fewer still resulted in prosecutions and convictions.


The blog describes the underlying issues that prompt individuals to hoard animals and how “the negative impacts of hoarding not only affect the animals, but also any of the humans who reside in the building or household.” It describes the enormous amounts of time and money involved with attempting to resolve these cases and a years-long investigation of a woman who allegedly operated two animal “sanctuaries” that exemplified the horrid conditions typical of animal hoarding.


“Animal hoarding is often the manifestation of a longstanding psychological problem, and evidence has shown a low potential for rehabilitation.”


LEGISLATION... and THE LINK


Legislative Successes in 2023

Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders


 **Colorado HB 23-1107** will continue to allocate annual funding indefinitely to the state domestic violence and sexual assault services fund for governmental and non-profit agency programs that provide services for crime victims, including attending to the needs of companion animals. (The fund was set to expire in 2027.)


 **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 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.


 **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.


 **Nebraska LB 157** allows victims to file for protection orders that allow courts to direct the care, custody and control of pets and enjoin the respondent from coming into contact with, harming or killing pets.


Psychological Evaluation and Therapeutic Interventions for Offenders


 **California AB 829, the Animal Cruelty and Violence Intervention Act** expands required counseling for violations under Penal Code section 597 to several other animal abuse crimes, such as malicious violence, willful poisoning and bestiality. It also requires 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.

 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," **Tennessee SB 183** requires juveniles who commit aggravated animal cruelty under certain circumstances to receive mental health evaluation and treatment.


 **New York S 5935** orders 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 will 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.


 **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."


 **British Columbia Bill 17** amends 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 in a divorce settlement.

 **Canada Bill C-21** amends 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 received Royal Assent on Dec. 15.

Animal Sexual Abuse

 **Connecticut HB 6714** defines "sexual contact with an animal" and a new crime of "sexual assault of an animal" including creating or distributing photographic images of animal sexual contact. Law enforcement and animal control officers can seize any victimized animal for veterinary examination and treatment. Offenders can be barred from having any contact with animals for 5 years.

 **Maryland SB 54 and HB 131** eliminated the archaic terminology of "unnatural or perverted sexual practice" referring to oral sex with animals or other persons.

 **New Mexico SB 215, the Animal Sexual Abuse Act,** made the Land of Enchantment the 49th state to outlaw sex with animals. It established crimes of bestiality and aggravated bestiality, with felony-level penalties upon conviction. Persons convicted will be registered as sex offenders, will be banned from keeping or caring for animals, and may be ordered to submit to psychological assessment and counseling.

Animal Abuse and Other Crimes



Oregon SB 5506 appropriated \$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.

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.



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 LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES — 2024

Biennial legislative sessions in several states extend into 2024, and other states allow bills for the 2024 session to be pre-filed. As we await what we anticipate will be dozens of Link-themed bills to be introduced in the 2024 state legislative sessions, the following list includes proposals which are still in the works and new measures that have been pre-filed. The bills are color-coded as follows:

- Purple bills affect domestic violence and pet protection orders
- Dark blue bills affect child abuse and maltreatment
- Grey bills affect abuse of the elderly and disabled
- Pink bills affect animal sexual abuse
- Green bills affect cross-reporting among animal care & control, veterinary and human services professionals
- Orange bills affect court-appointed advocates for animals
- Red bills affect animal hoarding
- Brown bills affect psychological assessments, interventions and treatments for animal cruelty offenders
- Light blue bills affect animal abuse Linked with other crimes

Please join us in following their progress and alert us to any additional bills we may have missed!

Note: Inclusion of a bill in this list does not necessarily imply our endorsement of the measure or its specific language, but we include these to demonstrate the breadth of proposals and the increased interest by legislators for laws addressing The Link between animal abuse and other crimes and acts of interpersonal violence.

LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

USA—FEDERAL BILLS

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 2019 federal PAWS Act – 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.

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.

ARIZONA

NEW! HB 2076 would expand existing definitions of acts of animal cruelty that also constitute acts of domestic violence to include intentionally or knowingly subjecting a domestic animal to cruel mistreatment or killing it.

CALIFORNIA

NEW! 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.

FLORIDA

NEW! HB 45 and SB 86 would require the Office of the State Courts Administrator to issue free wallet-sized laminated "Hope Cards" to petitioners who have been granted a final order of protection. Hope Cards will contain information about the respondent and any other individuals or companion animals covered under the protection order. The bills are in the House Judiciary, Civil Justice and Justice Appropriations Committees and the Senate Judiciary, Fiscal Policy and Appropriations Committee on Criminal and Civil Justice.

NEW! HB 297 and SB 272 would authorize courts to order attorneys or law school students to be appointed in the interests of justice for criminal proceedings regarding dogs' or cats' welfare. The bills are in the Criminal Justice and Judiciary Committees.

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.

H.4115 would add "coercive control," including committing or threatening to commit cruelty to animals connected to a family or household member, to the definition of abuse. The bill is in the House Committee on Ways and Means.

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.

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.

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.

MINNESOTA

NEW! 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.

NEW! 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.

NEW JERSEY

A4229 and S 1789 would expand the statutory definitions of domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and abuse of persons with a disability to include acts of animal cruelty against those persons' animals. They also 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.

A 1965 and 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.

A 4936 would allow 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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

A 1276 and S 7812 “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 bills are in the Assembly Children & Families and Senate Rules Committees.

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.

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.

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 shel-

ters and veterinarians for costs of care and treatment. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

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.

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.

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.

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.

A 3346-A and S 3170-A, “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.

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.

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.

A 433, A 1507 and S 294 (“Buster’s Law”) would prohibit animal cruelty offenders from owning pets unless the offender demonstrates through psychological or psychiatric testing that he or she clearly and convincingly demonstrates the ability to care for the animal in a humane manner and then is specifically authorized to possess animals by a court order. The bills are in the Assembly and Senate Agriculture Committees.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

SB 55 would order courts determining child custody to consider a party’s conviction for sexual intercourse with an animal, cruelty or aggravated cruelty to an animal, animal fighting, or possession of animal fighting paraphernalia. The bill would also permit the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts to develop and implement an ongoing education and training program for court officials on “all aspects of the maltreatment of children,” including the impact of child abuse and domestic violence – but not exposure to animal cruelty. The bill cites a duty to protect all children and defines domestic abuse as a pattern of abuse that can include abuse of a partner, spouse, child or pet. The bill passed the Senate on Dec. 13.

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

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

For Additional Information

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

Join Us In Our Mission!

If you would like to join us in our education and advocacy to promote greater legislative, public and professional 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 Training Calendar

More and more organizations are recognizing the value of training their staffs, multi-disciplinary groups, and the general public that preventing and responding to animal abuse can prevent other forms of family and community violence.

Here are some of the many training opportunities coming up — both in-person and virtual — in coming months. Click on the underlined hyperlinks for specific details and registration information.

If you're conducting a Link training, please let us know at least a month in advance so we can include it in the Calendar. And if you're looking for a speaker, please contact us so we can refer someone to you from our Speakers' Bureau.

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Jan. 16 – Kansas City, Mo. (online): Besty BnB will host a [webinar](#), “Safety Planning with Survivors of Domestic Violence and their Pets.”

Jan. 17 (online): Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

Jan. 17 – New Castle, Del. (online): Phil Arkow will conduct a Link training for the [Delaware State Office of Animal Welfare](#).

Jan. 18 –Phoenix, Ariz.: A breakout session on “Skills: Identifying and Presenting Links between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse” will be featured at the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys’ [5th National Domestic Violence Prosecution Conference](#).

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

Jan. 24 – New Castle, Del. (online): Phil Arkow will conduct a Link training for the [Delaware State Office of Animal Welfare](#).

Feb. 20 – Alexandria, Va. (online): Phil Arkow will present “Connecting the Dots in Preventing Domestic Violence: Animal Abuse’s LINK with Family Violence in Military and Civilian Families” for the [National Organization for Victim Assistance](#).

Feb. 20 – Kansas City, Mo. (online): Besty BnB will host a [webinar](#), “Pets and People: Safe, Together Connected.”

Feb. 21 (online): Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

Feb. 24 – Orlando, Fla.: Claire Coughlin of the Animal Welfare Institute will present “Animal Cruelty and Interpersonal Violence: Protecting People and their Pets” at the Florida Animal Protection & Advocacy Association’s [Educational Conference](#).

Feb. 28 – Pittsburgh, Pa. (online): Phil Arkow will present a [webinar](#), “Safer Together: Cross-Reporting for Humane and Human Services” for Pennsylvania’s Keystone Link Coalition and the Crisis Center North.

March 1 – Indianapolis, Ind. (online): Phil Arkow will present “Nine Career Opportunities Where Pet-Inclusive Social Work Can Improve Delivery of Services” at the Indiana University School of Social Work’s [Alumni Conference](#).

March 18-22 – Woodbine, Md.: “The Relationship of Animal Abuse and Family Violence” will be included in the 40-hour National Animal Cruelty Investigations training curriculum for [Level 3 Expert Animal Cruelty Investigators](#) offered by the University of Missouri Extension’s Law Enforcement Training Institute.

March 20 (online): Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

March 25 – 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 26-28 (online): My Dog is My Home will hold its 2024 [Co-Sheltering Conference](#).

March 28 (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 17 (online): Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

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

April 24 – Pittsburgh, Pa. (online): A webinar for Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) and the Crisis Center North will address The Link between animal abuse and child maltreatment.



April 29 – May 3 – Springfield, Mo.: “The Relationship of Animal Abuse and Family Violence” will be included in the 40-hour National Animal Cruelty Investigations training curriculum for [Level 3 Expert Animal Cruelty Investigators](#) offered by the University of Missouri Extension’s Law Enforcement Training Institute.

May 9 – New York City, N.Y.: The Urban Resource Institute will celebrate the [10th anniversary](#) of its People and Animals Living Safely (PALS) co-sheltering program.

May 15 (online): Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

May 17-18 – San Antonio, Texas: Dillon Dodson will present “Social Work’s Role in Preserving the Human-Animal Bond: From Animal Sheltering to Prevention and Early Intervention,” and Zoë Agnew-Svoboda will present “The BestyBnB Blueprint: Bridging the Gap between Animal Welfare and Social Services,” at the [HSUS Animal Care Expo](#).

June 3-7 – Concord, N.C.: “The Relationship of Animal Abuse and Family Violence” will be included in the 40-hour National Animal Cruelty Investigations training curriculum for [Level 3 Expert Animal Cruelty Investigators](#) offered by the University of Missouri Extension’s Law Enforcement Training Institute.

June 19 (online): Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

July 16 – (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](#).

July 17 (online): Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

Aug. 21 (online): Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

Sept. 13-14 – Cleveland, Ohio: The 8th [International Veterinary Social Work Summit](#) will be held.

Sept. 16-20 – Madison, Wis.: “The Relationship of Animal Abuse to Domestic Abuse” will be presented as part of the [Wisconsin Humane Officer training program](#) offered by the University of Missouri Extension’s Law Enforcement Training Institute’s National Animal Cruelty Investigations training curriculum.

Sept. 18 (online): Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

Sept. 23 – Pittsburgh, Pa. (online): A webinar for Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) and the Crisis Center North will address The Link between animal abuse and elder abuse.

Oct. 16 (online): Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

Nov. 19 – (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](#).

Nov. 20 (online): Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

Dec. 18 (online): Pennsylvania's [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

THE LINK... in the NEWS



Florida Man Charged with Child and Animal Pornography

A 21-year-old Palatka, Fla. man was arrested on charges of possession of child pornography, pornography with animals, and using a two-way

Douglas Bailey communication device during commission of a felony. The [Putnam County Sheriff's Office](#) reported that Douglas Xavier Bailey was charged after detectives were alerted to Bailey allegedly downloading child pornography through a cyber tip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The cyber tip was initiated after reported images of child sexual abuse material was uploaded through Twitter and other social media accounts. Detectives, a Homeland Security agent, and the Northeast Florida INTERCEPT Task Force reportedly discovered downloaded videos of sexual acts involving animals and children on his cellphone. Bailey was being held on a \$250,000 bond. "From the beginning he focused on children, but then he got pleasure searching for more depraved videos. This easily could have escalated further to him attempting to do harm to a child in our community. This is exactly why I take all of these crimes seriously," said Sheriff H.D. "Gator" DeLoach.

Pedophile Gets 14 Years for Soliciting Teen for Child/Animal Sexual Abuse



A British pedophile who blackmailed an American teenager to act as his sex slave and perform sex acts on a dog was sentenced to 14 years in prison. Trevor Fernandes, 37, of Swindon, Wiltshire, demanded the girl perform sexual acts on herself, a

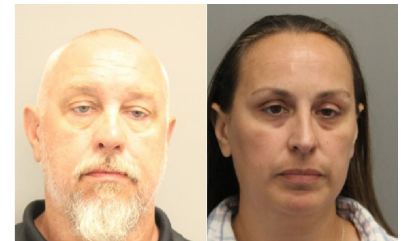
Trevor Fernandes newborn baby and on her pet dog. Fernandes made her call him "master" or "master Trevor" and threatened to share intimate images with her contacts unless she complied with his every demand. The [Swindon Advertiser](#) said the girl, aged 13, told police in Texas that Trevor had got her to send him nude photos of herself and threatened to send them to people she knew if she didn't do what he said. After sending photos of herself in revealing underwear, Trevor reportedly said, "That's hot, but go get your dog."

Two N.J. Men Charged in Dogfighting Operation

Two men from southern N.J. were charged by federal authorities for alleged violations of the Animal Welfare Act for fighting, training, transporting, and possessing pitbull-type dogs over a two year period. Tommy J. "Snakes" Watson, 43, of Clayton, and Johnny Lee Nelson, 34, of Bridgeton, were charged for reportedly running a dogfighting venture called "From Da Bottom Kennels." [NJ.com](#) reported that they were charged with transmitting videos of live dogfights and of killing underperforming fighting dogs, including by hanging. Watson was also charged with possession of ammunition by a convicted felon.

Delaware Couple Charged with Cockfighting

Emphasizing in a [press release](#) that "animal fighting is often linked to other crimes such as weapons, drugs and human violence," the



Billy and Andrea Keen

Delaware Office of Animal Services announced that Billy Keen, 51, and Andrea Keen, 43, of Felton were arrested on felony charges of possessing animals for fighting. Animal Services allegedly observed a cockfight taking place on their property with a crowd of people in attendance.



What is The LINK?

Legislation...

Intervention...

Networking...

Knowledge...

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

Daughter Charged with Neglect of Mother in Animal Hoarding Case

A Polk County, Fla. woman was arrested on 309 counts of animal cruelty and neglect and one count of neglecting an elder for keeping her 75-year-old mother in a home where 164 birds, 142 cats and three dogs were seized in what officials said were “lethal” levels of ammonia. While conducting a welfare check, the [Polk County Sheriff’s Office](#) took Lisa Lacharite, 48, of Frostproof, into custody and removed her mother after Polk County Fire Rescue’s ammonia reader registered ammonia samples ranging from 70—100 parts per million; anything over 50 ppm is considered hazardous to health. The animals included multiple chickens, ducks, geese, and a peacock. Feces were found on floors throughout the home. Polk County Animal Control took the animals and will be working to find homes for them.



You Can Help Us Create Safer Communities!

The National Link Coalition is the only international education and advocacy organization working to prevent animal cruelty, domestic violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse by showing how they are Linked. As the resource center on The Link between animal cruelty and human violence we train multidisciplinary professionals, showcase programs, and publicize legislation and 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.

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Join us!



NationalLinkCoalition.org



arkowpets@snip.net

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Adjunct Faculty, Animal-Assisted Therapy & Activities, Harcum College
Etowah, N. Car.

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Maya Gupta, Ph.D. (Alternate)

Senior Director of Research,
ASPCA Department of Strategy & Research
Woodstock, Ga.

Joey Orduna Hastings

CEO, National Council of Juvenile & Family
Court Judges
Reno, Nev.

Helen Holmquist-Johnson, MSW, Ph.D.

Director, Human-Animal Bond in Colorado
(HABIC)
Colo. State Univ. School of Social Work
Ft. Collins, Colo.

Kendall Houlihan, DVM

Assistant Director, Animal Welfare Division
American Veterinary Medical Association
Schaumburg, Ill.

Ann Laatsch, J.D.

Justice System Coordinator
National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life
Milwaukee, Wis.

Emily Patterson-Kane, Ph.D.

Director, Research
ASPCA Department of Strategy & Research
Chicago, Ill.

Allie Phillips, J.D.

Director, Sheltering Animals and Families
Together (SAF-T)
Lansing, Mich.

Gale Rasin, J.D.

Retired Associate Judge,
Baltimore City Circuit Court,
Chestertown, Md.

The Hon. John J. Romero, Jr.

Retired District Judge, Children's Court Division
2nd Judicial District, Albuquerque, N. Mex.

Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM

President, Forensic Veterinary Investigations, LLC
Interim Director, Div. of Animal Care & Control
Boston, Mass.

John Thompson

Executive V.P., Small & Rural Law Enforcement
Executives Association
Alexandria, Va.

Kathleen Wood, J.D.

Staff Attorney, Criminal Justice Program
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Portland, Ore.