



**NATIONAL LINK COALITION**  
Working together to stop violence against people and animals

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



#### Top Stories in This Issue:



**Animal control officers face deadly risks**  
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**Veterinarians need more training in animal welfare**  
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**Rescue of starving dog saves neglected child**  
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## Renowned Child Abuse Pediatrician Named to Link Professional Advisory Committee



**Sue Skinner, MD**

Skinner, of Portland, Ore., is board certified in general pediatrics and was one of the first physicians to be board certified in child abuse pediatrics. She serves on the Editorial Board for the American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on Child Abuse & Neglect Newsletter and works part time at CARES Northwest.

The National Link Coalition is pleased to announce the appointment of Sue Skinner, MD, to serve on our Professional Advisory Committee.

Her interests include health care of children in foster care, physical abuse of school-aged children, environmental neglect & drug endangerment, and the co-existence of animal abuse and child abuse.

Skinner began working in child abuse and neglect in 1995 and lectures internationally on related topics. She assisted in creating a training video for schools and developing state guidelines for medical assessment of child sexual abuse. She has worked at the county level on protocols and guidelines for how systems can best work together to respond to abuse and neglect.

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## 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.*

## News from LINK Coalitions

### Violence Link Learning Center Addresses Gender-Based Violence

Humane Canada — the organizer of Canada's Violence Link Coalition — has created a series of asynchronous online modules to acquaint advocates working in the field of gender-based violence about The Link.

The modules are part of a broader learning center called ACT — the [Adaptable Collaborative Response Model](#). The campaign includes: downloadable resources; case studies and survivors' stories; meetings in a community of practice where survivors of gender-based violence and their animals can connect with one another; advocacy for animal-friendly housing; and outreach and awareness efforts.

The free learning modules include:

- **The Violence Link and Gender-Based Violence**
- **Trauma-Informed Care with Animals in Social Service Settings: Supporting Survivors with Animals**
- **Co-Sheltering On Site**
- **Sheltering Animals Offsite**
- **Supporting Rural, Remote, Northern & Farming Communities**
- **Awareness, Engagement & Confidentiality**
- **Self-Care, Compassion Fatigue & Setting Boundaries.**

"We have built resources, educational modules, and more," said Sue O'Neill, ACT Project Manager. "Our work has been informed by our 41 partners who work in GBV services and animal services as well as survivors.

"We really think all of these free resources and education could be helpful to service providers working with

survivors and/or animals experiencing violence. We have also designed some awareness resources and education for the general public as well as some resources specific to survivors!"



### Animal Ethics and Sustainability Leadership Major Offered



Kendra Coulter of the National Link Coalition's Board of Directors has created the world's first academic major in [Animal Ethics and Sustainability Leadership](#). The BA major in Huron University's Management and Organizational Studies Department empowers students to channel their passion for issues facing animals and the environment with organizational and leadership skills that can be translated into careers. The program is open to students worldwide.

"Animal lovers can now earn a degree from one of Canada's elite universities focused on animal and environmental issues through this distinct learning pathway that combines Management and Organizational Studies, the Social Sciences, and the Arts," says Coulter, a professor in the department.

Students will learn:

- **Animal protection through law and policy**
- **Sustainable business strategies**
- **Ethical debates about our responsibilities to other species**
- **The relationships between nature and technology**
- **Climate action plans.**

# FIRST RESPONDERS... and THE LINK

## D.C. Police Officers Shot While Serving Warrant for Animal Cruelty



The most recent tragic example of the increased risks that first responders face when investigating possible animal cruelty crimes unfolded in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 14 when Metropolitan Police Officers and Humane Rescue Alliance agents confronted an armed suspect in a standoff that lasted several hours.

Three police officers attempting to serve a warrant for animal cruelty on Julius James, 46, were shot as they stood outside the suspect's door, [police said](#). The three officers were taken to a hospital with non-life-threatening injuries and were expected to recover. A fourth officer was also injured but those injuries were not gunshot-related.

The incident began at 7:30 a.m. when James allegedly fired multiple shots through the door. James reportedly continued to fire occasional shots throughout the day as officers attempted to negotiate with him as he remained barricaded in the home. Following the standoff, during which time several neighbors were evacuated and streets were blocked off, James surrendered later that night.

Nearly a dozen pit bulls were removed from the home. James is facing multiple charges including animal cruelty.

"As this dynamic situation unfolds, our thoughts are with our partners at MPD who are being treated in the hospital and we are wishing them all the best in their recovery. We could not fulfill our mission without them," a Humane Rescue Alliance spokesperson told [CNN](#).



**HUMANE  
RESCUE  
ALLIANCE**

## Animal Control First Responders Face Deadly Risks



The Washington D.C. incident was not the first — and, unfortunately won't be the last — case where first responders addressing animal cruelty face violence and death in carrying out their duties. These are some recent examples:

From the [June 2021 LINK-Letter](#):

### Gunman Charged with Murdering Two Deputies, Wounding ACO

Jeffrey Nichols, 28, of Eden, Texas, was charged with capital murder of a peace officer for allegedly killing two Concho County deputies and critically wounding an animal control officer responding to a complaint about a dog. While making contact with the suspect, an altercation escalated into gunfire.

From the [November 2019 LINK-Letter](#):

### Animal Abuse Complaint Leads to Shooting of Animal Control Officer

Brian Tran, of Loxahatchee Groves, Fla., who called himself a "warrior, a soldier and a sniper" was charged with aggravated assault with a firearm and false imprisonment for allegedly opening fire, threatening police and holding an ACO hostage when responding to a call about a neglected dog.

From the [December 2012 LINK-Letter](#):

### Evicted Tenant Charged with Killing Animal Control Officer

Sacramento County, Calif. ACO Roy Marcum, 45, a 14-year veteran of the sheriff's department, was shot and killed by a shotgun blast fired through the door of a foreclosed property where the evicted tenant was apparently still residing.

## Fallen Animal Control Officers Memorialized

The [National Animal Care & Control Association](#) has partnered with Code 3 Associates to re-erect the Fallen Animal Control Officer Memorial, built by NACA to honor ACOs who were killed in the line of duty. The memorial, originally at NACA's former offices in Kansas, will be on display at Code 3's headquarters in Longmont, Colo.



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## Closing a Custody Gap in Pet Protection Orders

A bill in the Rhode Island General Assembly would close a loophole that exists in its laws that include pets in protection orders – and that also appears in 14 of the 41 similar laws in U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

In 2019 Rhode Island enacted statute §107.718 which allows courts to issue a restraining order which prevents **Rep. John Lombardi** “the neglect and protect the safety of any service or therapy animal or any animal kept for personal protection or companionship, but not an animal kept for any business, commercial, agricultural or economic purpose.” **HB 7163**, sponsored by Rep. John Lombardi



(D—Providence), would allow courts to also award plaintiffs custody of household pets, including access to restraining orders or injunctive relief if necessary.

Laws to include household animals in domestic violence protection orders were first enacted in 2006. Virtually all of these 41 laws contain similar language allowing protective orders that generally enjoin a respondent from coming into contact with, harming, physically abusing, torturing, injuring, killing, threatening, or removing any animal owned jointly or by the petitioner or a child in the home. But 13 states neglected provisions that would grant the petitioner sole custody of the animals.

Two states have notable custody provisions. New Jersey §2C:25-29 (19) allows courts to issue “An order directing the possession of any animal owned, possessed, leased, kept, or held by either party or a minor child residing in the household. Where a person has abused or threatened to abuse such animal, *there shall be a presumption that possession of the animal shall be awarded to the non-abusive party.*”

Tennessee §36-3-606(a) allows such orders to direct the care, custody, or control of any animal. *“In no instance shall such animal be placed in the care, custody, or control of the respondent but shall instead be placed in the care, custody, or control of the petitioner or in an appropriate animal foster situation.”*

### States That Include Household Animals in Domestic Violence Protection Orders

#### States That Also Allow Courts to Award Custody of Animals to Petitioners

- |               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| Alaska        | Nebraska             |
| Arizona       | Nevada               |
| Arkansas      | New Hampshire        |
| California    | New Jersey           |
| Delaware      | North Carolina       |
| Florida       | Oklahoma             |
| Illinois      | Tennessee            |
| Indiana       | Vermont              |
| Kentucky      | Virginia             |
| Louisiana     | Washington           |
| Maine         | West Virginia        |
| Massachusetts | Wyoming              |
| Minnesota     | District of Columbia |
| Missouri      |                      |

#### States That Only Prohibit Respondent from Harming Petitioner’s or Children’s Animals

- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Hawaii
- Iowa
- Maryland
- Michigan
- New York
- Ohio
- Oregon
- Rhode Island
- South Carolina
- Texas
- Utah
- Wisconsin



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## Researchers Seek National Response to Forced Separation from Pets

A [scoping review](#) of the literature on forced separation from pets in domestic violence, natural disasters, and homelessness situations has confirmed the necessity of addressing the lack of national frameworks and guidance for women and pets in Australia and elsewhere seeking formal support in domestic violence situations. The review will lead to the development of what is hoped to be a conceptual framework.

The scoping review is preceding a more formal study, with results expected to be published in June, 2025, that will improve the understanding of the impact of forced separation between women and their pets at times of domestic violence and the gaps in best supporting both women and their pets.

Jasmine Montgomery, Janice Lloyd and Zhanming Liang at James Cook University found that the emotional attachment between survivors and their pets may be substantial due to sharing the experience of abuse, which makes deliberate cruelty or death of a companion animal particularly torturous.

The issue is particularly acute in Australia, with one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world, and where women with children are more likely to have a pet. "It is vital to address the risks for survivors and their companion animals at times of forced separation because of domestic violence," they write.

The scoping review findings will be used in the forthcoming research project to investigate policy frameworks and relevant services that provide support to people and pets in domestic violence situations.

The authors expect that the findings will identify the substantial issues experienced by women and pets in domestic violence situations such as psychological distress, grief, loss, and the complexity of decision-making when considering a pet. It is expected that



Jasmine Montgomery (left), Janice Lloyd and Zhanming Liang

the development of policies and services needs to include pets in safety planning, accommodation, and long-term housing as their standard practice.

"The evidence indicates it is vital to address the increased risks to safety when fleeing domestic violence," they conclude, in calling for the development of a national framework of response.

— Montgomery, J., Lloyd, J., & Liang, Z. (2024, Jan. 25). *The impact of forced separations between women and their pets in domestic violence situations and the effectiveness of crisis response: Protocol for a conceptual framework. JMIR Research Protocols, 13:e52067. doi:10.2196/52067*

### *Join Us In Our Mission!*

Please help 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.**

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, tax-deductible contribution.

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## Literature Review Identifies 5 Strategies for Pets of the Homeless

The causes of homelessness are complex and often include family violence, as well as trauma, financial difficulties, physical or mental illness, and substance



**Michelle Kurkowski & Andrew Springer**

abuse. An estimated 10–23% of individuals experiencing homelessness keep pets, and pet ownership has been shown to increase social interactions and physical activity and decrease loneliness, depression and anxiety. Meanwhile, Pet owners experiencing homelessness are also subjected to unique challenges in caring for both themselves and their companion animals. Individuals are often forced to choose between accessing lodging and keeping their pets with them

But despite the growing body of literature on both the benefits of pet ownership for the unhoused community as well as the needs and challenges that homeless pet owners and their pets face, little attention has been given to developing interventions specifically designed to address the challenges facing this group.

A new scoping review of 188 articles on homeless pet owners identified five distinct intervention strategies for improving the health of homeless pet owners and their companion animals:

- (1) Free veterinary clinics.
- (2) Joint human/animal clinics.
- (3) Stigma reduction.
- (4) Interdisciplinary relationships.
- (5) Pet-friendly lodging.

“Homelessness is both a public health and a social justice concern, and finding strategies to combat this complex epidemic will require the commitment and engagement of professionals from a wide variety of disciplines,” the authors conclude. “This is not an issue that should rely solely on the efforts of veterinary professionals but requires the combined efforts of healthcare providers, social workers, animal welfare workers and governmental and nonprofit organizations in order to develop innovative One Health solutions for the challenges currently facing this population.”

-- Kurkowski, M., & Springer, A. (2024). Exploring strategies for pet owners experiencing homelessness: A rapid scoping review. *Human-Animal Interactions*, 12(1).  
<https://doi.org/10.1079/hai.2024.0002>

## Pets Can Mitigate Harm of “Pregnant Partner Violence”

Andrew Campbell, whose groundbreaking research into The Link between animal abuse and domestic violence and the increased lethality risks when both forms of family violence co-occur, has begun a new area of inquiry investigating the additional risks of “PPV” – Pregnant Partner Violence.

Campbell presented a “War in the Womb: Pregnant Partner Violence and Associated Risks of Harm for Mother and Fetus” webinar to the Department of the Army’s Victim Advocates. He noted that an esti-

mated 25% of pregnant women in the U.K. have pets and that numbers are probably similar if not higher in the U.S.

“Dog ownership can be a protective factor for mental health and activity for pregnant women,” he said. “Pets may not be able to keep us from living in an abusive environment but they may help us manage it better and mitigate some of that harm.”

Campbell noted that in many cases where there are pregnant women

there are also other children in the abusive home, and dogs can help reduce those children’s stress as well.

“Pets create constancy while the abuser is creating chaos,” he noted. “They can be lifesaving support for the people in that home.”



**Andrew Campbell**

# CHILD WELFARE... and THE LINK

## Animal Cruelty Omitted in Screening-In Child Abuse Reports

The State of Minnesota's recent [annual Legislative Report](#) compiling county-by-county data on child maltreatment, which is probably typical of many states', unfortunately contains no data regarding children's committing or witnessing acts of animal cruelty as potential conditions warranting a child maltreatment investigation.

This gap is disappointing because Minnesota's [2021 Guidelines for Child Maltreatment Intake, Screening and Response Paths](#) made several references to animal welfare issues that can impact a child's welfare (*see below*). Sadly, the [2023 Resource Guide for Mandated Reporters](#) deleted these references.

The Legislative Report is supposed to help legislators better understand child welfare statistics and trends, including among Minnesota's Native American tribes. It details: child maltreatment reports received and screened by local agencies; characteristics of the children involved; assessment or investigation processes following screened-in reports; and those cases' outcomes. The findings included:

- **Local social service agencies screened 76,278 intakes in 2021, a 7% increase from the prior year.**
- **American Indian children were 2% of the child population but 6% of children reported to child protection.**
- **African American/Black or Hispanic children are a little more likely relative to their population size to be reported to child protection.**
- **Mandated reporters comprised the majority of reports to local agencies — 79%.**

[Safe Passage for Children of Minnesota](#) criticized the state's systems, noting that only 41% of reports of maltreatment were screened for further assessment — a figure below the national average.

The report lists county-by-county numbers of reports screened-in and -out; who reported; the gender, age, ethnicity and disability status of alleged victims; and

whether there were prior or subsequent screened-in reports. It lists similar data on whether the alleged maltreatment was neglect, physical abuse, threatened injury, sexual abuse, or mental injury.



Minnesota's mandated reporters include professionals or their delegates in the healing arts, social services, hospital administration, psychological or psychiatric treatment, child care, education, correctional supervision, probation and correctional services, guardians ad litem, law enforcement, and certain clergy. Some tribes consider attorneys and tribal representatives to be mandated reporters. Humane agents and animal control officers are not specifically named, although they may make reports voluntarily. Nor is it clear whether veterinary medicine can be construed within the "healing arts."

### MINNESOTA GUIDELINES FOR CHILD MALTREATMENT INTAKE, SCREENING AND RESPONSE PATH (2021)

#### Types of Child Maltreatment Allegations

##### Failure to Provide Necessary Shelter

###### Environmental Hazards: includes

Animal waste, feces, infestations of rodents and insects.

###### Threatened Injury: includes

Threatening serious harm, such as throwing objects at a child that could cause serious harm, threatening them with known weapons, hurting or threatening to hurt other family members or animals, reckless discharge of a firearm.

###### Domestic Violence: includes

When an alleged offender has killed, substantially harmed, or is making believable threats to do so to anyone in a family, including extended family members and pets.

Maltreatment of children, pets, and other family members. (Note: This is a common practice definition of domestic violence and does not fully parallel Minnesota criminal statutes.)

# VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

## Australian Vets Get “3-R’s” Training on 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](#)*) are conducting a pilot program to train practitioners to recognize, respond and refer victims of domestic violence.

The authors 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.” While veterinarians are “potential touch-points” for victims, many feel they lack the confidence and capacity to respond.

Veterinarians in a pilot “3-R’s” training program reported marked improvements in their ability to recognize, respond, and refer survivors appropriately.

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

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***“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.”***

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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 ani-

mals 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)

### AVMA Considers Expanding DVMs’ Responsibility to Report Suspected Animal Abuse

A draft proposal being considered by the AVMA would add to the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics that “A veterinarian has an ethical responsibility to report suspected animal cruelty and/or abuse.”

The issue of reporting was not addressed in the 2015 edition of the PVME during a period when AVMA’s Policy Statement on Animal Abuse and Neglect was amended from “The AVMA considers it the responsibility of the veterinarian to report such cases to appropriate authorities” to only encouraging states to enact laws granting liability immunity to practitioners who choose to report (*See the [July 2019 LINK-Letter](#)*). That latter policy statement is currently under review. In addition, AVMA’s 2023 Framework for Identification and Response to Suspected or Known Animal Maltreatment specifies that because the interconnectedness of human and animal health, safety and welfare cannot be overstated, veterinarians have an “imperative to identify and respond” to suspected or known cases of animal abuse (*See the [November 2023 LINK-Letter](#)*).



# WSAVA Survey Shows Global Need for More Education on Animal Welfare



**Nienke Endenburg**

With veterinarians in many countries being urged to respond more systematically to cases of suspected animal abuse and neglect, a key concern raised by many practitioners is that they have not received either pre-professional or continuing education training in recognizing signs of suspected non-accidental injury. A [new research study](#) by the World Small Animal Veterinary Association — believed to be the first worldwide study of animal welfare education in the veterinary curriculum and the availability of continuing education on animal welfare — is reporting a need to improve education on animal welfare in veterinary curricula and continuing education, so that companion animal practitioners can keep abreast of developments and societal expectations.

Results were compiled from a survey, available in English, French, Mandarin, Spanish, and Russian, responded to by 1,167 companion animal practitioners in 67 countries.

Worldwide, 58.4% of respondents thought that animal welfare was poorly covered or not taught at all when they were students. While animal welfare is a fundamental component of veterinary science and should be part of the veterinary curriculum, the authors found that the time devoted to animal welfare in veterinary curricula differs substantially worldwide.

For example, in 2016 only six of 30 AVMA-accredited veterinary schools in the U.S. had a formal course with animal welfare or animal well-being in the title. In con-

trast, formal education in veterinary medicine is standardized at a national level in Italy, so that all veterinary students receive similar training in animal welfare. Elsewhere, such as in Latin America, much work needs to be done to incorporate such training, they found.

“The importance of animal welfare continues to evolve in response to society’s in-

creasing awareness of its relevance. Even so, it was rather disappointing to find that most of our respondents (58.4%) considered that animal welfare was poorly covered or not taught at all during their veterinary training. This is why non-governmental organizations have addressed animal welfare issues, even though veterinarians should be the main actors in promoting animal welfare in different scenarios,” they write.

Nienke Endenburg and colleagues at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands and in Singapore recognize that most respondents had graduated from veterinary colleges many years ago before animal welfare awareness and teaching became more commonplace and that in the last couple of years there has been a substantial increase in animal welfare teaching in European veterinary schools. “Similar changes may be happening in the rest of the world,” they note.

“Veterinarians can play a significant role in educating their clients, as well as the general public, about animal welfare.”

— Endenburg, N., Ryan, S., & van Lith, H.A. (2024). A global survey of companion animal veterinary practitioners on animal welfare teaching: Focus on undergraduate and continuing education, and clients’ sources of information. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 27(1), 57-104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888705.2022.2047681>



## What is The LINK?

Legislation...

Intervention...

Networking...

Knowledge...

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

# Building LINK Awareness

## Link Awareness Continues to Expand in Japan



Japan's Animal Literacy Research Institute has published an [extensive web page](#) that discusses how the knowledge on the LINK is applied to human service/ animal protection practice. An English-language translation is available.

**Sakiko Yamazaki**

**Putting LINK's Knowledge into Practice: Overseas Initiatives** contains six articles addressing the overall theme of putting insights into the linkage between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence into practice. "Now that we know that animal cruelty is linked to interpersonal violence, how can we return this knowledge to society?" asks ALRI Director Sakiko Yamazaki. She offers five opportunities:

### Awareness-raising activities and citizen education

She describes national and local campaigns in other countries and ways in which ordinary people can distribute this information for free. ALRI has also published a free infographic that can be used to spread the Link message.

### Cross-reporting

This initiative, which originated in North America, is an information-sharing system between animal protection authorities and social welfare agencies. Cross-reporting "expands the possibility of early detection of cases that are difficult for those who have jurisdiction over the form of violence to detect at an early stage," she writes.

### Cross-training

In order to get agencies to share information smoothly, mutual education on each organization's structure and related laws and regulations "are indispensable for interprofessional collaboration."

### Protecting pets that live with human victims of violence

There is a high risk that pets may also be victimized by domestic violence. Establishing domestic violence shelters where people can evacuate with their pets, or that offer off-site foster care for the animals with local agencies, are solutions. ALRI has guidelines for programs to protect these pets.

### Using knowledge of The Link to create a world where people and animals can live comfortably

"LINK is a concrete example of 'One Welfare', in which violence against both people and animals is connected, and where people can live in peace, animals can also live with peace of mind," Yamazaki writes. "In order to realize a world where people and animals can live in harmony and live more abundantly, the knowledge of 'LINK' is beginning to be used in practice."

## Pittsburgh Link Rescue Group Gains Publicity

A dog rescue program working in the Greater Pittsburgh, Pa. area has been getting local publicity about their efforts



to offer foster care for **Molly McAleer & Tim Lydon** pets of domestic violence victims. Tim Lydon and Molly McAleer, co-founders of [Harmony Dog Rescue](#), told the Pittsburgh [Union Progress](#) that their organization can take in 12 dogs but hope to improve that number.

Lydon said that the public does not understand The Link between domestic violence and animal abuse. "Many times a victim won't leave a pet [in the home] because they are afraid of what will happen to the pet if they go." Harmony Dog Rescue has developed a partnership with three domestic abuse shelters. "We just went to them and asked how we could help them serve this mission," he said.

## CROSS-REPORTING... and THE LINK

### Rescue of Starving Dog Saved Life of Neglected Child



The Oregon Humane Society posted an [online video](#) about a heroic dog whose road to rescue and recovery saved a young girl's life in a dramatic example of how humane officers' reporting of suspected child abuse can work.

"When an animal is the victim of neglect or abuse, the path to their rescue can sometimes reveal other victims," begins the narrative describing the case of "Piper". "The Link between cruelty to animals and violence towards humans has been well documented. This connection was painfully illustrated in the case of Piper."

The OHS cruelty investigations team, responding to a call from a worried neighbor, found a severely underweight dog. Piper was living in a tiny section of the kitchen, with barely enough room to turn around. A veterinary examination determined the problem was extreme neglect and a simple lack of food.

When an OHS agent returned to the home to cite the owner and request to take custody of Piper, he saw a disturbing sight: a young girl who had severe developmental delays, limited mobility and an inability to talk. Following his instincts that something wasn't quite right, he called Child Protective Services to share information. Oregon is one of 11 states where humane officers are specifically named as mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect (*See the February 2024 LINK -Letter*).

"Knowing the connection to the starving dog gave both caseworkers and medical providers a reason to assess the young girl's condition in a more comprehensive way," the video notes. The investigation revealed disturbing signs of child neglect. Both the girl and Piper were moved into foster care where they thrived.

"Laws in Oregon already recognized the connection between animal abuse and human abuse," the video notes, "but the laws were strengthened even further after this case by allowing and encouraging cross-reporting between those who work with animals and those who work with children when there are abuse concerns."

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***"There is no doubt that our knowledge of Piper's case saved this little girl's life."***  
***— Sue Skinner, M.D.***

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"There is no doubt that our knowledge of Piper's case saved this little girl's life," said Sue Skinner, MD, who examined the girl.

Piper was honored four years later with special recognition at the Oregon Humane Society's [Diamond Collar Awards](#), an annual fundraiser that recognizes animals and individuals for their kindness, diplomacy, resiliency and courage whose inspiring stories represent the 156-year-old organization's vision for a more humane society.

#### ***Permission to Reprint***

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](http://www.nationallinkcoalition.org).

#### ***For Additional Information***

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

## THE LINK... in the LITERATURE

### Animal Hoarding Convictions Compared for Rescuers and Non-Rescuers

This pilot study compared the likelihood of conviction and the imposition of penalties in 84 animal hoarding cases among established animal rescuers and those not so affiliated. It examined what additional characteristics of hoarding cases are associated with conviction and penalties. Rescue hoarders did not significantly differ from the nonaffiliated with regard to the likelihood of conviction or the imposition of legal penalties. A prior history of hoarding and the number of animals involved influenced case outcomes in limited and inconsistent respects; however, a preponderance of nonsignificant findings suggested that much judicial discretion operates in the prosecution of animal hoarding cases.

— Willetts, M.C. (2022). *Convictions and penalties among rescue and non-rescue nonhuman-animal hoarders. Society & Animals, 31*(5-6), 707-725. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-bja10070>

### Case Study Finds International Crime Network in Brazilian Dogfighting

Citing how “dog fighting has been controlled mostly by criminal organizations and accompanied by illegal gambling and drug trafficking,” veterinary forensics researchers in Brazil published a case report about a dogfighting investigation that featured 27 pit bulls and an international ring of organizers from the U.S., Mexico and Peru. The prosecution resulted in the first dogfighting conviction and the highest criminal sentence for animal cruelty in Brazil to date, serving as case law for future prosecutions. Dog fighting was not addressed as crime by the Brazilian Justice system until this case, which brought widespread media coverage and ultimately led to criminal convictions.

— Espejo, E., Galante, A., Tremori, T.M., Kmetiuk, L.B., & Laiola, M.A., et al. (2024). *Case report: First criminal conviction of dog fighting in Brazil; An international network organization. Frontiers in Veterinary Science, 10*-2023. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2023.1327436>

### Flowchart Guides Forensics When Cats or Dogs Scavenge Human Remains

Forensic experts in Switzerland have created a flowchart to guide systematic collections of data at indoor forensic scenes where cats and dogs have scavenged human remains. This situation can occur when pets have access to the body and their deceased owners were socially distanced. Pets feeding on corpses have implications for trauma analysis, assessment of the cause of death, estimation of the postmortem interval, and recovery of the complete set of remains. The article includes a literature review for cat and canine scavenging and seven cases from Switzerland with cat and/or dog involvement. The authors provide a practical basis for feline and canine scavenging and its differentiation, summarize strategies and present a flowchart to use in forensic casework of suspected indoor scavenging.

— Indra, L., Schyma, C., & Lösch, S. (2023, Dec. 16). *Cat and dog scavenging at indoor forensic scenes: Strategies for documentation and detection. Forensic Science, Medicine & Pathology. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12024-023-00762-8*

### Link May be Rooted in Gender-Based Domination, Prejudice and Speciesism

A study from Colombia examines how animal cruelty, interpersonal violence, aggressive behaviors, and interspecies and social domination are impacted by genderization and masculinization of these types of violence. It includes the impact of psychic numbing and emotional desensitization to animal killing among employees whose environments are saturated with death, such as slaughterhouses and bullrings. Dehumanization of human victims was associated with increases in racial or ethnic prejudice and sexism that intertwined with animalization processes based on discrimination against the species—speciesism. Given that males tend to participate more in hunting, abuse and animal cruelty, a psychosocial process of genderization could be proposed on interspecies and animal exploitation practices, which, in turn, would be articulated with other forms of prejudice and discrimination.

— Ponce León, J. J. (2024). *De la crueldad animal a la dominación social interespecie y el autoritarismo: una revisión teórica desde la psicología social. Tabula Rasa, 49*, 151-178. <https://doi.org/10.25058/20112742.n49.08>



## THE LINK... in the LITERATURE

### SCAS Announces Funding for Research Projects

The U.K.'s Society for Companion Animal Studies is accepting applications until March 31 to support One Health/One Welfare-themed research on the emotional, psychological, and physical interactions of people, animals, and the environment. While five of the six focus areas for grants address therapy, service and assistance animals, one focus area — “Health and well-being of animals and their human counterparts” and how this impacts the human-animal bond— might be applicable to Link studies.



British and international organizations, universities, individuals and consortiums that work in multidisciplinary human and animal welfare are invited to apply. SCAS will award up to:

- 5 £10,000 awards to prime the pump for research
- 2 £1,500 undergraduate student awards
- 1 £ 1,500 award to support open access publication

Proposed projects must address clearly the key objectives of SCAS:

- Advance the understanding of relationships between people and companion animals
- Promote the quality of life of people and companion animals by encouraging responsible attitudes
- Disseminate information about human/companion animal relationships

Details about the application process, including an online application form, FAQs and guidance for applicants, are available on the [SCAS website](#).

## The LINK — Animal Abuse and Other Crimes

### Severe Threat Protective Orders Could Bar Animal Abusers from Having Guns

Four bills introduced in the Arizona State Legislature would address the risk of animal abuse as a precursor to other crimes by prohibiting animal cruelty offenders from possessing firearms.

**HB 2238**, **HB 2756** and **SB 1643** would explicitly allow individuals to petition courts to issue a Severe Threat Order of Protection against an individual who has committed or attempted to commit a credible threat of death or serious physical injury to self or others or cruel mistreatment of an animal. The Severe Threat Order would prohibit the respondent from possessing firearms. Violation of the protective order would be a Class 4 felony. The prime sponsors are Rep. Jennifer Longdon and Sen. Anna Hernandez.

**HB 2234** would require courts to prohibit individuals who have been convicted of domestic violence from possessing firearms. This



measure would **Rep. Longdon, left, & Sen. Hernandez** also implicitly address acts of animal cruelty and neglect, which under Arizona law are defined as domestic violence if committed as a way to intimidate, coerce or control a spouse, partner or child. The bill is also sponsored by Rep. Longdon.

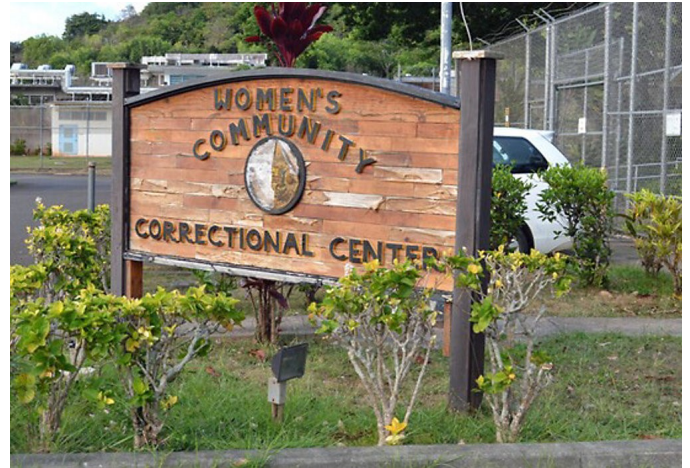
## Therapeutic Interventions and THE LINK

### Bills Would Fund Offenders' Foster Cat Care Program in Hawai'i Prison

Two bills in the Hawai'i Legislature would allocate \$100,000 in state funds to enable women incarcerated in the Women's Community Correctional Center to care for Hawaiian Humane Society cats until they are ready to be adopted.

"Programs like this all across parts of continental U.S. are giving [inmates] a bigger purpose, teaching them work ethic and other really incredible qualities to be able to prepare them for life outside of the prison system," Brandy Shimabukuro, Hawaiian Humane Society's Manger of Communications, told [KHON-TV](#).

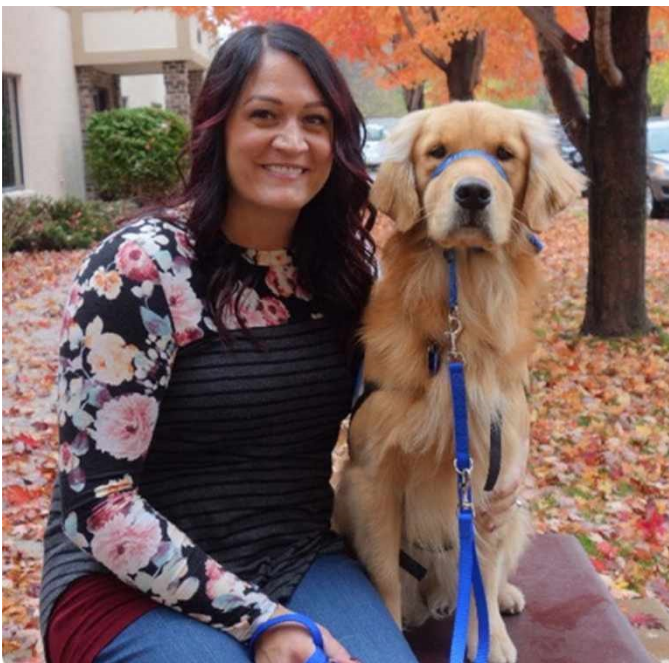
The two-year pilot program, which would help rehabilitate inmates and free up space at the animal shelter, would be a win-win for the society and the community, said Sen. Glenn Wakai, co-sponsor of **SB 2094**. A companion measure, **HB 2226**, is also moving through the Legislature. The facility, located in Kailua, is the only women's prison in the state.



The preamble to the proposal emphasizes that prison pet foster care programs elsewhere in the U.S. have been shown to reduce recidivism by improving:

- Offenders' sense of personal responsibility
- Relationships among inmates, staff and administrators
- Inmates' self-esteem, self-efficacy, empathy, emotional intelligence, coping skills, work ethic, and employability.

### Minnesota Courtroom Comfort Dog Inducted into Hall of Fame



"Nova" and her handler, Keli Trautman

A prosecutor's courtroom therapy dog who opened a path for other facility dogs to work in Minnesota has been given a special recognition.

"Nova" was honored by the Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association with its Hall of Fame Professional Award. Nova has worked for the [Stearns County Attorney's Office](#) since 2020 and was trained to comfort victims of crime, especially children who have been abused.

Since becoming the first facility dog in Minnesota, Nova has been allowed on the stand in several cases, including one where she spent almost six hours accompanying a child abuse victim. The MVMA recognized her with their Professional Award for animals that are especially trained to assist humans.

## LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

### Legislators Get The Link in Hawai'i and Minnesota

An underlying premise of The Link is that legislators are more likely to consider animal welfare proposals that are based on how animal abuse can also harm people.

That premise is understood in Hawai'i, where three bills have been introduced that explicitly cite The Link in calling for stronger penalties for animal cruelty crimes.

**HB 1580**, introduced by Rep. Darius Kila, would raise the category of felony animal cruelty. Dogfighting

offenses would also be increased by one class. Interference with a service animal or law enforcement animal would be upgraded from a misdemeanor to a Class C felony.

Sexual assault of an animal — which wasn't made illegal in Hawai'i until 2021 — would be upgraded from a misdemeanor to a felony.

Significantly, the preamble to **HB 1580** reads:

**"The legislature finds that animal cruelty offenders are a threat to the health and safety of all members of our communities, especially vulnerable populations. Recent research has shown that animal cruelty is a predictive and co-occurring crime with violence against humans, including children, intimate partners, and the elderly. Psychological stud-**

**ies show that 70% of violent criminals began by abusing animals. Children who witness animal abuse are also more likely to abuse animals as teenagers and adults."**

**HB 1980** and **SB 2684**, introduced by Rep. David Tarnas and Sen. Karl Rhoads, would add a new statute out-

lawing "fighting birds," with felony penalties for causing or allowing a fight, keeping fighting birds, attending or gambling on a bird fight or possessing bird-fighting equipment.

Again, the preambles to these two bills are significant:

**"The legislature finds that illegal animal fighting is directly associated with other criminal activities such as illegal gambling, illegal firearms possession, illegal drug distribution, endangerment of minors, and human violence, as evidenced by a double homicide that occurred at an illegal bird fighting operation in Maili, Oahu, in April of 2023, and this was but one of a number of cases of human violence occurring at an illegal animal fight over the years.**

**"Further, Hawai'i is one of only eight states that lacks a felony penalty for animal fights between birds**

**and has no existing penalty for attending a fight or allowing a minor to attend a fight. Psychologists and criminologists have long determined that children exposed to human or animal violence, or who engage in animal cruelty, are more likely to escalate to violence against humans, threatening the overall community and public safety."**

The two latter bills further note: "The purpose of this Act is to strengthen existing laws relating to the fighting of birds to more closely mirror those of existing state dogfighting laws, and to deter such illegal activity and its associated crimes, for the protection of human and animal health, welfare, and public safety."

#### Minnesota Bills Would Consolidate Animal Cruelty Enforcement — Based on The Link

In Minnesota, **SF 3542** and **HF 3799** would create a comprehensive and centralized state Office of Animal Protection, under the Department of Public Safety's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. Similar to the Hawai'i bills, the Minnesota's Legislative Finding states:

**"The Legislature finds that animal cruelty is linked to human violence and criminal activity and that there is an ongoing need across the state to better prevent and respond to incidents of animal cruelty...so as to protect the public's peace, health, and safety."**



Rep. David Tarnas



Sen. Karl Rhoads



## LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

# THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES — 2024

Most 2024 state legislative sessions are in full swing, with 60 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.

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 2234, HB 2756 and SB 1643** would require courts to prohibit individuals who have been convicted of domestic violence — which in Arizona includes coercive acts of animal cruelty — from possessing firearms.

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 2238** would allow individuals to petition courts to issue a Severe Threat Order of Protection against an individual who has committed or attempted a credible threat of death or serious physical injury to self or others or

cruel mistreatment of an animal. The order would prohibit the respondent from possessing firearms. Violation of the protective order would be a Class 4 felony.

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 2241** would expand the definition of bestiality to include possessing, distributing, transporting, exhibiting, selling, purchasing, electronically transmitting, or exchanging any visual depiction of a person engaged in sexual conduct with an animal. The crime would be a Class 1 misdemeanor unless the depicted person is a minor under 15 years old, in which case it becomes a Class 6 felony.

### 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.

**SB 902** would prohibit persons convicted of animal cruelty from possessing a firearm for 10 years.



**NEW THIS MONTH: AB 1215** would have appropriated 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**.

**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.

**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.

**NEW THIS MONTH: AB 2917** would expand provisions allowing courts to issue gun violence restraining orders, prohibiting a person from purchasing or possessing a firearm for 1 to 5 years, to individuals with a history of cruelty to animals.

## 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

**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.

**NEW THIS MONTH: SB 418** would require the basic and in-service training courses for all peace officers to include animal fighting and recognition of animal abuse.

## HAWAII

**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.

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 1580**, declaring that "animal cruelty offenders are a threat to the health and safety of all members of our communities, especially vulnerable populations," and that "animal cruelty is a predictive and co-occurring crime with violence against humans," would increase the category of offense and penalties for animal cruelty, animal fighting, and sexual assault of an animal.

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 1980 and SB 2684**, declaring that "illegal animal fighting is directly associated with other criminal activities such as illegal gambling, firearms possession, drug distribution, engagement of minors, and human violence," would increase the penalty for cockfighting to a felony and impose fines on persons who attend or gamble on a cockfight.

## IDAHO

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 512** would set minimum incarceration limits and increase penalties for offenders who induce children to commit bestiality or participate in ritual animal sacrifices. Offenders with history of multiple crimes would be ineligible for probation, parole or suspended sentences.

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 537** would limit the crime of bestiality with a minor child to offenders who are at least four years older than the child.

## ILLINOIS

**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.

**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.

**HB 3454** would make the theft of any animal a Class 4 felony.

## IOWA

**SF 2180 and HF 2318** 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.

Purple = Domestic Violence

Dark Blue = Child Abuse

Grey = Elder/Disabled Abuse

Pink = Animal Sexual Abuse

Green = Cross-Reporting

Orange = Court Animal Advocates

Red = Animal Hoarding

Brown = Assessments/Interventions

Light Blue = Link & Other Crimes

### NEW THIS MONTH: HF 472 and

SF 316 would grant veterinarians who act in good faith immunity from civil, criminal and administrative liability for cooperating with law enforcement officers, reporting suspected animal cruelty or neglect, rescuing a threatened animal, and serving as an expert witness in a cruelty case.

### KENTUCKY

#### 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

SB 17 and HB 667 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.4241 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

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.

HB 5410 would replace the archaic "abominable and detestable crime against nature either with mankind or with any animal" with the term "bestiality."

### MINNESOTA

SF 3324 and HF 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 HF 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 THIS MONTH: SF 3542 and

HF 3799 would create a comprehensive and centralized state Office of Animal Protection, under the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, based on the premise that "animal cruelty is linked to human violence and criminal activity."

### MISSOURI

#### NEW THIS MONTH: HB 1695,

SB 1259 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.

Purple = Domestic Violence

Dark Blue = Child Abuse

Grey = Elder/Disabled Abuse

Pink = Animal Sexual Abuse

Green = Cross-Reporting

Orange = Court Animal Advocates

Red = Animal Hoarding

Brown = Assessments/Interventions

Light Blue = Link & Other Crimes

## 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 law enforcement 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.

Purple = Domestic Violence

Dark Blue = Child Abuse

Grey = Elder/Disabled Abuse

Pink = Animal Sexual Abuse

Green = Cross-Reporting

Orange = Court Animal Advocates

Red = Animal Hoarding

Brown = Assessments/Interventions

Light Blue = Link & Other Crimes

## NEW MEXICO

**NEW THIS MONTH: SB 12** would have replaced 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 also would have allowed courts to include pets in protection-from abuse orders. **The bill died when the Legislature adjourned.**

**SUCCESS!!! HB 2**, the state's budget bill, included \$360,000 for the next two years to fund Children, Youth & Families' programs to provide and support temporary safe havens for the animals of domestic violence victims while they transition to safety.

## 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 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 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 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 aggravated animal cruelty committed in the presence of a child. The bills are in the Assembly Agriculture and Judiciary Committees, respectively.

**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 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.

**S 96** would enact “Kirby & Quigley’s Law” expanding the definition of aggravated cruelty to animals to include harm to a companion animal during the commission of a felony. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

**NEW THIS MONTH: S 5337, S 8471 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.

**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.

**NEW THIS MONTH: A 8901** would add the harming, interference, harassment or intimidation of a service animal belonging to a current or former family member to the definition of a “domestic violence crime.”

## OHIO

**SB 187** would prohibit individuals convicted of domestic violence from acquiring, having or using a firearm.

## OREGON

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 4043** would increase the potential penalties for committing felony-level aggravated animal cruelty if the offense involved domestic violence or occurred in the presence of a child.

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 4145** would create several levels of a state crime of creating, encouraging or failing to report a display of “animal crushing” videos.

**NEW THIS MONTH: SB 1574** would add sexual abuse of a corpse to the list of sex crimes for the purpose of sex offender reporting and would allow the Department of Transportation to share motor vehicle records with humane special agents.

## 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.

**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.

Purple = Domestic Violence

Dark Blue = Child Abuse

Grey = Elder/Disabled Abuse

Pink = Animal Sexual Abuse

Green = Cross-Reporting

Orange = Court Animal Advocates

Red = Animal Hoarding

Brown = Assessments/Interventions

Light Blue = Link & Other Crimes



**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 and the House 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.

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 1928** would require courts to consider a party's conviction for animal cruelty or animal fighting offenses in determining child custody that is in the safest interests of the child.

**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

**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.

**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.

## TENNESSEE

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 2302 and SB 2116** increase from 15 days to 15 business days the time period a court may send notification of a defendant's conviction of aggravated cruelty to animals to the appropriate protective agencies if the defendant resides in a household with minor children or elderly individuals.

Purple = Domestic Violence  
Dark Blue = Child Abuse  
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**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 2068 and SB 1782** would increase the penalties for cockfighting from a misdemeanor to a felony and add a fine of \$1,000—\$2,500 for attending a cockfight.

**NEW THIS MONTH: SB 1957 and HB 2079** would permit veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty and testify in court in good faith with immunity from civil and criminal liability.

## UTAH

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

**HB 478** would add a new category of animal care standards for breeders, shelters and rescues and would grant veterinarians freedom from civil liability for reporting a violation in good faith.

## VERMONT

**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

**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.

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 5146** would prohibit animal hoarding, punishable by a fine of \$500 and seizure of the animals by an animal shelter.

## WYOMING

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 77** would add "threatening or menacing conduct that causes another person to reasonably believe that the person is in danger of an imminent battery" to the definition of domestic assault.



## 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](http://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

**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 20: Pittsfield, Mass. (online):** The [Human-Animal Violence Education Network](#) (HAVEN) will meet.

**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 Don't Forget the Pets [training workshop](#) on creating and sustaining housing programs for people and pets in crisis.

**April 11 — Elkton, Md.:** [Don't Forget the Pets](#) will hold a workshop on creating and sustaining pet housing programs for survivors of domestic violence and the homeless.

**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 14 — Tokyo, Japan (online):** The Animal Literacy Research Institute and the Japanese Association for the Promotion of Good Canine Citizens will present a [webinar](#), "What is the 'LINK'? The Connection Between Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Violence."

**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 24<sup>th</sup> 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 [10<sup>th</sup> 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](#).

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

**June 21-25 — Austin, Texas:** Rachel Touroo will discuss how veterinarians can be expert witnesses, and Jody Lovejoy will discuss how hospitals can develop a Standard Operating Procedure for addressing suspected animal cruelty, at the [AVMA Convention](#).

**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 8<sup>th</sup> [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):** The [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 NCJFCJ 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](#).

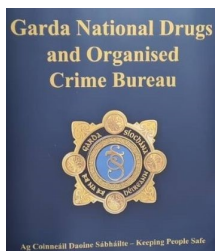
**Nov. 20 (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its monthly meeting.

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



## THE LINK... in the NEWS

### Dog Fighter on the Lam Caught with €1.9 Million Worth of Cocaine



A British man who had 16 prior convictions for animal cruelty and was seen as a key figure in the world of organized dog fighting was captured in County Kildare, Ireland with 27 kilos of cocaine after being on the run from UK authorities for six years. John Donaghy, alias

John Knibbs, 59, a father of six, admitted having €1.9 million worth of cocaine in his car and € 110,000 in cash in his home. The [Sunday World](#) said he was holding the drugs and cash for an organized crime ring. He was breeding dogs despite having been banned for life from keeping dogs after being convicted of dog fighting in 2009 and again on other animal charges in 2016 and 2019.

You may notice a slight change in the format of our “LINK in the News” section starting this month. Rather than glorify the perpetrators accused of Link crimes by displaying their mug shots, we are instead honoring the dedicated law enforcement agencies who enforce laws addressing animal cruelty and other crimes.

### Former Sailor Gets 10 Years in Federal Prison for Child and Animal Pornography

A former Navy sailor was sentenced in U.S. District Court to 10 years in federal prison, followed by 15 years of supervised release, after being convicted of distributing child pornography and distributing an animal crush video. William Vincent, 31, of Peachtree City, Ga., had pled guilty to distributing child pornography and a video of himself engaging in a sex act with a dog. Vincent used a cloud-based instant messaging service to unlawfully distribute the videos, unaware that the recipient of the videos was an undercover employee of the FBI. FBI agents executing a federal search at Vincent's home found more than 970 videos of child sexual abuse and dozens of bestiality videos. This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative led by United States Attorneys' Offices around the country designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. “In addition to collecting and trafficking horrific images of child rape, Vincent sexually abused an animal,” said U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia Ryan K. Buchanan. “With Vincent now unable to exploit the most vulnerable amongst us, our community is safer.”



### Man Gets 4-1/2 Years for Torturing Cat, Assaulting Disabled Roommate

A Howell, N.J. man who forced his roommate, a 59-year-old physically and developmentally disabled woman, to watch as he beheaded his cat, and then

assaulted her, was sentenced to 4-1/2 years in prison. Christopher Sanchez, 29, told investigators he wanted to keep the cat's head as a trophy.

The [Asbury Park Press](#) reported that the woman said she suspects Sanchez has killed “many cats in the neighborhood” and forced her to watch gory videos of a man torturing and killing a dog. “He told me, ‘I want to kill you so badly,’” she said.







## ***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.

## **Woman Tried for Killing Boyfriend Who Hurt Her Cat**



Nanaimo

A woman in British Columbia, Canada, being tried for murdering her boyfriend, cutting up his remains, and keeping his body in her apartment for six months while she disposed of his body parts in city parks told police that his hurting her cat had been the last straw before the killing. The [National Post](#), reporting that "Trial Hears of Link between Pet and Spousal Abuse," said Paris Laroche, 28, is accused of hitting Sidney Mantee, 32, in the head with a hammer while he slept. She reportedly admitted the killing to two undercover officers who pretended to help her dispose of the body parts. The defense is arguing that a person isn't guilty under the Criminal Code if they have reasonable grounds that a threat of force will be used against them; Laroche said Mantee had threatened to kill her family and friends. Link sociologist Amy Fitzgerald testified in her case that in households where pets are threatened or harmed, the victims have a 25% increased probability of fearing for their life from the abuser.

## **Florida Couple Charged with Bestiality**



A husband and wife from North Fort Myers, Fla., are facing animal cruelty charges after the Lee County Sheriff's Office alleged they committed and recorded sexual activities with a family dog. Authorities said Samantha White, 26, had sexual intercourse with the dog multiple times while her husband, John White, 29, recorded the encounters. The [Fort Myers News-Press](#) reported that Lee County Domestic Animal Services subsequently removed four dogs from the home and evaluated them for injuries. The Lee County Sheriff's Office has a full-scale [Animal Cruelty Task Force](#). "The actions of the Whites are repugnant and a clear violation of the trust and care that pets should expect from their owners," said Sheriff Carmine Marceno, who cites "a startling propensity for offenders charged with crimes against animals to commit other violent offenses toward human victims."

## **Woman Pleads Guilty to Monkey "Crush Videos"**



United States  
Attorney's Office  
Middle District of Florida

A Jacksonville, Fla. woman

who was part of an online group that swapped videos and messages of monkeys being tortured and killed ([See the December 2023 LINK-Letter](#)) has pled guilty to federal violations of "crush video" laws. The [U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida](#) announced that Nicole Danielle Devilbiss, 35, pled guilty under a plea agreement to conspiring to create and circulate the videos. She faces up to five years in prison. She was the administrator of a group-chat app dedicated to the abuse, torture, sadistic mutilation, and death of monkeys. Prosecutors said she sent at least three payments to help fund the videos, some of which were filmed in Indonesia. A sentencing date has not yet been set.

## 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.

I.R.S. 501c3 tax ID  
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Join us!



NationalLinkCoalition.org



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