



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



**Top Stories in This Issue:**



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***A Holiday Appeal to our Readers***

Thanks to the generosity of our 5,700 LINK-Letter subscribers, and with the much-appreciated support of three benevolent foundations, the National Link Coalition was able to carry on our critical work in 2024 without having to constantly pester our supporters with excessive and annoying fundraising appeals. Your contributions last December – when our status for 2024 was so tenuous – was so substantial, and the support of these foundations so encouraging and necessary, that we were able to continue our trainings and keep The LINK-Letter free. We thank the generous organizations and individuals who have enabled us to continue our dissemination of Link information, our advocacy for Link legislation, our compilation of relevant research, and our promotion of innovative programs around the world that are doing so much to protect vulnerable people and animals.

But 2025 is fast approaching, and we must once again appeal to you — our treasured supporters — to help us keep going for another year. On Pages 2-4 you can read what your gifts have accomplished this past year. We appeal to you to give us a great running start to make 2025 even more successful in promoting and implementing The Link between animal abuse and human violence.

Thank you for your generous support! [Please click here](#) to make a tax-deductible year-end contribution.

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## What Your Gifts Made Possible in 2024 – A Safer World for Vulnerable People and Animals

Elsewhere in this issue of The LINK-Letter, you can read how The Link is energizing bipartisan laws – specifically including pets’ welfare in domestic violence protection orders and divorce settlements – that are incrementally helping vulnerable people and slowly changing the status of animals into a new category of being more than just “property.” This is real progress – and it’s all made possible with your generous support.

In 2024, here’s what we’ve been able to accomplish; with your support we can do even more in 2025!

### BUILDING LINK AWARENESS

#### THE LINK-LETTER

We debuted our new format – to rave reviews!

We’ve already added over **400** new subscribers in 2024 – an **8%** increase since the start of the year.

We published **263** articles addressing The Link.

#### GLOBAL LINK AWARENESS

- As Link awareness has grown exponentially, 28% of references in our bibliography originate in foreign countries.
- We conducted trainings and wrote an *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work Journal* article on closing “The PAWS Gap” in social work training and practice.
- We presented podcasts and radio interviews.
- We produced a video describing how a DV shelter became pet-friendly.
- We co-wrote the lead chapter on The Link in the *International Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy*.

Among the LINK-Letter’s **263** articles were **70** about exciting news and research in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Great Britain, Greece, Guatemala, Ireland, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Scotland, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and Ukraine.

### COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS

- We compiled the first comprehensive state-by-state list of mandated reporters of animal abuse in collaboration with MandatedReporter.com
- We are working with the Department of Homeland Security’s Center for Prevention Programs & Partnerships.
- We are helping to develop a Toolkit for Alliance for Family Justice Centers.
- We expanded our ongoing collaborations with the Animal Welfare Institute, the National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges, and the International Association of Veterinary Social Workers.

### LINK PROGRAMS

We spotlighted many illuminating programs, including:

- The Urban Resource Institute published a blueprint for change and a “Pawprint” for action.
- A veterinary partnership was established with a Wichita DV shelter for pet safekeeping.
- A North Carolina prison dog-training program is giving offenders a new leash on life.
- A Minnesota collaborative fosters pets of domestic violence survivors.
- The Animal Welfare Institute launched a center to analyze FBI NIBRS data.

#### TARGETED OUTREACH TO THE MILITARY

Thanks to a grant from The Latham Foundation, we dramatically expanded our outreach to make active and retired military servicemembers, their families, and base family advocacy units aware of how The Link impacts the unique nature of military homes. In 2024 we gave trainings to:

- Institute on Violence, Abuse & Trauma
- Justice Clearinghouse
- National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges
- National Resource Center on Military-Connected Families and the Courts
- National Organization for Victim Assistance
- U.S. Department of the Army Victim Advocates
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

We also published **6** articles in *The LINK-Letter*, *The Latham Letter*, and *The Juvenile & Family Court Journal* about unique aspects of The Link in military families.

- Purina unveiled a “Courageous Together” statue to promote pet-friendly shelters.
- Connecticut published a brochure to stimulate DCF cross-reporting suspected animal abuse.
- A social workers’ guide addresses elders’ issues in aging with pets.
- Four states now have fully-funded statewide prosecutors of animal cruelty
- Rhode Island became the 47<sup>th</sup> state to have domestic violence pet co-sheltering.



## LINK LEGISLATION

2024 saw a record **144** Link-themed bills introduced in **27** state legislatures, the U.S. Congress and Canada's Parliament. We are encouraged that, as of this writing, **21** of these measures have been signed into law. Among our notable successes:

- Pennsylvania became the 41<sup>st</sup> state to allow pets to be included in protection orders.
- Rhode Island became the 8<sup>th</sup> state to protect pets in divorce decrees.
- Tennessee became the 20<sup>th</sup> state to allow veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse.
- Utah expanded veterinarians' ability to report suspected animal abuse.
- Canada and California enacted Extreme Risk Protection Orders, prohibiting individuals who harmed or threatened domestic violence survivors' pets, or who are animal cruelty offenders, from owning firearms.
- Oregon increased the penalties for animal abuse Linked with DV and children.
- Pennsylvania and Colorado added a history of animal cruelty to criteria for child custody decisions.
- New York and Florida enacted "Hope Cards" for domestic violence survivors.
- Iowa expanded its definition of and penalty for animal sexual abuse.
- Pennsylvania allowed courthouse dogs to comfort child abuse victims.
- Vermont, Massachusetts and New South Wales in Australia defined threats or harm to animals as coercive control.
- Massachusetts reduced cross-reporting restrictions.
- New Mexico funded safe havens for the animals of domestic violence victims.

## ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Our bibliography of Link research now contains nearly **2,400** references. New research published in 2024 included:

- Australian and British veterinarians got resource materials to recognize and respond to domestic violence and animal abuse
- The impact of forced separation from pets during DV, disasters and homelessness was examined.
- Strategies were offered to help the homeless maintain their pets.
- The World Small Animal Veterinary Association called for more training on animal welfare.
- Dogfighting was seen as part of an international crime network.
- Animal cruelty and gender-based violence were seen as based on male domination.
- Strangulation was called a risk factor in both domestic violence and animal cruelty.
- A study was conducted on the status of courtroom animal advocacy programs.
- Animal shelters were seen to have significant impacts on human society.
- Different types of intimate partner violence were Linked with which animal species are abused.
- Animal abuse was seen as being Linked with a "dark tetrad" of antisocial behaviors.
- Veterinarians were urged to be the first responders in animal cruelty cases.
- Link laws were seen as a key to redefining pets as "more-than-property."

## PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

National Link Coalition members, allies and advocates conducted **139** trainings to audiences including:

- Advanced Animal Control Officer Certification Course
- American Psychological Association
- American Veterinary Medical Association Convention
- Animal Abuse Leadership Summit
- Animal Crimes Conference
- Animal Legal Defense Fund
- Animal Protection New Mexico
- Arkansas Adult Protective Services
- ASPCA
- Associação Plano I (Portugal)
- Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
- Bernalillo County, N.M. Sheriff's Office
- Bermuda Animal Wardens
- BestyBnB
- Blank Children's Hospital, Des Moines, Iowa
- British Small Animal Veterinary Association
- Canadian Prosecution of Animal Abuse conference
- Colorado Animal Welfare Conference
- Connecticut Department of Children & Families
- Co-Sheltering Collaborative
- Delaware State Office of Animal Welfare
- Don't Forget the Pets
- Father Joe's Villages
- Florida Animal Protection & Advocacy Association
- Florida Partnership to End Domestic Violence
- Franklin County, Ohio Domestic & Juvenile Court of Common Pleas
- Guilford County, N.C. Department of Social Services
- Harbor House
- Human-Animal Violence Education Network
- Humane Society of the U.S. Expo
- Indiana University School of Social Work Alumni Association
- Institute on Violence Abuse & Trauma – Hawaii International Summit
- Institute on Violence, Abuse & Trauma – San Diego Summit
- International Association of Veterinary Social Work Summit
- International Conference on Child & Family Maltreatment
- International Family Justice Center Conference
- International Society for Animal Forensic Sciences
- International Veterinary Social Work Summit
- International Virtual Meeting in Animal Forensic Sciences
- Japanese Animal Literacy Research Institute
- Justice Clearinghouse
- Keystone Link Coalition
- The Links Group UK
- Lucy's Project (Australia)
- Maine Animal Control Association
- Mens en Dier Somen Naar Herstel) (The Netherlands)
- Michigan Pet Alliance Conference
- My Dog Is My Home
- National Adult Protective Services Association
- National Animal Cruelty Prosecution Conference
- National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life
- National Conference on Juvenile Justice
- National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges' Annual Conference
- National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges' Judicial Institute
- National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges' National Resource Center on Military-Connected Families and the Courts
- National Organization for Victim Assistance
- National Victim Assistance Academy
- New Mexico Judicial Law Enforcement Training Conference
- North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine
- Oregon Animal Control Council
- Oregon Department of Human Services
- RedRover
- Saskatchewan SPCA
- South Carolina Animal Care & Control Association
- Tennessee Animal Care & Control Conference
- United States Army Victim Advocates
- Universidade de Lusófona (Portugal)
- University of Florida Animal Abuse & Interpersonal Violence course
- University of Florida Animal Forensics Conference
- University of Missouri Law Enforcement Training Institute
- University of New Mexico
- Urban Resource Institute
- Veterans Administration Health Care Services
- Washington Animal Control Association

**As The Link message continues to grow globally, we thank you for your ongoing support of our work which is doing so much to help the world understand that when animals are abused, people are at risk, and when people are abused, animals are at risk. Please consider giving us a running head start to make 2025 even more successful in preventing violence against people and animals by showcasing The Link.**

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## Pennsylvania Finally Enacts Pet Protection Orders



Reps. Sappey (left) & Mihalek

A bipartisan bill that made its way through the Pennsylvania General Assembly make the Keystone State the 41<sup>st</sup> state to enable courts to include animals in domestic

violence protection-from-abuse orders. After a long struggle and several previous attempts over four years (See the [May 2024 LINK-Letter](#)), **HB 1210** finally passed the House and the Senate and was signed into law on Nov. 18.

Co-sponsoring Reps. Christine D. Sappey (D—Chester County) and Natalie Mihalek (R—Allegheny & Washington Counties) held a [press conference](#) on Oct. 22 to raise support for the measure, which would amend the Protection From Abuse Act to give judges the specific authority to order the defendant to refrain from abusing the victim’s pets. “It is not unusual for defendants to harm a victim’s pet as part of the abuse nor for this concern to prevent victims from escaping their abuser,” they wrote in their co-sponsoring memorandum.

“The Senate has the opportunity to pass a vital piece of legislation, and make a tangible difference in the lives of countless Pennsylvanians from the devastating cycle of domestic abuse,” Sappey told the press conference. She cited the National Link Coalition and the Keystone Link Coalition along with numerous other national and state organizations in encouraging passing the bill to close “a critical gap” in domestic violence protections.

Citing the wide bipartisan support “in a time when most things seem to be politicized, this is an issue that transcends political lines, because we all understand the importance of protecting the vulnerable — whether human or animal,” she added.

Sappey called voting to support the measure a “compassionate, common-sense decision that aligns Pennsylvania with the majority of states across the country.”

*“Our work here can serve as an example of a bipartisan partnership that looks past politics and actually tries to get something done.”*

— Rep. Natalie Mihalek

Calling the four-year effort a “labor of love,” Mihalek added, “Our work here can serve as an example of a bipartisan partnership that looks past politics and actually tries to get something done.”

An attorney who has seen the domestic violence Link first-hand, Mihalek said pet protection orders are needed for two “simple but very sad reasons”: when there is domestic abuse the chances are very high that any pets in the home are also suffering at the hands of the abuser; and the thought of leaving those pets is a barrier to victims escaping their abuse.

Sen. Daniel Laughlin (R—Erie) later added his support, calling the legislation “transformative” and saying when a victim of domestic violence seeks help “they can do so without the overwhelming fear that their pet will be harmed as a form of retaliation.



Sen. Laughlin

“Our message is clear: abuse, in any form, will not be tolerated and that includes the abuse of animals. By protecting the pets who are within the protection from abuse orders we are also protecting the people that love them. No one should have to choose between their own safety and the wellbeing of their companion animals.”

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## Link Laws Helping to Redefine Animals as “More-than-Property”

A research study analyzing the impact of Link laws in states that either specifically allow courts to include pets in domestic violence protection orders or that include acts of animal abuse within statutory definitions of domestic violence argues that such laws are helping to redefine animals as something more than their historical categorization as “property.”

Amy Fitzgerald, in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at Canada’s University of Windsor, proposes that the Link concept of framing animal maltreatment in terms of how this also harms people positions animals as “more-than-property.” The bipartisan nature of these laws, combined with their offering greater protections for animals, is helping to shift a sociolegal recognition of animals’ social membership and the ways their well-being is interconnected with that of the people who care for them.

This new framework, she writes, helps position animals more as “subjects” rather than as “objects” and as family members, workers, and domestic violence co-victims. She describes legal developments vis-a-vis these categories, such as taking animals’ interests into consideration in divorce settlements, designation of police and military service animals as personnel, and domestic violence literature acknowledging animal abuse as a form of victimization. “Of note, victims/survivors of DV report very strong and significant relationships with their pets. This is the key reason why so many report delaying leaving their abuser out of concern for their animal companion. They relate to them as family, not property,” she adds.

**Amy Fitzgerald and her colleagues have written extensively about the animal abuse/domestic violence Link in Canada. Among her findings:**

- Animal maltreatment is significantly more common among those who report their partners were abusive (13%) than among those who were not abused (0.84%).
- Those who report animal maltreatment by their partner have an 11% increased probability of physical and/or sexual DV and a 39% increased probability of emotional abuse.
- Animal maltreatment is associated with a 5.2% increase in the probability of experiencing frequent physical abuse, a 16.1% increase in the likelihood of reporting injuries, and a 24.7% increase in fearing for one’s life.
- Some victims/survivors even credit their companion animals with giving them “reason to live”.

Fitzgerald reviews extensive data from the U.S. and Canada that document animal abuse as coercive control in domestic violence and the growing number of shelters that are implementing programs to care for companion animals in recognition of how the fear for animals’ welfare is a significant barrier to



Amy Fitzgerald

survivors escaping their abusers. She then traces the origin of inclusion of pets in protection orders to a 2001 article in the Yale Journal of Law and Feminism that proposed amending state protective order statutes to include animals. (NOTE: No such provisions were enacted until 2006, and today 40 states have enshrined these provisions.)

She navigates the dilemmas posed by various sociolegal philosophies that describe animals as being property, as having rights, as having personhood, or as being sentient, by suggesting that companion animals might be particularly well positioned to be the first recipients of an intermediary designation.

Her research examined in depth 54 pet-protection-order and cruelty-as-domestic violence statutes that had been enacted in 37 states by the end of 2021 as “more than your average animal protection laws.”

“What may have begun as a relatively apolitical (and indeed, increasingly bipartisan) effort to protect people and animals from DV has exposed cracks in the animals-as-property bedrock,” she concludes. “The tripartite status of animals as family, informal worker, and victim in homes where there is DV may help account for the relatively dramatic developments in this specific area of law in the past few years, which provides some evidence for the value of the social recognition strategy of focusing on incorporating animals into extant legal categories external to property.”

-- Fitzgerald, A. (2024). **Animals as covictims and more-than-property: The inclusion of companion animals in protection order statutes at the state level in the United States. Violence and Victims.**

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1891/VV-2024-0004>

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and The LINK

## Canadian Parliament Learns About The Link



Our Canadian Violence Link Coalition colleagues had the honor of being invited to speak at a [hearing](#) of Parliament's House of Commons Committee on the Status of Women discussing issues involving coercive behavior.

### Kerri Thompson

Kerri Thompson, Manager of Justice & Legislative Affairs for [Humane Canada](#), the parent organization of the coalition, highlighted that abusers will often threaten or harm a survivor's animal as a way to control a survivor's actions or inflict emotional, psychological,

and physical harm on a survivor. She also answered questions from the committee regarding the need for gender-based violence shelters to have pet-inclusive programs as well as partnerships with animal welfare organizations to support survivors and their animals, explaining that the need for affordable, pet-friendly housing and the lack of housing options often results in survivors and animals remaining in violent or precarious housing situations.

Thompson also emphasized the need for the government to put resources towards considering animals as it examines ways to better support survivors.

## How Do Domestic Violence Quarrels Impact the Family Pets?

When couples have heated arguments, dogs in the home watching the quarrel exhibit an increased stress response similar to that experienced by children, and tend to console the victim afterwards rather than be drawn to the aggressor. Those are some of the findings of an Argentinian research study that examined the impact that familial disputes have on the canine members of the family.



### Laura Rial

The study, led by veterinarian and canine behaviorist Laura Analía Rial from the University of Buenos Aires School of Medicine, involved staged arguments between two family members conducted in their own home and observed by their pet dog. Watching family members fight caused an increase in stress responses in the dogs, similar to what children experience when watching family members fight. Older dogs exhibited more stress, possibly because they have more experience and thus are better at interpreting positive and negative human emotions, particularly during high-tension family quarrels awash in unpleasant emotions.

While they were observing the conflict, the dogs did not try to intervene nor try to run away, but rather stayed in place and stared at the couple, primarily at the aggressor. However, when the argument was finished and the couple retreated to opposite sides of the room and sat still, 15 of the 23 dogs in the study moved to be closer to the victim, rather than to the aggressor, and offered consolation. Male dogs were more likely to show consoling behaviors than female dogs, particularly when the victim was a woman.

The study's authors theorized that the dogs sided with the victim, rather than the aggressor, as a result of a genetic predisposition to be emotionally supportive – which may be why dogs can be such excellent candidates for therapy animals in environments where people are under high stress.

— Rial, L.A., Cavalli, C., Dzik, M.V., & Bentosela, M. (2024), **Third-party affiliation in domestic dogs during and after a human conflict.**

*Ethology* e13522. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eth.13522>

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## Survivor Shares Guidelines to Help Others Heal from Abuse

### Taking Back What Abuse Took

A Public Health Based Approach  
to Healing From Abuse



Andrew Campbell

[Andrew Campbell](#), whose research in Indianapolis has detailed correlations between animal cruelty and more violent domestic violence incidents ([See the September 2018 LINK-Letter](#)) and increased risks for first responders when both domestic violence and animal abuse co-occur ([See the July 2019 LINK-Letter](#)), has self-published a book describing his own journey to healing from his personal history of abuse.

*Taking Back What Abuse Took* uses a public health-based approach to help others heal from the abuse in their lives. Describing family violence as a worldwide, pervasive public health issue that includes partner, child, elder, and pet abuse, Campbell calls for expanded efforts to detect and prevent abuse to meet the growing number of victims of violence.

Campbell uses his own survivor's story to lay out a series of steps by which healing from abuse can occur: finding safety; seeking rest; understanding the impact of abuse; addressing other unhealthy behaviors; changing one's expectations for the future; and getting support and encouragement from others.

### Link Featured at Pet Advocacy Day



Five members of the Urban Resource Institute's [People & Animals Living Safely](#) (URIPALS) program participated in a meet-your-representatives event in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 11. The Pet Advocacy Day event featured meetings with U.S. Reps. Dan Goldman (D - NY), Nicole Malliotakis (R - NY), Jerry Nadler (D—NY), and Grace Meng (D - NY). URIPALS representatives discussed the significance of keeping families and their pets together in shelters during crises. They encouraged support for funding through the federal PAWS & PUPP Acts and the New York State PAWS Act.

Companion animals can be critical sources of support for survivors, Campbell writes, both while experiencing abuse and throughout the healing process.

“Supportive pets provide a stark contrast to abusive humans. While perpetrators seek to destroy hope, to isolate, to reduce or eliminate victim self-worth, to break down the victim mentally and emotionally, pets are working in the opposite direction.”

Unfortunately, abusers realize the value of a pet – or even farm animals -- to their victim and may actively target the animal with acts of violence and abuse, or get rid of the animal to remove that source of emotional support. Agencies working with survivors should recognize and appropriately address “the profound sense of loss likely being experienced by the victim. This animal might have been the only thing keeping them going, and separation from them becomes another obstacle to overcome in their path to healing from abuse,” he advises.

“Healing from abuse is often a difficult journey. It is a process, just as abuse is often perpetrated as part of a process. The journey to heal takes time and requires significant dedication and resolve,” he writes. “However, healing and health ARE possible to find on the other side of abusive relationships.”



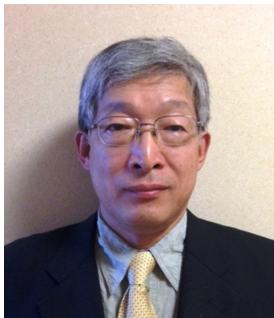
Please [click here](#) to make a tax-deductible donation to help keep The LINK-Letter's news, trainings, and information flowing freely.

Your gift helps us protect vulnerable people and animals from violence, abuse and neglect.

Thank you for caring!

## Need for Veterinary Forensics in Japan Cited

While the growth of veterinary forensic sciences has begun to emerge in the U.S. in response to increased calls for veterinarians to serve on the front lines of identifying and responding to suspected animal abuse and to serve as expert witnesses in animal cruelty cases, the development of this skill has lagged



**Tokuma Yanai**

behind in Japan. A forthcoming article in the Japanese Society of Toxicologic Pathology's journal cites *The Link* among a call for future international collaboration in Asia to overcome the shortage of veterinary forensic laboratories in Japanese veterinary colleges under the guidance of the recently established Japanese Association of Veterinary Forensics.

Tokuma Yanai, of the Institute of Veterinary Forensic Science, describes 19 case studies and noted that veterinary forensics could potentially build upon the foundation already established in human medical forensics, which has evolved into an active medical field supported by numerous dedicated forensic experts and is now a required subject for national licensing examinations in Japanese medical schools. Although medical and veterinary forensics are fundamentally different disciplines, veterinary forensics can benefit from the foundations established in medical forensics, particularly the principles, examination methods, report writing methods, courtroom procedures, and medical knowledge relevant to child abuse, Yanai writes.

However, "Veterinary forensics differs from medical forensics in that they cover a wide variety of animal species, including livestock raised for labor or food, as well as various wild animals. The definition of and reaction to abuse can be ambiguous in animal cases compared with human cases, especially in the context of criminal prosecution related to evidence of abuse. Moreover, the prevalence and nature of animal abuse can vary greatly depending on the country, tradition, religion, and lifestyle," Yanai writes.

"Forensic analytical results obtained from the accumulation of human cases cannot be directly extrapolated to animals, necessitating a tailored approach by veterinary forensic scientists to accumulate data for each animal species. However, there exists a link between violence toward animals and violence toward humans. Cruelty to animals often correlates with violence against humans; thus, crimes against animals may serve as indicators of ongoing crimes against people and predictors of potential interpersonal violence."

Yanai also cites a 2013 revision of Japan's Animal Protection Law that has caused police authorities to intensify efforts to detect and prevent animal abuse cases including harming, killing without cause, keeping animals in poor conditions, neglecting food and toilet care, sexual abuse, and forcible labor. However, only a few veterinary forensic experts are available in Japan to augment law enforcement's investigations.

--Yanai, T. (2024). *Current status of veterinary forensic science in Japan. Journal of Toxicologic Pathology [in press].*

## Podcast Helps Veterinarians to Recognize and Respond to Suspected Animal Abuse

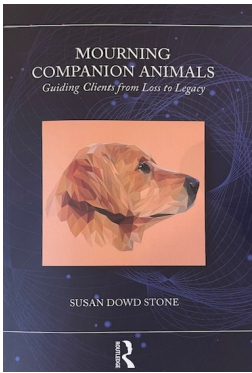


A new [podcast](#) by Victim to Verdict's Kris Otteman aims to help veterinarians to recognize, report and stop animal abuse.

The podcast, Episode #301 of Andy Roark's Cone of Shame Veterinary series, offers practical strategies for veterinarians and their staffs to identify signs of neglect and abuse in their patients. She discusses a step-by-step guidance on how to document and communicate suspected cases to authorities effectively, and how to navigate particularly complex cases and the highly charged emotions often accompanying these scenarios. The 24-minute podcast strives to empower veterinary professionals to become strong advocates for animal welfare while maintaining their professional roles.

# THE LINK in the LITERATURE

## Clinicians' Guidance on Pet Loss Addresses The Link



While most Americans describe companion animals as family members, and while society increasingly seeks to elevate the

status of animals, it is unfortunate and ironic that while the death of animal companions may cause as much anguish as the loss of any other deeply valued relationship, this grief is not always accorded the same significance.

That is the premise underlying a new guidance designed to help clinicians direct their clients “from loss to legacy” when struggling to adjust to the loss of an animal companion. There are innumerable books helping pet stewards to mourn the loss of their animals but “the clinical community may sometimes underestimate the im-

port of their deaths in triggering mental health crises in both vulnerable or the most well-adjusted clients,” writes Susan Dowd Stone.

Pet stewards can be traumatized by a number of causes for their pets’ death or disappearance, including euthanasia, terminal illnesses, accidents, forced surrender, kidnapping, and running away. Stone emphasizes that the emotional turmoil experienced over pet loss and grief may be magnified when the animal’s death is the result of traumatic circumstances involving the animal and/or other members of the family.

“In violent homes, animals may be the first or initial target of aggression by family members,” she writes. Yet despite research showing that animal abuse is among the first clues that other family members are also being mistreated, legal mandates to report animal abuse or neglect are not uni-

versally applied. Failure to immediately and effectively intervene can contribute to secondary trauma – having knowledge of, witnessing, or being involved in the harm of a loved one -- among veterinary staff, pet sitters and groomers, neighbors and family members and exacerbate the grief experienced by the animal’s steward.

Stone, an adjunct associate professor at New York University’s Silver School of Social Work, asks clinicians to appreciate the significance of The Link while working with clients experiencing pet loss and grief. “Research that associates human attachment and personality styles with the potential for abuse alerts us to consider animal health in family safety assessments,” she adds. “Incidence of animal abuse points to a potential for human abuse.”

— Stone, S.D. (2024). *Mourning companion animals: Guiding clients from loss to legacy*. Routledge.

## Study Examines Animal Hoarders in New York City

A study of 79 cat hoarding cases in New York City has reported that the majority of individuals involved were woman who lived alone and had high levels of social vulnerability. The hoarders, who often self-identified as rescuers or community cat caregivers, had a median population of 22 cats. Object hoarding and unsanitary conditions were reported in 29.1% and 68.4% of the cases, respectively. Through the ASPCA’s community engagement program, social services agencies were brought in for 26.4% of the cases. Successful outcomes – defined as

cases in which clients were left with a manageable population of cats through spay/ neuter programs and animal surrenders – occurred in 67.1% of the cases. Recidivism occurred in 41.5% of the cases.

The researchers concluded that animal hoarding cases are complex and require significant planning, collaboration and resources involving multiple organizations, but that a collaborative approach with cooperative animal caregivers and rescuers can be successfully managed. Expanded access

to veterinary care, strategic management, and additional interdisciplinary research on how mental health, social services and animal service providers can collaborate will attain successful long-term outcomes and reduce animal hoarding recidivism.

— Tamimi, B., Dolan, E., Kisiel, L., & Berliner, E. (2024). *A retrospective study of cat hoarding cases and their management through voluntary spay/neuter and relinquishment in New York City*. *Journal of Shelter Medicine & Community Animal Health*, 3(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56771/jsmcah.v3.92>

## ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE... and THE LINK

### Spanish Veterinarians Link Animal Sexual Abuse with Human Violence

Describing sexual violence against animals as acts done with the purpose of breaking down moral barriers in order to more easily move on to human victims, a team of Spanish veterinary researchers have called for veterinarians to be more active in their “essential” and “crucial role” of detecting animal sexual abuse, collecting evidence, performing forensic analyses, and reporting their findings.

“Sexual violence against animals is a problem that must be approached with determination and professionalism, since it represents a risk not only for animals but also for society. Also, it is nec-

essary to have legal measures for its prevention and punishment,” they argue. “Sexual aggression towards animals represents an eroticization of violence and the position of power, which can lead in some cases to necrophilic tendencies, obtaining pleasure from killing the animal. Various studies demonstrate a relationship between sexual abuse injuries in animals and humans, with findings such as trauma, penetration and mutilation.”

The article cites several Link authorities and argues that by fighting the problem of animal sexual abuse, not only are animals being protected but the entire

society is protected as well. Violence against animals often follows the same patterns as gender violence, child sexual abuse and other violent attitudes, they write. In addition, any abuse or sexual assault carried out by a child should be examined and evaluated appropriately, because it is widely understood that it is unusual behavior that may stem from an even bigger problem.

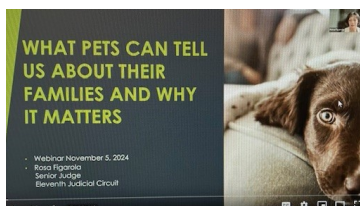
— Rendón Páez, D.L., Martínez-Morcillo, S., Prado Míguez-Santiyán, M., Fernández Casado, D., & García Muñoz, J., et al. (2024). *Violencia sexual sobre los animales: Una perspectiva profesional y ética veterinaria. Anales de Veterinaria de Murcia*, 38, 1-13. [Spanish]. DOI: 10.6018/analesvet.622091

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE... and THE LINK

### NCJFCJ Videos Help Educate Judges on the Impact of The Link

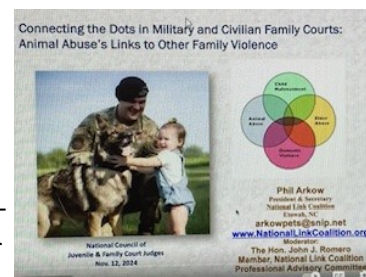
The National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges has made two videos available which can serve as excellent resources for judicial officials to learn more about the inclusion of animal-related issue in court cases.

Judge Rosa Figarola, who serves on the National Link Coalition’s Professional Advisory Committee, recorded a 48-minute webinar with the Florida Office of the Supreme Court Administration on [“What Pets Can Tell Us About Their Families and Why It Matters.”](#) While the webinar is specific about Florida’s statutes and bench tools, the general concepts can be applicable anywhere to help educate court officials on The Link.



Judge John Romero, who also serves on our Professional Advisory Committee, and National Link Coalition President Phil Arkow presented a 75-minute webinar for the NCJFCJ’s project on military-connected families and the courts.

[“Connecting the Dots in Military and Civilian Family Courts: Animal Abuse’s Links to Other Family Violence”](#) addressed the Link issues for court officials with a special emphasis on the unique dynamics of military family life that make The Link particularly pertinent.



# LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

## THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

We're following 144 Link-themed bills in 27 states, Congress and Canada. The bills are color-coded as follows:

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

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

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

### USA—FEDERAL BILLS

**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. 56, the RAISE Act (Reforming Alternatives to Incarceration and Sentencing to Establish a Better Path for Youth Act of 2023)** would have the Bureau of Prisons establish a two-year pilot program, in at least 10 judicial districts, to equip incarcerated youths with the skills to provide therapy and training to animals seized by federal law enforcement and to organizations that provide shelter and other services to abandoned, rescued or otherwise vulnerable animals.

**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.

**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 reportedly funded as part of the FY 2024 budget.*

**H.R. 8733, the Child and Animal Abuse Detection and Reporting Act,** would direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to include data on animal abuse in the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) clearinghouse for information.

**H.R. 8923, the Animal Cruelty Enforcement Act of 2024,** would establish an Animal Cruelty Crimes Section within the U.S. Department of Justice.

**S.321** would create a new misdemeanor crime of stalking and extend federal firearms restrictions to individuals subject to court orders restraining them from stalking someone from a current or former dating relationship, including making them fear for their pet, service animal or emotional support animal.

### ARIZONA

**HB 2076 died when the Legislature adjourned.** It would have expanded definitions animal cruelty that are also 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 banned individuals 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.

**SUCCESS!!!** **HB 2241** expands the definition of bestiality to now include possessing, distributing and purchasing images of a “real person” (i.e., no AI) engaged in sex with a “real” animal. Bestiality remains a felony; possessing the media is a misdemeanor.

## CALIFORNIA

**SB 89 died in committee.** It would have expanded 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 had passed the Senate but died in the Assembly Public Safety Committee.

**SUCCESS!!!** **SB 902** prohibits persons convicted of animal cruelty after Jan. 1, 2025 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 died in committee.** They would have expanded 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 died in committee.** It would have made 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.

**SUCCESS!!!** **AB 2917** expands provisions allowing courts to issue gun violence restraining orders, prohibiting individuals with a history of cruelty to animals from purchasing or possessing a firearm for 1 to 5 years.

## COLORADO

**SUCCESS!!!** **HB 24-1350** requires child custody dispositions to consider evidence related to the use of coercive control on the child. “Coercive control” now includes threatening to harm or kill an animal with which the individual or the individual’s child or relative has an emotional bond.

## DELAWARE

**SUCCESS!!!** **SB 198** adds the possession, ownership, sale or manufacture of animal fighting paraphernalia to existing statutes making animal fighting a Class E felony.

## FLORIDA

**SUCCESS!!!** **SB 86** requires the Office of the State Courts Administrator to issue free wallet-sized laminated “Hope Cards” to petitioners 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.** 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 in committee.** They would have expanded dog-fighting 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 pet protection orders to allow children to file for a protection order or a temporary restraining order even if the child was not a victim of domestic violence.

**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.

**HB 1580 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.

## 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

**SB 2633 and HB 4469 died in committee.** They would have would allowed petitioners for protective orders to also seek to prevent the respondent from possessing firearms or ammunition.

Purple = Domestic Violence

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Orange = Court Animal Advocates

Red = Animal Hoarding

Brown = Assessments/Interventions

Light Blue = Link & Other Crimes

**HB 3294 died in committee.** It would have expanded the definition of domestic violence abuse to include the infliction of fear of imminent conduct related to animal cruelty, 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 died in committee.** It would have made the theft of any animal a Class 4 felony.

## 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.

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## MARYLAND

**SB 17 and HB 667 died .** They would have established each animal harmed in an act of animal cruelty as a separate offense and that convictions and cruelty sentences could not be merged with convictions and sentences for co-occurring crimes.

**SB 744 died in committee.** It would have allowed minors aged 10-12, to be charged with aggravated animal cruelty.

## MASSACHUSETTS

**SUCCESS!!! H.4744** adds “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.

**SUCCESS!!! H.4911** allows employees of the Department of Children & Families, the Department of Elder Affairs, and the Disabled Persons Protection Commission to report suspected animal abuse at any time, not just during the course of their investigations. It also prohibits DCF from using a dog’s breed as a factor in whether a family can adopt or foster a child. DCF can request that pre-adoptive 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.

**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.

**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.

## 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.

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

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

**HB 6024** would authorize courts to appoint, on the court’s own motion or the motion of any party, uncompensated attorneys and law students to serve as volunteer advocates to represent the interests of the animal or the interests of justice in criminal prosecutions related to the animal’s treatment, welfare, or custody.

**HB 6014** would authorize grants under the Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention and Treatment board for domestic violence shelters to include survivors’ pet animals.

**HB 6013** would allow victims of crime to be compensated from the state crime victim services agency for temporary pet boarding and pet deposit expenses.

## MINNESOTA

**SF 3324 and HF 3300 died in committee.** They would have allowed courts to appoint pro bono attorneys as advocates to represent the interests of the animal, and require Office of Animal Protection personnel to report suspected child and elder abuse to the Department of Human Services, and child and adult protective services employees to report suspected animal cruelty to the Office of Animal Protection, with immunity from civil and criminal liability.

**SF 3542 and HF 3799 died in committee.** They would have created a 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.”

**HF 4215 died in committee.** It would have awarded state grants to 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 died when the Legislature adjourned.** They would have required animal control officers/humane investigators and child/adult protective services to cross-report abuse. All persons in the child and eligible adult protection and welfare system would have been mandated to complete one hour of training 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 have been 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.

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

**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.

## NEW MEXICO

**SB 12 died when the legislature adjourned.** It would have replaced “domestic abuse” with the more encompassing term “abuse” to include incidents or patterns of behavior 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 died when the Assembly adjourned.** It would have established a misdemeanor crime of knowingly causing a minor to attend an animal fight.

**A 39 and S 5309 died when the Assembly adjourned.** They would have provided 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 483 died when the Assembly adjourned.** It would have amended penal law to create new crimes of animal cruelty when a companion animal is intentionally injured or killed 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 died when the Assembly adjourned.** It would have made 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,” died when the Assembly adjourned.** They would have allowed 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 1844 died when the Assembly adjourned.** It would have moved the state’s anti-cruelty statutes from the Agriculture and Markets Law to the Penal Law.

**A 1276 and S 7812 “Bella’s Law,” died when the Assembly adjourned.** 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,” they would have required 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.

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

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**A 5504 died when the Assembly adjourned.** It would have required every county 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.

**A 7903 and S 7608 died when the Assembly adjourned.** They would have enabled veterinarians to receive continuing education credit for providing pro bono veterinary care services to individuals in domestic violence and homeless shelters.

**A 111 and S 1659 died.** They would have created court-appointed attorney and law student advocates for animals in civil and criminal animal welfare cases, to represent the interests of the animal.

**A 433, A 1507 and S 294 (“Buster’s Law”) died when the Assembly adjourned.** They would have prohibited 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 394 and A 1430 died when the Assembly adjourned.** They would have increased the penalties for aggravated animal cruelty committed in the presence of a child.

**A 5405 died when the Assembly adjourned.** It would have caused 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.

**S 5337, S 8471 and A 7303 died when the Assembly adjourned.** They would have added animal fighting as a criminal act when referring to enterprise corruption.

**A 3908 and S 5947 died when the Assembly adjourned.** They would have required 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 died when the Assembly adjourned.** They would have required offenders convicted of aggravated cruelty to animals to undergo psychiatric evaluation and appropriate treatment for mental illness.

**A 340 died when the Assembly adjourned.** It would have included felony animal cruelty offenses among the crimes which would prohibit possession of a firearm.

**A 1639 died when the Assembly adjourned.** It would have required 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 died when the Assembly adjourned.** It would have expanded aggravated cruelty to animals to include harm to a companion animal during the commission of a felony.

**SUCCESS!!!** **A 8604 and S 8063, the “Hope Card Act,” offers any protected party of a final order of protection either a digital image of the final order 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 died when the Assembly adjourned.** It would have defined harming, interference, harassment or intimidation of a service animal belonging to a current or former family member as a “domestic violence crime.”

**A 10592 and S 9629 died when the Assembly adjourned.** They would have established the housing people and animals together grant program to expand access for co-sheltering homeless people and victims of domestic violence with pets.

## OHIO

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

**SUCCESS!!!** **HB 1210 and SB 1105** 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 convicted of felonies. Individuals convicted of sexual intercourse with an animal within the previous 15 years would not be eligible for such limited access. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

**SUCCESS!!!** **SB 1018** allows child abuse witnesses and victims to have access to an animal to provide emotional support or mitigate emotional trauma during the proceeding.

**HB 2477, the Victims of Violence Safe Employment Act**, would require employers to allow employees to take a leave from work if they or a family member are victims of abuse of a vulnerable adult which includes "an act of violence against, or the taking, transferring, concealing, harming or disposing of, an emotional support or service animal owned, possessed or held by a vulnerable adult."

## RHODE ISLAND

**H 7163 died in committee.** It would have expanded existing law, which allows courts to include household animals in protection orders, to allow courts to award custody of the pets to the plaintiff.

**SUCCESS!!!** **H 7970** requires courts, in awarding sole or joint possession of a domestic 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 died in committee.** They would have added animal cruelty, malicious killing or injury of an animal, and abandonment of an animal to the definition of domestic violence.

## TENNESSEE

**HB 2068 and SB 1782 died in committee.** They would have increased 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 died in committee.** They would have expanded the "racketeering activity" to include committing, conspiring to commit, aiding, attempting to aid, soliciting, coercing, facilitating, or intimidating another person to commit 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

**SUCCESS!!!** **H.27** adds committing or threatening to commit cruelty to animals that intimidates a family or household member to the definition of "coercive controlling behavior" for the purposes of a plaintiff's seeking a domestic relief from abuse order.

## 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.

## WEST VIRGINIA

**HB 4935 and HB 5146 died in committee.** They would have created a new misdemeanor crime of animal hoarding.

## WYOMING

**HB 77 was defeated.** 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.

## 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

**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. 11 — Atlanta, Ga. (online):** Jill Hollander, Deputy District Attorney for the Fulton County District Attorney's Animal Cruelty & Elder Abuse Unit, will present "Community Engagement: Establish Relationships and Trust to Raise Awareness" in a [webinar](#) for the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys.

**Dec. 14 — Tokyo, JAPAN (webinar):** Sakiko Yamazaki of the [Animal Literacy Research Institute](#) will conduct a webinar on The Association between Animal Abuse and Child Abuse: Protecting Children and Animals Comprehensively"

**Dec. 17 — Madison, Wis. (online):** The National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life will conduct a [webinar](#) on "Addressing Pet Safety with Victims of Abuse in Later Life."

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

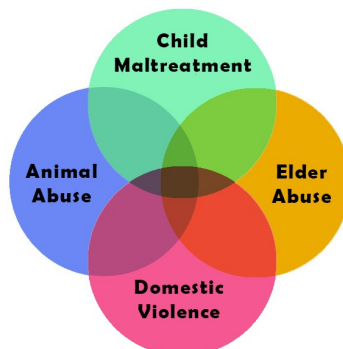
**Jan. 28-29, 2025 — Concord, N. C.:** The ASPCA will conduct , "North Carolina C.A.R.E.S.: a Dogfighting Investigations and Response [Workshop](#)."

**Feb. 19, 2025 — Springfield, Ill. (online):** Phil Arkow will conduct a training webinar on "Kids & Critters: Connecting the Dots between Child and Animal Abuse and Advocacy" for [Prevent Child Abuse Illinois](#).

**February 21 — Orlando, Fla.:** Phil Arkow will present "It's Either You or the Dog!" Addressing the Increased Risks of Animal Abuse and Other Family Violence in Civilian and Military Households" at the [Florida Animal Protection & Advocacy Association](#) Conference.

**March 7, 2025 — Indianapolis, Ind. (webinar):** Phil Arkow will present "It's Either You or the Dog!' Addressing the Increased Risks of Animal Abuse and Other Family Violence in Military and Civilian Households" to the [Indiana University School of Social Work Alumni Association](#).

**March 25, 2025 — Hurst, Texas:** Phil Arkow will present "Connecting the Dots in Crime Prevention: Using the 'Power of We' to Address the "PAWS Gap" in Family Justice" at One Safe Place's 2025 [Stop Violence Conference](#).



### What is The LINK?

Legislation...

Intervention...

Networking...

Knowledge...

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

**April 15-18, 2025 — Las Vegas, Nev.:** Several workshops at the [HSUS Expo](#) will focus on Link-themed cross-community collaborations, including: “Under One Roof: How Intake Data Can Streamline Human and Animal Services Collaboration”; “Community Outreach 101: Creating a Support Services Program Using the Pets for Life Approach”; “How Law Enforcement and Veterinarians Can Partner to Prevent Animal Cruelty”; “Co-Sheltering: Keeping Pets with Their People in Temporary and Emergency Housing”; “Veterinary Professionals as Animal Advocates: The Power of the Veterinary Voice”; and “Veterinary Social Work: The What, Why and How”.



**April 30, 2025 (online):** Phil Arkow will present a webinar on “The ‘Dark Side’ of the Human-Animal Bond: Animal Abuse and Its Link with Human Violence” for the [International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations](#).

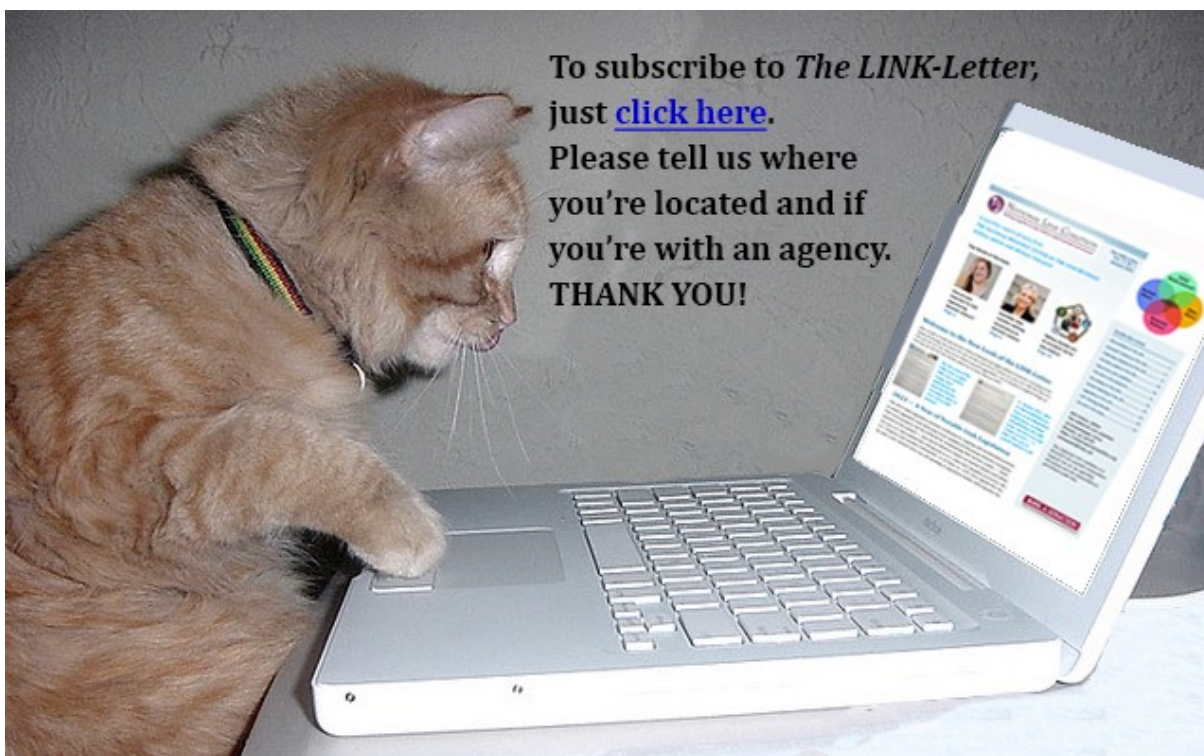
**May 5-6, 2025 — Washington, D.C.:** The National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges’ [Judicial Institute](#) on the Human-Animal Bond and the LINK Between Animal Cruelty and Interpersonal Violence: Issues in Family Law Cases will be held at George Washington University.

**May 7-9, 2025 — Daytona Beach Shores, Fla.:** The [Animal Forensic Investigations Conference](#) will be hosted by the University of Florida’s Veterinary Forensic Sciences Laboratory, in collaboration with The Maples Center for Forensic Medicine and the International Society for Animal Forensic Sciences.

**May 13-16, 2025 — Clearwater, Fla.:** Temple Grandin and Marty Becker will headline the 2025 Conference of the [International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association](#).

**June 3, 2025 — Bloomington, Ill.:** Phil Arkow will present “Learn What the Monster Likes... and Feed it! Bridging the Animal Rights/Welfare Gap by Focusing on The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence” at the [Prairie States Animal Welfare Conference](#).

**June 24, 2025 (online):** Phil Arkow will present “Pet Protection Orders: A Powerful Tool to Respond to Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence” in a webinar for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).



## THE LINK... in the NEWS

### Caged Naked Toddler and Neglected Dogs Found in Kentucky Home

Police in Carrollton, Ky., responding to a tip from a delivery driver who said he saw a naked toddler locked in a cage, arrested five people and also found eight to 10 dogs in poor health. [WDRB](#) reported that the house's unsanitary conditions included feces and urine in the area where the two-year-old boy was allegedly kept behind a wooden and metal enclosure secured with a padlock. Two children were removed from the home; there was no word on the status of the dogs. The house was condemned as uninhabitable. Police arrested Brenda Chilton, 71; William Mahoney, 72; Codey Johnson, 29; Tammy Simmons, 52; and Shelby Turocy, 28. They face charges of first-degree criminal abuse, wanton child endangerment, and possession of methamphetamine, marijuana and drug paraphernalia. The arrests included the child's father, grandmother and great-grandmother.



### Murder/Suicide Also Claims Two Dogs



In an apparent murder-suicide, a couple living in a suburb of Denver, Colo., and their dogs were all found shot to death. [9News](#) reported that the unnamed couple, both aged 67, and their dogs were found in their Conifer

home after their daughter was unable to reach them by phone. Two dogs were also dead from apparent gunshot wounds, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office said. Officials said they are not looking for any suspects.

### Armed Burglar Charged with Breaking into Animal Shelter to Retrieve His Dogs

A man wearing an ankle bracelet following a previous armed home invasion, who allegedly broke into the Webster, Mass. animal shelter to retrieve his two dogs, was arrested by police who said they found meth in his car. [Boston 25 News](#) reported that the dogs belonging to Taj Wood, 25, had been seized during an animal neglect investigation several weeks previously, and that animal control officers had been trying to transfer custody back to him if he could provide proper documentation, which he failed to do. Police said Wood also had been arrested in 2022 for several firearms offenses. Wood was charged with trafficking in meth, larceny, animal cruelty, breaking-and-entering, and trespassing.



### Canadian Couple Charged in Alleged Dark Web "Crush" Videos



Police in Winnipeg, Manitoba arrested Chad Kabcz, 40, and Irene Lima, 55, on charges of killing animals and making five-minute-long "crush" videos of cats and kittens being stomped to death under Lima's feet.

Prosecutors alleged that Lima, who is Kabcz's girlfriend and goes by the name "Goddess May" online, were the owners of a dark web site called Goddess May Barefoot Premium Crush. A caption on the site's title page referred to it as "a place to exchange barefoot hard crush," the [CBC reported](#). Previews of May's work were posted and available for purchase by "members" who were required to provide one of their own barefoot hard crush videos prior to gaining entry.

"May is 55 and has been crushing since she was a little girl, and does it for her own satisfaction and pleasure," the site said. "She crushes barefoot because that's what she enjoys, as it brings her extreme satisfaction even to the point of orgasm without being touched. She's one in a million."

## THE LINK... in the NEWS

### Rodeo Coach Charged with Deaths of Calves and Goats and Embezzlement



The rodeo coach at Eastern New Mexico State University was charged with animal cruelty and embezzlement for allegedly keeping school property at his house, selling the program's used scrap metal and pocketing the money, and improperly caring for ENMU's calves and goats. [KRQE-TV](#) reported that Albert Flinn was placed on administrative leave pending the investigation. Officials reportedly found extensive rodeo equipment at his home, which Flinn said he had taken because either the school had limited storage space or it was going to be disposed of anyway. A court affidavit accused Flinn of improper medical care, lack of water, and poor feed ratios for the calves and goats. Three goats and dozens of calves reportedly died and were either buried on school grounds or disposed of in school dumpsters.

### Cop Convicted of Animal Cruelty Charged with Domestic Battery



St. Joseph County, Ind. prosecutors argued that a police officer who was charged with domestic battery for allegedly pushing his girlfriend to the ground should be denied pre-trial release because he poses a danger to the community after having been convicted of animal cruelty three days earlier. The [South Bend Tribune](#) reported that David Finn, 35, was convicted on Nov. 14 of kicking his daughter's mother's dog and throwing it out of his truck when picking up his daughter from her mother's home. Witnesses said Finn snatched his daughter from the house with no shoes or socks and roughly handled her in carrying her to his truck. On Nov. 17, Finn was arrested in the incident with his girlfriend. Finn, who had been placed on restrictive duty by the South Bend Police Department pending the animal cruelty investigation, was later relieved of all police duties.



### Domestic Violence Over Dog Abuse Leads to SWAT Team Arrest

A Montgomery County, Ohio Sheriff's SWAT team responding to a domestic violence incident engaged in a standoff with an unnamed suspect who reportedly had abused one of the family's three dogs, prompting an argument in which a woman sustained injuries to her forehead. [WKCF-TV](#) reported that

after the suspect had barricaded himself in his room, deputies called in the SWAT team who eventually used tear gas and a barrage of non-lethal bean bags to get the suspect to leave. The suspect has a criminal history and was in custody awaiting filing of charges which could include having weapons illegally and obstruction of official business. Other family members took all of the dogs.

### *Join Us In Our Mission!*

Please help us educate and advocate to promote greater legislative, public and professional understanding of, and response to, The Link between animal abuse and other family and community violence! It is through the generosity of our donors that we are able to continue our trainings, publications, compilation of resources and research, and reporting on Link legislation. Your gift helps us prevent animal cruelty, domestic violence, child abuse and elder abuse and create a safer world. [Please click here](#) to make a secure and tax-deductible contribution.

## You Can Help Us Create Safer Communities!

The National Link Coalition is the only international education and advocacy organization working to prevent animal cruelty, domestic violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse by showing how they are linked. As the global resource center on The Link between animal cruelty and human violence we train multidisciplinary professionals, showcase programs, and publicize legislation and research to foster collaborations that create safer communities by recognizing that when animals are abused, people are at risk, and when people are abused, animals are at risk.

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Join us!



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Please [click here](#) to make a tax-deductible contribution to support our work



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