



A monthly report of news from
**THE GLOBAL RESOURCE CENTER ON THE LINK BETWEEN
ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE**

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Federal Tax ID: 92-2607909.
Donations are tax deductible as
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Explore Our New Format for Legislative News

With this issue of *The LINK-Letter* we introduce a new, more user-friendly way for you to keep track of the dozens of bills introduced each year into state, federal and Canadian legislatures. In past issues we segmented these bills by their Link topic: domestic violence, child maltreatment, elder abuse, etc. This made it easy for advocates focusing on any one type of legislation, but created unwieldy lists for readers seeking to learn what is going on in their particular state.

So we're now listing bills by state, which should make it easier for you to learn about what's most relevant to you. We're still color-coding the bills to further delineate what each bill's primary focus is. And we've highlighted which bills are newly introduced. You'll find a key to the color-coding at the start of the legislation list beginning on Page 14.

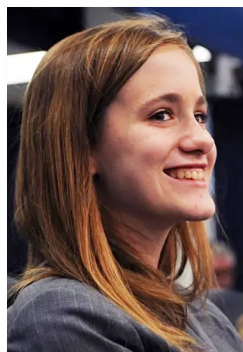


About the National Link Coalition

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 global resource center on The Link between animal cruelty and human violence — with readers in 55 countries — 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



Kiera Dunk

Teen Prompts Legislators to Introduce Cross-Reporting Bill

Two bills being introduced in the Kentucky Legislature that would require animal control officers to receive training on child abuse, and to report suspected cases, have a tragic history based on The Link.

SB 106 and HB 253, to be known as “Kyan’s Law,” came about as a result of a tragic Link case. In 2021, Kaitlyn Higgins, 28, was arrested and charged with murdering her son, Kyan, aged 10. Because animal abuse can be an indicator of a future crime, Joye Keeley, a former lieutenant in the Louisville Metro Police Department, filed an open records request with Louisville Metro Animal Services.

Keeley found that Animal Services had responded to complaints against Kyan’s mother more than 20 times.

In her law enforcement role, Keeley investigated child abuse and domestic violence and sometimes found them co-occurring with animal abuse, she told [WDRB-TV](#). “The reason that they do co-occur, is because of the abusive nature of the perpetrator. That’s the link that links it all together.”

Keeley went on to found the Kentucky Link Coalition, but the story doesn’t end there.

Kyan’s story inspired Kiera Dunk, a high school freshman in Oldham County, Ky., to approach lawmakers in Frank-

fort about a bill. It would require evidence-informed trainings on child abuse and neglect recognition for animal control officers. Those who know or have reasonable cause to believe that a child is neglected or abused would file a report.

“I’m hoping that it will help children get out of that situation before abuse can occur,” Dunk said.

Louisville already has a local ordinance requiring all police and animal control officers to be trained on The Link between animal and human abuse ([See the December 2021 LINK-Letter](#)). The director of Oldham County Animal Control said the introduction of mandated training would be a positive game-changer.

“I admire her ingenuity, her passion,” Keeley said of Dunk, who had earlier built a reputation as a legislative advocate for children. Even though she’s not old enough to vote, in 2022 she helped produce “[Kami’s Law](#),” which made criminal abuse against a child under 12 years old a Class B felony.

Dunk hopes other children and teens will continue to approach lawmakers in trying to make a difference. “I say it’s very important to have a voice in the government,” Dunk said. “If you’re passionate about something, try and make changes.”

“It’s very important to have a voice in the government. If you’re passionate about something, try and make changes.”

Are Humane Officers Mandated to Report Suspected Child Abuse?

An interesting question was posed to us by a local humane society. We thought we'd toss it out to all our animal control officers, humane investigators, prosecutors, and judges to get your insights. Here goes:

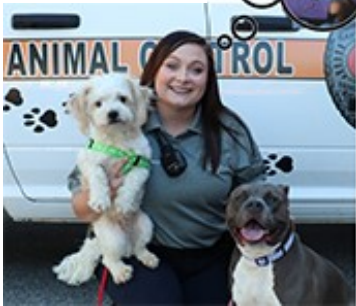
The shelter is one of several humane societies in its state that have long had government powers to serve as animal cruelty and control law enforcement. Its Humane Enforcement Officers are part of the Police Department but are employees of the Humane Society. They can issue citations, carry handcuffs and make arrests. But do they have to report suspected child abuse to either the local police or the Department of Human Services?

The state statute mandating child abuse reporting reads:

"Employees or officers of any law enforcement agency, including but not limited to the courts, police departments, department of law enforcement, correctional institutions, and parole or probation offices" who "in their professional or official capacity, have reason to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred or that there exists a substantial risk that child abuse or neglect may occur in the reasonably foreseeable future, shall immediately report the matter orally."

But what about elsewhere? Are contracted animal care and control services the same as staff members when it comes to responsibilities for reporting child abuse?

In many states, it's moot: either everyone is a mandated reporter, or animal control officers are explicitly named as mandated reporters. ACOs in Virginia, for example, must receive training on recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse.



But what about officers employed by a humane society or SPCA? According to our National Directory of Abuse Investigation Agencies, 626 humane groups have such authority, usually because either:

- (a) the humane society/SPCA has a long, respected history of animal cruelty investigatory work;
- (b) these investigations require a specialized team;
- (c) law enforcement may not consider animal welfare its priority; or
- (d) it may be more cost-effective to contract these services out to a nonprofit than to conduct this work internally.

What about city or county animal control officers who can handle stray animal calls but not criminal investigations? What about animal control officers who work for health departments, code enforcement, public works, or even the fire department (yes, that exists!)

Humane and animal control officers have unique access to homes where they may observe children whose welfare is questionable. As Link awareness prompts calls for cross-reporting between humane and human services, we can all use more clarity regarding this grey area of mandated reporting.

We'd love to know whether this question has ever been raised in your jurisdiction. Please let us know your thoughts by emailing us at arkowpets@snip.net.

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS MANDATED TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE

California
Colorado
Connecticut
D.C.
Florida
Illinois
Maine
Massachusetts
Ohio
Oregon
Virginia
West Virginia

EVERYONE MANDATED TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE

Delaware	New Jersey
Florida	New Mexico
Idaho	N. Carolina
Indiana	Oklahoma
Kentucky	Rhode Island
Maryland	Tennessee
Mississippi	Texas
Nebraska	Utah
New Hampshire	Wyoming

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Link Training and Professional Development Available “Down Under”

Two university professors from “Down Under” with extensive Link publications have launched a new initiative to provide customized training and professional development courses addressing the needs of people and animals experiencing domestic and family violence.

Heather Fraser, Associate Professor of Social Work at Queensland University of Technology in Australia, and Nik Taylor, Professor of Sociology, Anthropology and Human Services at New Zealand’s University of Canterbury, are offering

[“Human and Companion Animal Experiences of Domestic/Family Violence.”](#) The training and professional development courses are designed to meet the needs of social/human services, animal welfare and rights organizations, and law enforcement.

Human & companion animal experiences of domestic/family violence

Prof Nik Taylor, University of Canterbury, Aotearoa New Zealand
A/Prof Heather Fraser, QUT Australia



Website Allows Survivors to Share Animal/Domestic Violence Stories



A new British-based website, [Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse \(SAHSDA\)](#) is raising awareness of the use of companion animals as a tactic of coercive control and animal sexual abuse. The group is committed to challenging and changing social and cultural norms which accept and perpetuate domestic abuse, including coercive control, and cruelty and neglect of animals. It aims to provide support and encourage professionals from all sectors and disciplines to be professionally curious, recognize the signs of abuse against animals and humans and understand their roles and responsibilities to safeguard and protect all survivors of abuse, regardless of species. The website features a space where survivors can upload their personal stories were used within a domestic violence context.

Outstanding Pet Shelter Programs to be Honored at Purple Ribbon Awards

Domestic violence shelters with pet co-housing programs are among 42 categories that will be honored in the 4th Annual Purple Ribbon Awards, presented by DomesticShelters.org and Alliance for Hope to honor heroes in the domestic violence movement.

Winning entries will receive grants totaling up to \$30,000. The program honors advocates, shelters, survivors, and members of the community support system.



[Nominations for the awards](#) will close at 3:59 pm EST on Feb. 29. The Outstanding Pet Program will recognize the most innovative and impactful pet sheltering programs.

The 42 categories also include the most innovative service, interdisciplinary team, outstanding partners in a collaborative, urban and rural initiatives, and training programs, as well as recognition for the most outstanding survivor, volunteer, team member, board member, advocate, judge, and first responder of the year.

“Why Doesn’t She Just Leave?” **Fear for Pets’ Welfare a Top Concern**

At least as far back as 2014, DomesticShelters.org (now a program of Alliance for HOPE International) was citing fear of what might happen to the family’s pets among the numerous factors that compound domestic violence survivors’ dilemmas and make it difficult for them to answer the question, “Why doesn’t she just leave?”

In an article published originally on Sept. 3, 2014, the organization noted that separating from an abuser is often much more complicated than anyone—especially the survivor—realizes until they’re in the thick of it. The primary concern is the threat of homicide, with multiple studies indicating that leaving is the most dangerous time for a woman. It’s the time when she’s most likely to be killed. When an abuser feels he has lost control over his victim, he often uses violence as a way to coerce his partner to return, or as a form of retaliation for her leaving.

The organization’s survey of survivors reported that the number one barrier survivors face was threats from their abuser, followed closely by fear of retaliation against them, their children, or their pets.

The article quoted Anna Marjavi, now a Director for Health Partners on IPV and Exploitation at [Futures Without Violence](#), who noted that an abusive partner may threaten to harm the children, a survivor’s extended family or pets if the woman leaves. Some abusive partners will kill a family pet as a warning to prove the seriousness of their threats. “This is why it’s important for women to work with an advocate so they can leave in the safest way possible,” said Marjavi.



Anna Marjavi

Other barriers to leaving include the survivor’s being financially dependent on the abuser and unable to support herself on her own, and her belief that despite the abuse she truly loves him.

50 Ways to NOT Leave Your Lover

In some domestic violence circles, there is still limited awareness of the emotional attachments that domestic violence survivors and their children have toward the family pets, and how abusers target this point of vulnerability to threaten, hurt or kill the animals if the survivors think about leaving. Sarah Buel, now a retired law professor from Arizona State University and the University of Texas and a domestic violence survivor, compiled a [list of 50 reasons](#) why she’s seen survivors stay with their abusers. Unfortunately, her list omitted the Link issue of threats to pets:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Lack of an advocate. | Low self-esteem. |
| Abuser’s influence. | Love. |
| Threats to victim and children. | Mediation. |
| Children’s best interest. | Health issues. |
| Pressure from children. | Mental illness. |
| Cultural and racial defenses. | Mentally disabled. |
| Denial. | Military. |
| Disabilities. | No place to go. |
| Elderly. | No job skills. |
| Abuser’s excuses. | No knowledge of options. |
| Pressure from family members. | Past criminal record. |
| Fear the abuser will retaliate. | Previous abuse. |
| Fear of losing child custody. | Negative experiences with the court system. |
| Financial abuse. | Promises of change. |
| Financial despair. | Religious beliefs and misguided teachings. |
| Gratitude. | Rural victims. |
| Guilt. | Safer to stay. |
| Homelessness. | Being a student. |
| Hope that the violence will end. | Shame and embarrassment. |
| Isolation. | Stockholm syndrome. |
| Wanting to keep the family together. | Substance or alcohol abuse. |
| Illiteracy. | Teens. |
| Incarcerated or newly released survivors. | Transportation. |
| The abuser is in law enforcement. | Unaware that abuse is a criminal offense. |
| LGBTQ survivors. | Undocumented survivors. |

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Legislators Mulling Overriding Veto of Funding for Pet-Friendly Shelters

California legislators are considering whether to override a veto by Gov. Gavin Newsom of **AB 1215** that would appropriate state funds to domestic violence and homeless shelters to provide shelter, food and veterinary services for pets owned by people experiencing domestic violence or homelessness.

The measure would require the Department of Housing and Community Development to administer a Pets Assistance With Support (PAWS) grant. The bill would authorize the department to use up to 7% of its annual budget for these purposes.

The bill passed the Senate 39-0 and the Assembly 78-0 and was sent to Gov. Newsom, who vetoed it on

Oct. 7, who wrote that, "While I appreciate the author's commitment to programs like these which reduce barriers to



Wendy Carrillo

accessing shelter, this bill would create an unfunded grant program and should be considered in the annual budget in the context of all state funding priorities." He noted that he supported \$11 million in 2019 and 2022 for funding for homeless shelters to care for pets.

Supporters of the bill noted that California has the largest homeless population of any U.S. state with 173,000

people experiencing homelessness on any given night. Pets of the Homeless estimates that 5-10% of these individuals have pets, which are often prohibited from shelters.

Assembly Member Wendy Carrillo (D—Los Angeles), who sponsored the bill, replied, "Individuals experiencing homelessness or DV often are denied shelter if they don't surrender their pets. Studies show that pets provide comfort and help with trauma and abuse. When pets are surrendered, less than 15% are reunited, furthering depression and anxiety. The program provides food and basic veterinarian services for pets and allows pathways for permanent housing placement."

Co-sheltering Workshops Help People and Pets in Crisis



their pets.

A [two-day conference](#) dedicated to keeping people and animals together during times of crisis will be held at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque on March 5-6. Animal Protection New Mexico, in conjunction with RedRover and Greater Good Charities, will conduct the event to explore the human-animal bond and develop pet housing programs for people and

RedRover and Greater Good Charities will conduct the **Housing People and Pets in Crisis Training Workshop** on March 5. Animal Protection New Mexico will bring together experts from around the state for an all-day session on March 6 on **A Trauma-Informed Approach to Surviving Together, Staying Together, and Healing Together**. The session will feature service providers, address the companion animal housing gap, and discuss legislative solutions to animal and human violence.

Safe Housing Grants to Include Homeless Shelters

RedRover, which has already awarded over \$4 million to help domestic violence shelters become pet-friendly, has announced a \$100,000 pilot program to help homeless shelters accept pets. Thanks to an anonymous donor, the 2024 Safe Housing Homeless Shelter Pilot Program is accepting [funding applications](#) until March 1.

Grants can be used for building, renovations and pet care supplies, with limited funds available for veterinary care and transportation. A 1995 study reported that 93% of men and 96% of women would not stay at a homeless shelter if pets were not allowed.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

State Legislative Proposals Would Advance Link Provisions

Illinois: Define Animal Abuse as Domestic Violence, Bar Offenders from Owning Firearms



Three bills working their way through the Illinois General Assembly would affect domestic violence as it also pertains to the protection of animals.

HB 3294, introduced by Rep. Anne Stava-Murray (D—Downers Grove),

Rep. Stava-Murray would make Illinois the 14th jurisdiction to identify acts of animal abuse, when committed to coerce or control a domestic partner, as an act of domestic violence as well as animal cruelty.

The bill would expand the definition of domestic violence abuse to include the infliction of fear of imminent conduct related to the cruel treatment of an animal, aggravated cruelty of an animal, animal torture, or sexual conduct or sexual contact with an animal, taken against a domestic animal when used as a method of coercion, control, punishment, intimidation, or revenge directed against a family member or member of an unmarried couple who has a close bond of affection to the domestic animal.

Similar laws have been enacted in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, Tennessee, Utah, Washington, and the District of Columbia. The Tennessee law was inexplicably deleted in 2023.



SB 2633, sponsored by Sen. Celina Villanueva (D—Chicago), and **HB 4469**, sponsored by Rep. Maura Hirschauer (D—

Sen. Villanueva, left, & Rep. Hirschauer West Chicago), would enable persons petitioning for a protective order to also seek to prevent the respondent from possessing firearms, ammunition, or parts that could be assembled to make an operable firearm. Illinois has included pets in protection order provisions since 2007.

New Mexico: Define Animal Abuse as Domestic Violence, Allow Pets in Protection Orders

A bill introduced in the New Mexico Legislature would make key improvements to the protection of pets affected by domestic violence.

SB 12, sponsored by Sen. Antoinette Sedillo Lopez (D-Bernalillo) would rename NMSA Statute § 40-13-2 (the Family Violence Protection Act) as the “Protection Against Abuse and Violence Act”. It would replace the definition of “domestic abuse” with a more encompassing term of “abuse”



Sen. Sedillo Lopez that would include incidents or patterns of behavior by a household member against another household member consisting of, or resulting in, harm or threatened harm to an animal. Thirteen other states, plus the District of Columbia, have enacted similar laws in which acts of animal abuse serving as coercive control are classified as domestic violence as well as animal cruelty.

SB 12 would also make New Mexico the 41st state to allow courts to include pets in protection-from abuse orders. If enacted, courts could grant to a party the exclusive or shared possession and control of any animal kept, owned or leased by either party or by the minor child or minor children residing in the household of either party. The court would be able to order a party to stay away from the animal and forbid a party from taking, transferring, concealing, mistreating, harming or disposing of the animal.

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

Veterinarians Get Training to Respond to Domestic Violence

Researchers at Australia's University of Melbourne, where others already have urged veterinarians to respond to suspected child abuse and child sexual abuse (See the [January 2024 LINK-Letter](#)) have expanded Link involvement by conducting a pilot program on training practitioners to recognize, respond and refer victims of domestic violence.

The authors, based in the university's veterinary and medical schools and Melbourne's EDVOS domestic violence service agency, argue that "veterinary professionals have a key role in facilitating multi-agency collaboration to prevent and respond to domestic violence in situations where animals may be directly or indirectly involved." Despite their position as "potential touchpoints" for victims, however, many veterinarians feel they lack the confidence and capacity to respond.

A pilot "3-R's" training program was tested on 65 veterinary professionals. Upon completion, participants reported marked improvements in their ability to recognize, respond, and refer survivors. The most significant improvement was seen in participants' self-reported ability to respond appropriately to suspicions of domestic violence.

"Veterinary professionals have a key role in facilitating multi-agency collaboration to prevent and respond to domestic violence in situations where animals may be directly or indirectly involved."

The study suggested that veterinary professionals may be an underutilized intervention point for survivors with animals. They noted that pets are often one of the few valued sources of trust and companionship for a victim, especially when they have been isolated from friends, family, and community as a deliberate tactic of abuse.

"Domestic violence is a significant and persistent problem across all societies, and veterinarians' interactions with citizens present a unique opportunity to create robust intervention points for victim-survivors with animals,"

they wrote. "With animal ownership, DV, and animal abuse as a form of DV being common across the globe, the likelihood that a veterinarian (or other veterinary professional) will come into contact with both humans and animals experiencing abuse is, by definition, likely to be high."

The Vet-3R's training consisted of five 2.5-hour slide presentations with informal discussion to challenge the myths around domestic violence, describe The Link and explain how to safely and appropriately respond and refer human victims.

- Paterson, R., Boller, E., Kim, Y., Hammond, K., & Diemer, K. (2024). What can veterinary professionals do? Measuring the effect of one domestic violence training pilot program on veterinary professionals' capacity to recognize, respond and refer human victims of domestic violence. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 11. doi: [10.3389/fvets.2024.1254373](https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2024.1254373)



CRIMINAL JUSTICE... and THE LINK

California Bill Would Bar Animal Cruelty Offenders from Obtaining Firearms

With increasing recognition that domestic violence survivors face heightened risk from acts or threats of animal cruelty and the presence of firearms, California has joined the list of states proposing to enact firearms prohibitions for animal cruelty offenders. **S 902** would prohibit offenders from having access to firearms for 10 years. Similar measures in other states have included firearms bans in domestic violence Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs)

The preamble to the measure, introduced on Jan. 3 by Sen. Richard Roth (D—Riverside) declares that the California Legislature finds that “Ample research backs up the finding that there is a direct link between acts of cruelty to animals and violence toward humans. This includes child abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse, and other violent behavior.”

Citing Link research statistics connecting histories of animal cruelty with domestic violence, child abuse and school massacres, the bill emphasizes that “Violence toward animals is a strong predictor that the abuser may inflict violence on people, and it is in the interest of California citizens to prohibit animal abusers from owning or possessing firearms.”



Sen. Richard Roth

If enacted, the firearms prohibition would take effect Jan. 1, 2025. Offenders would face one year incarceration and/or a \$1,000 fine. The National Link Coalition consulted with aides to Sen. Roth on the measure.

Delaware Link Training Continues to Bear Fruit



A groundbreaking Link training program in Delaware ([See the May 2022 LINK-Letter](#)) that resulted

Judge Jennifer Ranji In three major new state laws ([See the July – August 2023 LINK-Letter](#)) has also led to an expansion of Link awareness in the First State. National Link Coalition President & Secretary Phil Arkow was invited to present two online trainings to the entire staff of animal cruelty investigators in the Delaware Office of Animal Welfare.

The office — the only one of its kind in the U.S. whereby all animal

cruelty investigations statewide are funneled into one state agency, instead of on the local level — investigates over 1,300 cruelty and neglect cases annually in a state with a population of 1,000,000.

Arkow’s programs, “Connecting the Dots in Animal Welfare and Human Violence: Protecting Animals by Addressing Other Family Violence,” covered the challenges inherent in animal welfare legislation and enforcement, eight types of animal/human violence Links, responses to The Link in other states, and how animal welfare officers can identify and respond to child, elder and domestic abuse. His programs were followed by another presentation from the state’s child advocate.

The 2022 program, convened by Judge Jennifer Ranji, brought together over 100 Delaware judicial officers, attorneys, social services providers, and state legislators for an all-day CLE training. They left with plans to move forward with new organizational policies, programs and state legislation.

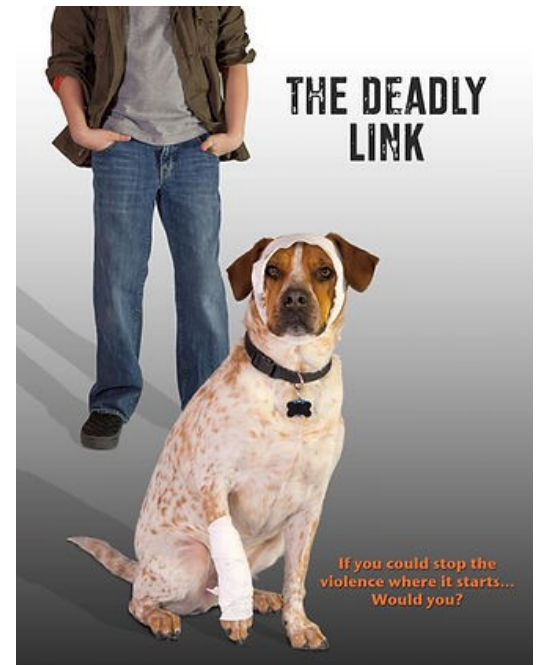
These plans succeeded in enacting: **SB 70**, which adds pets to domestic violence protection orders and adds intimidating animal abuse to the definition of domestic violence; **HB 95**, which allows courts to award custody of pets in divorce settlements in the animals’ best interests; and **SB 71**, which requires law enforcement and family services to report suspected animal abuse during a child welfare investigation, with immunity from civil and criminal liability.

Raising LINK AWARENESS

Link Video Wins Hollywood Award

A Link awareness project that was more than 10 years in the making has received significant recognition at a major film festival. [The Deadly Link](#) — an investigative documentary on The Link between animal abuse and domestic violence — won Honorable Mention at the Hollywood Independent Filmmakers Awards and Festival for 2023. Film producer Nina Knapp tells *The LINK-Letter*, “We are so honored and are waiting to hear back on a couple of other festival submissions.”

The production (See the [April 2023](#) and [November 2012 LINK-Letters](#)) features interviews with numerous Link authorities who have presented at New Mexico’s Positive Links conference over the years. The film had its premiere showing in Albuquerque on January 13.



American Humane Calls for Implementing Greater Link Provisions

American Humane has published a [web page](#) fact sheet describing The Link. The organization, founded in 1877 as the American Humane Association to focus on both child protection and animal cruelty, was instrumental in first raising awareness of The Link in the 1990s and created the National Link Coalition in 2008.

“Understanding the Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence” contains short descriptions of The Link, how serious the issue is, and how communities and professional groups are responding. It offers a list of seven action steps that must be taken to prevent the self-perpetuating cycle of violence:

- Cross-training and cross-reporting among law enforcement officers, humane investigators, veterinarians, health professionals, domestic violence advocates and child protection workers.
- Training and continuing education for judges and prosecutors.
- Model legislation for cross-reporting and cross-reporting standards.
- Systematic tracking of national animal abuse data.
- Expanded research including evaluation of prevention and intervention approaches.
- Inclusion of animal-focused violence in standard assessments and intake forms for child protective services, mental health and domestic violence workers.
- Community partnerships to respond to family violence and educate the public about taking all acts of violence seriously.

Podcast Episode Features The Link



Ken Shapiro, founder of the Animals & Society Institute, has created a series of anthrozoology podcasts and webinars dealing with hu-

man-animal relationships. Podcast #28 is entitled The Link and covers interventions that have been developed for the treatment of adult and juvenile animal abusers. The 36-minute episode features three other presenters: Kris Hill, Michelle Szydlowski and Sarah Oxley Heaney, Ph.D. candidates at the University of Exeter. The podcast is available as a [YouTube video](#).

Therapeutic Interventions and THE LINK

Inmates in Chile's Largest Penitentiary Care for Feral Cats

From the “Birdman of Alcatraz” Robert Stroud, to Colorado State Penitentiary inmates gentling wild horses, to prisoners in Michigan, Minnesota and Iowa raising future guide dogs for the blind, the introduction of animal-assisted therapy programs for criminal offenders has a long history. The *New York Times* published an [extensive feature](#) on Dec. 31 about one of the more unusual such programs — the 300 stray cats being cared for by 5,600 residents of Chile’s oldest and largest prison.

“A cat makes you worry about it, feed it, take care of it, give it special attention,” said Carlos Nuñez, serving a 14-year sentence for burglary. “When we were outside and free, we never did this. We discovered it in here.” Nuñez plans to take one cat, who he named “Ugly,” home with him when he is released.

The 180-year-old Santiago Sur penitentiary in Santiago had long tolerated the presence of feral cats to control the rodent population. But administrators soon learned that in an environment where cats run free and men live in cages, the cats were also good for the inmates.

Caring for the cats “has changed the inmates’ mood, has regulated their behavior and has strengthened their sense of responsibility with their duties, especially caring for animals,” said the prison’s warden, Col. Helen Leal González, who has two cats of her own at home.

“Prisons are hostile places,” she added. “When you see there’s an animal giving affection and generating these positive feelings, it logically causes a change in behavior, a change in mindset.”

The *Times* feature reviewed such programs as prisoners training wild horses to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border and Massachusetts inmates rehabilitating injured wildlife. The impact of such programs is increasingly being appreciated according to a research study* from



Photo Credit: Claudio Ramirez for HSI

Spain that reported that dog-based animal-assisted therapy may improve anxiety, stress, recidivism, and other social variables in male or female inmates.

Nearly 100 of the cats recently received veterinary care and spay/neuter services thanks to volunteers from Humane Society International and the Chilean Felinnos Foundation, in cooperation with the Chilean Gendarmerie.

“You dedicate yourself to the cat. You tend to it, keep an eye on it, give it love,” he said. “The feeling that comes out of that — there’s nothing bad about it, man,” said Denys Carmona Rojas, 57, serving eight years on gun charges.

***Villafaina-Domínguez, B., Collado-Mateo, D., Merellano-Navarro, E., & Villafaina, S. (2020, November). Effects of dog-based animal-assisted interventions in prison population: A systematic review. *Animals*, 10(11): 2129. doi: [10.3390/ani10112129](https://doi.org/10.3390/ani10112129)**

CROSS-REPORTING... and THE LINK

Missouri Proposes Comprehensive Link Cross-Reporting Law

Three bipartisan bills in the Missouri State Legislature would enact one of the nation's most comprehensive cross-reporting and cross-training laws addressing The Link between abuse of companion animals and abuse of children, the elderly and the disabled.

HB 1695, sponsored by Rep. Justin Sparks (R—Wildwood), **SB 995**, sponsored by Sen. Tracy McCreery (D—St. Louis County), and SB 1259, sponsored by Sen. Travis Fitzwater (R— Callaway Co.) would require animal control officers and animal humane investigators to report suspected abuse, neglect or bullying of “eligible adults” (elderly adults and disabled persons) and children. Animal control and humane investigators would be required to complete one hour of training, within the first 60 days of employment, on how to identify and report suspected abuse of a child or eligible adult and the relationship between child, eligible adult and companion animal abuse or neglect.

Similarly, professionals working in elder and child abuse would be required to report suspected companion animal abuse to a Missouri Animal Control Association hotline. All persons in the state's child and eligible adult protection and welfare system would be



Sens. Travis Fitzwater & Tracy McCreery & Rep. Justin Sparks mandated to complete one hour of training, within the first 60 days of employment, on how to identify and report companion animal abuse and the relationship between companion animal abuse and elder abuse and child abuse, respectively.

Professionals involved would include psychologists, mental health professionals, social workers, school counselors, teachers, other school professionals, home health aides, adult protective services workers, volunteer or personnel of community service programs, advocacy services for children in foster care, and law enforcement, juvenile, probation and parole officers.

The bills are similar to measures which failed to pass in 2022 and 2023.

ANIMAL HOARDING... and THE LINK

Help Sought on Animal Hoarding Responses and Best Practices

The Animal Rescue League of Iowa has reached out to *LINK-Letter* readers seeking information. The ARL wants to develop a response with a protocol of recommended best practices for animal hoarding cases. They want to eventually expand this idea to address all Link issues but they are looking at stair-stepping into it by starting with hoarding cases .

The program is in the very early stages of development. Rather than reinventing the wheel, the ARL is interested in gathering information from those who already have established response protocols. Readers who have some suggestions and can point them in the right direction regarding best practices can email Lynn Aswegan at iadukie@q.com.

West Virginia Bill Would Outlaw Animal Hoarding

A bill in the West Virginia Legislature would create a new misdemeanor crime of hoarding of animals. **HB 4935** defines this as: possessing a large number of companion animals; failure to provide food, water, shelter, veterinary care and humane treatment; and an inability to recognize or have a reckless disregard for the conditions and their impact on the owner's health and well-being. The provisions, introduced by Delegate Dana Ferrell, (R-Kanawha) are part of a larger bill increasing penalties for interfering with a humane officer, banning euthanasia gas chambers, defining adequate care of companion animals, regulating commercial dog breeders, and unlawful confinement of domestic animals.



Dana Ferrell

LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES — 2024

Most 2024 state legislative sessions are in full swing, with 29 new Link-themed bills joining 63 bills carried over from 2023 in 22 states and Congress. The following list includes proposals which are currently being considered. 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 does not necessarily imply our endorsement of the measure or its specific language, but is included 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.

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

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

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.

NEW THIS MONTH: SB 902 would prohibit persons convicted of animal cruelty from possessing a firearm for 10 years.

AB 1215 would appropriate up to 7% of the Department of Housing and Community Development's budget to administer a Pets Assistance With Support (PAWS) grant to domestic violence and homeless shelters to provide shelter, food and veterinary services for pets. The bill passed the Assembly and Senate unanimously, but was vetoed by the Governor. The Assembly is considering overriding the veto.

NEW THIS MONTH: SB 933 and **AB 1873** would expand the definition of sexual exploitation of a child to include depictions of sexual conduct between a minor and an animal generated by the use of artificial intelligence.

NEW THIS MONTH: SB 921 would make it a crime to abuse or subject an animal to needless suffering, even if it does not cause physical injury, and require offenders to undergo counseling.

FLORIDA

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.

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.

GEORGIA

NEW THIS MONTH: HB 217 and SB 255 would expand dogfighting statutes to include cockfighting and make it a high aggravated misdemeanor to permit a minor child to be present at a dog or cock fight. Subsequent convictions would be felonies. The bills are in the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee and the Senate Public Safety Committee.

HAWAII

NEW THIS MONTH: SB 30 would expand domestic violence protection orders, which already enjoin any party from harming or threatening household animals, to allow minor children in the home to file for a protection order or a temporary restraining order even if the child was not a victim of domestic violence.

ILLINOIS

NEW THIS MONTH: SB 2633 and HB 4469 would enable persons petitioning for a protective order to also seek to prevent the respondent from possessing firearms, ammunition, or parts that could be assembled to make an operable firearm. Illinois has included pet protection provisions in these orders since 2007.

NEW THIS MONTH: HB 3294 would expand the definition of domestic violence abuse to include the infliction of fear of imminent conduct related to animal cruelty, aggravated cruelty, animal torture, or sexual conduct or sexual contact with an animal, taken against a domestic animal when used as a method of coercion, control, punishment, intimidation, or revenge directed against a family member or member of an unmarried couple who has a close bond of affection to the domestic animal.

NEW THIS MONTH: HB 3454 would make the theft of any animal a Class 4 felony.

IOWA

NEW THIS MONTH: SF 2018 and HSB 533 would expand the statutory definition of bestiality to include organizing, promoting, conducting, promoting, permitting, filming, distributing, possessing, or participating as an observer of an act involving a sex act with an animal. It would add enhanced penalties for subsequent convictions.

KENTUCKY

NEW THIS MONTH: SB 106 and HB 253 ("Kyan's Law") would require animal control officers to receive training on recognizing child abuse and add animal control officers to the list of people with a duty to report dependency, neglect, or abuse of a child.

MARYLAND

NEW THIS MONTH: SB 17 would establish each animal harmed in an act of animal cruelty as a separate offense and that convictions and sentences for animal cruelty could not be merged with convictions and sentences for any other co-occurring crime. The bill is in the Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings.

MASSACHUSETTS

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.

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.

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.

MICHIGAN

NEW THIS MONTH: SB 248 would define the age of persons eligible to have a courtroom support dog as those under 16 years of age or over 16 years if they have a developmental disability.

NEW THIS MONTH: HB 4431 would replace the archaic "abominable and detestable crime against nature either with mankind or with any animal" with the term "bestiality."

LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

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.

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.

MISSOURI

NEW THIS MONTH: **HB 1695** and **SB 995** would require animal control officers and humane investigators to report suspected abuse, neglect or bullying of elderly adults, disabled persons and children. Professionals working in elder and child abuse would be required to report suspected companion animal abuse to a Missouri Animal Control Association hotline. All persons in the state's child and eligible adult protection and welfare system would be mandated to complete one hour of training, within the first 60 days of employment, on how to identify and report companion animal abuse and the relationship between companion animal abuse and elder abuse and child abuse, respectively. Animal control and humane investigators would be required to complete training on how to identify and report suspected abuse of a child or eligible adult and the relationship between child, eligible adult and companion animal abuse or neglect.

NEW JERSEY

A 2456 and **S282** 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.

A291 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.

A 296 ("Shyanne's Law") would require mental health evaluation for all animal cruelty offenders.

A 310 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.

A369 would prohibit convicted animal cruelty offenders from having or being issued a permit a firearm for a handgun.

NEW MEXICO

NEW THIS MONTH: **SB 12** would replace the definition of "domestic abuse" with a more encompassing term of "abuse" that would include incidents or patterns of behavior by a household member against another household member consisting of, or resulting in, harm or threatened harm to an animal. It would also allow courts to include pets in protection-from abuse orders.

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.

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.

A 483 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 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.

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 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.

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 3346-A and S 3170-A, “Kyras 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 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.

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.

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.

NEW THIS MONTH: A 8604 and S 8063, the “Hope Card Act,” would provide that any protected party of a final order of protection shall be provided either a digital image of the final order of protection or a durable, wallet-sized physical card that contains a summary of information about a final order of protection, including that pets can be included. The bills are in the Assembly Judiciary and Senate Rules Committees.

OHIO

NEW THIS MONTH: SB 187 would prohibit individuals convicted of domestic violence from acquiring, having or using a firearm.

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. and will be heard by the House Judiciary Committee on Feb. 14.

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.

NEW THIS MONTH: SB 1018 would allow child witnesses and victims to have access to an animal to provide emotional support or mitigate emotional trauma during the proceeding. The bill is in the Committee on Aging and Youth.

RHODE ISLAND

NEW THIS MONTH: H 7163 would expand existing law, which allows courts to include household animals and pets in protection orders, to allow courts to award custody of the pets to the plaintiff.

NEW THIS MONTH: H 7236 would add animal cruelty, malicious killing or injury of an animal, and abandonment of an animal to the statutory definition of domestic violence.

UTAH

NEW THIS MONTH: HB 130 would make it a misdemeanor to allow a minor child under age 18 to attend a dog- or cock-fight.

VERMONT

NEW THIS MONTH: H.27 would add "coercive controlling behavior," including threatening to harm or abduct the plaintiff's animals, to the definition of abuse for the purposes of obtaining a protective order. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.

WEST VIRGINIA

NEW THIS MONTH: HB 4935 would create a new misdemeanor crime of hoarding of animals, defined as: the possession of a large number of companion animals; failure to provide food, water, shelter, veterinary care and humane treatment; and an inability to recognize or have a reckless disregard for the conditions and their impact on the owner's health and well-being.

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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.



HELP US KEEP THE LINK FREE!

We at the National Link Coalition believe that information is power, and that power shouldn't be available only to those who can afford to pay. That's why we keep *The LINK-Letter* and the fabulous resources at NationalLinkCoalition.org free of charge.

Thousands of people around the U.S. and world rely on our high-quality information to keep up-to-date on new developments in this rapidly-evolving, dynamic field.

Please support our mission and help keep *The Link* free for all by making a [tax-deductible contribution](#) to the National Link Coalition today.

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

Feb. 13 (online): Jill Hollander and David Rosengard will describe the "Canine Cellmates Model" animal care program for post-conviction offenders in a [webinar](#) for the Justice Clearinghouse.

Feb. 15 (online): Zoë Agnew-Svoboda and Janet Hoy-Gerlach will present a [webinar](#), "Building Supports for People with Companion Animals," on behalf of the International Association of Veterinary Social Work, in collaboration with the Open Door Veterinary Collective and Besty BnB.

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. 20 — Fort Worth, Texas: RedRover and Greater Good Charities will hold a Don't Forget the Pets [training workshop](#) to explore ways to create and sustain pet housing programs for people and pets in crisis.

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 5-6 — Albuquerque, N. Mex.: RedRover, Greater Good Charities, and Animal Protection New Mexico will hold a [two-day co-sheltering training workshop](#) on Housing People and Pets in Crisis and A Trauma-Informed Approach to Surviving Together, Staying Together, and Healing Together.

March 9-16 — Hamilton, Bermuda: Mark Kumpf of the [Animal Control & Care Academy](#) will train Bermuda's Animal Wardens on animal control procedures and The Link.

March 17-20 — Cleveland, Ohio: The Hon. John J. Romero, The Hon. Lee Chitwood, Andrew Campbell, and David Rosengard will present programs on childhood animal cruelty and rehabilitation programs at the [National Conference on Juvenile Justice](#).

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 8-11 — Honolulu, Hawai'i: Paul Needham will present on The Link at the 21st Annual [Hawaii International Summit](#) of the Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma.

April 10 — (online): RedRover and Greater Good Charities will hold a virtual Don't Forget the Pets [training workshop](#) to explore ways to create and sustain pet housing programs for people and pets in crisis.

April 11 — Elkton, Md.: [Don't Forget the Pets](#) will hold an in-person training workshop on how to create and sustain pet housing programs for survivors of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness.

April 12-13 — Whitecap Dakota First Nation, Sask., Canada: Margaret Doyle, Dennis Smithson and Jill Gibson will present "Getting Out of the Silo," and Dillon Dodson will present "Social Work in Animal Care Spaces" at the 2024 [Saskatchewan SPCA Gathering for Animal & Human Welfare](#).

April 15-18 — Springfield, Mo.: Mark Kumpf of the [Animal Control & Care Academy](#) will teach a unit on Proactive Animal Control, including responding to domestic violence situations, as part of the Advanced ACO Certification Course.

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 15 (online): Phil Arkow will present "Connecting the Dots: Animal Abuse's Links to Other Family Violence in Military and Civilian Families" for the National Organization for Victim Advocacy's [National Victim Assistance Academy](#).

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.

Sept. 30—Oct. 1 – Washington, D.C.: The National Council on Juvenile & Family Court Judges and the Animal Legal Defense Fund will present the [Judicial Institute](#) on the Human-Animal Bond and The LINK Between Animal Cruelty and Interpersonal Violence: Issues in Family Law Cases.

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

Nov. 5 (online): Jessica Chapman and David Rosengard of the Animal Legal Defense Fund will present “Recognizing the Role of Trauma in Violence Against Animals” in a [webinar](#) for the Justice Clearinghouse.

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.



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.

THE LINK... in the NEWS

Nurse Charged with Poisoning Neighbor's Pets

A Lakeland, Fla. nurse who reportedly had previously threatened to poison a neighbor's pets for coming into her yard was charged with three counts of animal cruelty and one count of depositing poison in public after detectives said she poisoned two cats and a pregnant Chihuahua. [WFLA-TV](#) reported that the Polk County Sheriff's Office's Agricultural Crimes Unit arrested Tamesha Knighten, LPN, 51. Eight puppies in the Chihuahua's womb were also killed.



Man Sexually Extorts Autistic Youth and Pimps Dogs in Bestiality Ring



An Ontario man who had pled guilty to sexually exploiting and extorting a young boy with autism for nine years and who ran a bestiality ring in which he pimped out St. Bernards and other dogs to be raped has been released from custody after serving 522 days in jail. The [Ottawa Citizen](#) reported that Steve Sernoskie, 60, of Round Lake Centre, had groomed the youth, then 15, with sexualized comments, liquor, cannabis, gifts, and cash in exchange for sexual favors. Meanwhile Sernoskie was running a bestiality ring that included photographing the impaired young man engaged in bestiality wearing nothing but a bolo tie and a cowboy hat and using the photo to further extort sexual favors from him. The young man told the judge that his life has been ruined. Sernoskie is banned from having any animals and will be on probation for three years.

Two Link Cases in Edmonton, Alberta



Two recent criminal cases in the Edmonton, Alberta Police Services' child and animal protection units vividly demonstrate several different dimensions of The Link.

In May, Edmonton police responding to a residential break-in found a dead cat in a microwave. "This is a horrific act of cruelty, and our hearts go out to the family who lost their beloved cat and witnessed the aftermath of this disturbing assault," Liza Sunley, CEO of the Edmonton Humane Society told [CTV News](#). "We are thankful that Edmonton has a dedicated Animal Cruelty Investigation Unit who is taking this investigation seriously."

"There is a well-established link between violence against animals and violence against humans, and it is crucial that we work together to prevent both," she added.

In December, what Edmonton child protection investigators called "one of the most disturbing cases of child abuse" that they had ever seen, three people were arrested on over 100 charges of child abuse and animal cruelty. [CTV](#) reported that the Edmonton Police Service's Child Protection Unit began its investigation after receiving reports of "significant" child abuse against seven children between the ages of 2 and 13. The children were reportedly frequently beaten, strangled and malnourished for years and forced to stay in painful positions for hours at a time. The accused father also allegedly used a shock collar to assault some of the children and frequently tortured one of the family's five dogs. The father, 37, his common law partner, 37, and a 25-year-old family member — who were not named to protect the children's identities — face over 100 charges. The children are in foster care and the dogs were removed from the home.

"It's Either You or the Dog"



Los Angeles police arrested David Sumlin, 22, after a two-week-long search for the man who authorities say brutally executed a puppy belonging to his ex-girlfriend during a heated argument. [KCAL-TV](#) reported that Sumlin allegedly held a pillow over the dog's head and fired twice after telling the woman, "It's either you or the dog." Sumlin, who was being held on \$50,000 bail, allegedly has an extensive criminal history of multiple felony convictions that should have prohibited him from having access to a firearm.

Police Rescue Children and Animals from Deplorable Conditions

Pennsylvania State Police troopers executing a search warrant for animal cruelty in Slippery Rock Township, Butler County, encountered multiple cases of animal starvation and neglect and endangerment of children. A police [press release](#) said several animals were found deceased and rotting at the property including 10 alpacas, a basset hound, a chicken, and a duck. The property owner, who was not named pending the filing of charges in an ongoing investigation, surrendered the remaining 60 animals; including a horse, alpacas, ducks, chickens, dogs, and cats to an animal shelter in Erie. Child Youth Services were contacted and removed several children from the home.

Brothers Jailed for Assaults and Torturing Wildlife



HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT CONSTABULARY

Two brothers from a rural area of Hampshire in the United Kingdom have been jailed for a total of eight years and eight months for animal cruelty and various assault charges. The [Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary](#) reported that Kristen Christopher Cooper, 24, and Todd James Edward Cooper, 29, had chased a resident into a store, pushed him to the floor and fired a ball bearing at him using a catapult. Later that day, they used their SUV to ram another vehicle before attacking it and the occupants with a crowbar, baseball bat and catapult. The two were also arrested on separate charges of causing harm to injured deer and rabbits, mutilating them and encouraging dogs to attack them. A veterinarian stated it was the worst case of animal cruelty he had seen in 24 years.

Police Charge Father with Animal Cruelty and Child Abuse



Police in Port St. Lucie, Fla. investigating a domestic dispute charged Fritz Eugene, 67, with animal and child cruelty for allegedly cutting off the legs and slitting the throat of a state- and federally-protected wild blue heron in front of his son. The New York [Post](#) reported that the police affidavit said Eugene became enraged after the bird started eating his fishing bait. His wife reported the allegations to police after she reportedly found a photo of him holding the bird on her daughter's phone.

Woman Charged in Hoarding Case with Elder Abuse Suspicions

A 74-year-old woman suspected of financially exploiting a blind 83-year-old man who had to spend his days at a seniors' center to escape the smell of a house with 19 living and several dead and decomposing animals was charged with 19 counts of animal cruelty. Deborah Battaglino, of Cedar Crest, N. Mex., but was not charged with elder abuse because the victim was uncooperative with sheriff's deputies. [KRQE-TV](#) said there was so much clutter in the house the man hadn't been able to access his kitchen in five years and there was no heat or running water.

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 global 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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#92-2607909.**

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