



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



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**FIRST RESPONDERS... and The LINK**

**Maine Link Training Reaches First Responders in Animal Cruelty Cases**

Link training returned to Maine in April thanks to the [Maine Animal Control Association](#)'s 2024 Professional Development Training program. National Link Coalition President & Secretary Phil Arkow was one of a group of speakers who addressed issues involving the interagency collaborations necessary to enforce and prosecute animal control, wildlife, narcotics, and zoonotic disease cases.



Arkow's presentation, "We're All in This Together! Pooling Limited Animal Control Resources to Help People and Animals" was well-received by the first responders in live and virtual attendance. Other speakers included assistant district attorneys, behavioral health liaisons, police chiefs, drug enforcement agents, and wildlife wardens.

The training program, held under the auspices of the Maine Municipal Association, emphasized that all animal cruelty cases deal with a behavioral health issue at some level; local law enforcement agencies are embracing this concept and are integrating Behavioral Health Liaisons into their departments to address animal cruelty calls. The Maine Animal Control Association is also working with the state prosecutors' association to try to get dedicated district attorneys in every county who can handle animal cruelty cases.

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**A NOTE TO OUR READERS:**  
The LINK-Letter will be taking a much-needed vacation in June. We'll be back in July with lots of new news about animal abuse's LINKS with other crimes and acts of violence.

**MAKE A DONATION**

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and The LINK

## 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.*

## UK Cat Fostering Group Plans Expansion



What is believed to be one of only a handful of programs in the UK specializing in fostering the feline victims of domestic violence ([See the July 2018 LINK-Letter](#)) has announced plans to expand its services. Lifeline, formerly known as Paws Protect, is Cats Protection's specialist cat fostering service for people and pets fleeing domestic abuse.

Lifeline is currently available across the South East (London, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Kent, Sussex, Surrey and Hampshire), and throughout Yorkshire, East Anglia and the Midlands. The organization is looking to expand its services to more regions across the UK, and will launch in Scotland and Wales in 2024.

Cats Protection offers a free and confidential fostering service for cats whose families are fleeing domestic abuse so they can rest assured their cat will be taken care of until they can be safely reunited. Referrals are handled by a specialist and experienced team who support owners referring to the service, arrange to collect cats, and organize foster placements through a network of dedicated Lifeline volunteers.

## Minnesota Animal Groups Collaborate to Foster Pets of Domestic Violence

A coalition of Minnesota humane and animal rescue groups have formed a collaborative to help keep pets surviving domestic violence safe. A [press release](#) announced that the [Animal Humane Society](#), [The Bond Between](#) and [Four Winds Connections](#) have formed the Minnesota Pet Foster Coalition. The group will provide short- and long-term foster care for domestic violence victims who are staying in emergency housing at [Women's Advocates](#), [Cornerstone](#), and [Tubman](#).

The coalition is seeking foster families who can care for these pets for as short as 72 hours or as long as 90 days, or who can provide transport services. The coalition will pay all costs of veterinary care, pet supplies, training, and compensation for gas and mileage.

"It's really important to have safe spaces for animals; it helps reduce barriers for women who need to access shelter and housing," said Holly Henning, Executive Director at Women's Advocates.

The Coalition is meeting gaps in services for pet victims of domestic violence in the heavily populated Twin Cities region. There are currently [five Minnesota domestic violence shelters](#) that accept pets, but they are located in more outlying areas of the state.

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and The LINK

## Pennsylvania To Try (Again) to Enact Pet Protection Orders

Perhaps the fourth time is the charm for Pet Protection Orders in Pennsylvania, where **SB 1105** was introduced on March 24, as a companion to **HB 1210** introduced in May, 2023, in another effort to finally allow Pennsylvania courts to include companion animals in protection-from-abuse orders.



Sen. Daniel Laughlin

The bills which have six co-sponsors in the Senate and 29 co-sponsors in the House, differ slightly from similar measures in other states in that they include companion animals not only in domestic violence orders, but also in child abuse protection orders.

The bills would allow courts to grant temporary ownership rights over a companion animal. In another unusual provision, the court could direct the defendant to refrain from possessing, contacting, attempting to contact, transferring or relocating the companion animal, and also from “contacting or entering the property of any person sheltering the companion animal.”

The movement to include pets in domestic violence protection orders began in Maine in 2006 and has quickly spread to 40 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Pennsylvania is the most populous of the states lacking pet protection orders.

Similar bills in Pennsylvania were defeated in 2015, 2018 and 2022.

“Offenders often use animals as tools in their abuse, exploiting the close bond victims have with their companion animals, preventing victims from escaping their abuser. Unfortunately, this form of coercive control is extremely effective. Please join me in co-sponsoring this important piece of legislation by allowing judges to extend protection from abuse to the victim’s pets alleviating additional stress to the victim,” said Sen. Daniel Laughlin (R—Erie) in introducing the Senate version of the bill.

### STATES STILL LACKING PROTECTION FOR PETS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTECTIVE ORDERS

STATE	FEMALE POPULATION
Alabama	2,595,000
Georgia	5,529,000
Idaho	946,000
Kansas	1,461,000
Mississippi	1,513,000
Montana	543,000
New Mexico	1,064,000
North Dakota	375,000
Pennsylvania	6,559,000
South Dakota	443,000

### *Join Us In Our Mission!*

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

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and The LINK

## Family Justice Centers: Harnessing the Remarkable Power of “We”

Much as Children’s Advocacy Centers create multidisciplinary community partnerships to address the needs of abused children, Family Justice Centers (FJCs) have pioneered a similar concept to provide support, resources and a sense of community for domestic violence survivors and their children. There are now 150 FJCs in the U.S. and another 150 in other countries, creating a movement and helping survivors navigate the complexities of multiple systems and resources.



These FJCs all harness what Gael Strack, CEO and co-founder of the [Alliance for Hope International](#), calls “The Remarkable Power of We”. That message was promoted repeatedly at the Alliance’s 24<sup>th</sup> annual International Family Justice Association conference for 700 participants.

**Gael Strack** Two presentations from the National Link Coalition introduced FJCs to the concept that “We” includes the animal members of families and also the animal care and control agencies, veterinarians, and other animal-based resources which have yet to be widely included in community FJC partnerships.

“The power of ‘We’ includes recognizing the intense bonds between survivors and their pets and how fear for the animals’ welfare is a barrier to seeking safety,” said Phil Arkow, Coalition President & Secretary, in a plenary presentation. “It includes adding animal agencies into community coalitions. And it includes recognizing that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century families define their ‘we’ as including members who have four legs.”

“This week is about justice and hope,” said Casey Gwinn, President and co-founder of the Alliance, explaining that survivors don’t need just a program, they need a relationship with people who can help them and a community where they feel welcomed. “We all believe in collaborations and partnerships. Hope is a **Casey Gwinn** team sport,” said Gwinn, co-author of a book on “The Science of Hope.” “Survivors have a better chance of surviving when they’re surrounded by a like-minded community.”



Children’s Advocacy Centers served as a model of collaboration to overcome the effect of professional sectors operating in silos. “People are threatened by collaboratives,” Gwinn said, describing the challenges faced by people trying to build community coalitions.

“They fear they’re going to lose their influence and power. Our job is to help survivors find their pathway, make their own decisions and make their own

**“Outcomes are always better in a collaborative world. Silos are normal but are not the best practices.”**

**—Casey Gwinn**

choices. You will never succeed if you go down that road alone. You need to bring a team. That’s the power of ‘We’ when we go down that road,” he added. “Outcomes are always better in a collaborative world. Silos are normal but are not the best practices.”

Participants described how their FJCs operate as “umbrella” service centers. Survivors and their children can find safety, hope, healing and community in one place. They simplify what has become a torturous path navigating all the systems affecting domestic violence survivors, such as legal services, job readiness training, forensic medical examinations, primary and behavioral healthcare, multilingual services, and educational programs so children who get caught in the crossfire of domestic violence can keep up with school. A handful of FJCs have programs that include visiting therapy dogs or clients’ own pets.

*(Continued on Page 5)*



**Domestic violence survivors’ convoluted path to healing through many agencies and systems was depicted in this model from the Ventura County, Calif. FJC.**

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and The LINK

## Family Justice Centers: Harnessing the Remarkable Power of “We”

*(Continued from Page 4)*

In addition to the alliance of FJCs, the Alliance for Hope International conducts five other programs:

The **Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention** is training family violence prevention professionals worldwide on how strangulation is an extreme risk factor for domestic violence homicides.

**Camp Hope** programs provide pathways to hope and healing for children in 26 states and four other countries who have been impacted by domestic violence.

The **VOICES Survivor Network** elevates survivors’ stories of hope, courage and empowerment by building a framework to find and train survivors who are ready to share their stories.

**DomesticShelters.org** offers the largest collection of online resources for survivors and professionals, including information about pet-friendly shelters.

**The Justice Project** provides consultation and forensic services in suspicious cases of “hidden homicides”: victims of strangulation whose abusers were “getting away with murder.”



**Rosie Hidalgo**

Rosie Hidalgo, Director of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Violence Against Women, offered a vision for reducing gender-based violence in America. OVW is commemorating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of enactment of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that had been championed by then-Sen. Joe Biden. She recognized the lived experiences of survivors and the community partners on the front lines who are working with them.

“There is no doubt that the remarkable power of ‘We’ is where the real power is found,” Hidalgo said. “We need to work collaboratively, not in silos, because survivors don’t live in silos. When we begin to collaborate and realize it takes a coordinated approach and that no one size fits all, we can help advance survivors on their journey.”

## Tips Offered to Keep You — and Pets — Safe from Domestic Violence

[DomesticShelters.org](https://www.domesticshelters.org) has published a list of suggestions to help domestic violence survivors protect their pets from abusive partners who may take out their aggression or revenge on household animals. “Oftentimes, animal abuse is not a problem with temper or anger management, but rather a way to establish power over a human victim by killing, harming or threatening to harm their pets and rob survivors of the comfort they provide,” the article notes.

The helpful suggestions include:

- Get documentation in your name to establish that you were the original owner of the pet or provided the majority of its care while it was in a shared home, such as adoption or purchase papers, licenses or microchips, and bills for vets, boarding, grooming and pet supplies.
- Make sure your partner is not listed as a contact on the pet’s microchip.
- Don’t leave pets unattended outdoors for extended periods of time.
- Find other groomers, vets, doggy day care and dog parks after you relocate — places where your abuser won’t find you.
- Avoid leaving your pets with the abuser.



# CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK

## Pennsylvania Adds Animal Cruelty History to Child Custody Decisions

Citing both a “duty to protect all children” in the Commonwealth and how “domestic abuse is a pattern of abuse within the family or household and can include

abuse of a partner, spouse, child or pet,” Pennsylvania Gov. John Shapiro signed **SB 55** into law on April 15. The new law will give courts more specific guidance in questions of child custody to ensure that the child’s health, safety and welfare “must be the first priority in all decisions” and are “protected and regarded as issues of paramount importance.”



Gov. Josh Shapiro

Among the new law’s provisions, courts will now have to consider whether any party seeking child custody has been convicted of or pleaded guilty or no contest to cruelty or aggravated cruelty to animals, animal fighting, or possession of animal fighting paraphernalia. Current law includes a history of animal sexual abuse among offenses that must be considered.

If the court awards custody to a person with a history of abuse or a risk of harm to the child or a household member, the court shall include safety conditions, restrictions or safeguards necessary to protect the child or the abused party in the custody order.

The new provisions emphasize that no single factor is determinative in the awarding of custody, but that the court shall examine the totality of circumstances, giving weighted consideration to factors that affect the safety and best interests of the child.

The law enables the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts to develop and implement an ongoing continuing education and training programs for judges and other court personnel on various aspects of child maltreatment. However, the impact of animal cruelty witnessed or committed by children is not specifically identified in the curriculum.

**← AT LEFT:**  
Connecticut’s Department of Children & Families designed these handy cards to help animal control officers identify telltale signs of child abuse and how to report it. A similar card for DCF workers for reporting animal abuse was also created.

### Report Child Abuse

*You Might Also Save an Animal's Life!*

#### SIGNS OF PHYSICAL CHILD ABUSE

- Unexplained bruises, welts, burns, fractures, lacerations, abrasions
- Child is wary of adult contacts, afraid to go home
- Child reports injury by parents
- Clothing covers body excessively
- Parents attempt to conceal child's injury or seem unconcerned
- Inconsistent or inadequate explanation of injury
- Discipline not consistent with child's age, condition or behavior

#### SIGNS OF CHILD NEGLECT

- Consistent lack of supervision, abandonment
- Inappropriate dress for weather
- Consistent hunger, fatigue, school absences
- Animal or human feces, urine, garbage, broken glass in home
- Untreated illnesses, lice, poor hygiene
- Premises overrun with vermin
- Appliances not working, utilities disconnected
- Hazardous electrical or heating connections
- Unwashed eating utensils, inadequate bedding
- Access to medicines, cleaning compounds
- Family eating animal food

#### SIGNS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Pain, itching, bruises or bleeding in genital area
- Venereal disease, frequent urinary or yeast infection
- Rigid, restrictive home environment
- Parent jealous, overly protective, or isolates child from friends
- Threatened by physical contact, afraid to be alone with men

**REMEMBER: When there are signs of animal abuse or domestic violence, children should be considered at risk**

#### HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

If you have reasonable suspicion to believe that a child is suffering from abuse or neglect, call the agency below.  
Provide specific details:  
Date, Time, What you observed, Your contact details.

**ANIMAL ABUSE OFTEN INDICATES CHILD MALTREATMENT:  
PROMPT REPORTING CAN SAVE LIVES!**

# VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

## Social Work Lecturer Trying to Bring Veterinary Social Work to the U.K.

The field of Veterinary Social Work has gained a foothold in the U.S., but has not yet been established on the “other side of the pond.” A Senior Lecturer in Social Work & Social Care at Great Britain’s University of Sussex is trying to change that.

Rebecca Stephens recalls when her family had to make the heartbreaking decision to euthanize their beloved Weimaraner, “Wesley,” and wondered why there was no one at the veterinary clinic to help comfort her children. She enrolled in the Veterinary Social Work program at the University of Tennessee and today serves on the Education Committee of the International Association of Veterinary Social Workers who address the four core pillars of this work:

- **Intentional well-being for veterinary staff**
- **The Link between human and animal violence**
- **Animal-related grief and bereavement**
- **Animal-assisted interventions**

“The role that pets play in the lives of humans cannot be underestimated. And so it follows that there is also an important role for social work in incorporating these important relationships into practice,” she wrote in the July 2023 issue of the British Association of Social Work’s *Professional Social Work* journal. Social workers, she wrote, are especially adept in using specific communication and intervention approaches to support people in crisis. In so doing, they support veterinary professionals for whom this is not their focus, even though they encounter pet carers in distress daily.

To build this branch of social work and influence its development in the UK, Stephens created a peer network of veterinary professionals to identify opportunities for inter-disciplinary collaboration. They are investigating how to develop British veterinary curricula to include a focus on human-animal relationships – currently missing from both veterinary medicine, veterinary nursing and social work courses throughout the UK.

She is also working with a veterinary nurse to develop psycho-education seminars aimed at pet carers experiencing animal-related bereavement, and to undertake research involving social workers on The Link between human and animal violence and cross-reporting.



Stephens also authored **Rebecca Stephens and “Wesley”** “Why We Need Veterinary Social Workers Here in the UK” for the June 21, 2023 edition of [Social Work News](#). “I am a strong advocate of including pets in social work assessments including family genograms because this can offer insights into the human-animal family configuration.

“Likewise with adults, research has shown that someone experiencing domestic abuse will often postpone leaving an abusive situation where there’s a pet, because they’re worried about what could happen to their animal if they leave and taking them with them to a refuge is rarely an option.

“Additionally,” she added, “it is crucial that social workers and veterinarians are aware of The Link between animal abuse and human violence; the idea that when people are being abused, and there are pets in the home, the likelihood of that pet also being abused is very high.

“Likewise, the research confirms that, in a domestic setting where an animal is at risk, there’s a good chance people are at risk too. Since social workers and veterinarians are in primary positions to consider the welfare needs of vulnerable humans and animals, where there are suspicions or known cases of abuse, there are opportunities to cross-report.”

# THE LINK in the MILITARY

## U.S. Military Has Long History of Involvement with Animals, But Less Awareness of The Link

*Part III in a series on family violence, including animal cruelty, in military populations*

In recent issues of *The LINK-Letter*, we've been focusing on a previously under-recognized aspect of The Link between animal abuse and family violence: How The link impacts U.S. servicemembers and their families.

In our [January 2024 LINK-Letter](#), we looked at how military families are at increased risk for domestic violence and its accompanying risk of animal abuse. In our [April 2024 LINK-Letter](#), we reported on how the Department of Defense has recognized that this community experiences higher rates of exposure to trauma, physical and sexual abuse and PTSD, and that their pets can provide additional emotional support to servicemembers and their families; in response, the DoD has increased the allowance to enable more military personnel to transport their pets with them when they relocate.

In this issue, we look at some of the history of the military and the human-animal bond in general, the role of veterinarians in particular, and organizations that are addressing the gaps in services. This information is excerpted from an article in the [Winter 2024 issue](#) of the Latham Foundation's *Latham Letter*.



### THE MILITARY AND THE HUMAN-ANIMAL BOND

The U.S. military's history of addressing the human-animal bond among active and retired service members is relatively recent. Animal-assisted therapy visits to VA hospitals, for example, were not widely implemented until 2003, when the Army published its landmark *DoD Human-Animal Bond Principles and Guidelines*. The 2003 guidelines recognized: the significant impact of pets on families at transfer time; demographics indicating that one-half of military families owned pets; pets in day care facilities; care of military working dogs and service animals; unit mascots; a sample animal visitation policy for military hospitals; procedures for implementing human-animal bond programs; and requirements for health assistance animals in the military.

The guidelines were updated in 2015 with the U.S. Army Veterinary Services' *Technical Bulletin, Medical DoD Human-Animal Bond Program Principles and Guidelines*. Citing the "rich history" of animals in the military, from cavalry mounts to working dogs and Navy dolphins, the *Bulletin* outlined a multi-disciplinary approach to program planning, implementation and evaluation.

When servicemembers began returning from Middle East conflicts with skyrocketing incidence of traumatic brain injuries and PTSD, animal-assisted therapy and service animal programs to assist "wounded warriors" readjust to civilian life proliferated, often through the new availability of federal grants.

Concurrently, there emerged new interest in The Link. In 2016 the Uniform Code of Military Justice

finally criminalized animal cruelty, neglect and bestiality, punishable by dishonorable discharge, fines and imprisonment.

Well-publicized examples of sexual assault of female servicemembers prompted the establishment of family and victim services programs on many military installations. The National Link Coalition has conducted Link trainings to military personnel and family advocacy units on military bases including: Fort Leavenworth, Kans.; Hurlburt Field, Fla., Cannon AFB, N. Mex.; the Marine Family Advocacy Program at Quantico, Va.; Army Special Victim Prosecutors in Texas; the Naval Justice School Prosecuting Special Victim Cases in Newport, R.I.; and the CIS Advanced Family Violence School at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Brunswick, Ga.

Through a collaboration with the National Organization for Victim Assistance, we have conducted 22 virtual training programs since 2014 for family advocacy programs at military installations in the U.S., Germany, South Korea, and other overseas locations. A similar training is planned for November 2024 with the Justice Clearinghouse.

## VETERINARIANS AND THE MILITARY

An under-utilized resource in addressing The Link in the military are the Veterinary Corps Officers (VCOs) and technicians. VCOs' long history has included: care of mounted cavalry horses; inspecting food served on military

bases; caring for service members' pets; and providing animal care services in war-damaged countries. Yet many of the nation's 700 military veterinarians are untrained in responding to animal abuse and its potential implications for abuse of service members and their families.

Military veterinarians are trained at the Working Dog Veterinary Services program at Lackland AFB, Texas, where each year some 40 new veterinary college graduates who made a service commitment are given a 10-month veterinary medical assignment at a regional veterinary specialty center for advanced introduction to the Army Veterinary Service. Thereafter, they are assigned around the world, operating veterinary clinics and hospitals. They support not only pets of service members but also nearly 4,000 DoD working dogs at over 400 sites globally and nearly 1,000 working dogs of the Transportation Security Administration and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

An informal query of these officers found that 20% had never heard of The Link, nor had had any formal veterinary education on this subject. The remainder only either had minimal exposure, either as part of a One Health initiative or witnessing animal abuse with rare mention of The Link during clinical rotations in their final year of training. Link awareness appears to be similarly lacking in the clinical training of 450 new veterinary technicians entering the military annually.

## CLOSING THE GAPS

At least two agencies are believed to specifically address Link-related issues among military service members and their families. [Pathways to Safety International](#) serves Americans abroad experiencing interpersonal and gender-based violence. They provide a toll-free crisis line and case management for 9,000 Americans living overseas and 80,000 Americans traveling abroad each year; they also assist 450,000 American military personnel and their dependents overseas who are at risk for gender-based violence. Their services also include protecting the pets of domestic violence survivors living overseas and assisting in placing pets in foster homes while working to get victims from danger to safety.

[Dogs On Deployment](#) provides an online network where service members can search for volunteers



to board their pets while the owner is deployed to another installation. The organization also advocates for military pet owners' rights, provides educational resources, and grants financial assistance to military pet owners needing emergency veterinary care. They also help military families keep their pets when faced with the costs, regulations, quarantines, vaccination and health requirements, pet transportation logistics, and pet-friendly housing involved during a Permanent Change of Station to a new domestic or overseas base.

# CRIMINAL JUSTICE... and THE LINK

## NCJFCJ Conference Workshops to Spotlight The Link

The Link will be front-and-center later this summer at the National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges' [87<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference](#) with three workshops featuring how judicial officials can address animal abuse in the context of other family violence.

On July 22, Judges Lee Chitwood, Judge Rosa Figarola and Kathy Hessler will kick off the day's workshop schedule with a presentation on **"When Pets Are Family: The Human-Animal Bond in Divorce and Child Custody Case Decision Making."** Chitwood, Presiding Judge of the 27th Judicial District's Juvenile & Domestic Relations



**Lee Chitwood**

District Court in Pulaski, Va., has been instrumental in introducing a Link-themed bench card for Virginia judges and a poster and video about animal abuse's Links with domestic violence ([See the February 2021 LINK-Letter](#)).



**Rosa Figarola**

Figarola, a retired Circuit Probate Judge in Miami's 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, serves on the National Link Coalition's Professional Advisory Committee. Hessler is Assistant Dean for Animal Law at George Washington University and has been instrumental in bringing the NCJFCJ's Judicial Institute on the Human-Animal Bond and The Link ([See the November 2023 LINK-Letter](#)).



**Kathy Hessler**

On July 23, Jill Hollander will lead off the morning workshops with a program on **"In the Shadows: Animal Cruelty as Coercive Control in the Exploitation of Elders, Vulnerable Adults, and Children."** Hollander, Chief Senior Assistant District Attorney for Fulton County, Ga., specializes **Jill Hollander** in domestic violence, animal cruelty and elder abuse cases. She has educated veterinarians about how to testify without fear in animal cruelty prosecutions ([See the December 2020 LINK-Letter](#)).



Later that day, Judge Rosemary Cosgrove-Aguilar and Javier Argueta will describe **"Stopping the Cycle of Violence: A Treatment Court for High Risk-High Needs Domestic Violence Offenders."** Cosgrove-Aguilar, of the Bernalillo County, N. Mex.

**Cosgrove-Aguilar** Metropolitan Court, established a specialty Pre-Adjudication Animal Welfare (P.A.W.) Court in 2016 after a law school student found huge correlations between animal complaints and violent crimes against people in the county's criminal database. The court offers a voluntary diversion program for animal cruelty and low-level animal control offenses ([See the November 2023 LINK-Letter](#)).

The conference is scheduled for July 21-24 at the Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse Pass in Phoenix, Ariz.



### ***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.**

# SOCIAL WORK and THE LINK

## Australian Social Workers Just Beginning to Consider Animals and The Link

A recent survey of Australian social work educational programs confirms a phenomenon also present in the U.S.: that despite the anti-oppressive theory and social justice motives underpinning the profession, the historic human-centric focus of social work largely continues to ignore the presence of animals in clients' lives and how their well-being or abuse may impact humans' decision-making and quality of life.



“There is growing impetus for social work to move beyond a human-centric social justice orientation

to include the consideration of animals,” the wrote Angella Duvnjak and Ashleigh Dent, citing a rise in veganism, animal rights, environmental concerns related to animal agriculture, and research that has identified Links between animal abuse and human abuse, such as domestic and family violence. Such research is “showing increasing promise and insight into both prevention and intervention strategies in this space.”

Yet despite this new interest, social work programs in Australia are currently not required to include content related to animals within the curricula. To determine the extent to which such content is currently being taught, the researchers surveyed 15 social work educators.

The findings revealed that where animal-related content was included it predominantly took an “instrumental” or “anthropocentric” focus related solely to human well-being. Exceptions to this focus were found within some ethics and theory units under topics such as “green social work”. Participants reported challenges within the university context and the perceived relative importance of other topics within a crowded social work curriculum as barriers to including such content.

The researchers identified three implications for this gap in social workers' knowledge, training and perspectives:

- As a social justice-oriented profession social work has an ethical responsibility to expand its focus to include consideration of human-animal relations within the Australian social work curriculum.
- There is evidence that inclusion of content related to animals is limited and is often a reflection of the educator's commitment and passion for the topic rather than curriculum priorities or requirements.

- Further research is needed to gain a better understanding of the extent to which human-animal relations content is included within Australian social work curriculum and what barriers may exist to its inclusion.

The findings mirror the American situation, in which the National Link Coalition has identified only 31 colleges of social work, out of an estimated 889 BSW and MSW programs, where courses in human-animal interactions either currently or formerly are believed to have existed. It is unclear how many of these courses may include The Link ([See the September 2020 LINK-Letter](#)). Graduates of the renowned Veterinary Social Work program are believed to comprise only .05% of the total social work workforce in the U.S. The absence of human-animal relationships in Canadian social work curricula has come under similar criticism in recent years ([See the October 2022 LINK-Letter](#)).

— Duvnjak, A., & Dent, A. (2023). *The consideration of animals within Australian social work curriculum*. *Australian Social Work*. DOI: 10.1080/0312407X.2023.2238697

### Social Work Codes of Ethics “Down Under” Recognize Human-Animal Relationships

Despite the above-mentioned lack of inclusion in social work curriculum, the Australian Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics includes reference to animals in section 4.2 under “commitment to social justice and human rights.” The Code states that social workers are required to “ensure that any animal engaged as part of social work is protected”

Meanwhile, the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics was updated in 2019 to include reference to animals for the first time, extending manaakitanga (respect, generosity and care) towards animals with the following statement: “We recognise the sentience of animals and ensure that any animal engaged as part of our social work practice is protected.”

## SOCIAL WORK... and THE LINK

### NYC Animal Medical Center Seeks Veterinary Social Worker

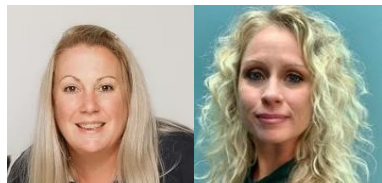
With the retirement of Judith Yunis Harbour — who followed in the pioneering footsteps of Susan P. Cohen as the Veterinary Social Worker in New York City’s Animal Medical Center — there is a position opening.

The Schwarzman Animal Medical Center, a full-service, nonprofit veterinary specialty hospital and research and teaching facility on Manhattan’s Upper East Side, is seeking a Licensed Clinical Social Worker to oversee activities related to client support and staff well-being. These responsibilities include consulting with medical teams to address communication challenges with clients to make an action plan in ethically complex situations involving euthanasia, end-of-life care, or animal abuse. The position, which has a salary range of \$70,000—\$93,000, includes direct client support, staff support and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Interested and qualified candidates should email their resume and cover letter to [careers@amcny.org](mailto:careers@amcny.org).

### Links Group UK Webinar to Raise Awareness Among Social Workers

In an effort to increase awareness of The Link and the significance of human-animal relationships



among social workers **Mary Wakeham & Rebecca Stephens** in the United Kingdom, our British counterpart, The Links Group UK, will host a [webinar](#) for social workers on June 13.

“The Human-Animal Bond in the Context of Domestic Abuse: Implications for Practice” will feature several prominent British authorities on the topic including:

- **Rebecca Stephens, Senior Lecturer in Social Work at the University of Sussex**
- **Mary Wakeham, Founder and CEO of Refuge4Pets**
- **Andrea Lynch**
- **Vic Harbrecht-Parker, Yorkshire Paws Protect Manager at Cats Protection**
- **Amy Hyde**

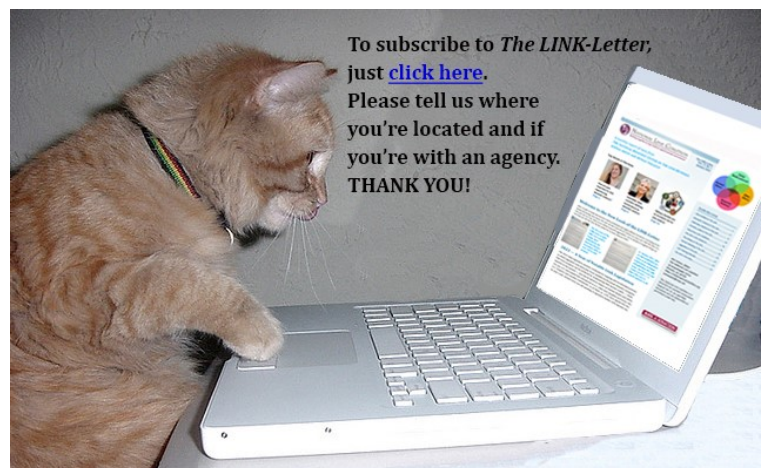
### Webinar to Address How Social Workers Can Consider Animals as Clients’ Strengths and Stressors

With approximately 66% of American households reporting having at least one companion animal, and the majority indicate they consider their animals to be family members, a serious gap exists when social workers fail to recognize and respond to clients’ companion animal relationships. Janet Hoy-Gerlach, LISW-S, LCSW, Ph.D., retired professor from the University of **Janet Hoy-Gerlach** Toledo, will address this gap in a [June 6 webinar](#) for the Human-Animal Interaction Section 13 of Division 17 of the American Psychological Association.



“Supporting Clients with Companion Animals: The ‘Why’ and the ‘How’” will describe how companion animals can be both strengths and stressors and should be routine considerations in most practice settings. She will discuss how clinicians who are responsive to clients’ companion animal concerns face both system and resource barriers.

The focuses of the webinar will be: to delineate the biopsychosocial benefits (and risks) of animal companionship for people as a rationale and advocacy strategy for addressing clients’ companion animal concerns; and to provide resources and strategies to support people’s relationships with their animals effectively.

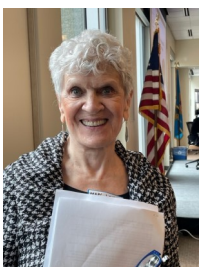


# LAW ENFORCEMENT and THE LINK

## Center Launched to Track and Analyze NIBRS Data

When the FBI announced including four types of animal cruelty in its National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) (*See the [July 2014 LINK-Letter](#)*), there was great expectation that, for the first time, there would be nationwide data on the incidence of animal abuse and how many of these incidents intersect with other crimes. Availability of these data has been hampered in the ensuing years, due to difficulty in accessing and analyzing the data deep within the FBI's website. A solution to this dilemma appears to be at hand.

The Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) has announced a new initiative to provide researchers with readily accessible animal cruelty data from across the country. The [Center for the Study of NIBRS Animal Cruelty Data](#) provides updated data through a condensed version of the NIBRS database. AWI and the National Link Coalition were instrumental in convincing the FBI to include animal cruelty as four distinct crime categories within NIBRS. Previously, animal cruelty incidents — to the extent they were reported at all by local law enforcement — were consigned to “miscellaneous crimes,” making retrieval and analysis of all but impossible.



**Mary Lou Randour**

“This new effort will allow researchers to systematically analyze animal cruelty data, informing effective intervention and prevention efforts that will benefit both animals and the communities in which they live,” said Mary Lou Randour, coordinating consultant for the Center.

Animal cruelty data files, user guides and animal cruelty codebooks from 2016 to 2022 are available on the Center's website in both SPSS and Excel format. Future years will be posted as they become available.

An advisory board of researchers, law enforcement, policymakers, and practitioners will promote the Center and recommend new research, such as regional differences in animal cruelty crimes and trends over time:

- **Dr. Bethany Backes**, associate professor of criminal justice and social work at the University of Central Florida.
- **Dr. Maya Gupta**, senior director for research at the ASPCA.
- **Dr. Brinda Jegatheesan**, associate professor of learning sciences and human development, early childhood and family studies, and anthrozoology at the University of Washington.
- **Dr. Nathan Perkins**, assistant professor of social work at Loyola University Chicago.
- **Keon Turner**, manager of the Data Analysis and Reporting Team for the Virginia State Police.
- **Dr. Michael Vaughn**, professor of social work and director of the Ph.D. in Social Work Program at Saint Louis University
- **Michelle Welch, Esq.**, senior assistant attorney general in the Virginia Attorney General's office.

Assisting the Center are Lynn Addington, AWI consultant and professor of justice, law, and criminology at American University; and Claire Coughlin, coordinator for AWI's Animals and Interpersonal Violence Program.

### Bill Would Provide Therapy Dogs for Law Enforcement Officers with PTSD

**HF 4215** in the Minnesota Legislature would award state grants to nonprofits that train and place therapy dogs in local law enforcement agencies to assist peace officers suffering from job-related trauma and PTSD. Priority would be given to those agencies that demonstrate its officers suffer high rates of trauma or PTSD or are exposed regularly to high-stress incidents.



### What is The LINK?

Legislation...

Intervention...

Networking...

Knowledge...

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

# Raising LINK Awareness

## Link Awareness Highlighted in California, Connecticut

From California to Connecticut, The Link was front-and-center as news media highlighted animal cruelty's influence on human safety in April.

In the Red Bluff, Calif. [Daily News](#), reporter Ronnie Casey noted the third week of April as "Animal Cruelty/Human Violence Awareness Week". "Data on domestic violence reveals that an overwhelming number of animals are targeted by those who abuse their children or spouses. Pets in many households are considered family members and are treated just like other family members. Often this is welcome, but in homes where domestic violence, abuse, or neglect occurs, this is serious not only for the human components, but for the animals as well."

The article cited data about how an abuser, in an effort to create the necessary fear, will either threaten, hurt or kill an animal. "Cruelty to the animal may be used to convince the victim to stay in the rela-

tionship, keeping the victim isolated from friends and family. In addition, the abuser may harm the animal to mentally punish the victim, asserting and assuring his dominance and control," it continued.

The article referenced several key developments in The Link:

- classic Link research describing how animal abuse can either precede or follow acts of human violence;
- the increase in felony-level penalties for animal cruelty;
- mandates for veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse;
- animal control officers being trained to report child abuse.

It cited the growth of pet-friendly domestic violence shelters and the inclusion of pets in protection orders. The Animal Welfare Institute and DomesticShelters.org resources for finding safe havens for pets were noted.

The article concluded with advice to readers about what they can do

to protect pets and people. "Lastly, if you see animal cruelty or human violence, contact the authorities and take a step to help end it. We can help bring about changes for the people and animals involved. Remember this month and the rest of the year, 'To say nothing, to do nothing, stops nothing.'"

In Branford, Conn., the Dan Cosgrove Animal Shelter highlighted Animal Control Officers Appreciation Week and April as Child Abuse



**Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz**

Awareness Month and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month by convening state government and agency officials to discuss the strong correlation between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence and the proactive steps Connecticut is taking to address the issues, the [Zip06](#) news media reported.

Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz said there is a critical Link involving cruelty to animals and child abuse. "It's important to recognize the Links between these acts of violence. The overlap of child abusers and animal abusers is significant. Research has shown that animals were harmed in 88% of the homes where a child was physically abused," Bysiewicz said.

"When we hear of issues of animal cruelty, there's often other things going on. So this not only affects the individuals and the families, but really all of our communities," First Selectman Jamie Cosgrove added.



**HELP US KEEP THE LINK FREE!**

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

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

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

### Status of Brazilian Veterinary Forensics Reviewed

Citing Link veterinary literature that describes how animal welfare is a recurring theme, and given the growing concern from social, political, ethical, legislative, and scientific perspectives as to how animal welfare profoundly influences almost all aspects of the relationship between humans and animals, researchers in Brazil have written an overview of the state of veterinary forensics in Brazil. The article, which focuses on cases involving poisoning, argues that there is a need for trained professionals to implement protocols and tools based on animal welfare science and what the researchers call Legal Veterinary Medicine (LVM). They note that LVM is a recent specialty in Brazil, created by a Federal Council of Veterinary Medicine resolution only in 2003. The review addresses the application of scientific knowledge to veterinary forensics in confirming cases of animal poisoning specifically, and demonstrating that expertise in this area ensures the production of material evidence that can be used in judicial criminal proceedings to defend animal welfare.

-- Santos Araujo, D., da Silva Santos, A., Tostes, R.A., Miguel, M.P., & Borges, D.L.L. (2024). Application of legal veterinary medicine: Main toxic agents versus real cases of intentional toxication in domestic animals analyzed in criminal expertise in central Brazil. *Forensic Science*

### Domestic Violence Pet Strangulation a Risk Factor in Ukrainian Study

One of the few Link-related research articles to come from Ukraine provides an overview of theoretical information and methodological approaches to the problem of forensic veterinary examination of animal corpses that died as a result of mechanical asphyxiation. The authors note that most often, these types of cases occur in dogs and cats and are associated with animal cruelty, including cases of domestic violence, when the aggressor's inappropriate behavior extends to animals kept in human homes. Such actions fall under an offense for which the perpetrators of such a crime are criminally liable under Ukrainian law. Mechanical asphyxia is due to ingestion of various media, objects, and neck compression from the outside. Just as strangulation is a known risk factor in domestic violence, asphyxia of domestic violence victims' animal companions also appears to be a notable risk factor.

-- Borysevich, B., Kruchynenko, O., & Peredera, O. (2024). The problem of forensic veterinary examination of small animal corpses in cases of mechanical asphyxia. *Scientific Progress & Innovations*, 27(1). doi: 10.31210/spi2024.27.01.25

## Animal-based THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

### Student Anxieties Decrease in School-based Animal Therapy Program



Barbara Boat (left) & Shakesha Alexander support the well-being of students and staff (See the [November 2021 LINK-Letter](#)) is featured in a [YouTube](#) video.

Program director Shakesha Alexander describes how students in grades 6-11 are trained to be handlers to work with specially-trained therapy dogs that are brought in for designated events: Reading with "Roomie", Sunning with "Sir Bentley", "Learning with

The animal-assisted interventions program in River Rouge, Mich. Schools – "the Happiest Place in the District" where animals are co-facilitators to

Lola", Bonding with "Bailey", Coloring with "Cody", Fridays with "Frankie", and Cartoons with Canines.

The video also describes how one student overcame his fear of dogs by grooming "Cody" every day at lunch time. A full-service grooming salon in the Pup-Culture Lab teaches high school students basic grooming techniques and a Teacher's Pet program teaches students the responsibilities of pet care in the classroom.

As a result of the program, levels of anxiety among students and staff have decreased, conversation skills and peer relationships have improved and a sense of community has developed. "It's made learning a lot more engaging and a lot more fun," one teacher notes.

## LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

### Link Cited in Call for Minnesota Animal Protection Legislation

In our [April LINK-Letter](#), we described two bills in the Minnesota Legislature that would create a statewide Office of Animal Protection. [Animal Folks of Minnesota](#) has launched a Link-based campaign in support of the measures. [SF 3542](#) and [HF 3799](#) would create the new program, under the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, based on the premise that “animal cruelty is linked to human violence and criminal activity.” As a component of the Department of Public Safety, it would have authority to enforce animal cruelty laws as well as a mission to train, certify, and hire special agents qualified in animal cruelty and The Link. Ann Olson of Animal Folks tells *The LINK-Letter* that this card is being distributed to legislators to raise additional support for the bills.



### Florida Enacts “Hope Cards” for Domestic Violence Survivors



Sen. Lauren Book

Following similar success in New York State ([See the November 2023 LINK-Letter](#)), Florida enacted [SB 86](#). The measure requires 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. Hope Cards will start becoming available on Oct. 1 and will be valid for two years after the issuance of a final protection order. The bill, introduced by Senate Democratic Leader Lauren Book, passed both the Senate and House unanimously.

Photo Credit: Claudia Ramirez for HSI

### Iowa Expands Definition of Animal Sexual Abuse

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds signed [HF 2318](#) into law on April 10, significantly expand the statutory definition of bestiality in the Hawkeye State. The new provisions add advertising, offering, selling, transferring, purchasing, or otherwise obtaining an animal for sexual purposes to the definition of a crime. It also adds organizing, promoting, conducting, promoting, permitting, filming, distributing, possessing, participating as an observer of an act involving a sex act with an animal, or engaging in a sex act in the presence of a minor.

The expanded crimes are now Class D felonies. Previously, bestiality was considered only an aggravated misdemeanor. A Class D felony is punishable by confinement for up to five years and a fine of at least \$1,025 but not more than \$10,245. An aggravated misdemeanor is punishable by confinement for up to two years and a fine of at least \$855 but not more than \$8,540.



Gov. Kim Reynolds

In 2023, three individuals were convicted of a bestiality offense in Iowa, according to the state legislative researchers. Of these, there were no prison admissions, and one individual was admitted to probation.

# LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

## THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES — 2024

With many 2024 state legislatures still in session, we're following 136 Link-themed bills in 26 states, Congress and Canada. The bills in the lists that follow 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

**S 3737 and H.R. 7396 — the AVERT Future Violence Act (Animal Violence Exposes Real Threat of Future Violence)** — would order the National Institute of Justice to conduct a \$2,000,000 study on the underlying factors that contribute to people committing acts of animal cruelty and an analysis of animal cruelty as a predictor of future violence against humans. It would also fund a \$2,000,000 Stop Future Violence Grant Program to develop and strengthen effective detection strategies and early intervention or diversion resources to stop acts of animal cruelty and rehabilitate offenders.

**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 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.

### ARIZONA

**HB 2076 died when the Legislature adjourned.** It would have expanded 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.

**HB 2234, HB 2756 and SB 1643 died when the Legislature adjourned.**

They would have required courts to prohibit individuals who have been convicted of domestic violence — which in Arizona includes coercive acts of animal cruelty — from possessing firearms.

**HB 2238 died when the Legislature adjourned.** It would have allowed 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 have prohibited the respondent from possessing firearms.

**HB 2241 died when the Legislature adjourned.** It would have expanded 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 have been a Class 1 misdemeanor unless the depicted person is a minor under 15 years old, in which case it would have become 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.

**AB 1215** was vetoed by the Governor.

It 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.

**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.

**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.

## COLORADO

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 24-1350**

would add a statutory definition of "coercive control" to include threatening to harm or kill an animal with which the individual or the individual's child or relative has an emotional bond," and require child custody dispositions to consider evidence related to the use of coercive control.

## FLORIDA

**SUCCESS!!! SB 86** requires 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.

**HB 297** and **SB 272** died in committee when the Legislature adjourned. They would have authorized courts to order attorneys or law school students to be appointed in the interests of justice for criminal proceedings regarding dogs' or cats' welfare.

## GEORGIA

**HB 217** and **SB 255** died when the General Assembly adjourned. They would have expanded 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.

**SB 418** died when the General Assembly adjourned. They would have required the basic and in-service training courses for all peace officers to include animal fighting and recognition of animal abuse.

## HAWAII

**SB 30** was never acted upon. It would have expanded 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.

**HB 1580** passed the House but died in the Senate. It declared 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," and would have increased the category of offense and penalties for animal cruelty, animal fighting, and sexual assault of an animal.

**HB 1980** and **SB 2684** passed the House but died in the Senate. It declared 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," and would have increased the penalty for cockfighting to a felony and impose fines on persons who attend or gamble on a cockfight.

## IDAHO

**HB 512** died when the legislature adjourned. It would have 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.

**HB 537** died when the legislature adjourned. It would have limited the crime of bestiality with a minor child to offenders who are at least four years older than the child.

## ILLINOIS

**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.

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 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.

## IOWA

**SUCCESS!!! SF 2180** and **HF 2318** expand the statutory definition of bestiality to include organizing, promoting, conducting, promoting, permitting, filming, distributing, possessing, participating as an observer of an act involving a sex act with an animal, or engaging in a sex act in the presence of a minor.

**HF 472** and **SF 316** died when the legislature adjourned. They would have granted 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”) died when the legislature adjourned.

They would have required animal control officers to be trained on recognizing child abuse and mandate animal control officers to report dependency, neglect, or abuse of a child.

**SB 243** died when the legislature adjourned. It would have made cockfighting and allowing a child to attend any animal fight, currently a misdemeanor, a felony.

## MARYLAND

**SB 17** and **HB 667** died when the General Assembly adjourned. They would have established 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.

**HB 814** would allow minors to be charged with aggravated animal cruelty.

## 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.

**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.

**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 Senate Ways & Means Committee.

**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.”

**SB 783** would require child protective services employees to report suspected animal abuse or neglect to law enforcement officers.

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 5587** would add additional points to sentencing guidelines if a companion animal is killed as a result of another crime.

**NEW THIS MONTH: HB 5593** would add additional points to sentencing guidelines for sexual penetrations of a companion animal.

## 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.

**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.

**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.”

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 4215** would award state grants to nonprofits that train and place therapy dogs in local law enforcement agencies to assist peace officers suffering from job-related trauma and PTSD.

## MISSOURI

**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.

## 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.

## NEW MEXICO

**SB 12 died when the legislature adjourned.** It 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.

**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.

**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.

**A 1844** would move the state's anti-cruelty statutes from the Agriculture and Markets Law to the Penal Law.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

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**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.

**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.

**A 394 and A 1430** would increase the penalties for aggravated animal cruelty committed in the presence of a child.

**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.

**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.

**A 3908 and S 5947** would require persons charged with enforcing laws prohibiting cruelty to animals to report when, in the performance of duties, there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse or maltreatment of a child has also occurred; persons mandated to report child abuse or maltreatment would be required to report suspected animal cruelty.

**S 299 and A 390** would require offenders convicted of aggravated cruelty to animals to undergo psychiatric evaluation and appropriate treatment for mental illness.

**A 340** would include felony animal cruelty among crimes which would prohibit possession of a firearm.

**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.

**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.

**S 5337, S 8471 and A 7303** would add animal fighting as a criminal act when referring to enterprise corruption.

**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.

**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

**SUCCESS!!!** **HB 4043** increases the penalties for committing felony-level aggravated animal cruelty if the offense involved domestic violence or occurred in the presence of a child.

**SUCCESS!!!** **HB 4145** creates two new crimes of aggravated animal abuse in the first degree to include creating, duplicating, disseminating, financing, or possessing visual recordings of “crush” videos — persons maliciously killing or torturing an animal.

**SUCCESS!!!** **SB 1574** adds sexual abuse of a corpse to the list of sex crimes for the purpose of sex offender reporting and clarifies that humane special agents are “law enforcement officials” for the purpose of receiving driver’s license and identification card photos from the Department of Transportation.

## PENNSYLVANIA

**HB 642** would allocate \$2,000,000 per year to local law enforcement agencies to investi-

gate and enforce violations of gambling and animal fighting laws.

**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.

**HB 1210 and SB 1105** would amend the Domestic Relations title to allow courts to grant temporary ownership rights over companion animals in domestic violence and child protection orders and direct defendants from harming, possessing, transferring, or relocating the animal, or entering the property of anyone sheltering the animal.

**HB 530** would require persons convicted of animal cruelty to attend and complete violence prevention counseling.

**SUCCESS!!!** **SB 55** orders 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 to ensure that children’s health, welfare and safety in custody determinations are of paramount importance. The law also defines domestic abuse as a pattern of abuse that can include abuse of a partner, spouse, child or pet.

**SB 852** would permit limited access to criminal records of certain individuals

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convicted of felonies. Individuals convicted of sexual intercourse with an animal within the previous 15 years would not be eligible for such limited access.

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

**NEW THIS MONTH: SB 1018** would allow child witnesses and victims to have access to an animal to provide emotional support or mitigate emotional trauma during the proceeding.

## 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 7970** would require courts, in awarding sole or joint possession of a companion animal in a divorce or separation agreement, to consider the best interest of the animal based upon a list of criteria.

**H 7236 and S 2655** would add cruelty, malicious killing or injury of an animal, and abandonment of an animal to the statutory definition of domestic violence.

## TENNESSEE

**HB 2302 and SB 2116** would 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.

**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.

**HB 1875 and SB 1767** would expand the definition of "racketeering activity" to include committing, conspiring, aiding, attempting to aid, soliciting, coercing, facilitating, or intimidating another person to commit the criminal offense of animal fighting.

**SUCCESS!!! SB 1957 and HB 2079 permit veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty and testify in court in good faith with immunity from civil and criminal liability.**

## UTAH

**HB 130 died when the Legislature adjourned.** It would have made it a misdemeanor to allow a minor child under age 18 to attend a dog- or cock-fight.

**SUCCESS!!! HB 478 extends the veterinarians' freedom from civil liability for reporting a violation in good faith to include reports of alleged abuses in animal care facilities, animal rescues, animal sanctuaries, and animal shelters.**

## 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.

## WEST VIRGINIA

**HB 4935 died in committee when the Legislature adjourned.** It would have created a new misdemeanor crime of hoarding of animals.

**HB 5146 died in committee when the Legislature adjourned.** It would have prohibited animal hoarding, punishable by a fine of \$500 and seizure of the animals by an animal shelter.

## WYOMING

**HB 77 died when the Legislature adjourned.** It would have added

"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.

## CANADA

**Bill C-332** would add to the Criminal Code a new crime of controlling or coercive conduct, defined as a "pattern of conduct" with intent to cause the accused's intimate partner to believe their physical or psychological safety is threatened, including actual or threatened violence against their animal. It would also add this offense to the criteria for determining the accused's eligibility to have a firearms license.

## *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.

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# 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

**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 — Columbus, Ohio:** Kathleen Wood, Martha-Elin Blomquist and Judge John Romero will present “A Matter of Community Safety: Understanding and Addressing the Interconnections between Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Violence” at a [training](#) for Franklin County judges, court personnel, advocates, social services workers, law enforcement, and attorneys.

**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](#).

**May 20-22 — Gainesville, Fla.:** The University of Florida’s Veterinary Forensic Sciences Laboratory will host the 2024 [Animal Forensic Investigations Conference](#).

**May 28 — Kansas City, Mo. (online):** BestyBnB will conduct a [webinar](#) on “Bridging the Gap: Establishing Relationships between Social Services and Animal Welfare.”

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

**June 4-5 — Albuquerque, N. Mex.:** Maya Gupta will conduct a [training](#) for the ASPCA and the Bernalillo County Sheriff’s Office on animal cruelty investigations.

**June 6 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Janet Hoy-Gerlach will address “Supporting Clients with Companion Animals: The ‘Why’ and the ‘How’” in a [June 6 webinar](#) for the Human-Animal Interaction Section 13 of Division 17 of the American Psychological Association.

**June 12 — Albany, N.Y.:** The Link between Domestic Violence and Animal cruelty will be presented at the [2024 Animal Crimes Conference](#).

**June 13 — London, UK (online):** The Links Group UK will host a [webinar](#) for social workers featuring Rebecca Stephens, Mary Wakeham, Andrea Lynch, Vic Harbrecht-Parker, and Amy Hyde discussing “The Human-Animal Bond in the Context of Domestic Abuse: Implications for Practice.”

**June 13 (online):** Liz Graham of 180 Turning Lives Around will lead a webinar on “Sheltering Together: Inside a Pet-Friendly Safe House” for [Don’t Forget the Pets](#).

**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](#).

**June 25 — Chesapeake, Va.:** Don’t Forget the Pets will hold a [workshop](#) on “Housing People and Pets in Crisis.”

**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.

**July 22-23 — Phoenix, Ariz:** Lee Chitwood, Rosa Figarola and Kathy Hessler will present “When Pets Are Family: The Human-Animal Bond in Divorce and Child Custody Case Decision Making”, and Jill Hollander will present “In the Shadows: Animal Cruelty as Coercive Control in the Exploitation of Elders, Vulnerable Adults and Children” at the [87th Annual Conference](#) of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.



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

**Aug. 26 — Westminster, Colo.:** Hannah Tomazweski, LSW, of the Denver Dumb Friends League, will present “A Field Guide to ‘The Link’” at the [Colorado Animal Welfare Conference](#).

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

**Sept. 16-19 — Albuquerque, N. Mex.:** The National Adult Protective Services Association will hold its Annual [National Conference](#).

**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):** Mary Rautkis and Jessica Bibbo will lead a webinar for Pennsylvania’s Keystone Link Coalition and the [Crisis Center North](#) will address The Link between animal abuse and elder abuse.

**Sept. 30—Oct. 1 — Washington, D.C.:** The 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.

**Oct. 16 — Lismore, N.S.W., Australia (online):** Phil Arkow will conduct a Link training for [Lucy’s Project](#).

**Oct. 18-20 —Portland, Ore.:** The Animal Legal Defense Fund will hold the [32nd Animal Law Conference](#).

**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. 3 (online):** Andrew Campbell will discuss the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences and childhood perpetration of animal cruelty in a webinar, “School Shooters and Adverse Childhood Experiences” for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

**Dec. 10 (online):** Katie Campbell will present “Collaboration: The Secret Ingredient to Housing People and Pets in Crisis,” in a webinar for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

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

## THE LINK... in the NEWS

### Attacks on Kittens Prompt Woman to Finally Call Police for Help



Police in Windsor Locks, Conn. were asking the public's help in locating Kevin Colgan, 44, sought as a suspect in the beating of his girlfriend and allegedly killing one of her kittens. [WFSB-TV](#) reported that the woman had called police, saying he had punched her in the face and throat and threatened to kill her kittens. She was able to gather up most of the kittens but he allegedly grabbed one and threw it against an air compressor, killing it. He had reportedly head-butted and punched the girlfriend and threw a kitten across the room the previous day. Police said the victim had been seriously assaulted by Colgan numerous times in the past but did not report the incidents or lied about who assaulted her due to fear.

### Eight Charged, 100+ Dogs Rescued, in Alleged N.J. Dogfighting Raid

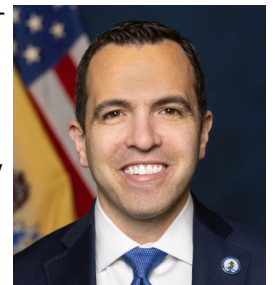
Eight people were arrested and charged with a multitude of crimes, including racketeering, money laundering, promoting organized street crime, identity theft, and animal cruelty after a raid on an alleged dogfighting ring operating out of a kennel and two other locations in southern New Jersey. New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin [announced](#) that over 100 dogs believed to have been bred and trained to fight were seized following an intensive investigation by the Division of Criminal Justice, the New Jersey State Police, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service of the Department of Defense, and the Humane Society of the U.S.

The alleged ringleader of the operation, Bruce "Hollywood" Low, 44, of Milmay, was charged with 12 offenses. Other defendants include several family members: his mother, Terri A. Low, 67; and sons-in-law Bryce J. Low, 20, and Roosevelt Hart IV, 29. Also charged were dog trainers and breeders Coy Glenn Dickenson, 58; Travis J. Garron, 38; Mark A. Runkle, 42; and William McClinton, 58. A construction company which allegedly laundered the proceeds of the criminal activities, was also charged.

"Dismantling a dog fighting ring is not just about rescuing animals; it's about dismantling a culture of cruelty and restoring compassion to our communities," said Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police. "It represents a steadfast commitment against violence, showcasing the impact of justice and empathy."

### Coke Possession, Animal Cruelty Land Man in Prison

A Warren, Penna. man who had 1.75 pounds of cocaine that he said he was selling in order to provide for his child, and whose three French bulldogs were seized because they were living in what investigators called "deplorable conditions," was sentenced to up to 10 years in state prison. Gregory L. Berry, 35, was sentenced to 60-to-120 months incarceration for drug possession with intent to sell, plus five-to-10 months for animal neglect, plus over \$6,800 in fines, fees and restitution. The Warren [Times-Observer](#) reported that the case stemmed from an eight-month-long investigation and that the street value of the cocaine was over \$65,000.



**Atty. Gen. Matthew Platkin**

## Man Charged with Resisting Arrest After Two Dogs Starved to Death



Paul Joseph Frederick, 53, of Connoquenessing Township, Pa., was charged with obstructing administration of law, resisting arrest and aggravated animal cruelty after refusing to leave his home after Butler County Sheriff's deputies

allegedly found two dead German shepherds and seized 50 other animals. The [Tarentum Tribune](#) reported that the dogs, cats, pigs, goats and ducks were taken to an animal shelter in Erie. Deputies said the two dead dogs, that had matted fur and appeared underweight, were found in garbage bags off a parking lot. A necropsy determined the dogs had been starved to death.

## Domestic Violence Crackdown Charges Man with Animal Cruelty

An extensive investigation into intimate partner violence in Brampton, Ont., Canada led to nine men being charged, including an unnamed 28-year-old man who was also charged with cruelty to animals. [Local news media](#) reported that the man, whose identity was withheld in order to protect his alleged victim, was caught up in an investigation by the Ontario Provincial Police. The man was also charged with causing "mischief under \$5,000."

## Boyfriend Charged with Strangling, Assaulting and Robbing Girlfriend and Abusing Their Dog

Police in Tulsa, Okla. arrested Sonnie Alexander on charges of allegedly robbing, assaulting and strangling a woman he was dating and abusing their dog. [Fox 23 News](#) reported that the incident occurred last December when Alexander reportedly called her to falsely say their house was on fire; when she returned, he began questioning her about her whereabouts. Police said a domestic violence incident ensued, including Alexander allegedly punching her, throwing knives and glass shards at her, and throwing the dog against the wall. After she attempted to escape he allegedly strangled her in the front yard. She escaped with what a forensic nurse said were over 30 injuries. A warrant for Alexander was finally issued in April.



## Police Kill Armed Woman Who Reportedly Shot Her Son and Dog



An armed Pacifica, Calif. woman was shot and killed by police after she apparently shot her son and killed the family dog. The San Jose [Mercury News](#) reported that two Pacifica police officers responded to a call from

a man who said his mother, Michelle Arrais, 50, had shot him twice. Upon confronting her at the apartment, Arrais reportedly pointed a firearm at the police who fired 10 rounds back, killing her. While searching the apartment, officers discovered the family's dog dead from gunshot wounds. The son, who was hiding in a bathroom, was treated at a hospital for his injuries and released.

## Child Sex Abuse Investigation Leads to Cockfighting and Animal Cruelty Charges

Detectives in Calcasieu Parish, La. responding to a report about an alleged rape discovered not only a girl, under age 16, who said that Derek F. Thibodeaux, Jr. 55, of Sulphur, was sexually abusing her, but also allegedly found a large number of roosters tethered to individual shelters, cockfighting paraphernalia, and a dog suffering from injuries to its neck, likely from being tethered for a long period of time.



Thibodeaux was arrested and charged with trafficking of children for sexual purposes, aggravated cruelty to animals, and cockfighting. Judge Clayton Davis set his bond at \$1,215,000, the Lake Charles [American Press](#) reported.

The dog was seized by Calcasieu Parish Animal Services and received veterinary care. Louisiana was the last state to ban cockfighting – in 2008 – but penalties and enforcement remain minimal.

## 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  
#92-2607909.

Join us!



NationalLinkCoalition.org



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