



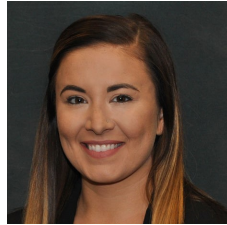
A monthly report of news from  
**THE GLOBAL RESOURCE CENTER ON THE LINK BETWEEN  
ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE**



**Top Stories in This Issue:**



Animal cruelty called a warning sign for school shootings (Page 4)



Study IDs barriers to reporting domestic violence in rural areas (Page 5)



Canada updates policy on veterinarians reporting animal abuse (Page 11)

**Special Focus:**

**Animal Cruelty’s LINK with Targeted Violence**

For decades, companion animal cruelty was ignored by federal law enforcement. But by 2016-2018, Link awareness that animal abuse may be a precursor of mass and targeted violence began to get federal agencies involved for the first time:

The FBI, Homeland Security, and the National Counterterrorism Center’s *First Responders’ Toolbox* called premeditated animal cruelty a novel aggressive warning behavior and called cross-reporting of animal cruelty a force multiplier that could protect public safety. The FBI’s Behavioral Analysis Unit published an extensive study on the underlying psychological features of animal cruelty and its links to human violence (See the [August 2018 LINK-Letter](#)).

Meanwhile, the FBI began including four types of animal cruelty in its National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) to give us the first data of animal abuse co-occurring with other crimes.

This federal involvement continues today with the Department of Homeland Security’s Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) and National Threat Evaluation and Reporting (NTER) Program. Turn the page to read more about animal abuse as a potential risk factor for acts of targeted violence...

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# TARGETED VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

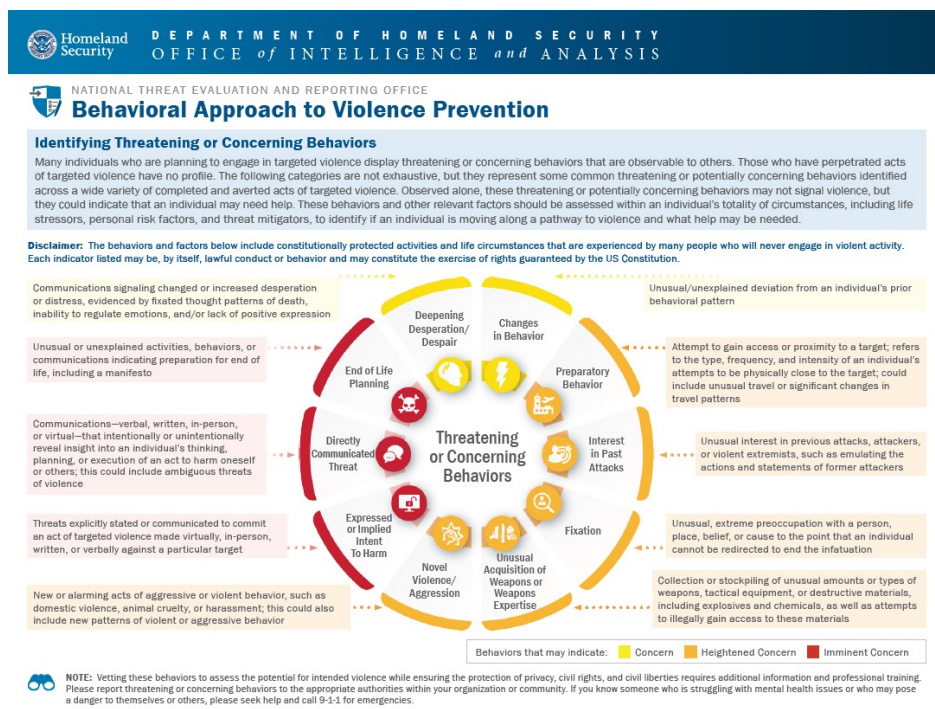
## Animal Cruelty a “Heightened Concern” for Potential Targeted Violence

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has recognized animal cruelty as one of a number of threatening or concerning behaviors that, when included with other suspicious warning signs, could predict acts of intended targeted violence.

DHS’s National Threat Evaluation and Reporting (NTER) Program Office is including awareness of animal cruelty in their training programs and resource materials. In March 2024, Trevor Whipple, law enforcement trainer for the Humane Society of the U.S., presented “Where Animal Cruelty and Threat Assessment Intersect: How to Identify and Report Warning Signs” in NTER’s quarterly webinar series.

NTER is also distributing an [info-graphic](#) depicting their behavioral approach to violence prevention, which includes animal cruelty and domestic violence among novel, new or alarming acts of aggressive or violent behavior which are of “heightened concern” and which, by themselves, may not signify a risk for violence but when committed in conjunction with other concerning behaviors may signal an individual who needs help.

In addition to novel acts of violence or aggression, other threatening or concerning behaviors include:



- Deepening desperation or despair;
- Changes in behavior;
- Preparatory behavior;
- Interest in past attacks;
- Fixation;
- Unusual acquisition of weapons or weapons expertise;
- Expressed or implied intent to harm;
- Directly communicated threats;
- End-of-life planning.

“These behaviors and other relevant factors should be assessed within an individual’s totality of circumstances, including life stressors, personal risk factors, and threat mitigators, to identify if an individual is moving along a pathway to violence and what help may be needed,” NTER cautions.

Recognizing animal cruelty as a potential red flag for mass or targeted violence was included in a 2018 [First Responders’ Toolbox](#) by the Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team, comprised of the FBI, Homeland Security and the National Counterterrorism Center (*See the August 2018 LINK-Letter*). “Reporting, investigating, and prosecuting animal cruelty may help minimize violent acts toward humans, including terrorism,” it said, encouraging first responders, animal control, animal shelters, social services, veterinarians, peers, neighbors, and family members to report suspected animal cruelty to authorities for further vetting. “Their participation becomes a force multiplier and may assist communities and law enforcement with identifying, assessing and managing threats of planned violence while promoting public safety.”

## Homeland Security Explores Animal Abuse as Risk for Targeted Violence

Jamey Barcomb, Regional Prevention Coordinator for Homeland Security's Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) in their Buffalo office, told the National Link Coalition's Professional Advisory Committee that Link advocates are "prevention providers" who can work to stop the trajectory of individuals plotting acts of mass violence.

CP3 works with multidisciplinary stakeholders to identify opportunities to prevent "targeted violence" including terrorism, based on a preventive public health model rather than a reactive law enforcement one. CP3 offers grant funding, an evidence-based [resources finder](#), and community, professional and pre-professional education and training to improve the public's awareness of and role in preventing targeted violence.

He noted that the family dynamics and stressful relationships that result in acts of animal cruelty, domestic violence, and child and elder abuse can be among the numerous underlying factors that can drive individuals to violence. "We know that a behavioral threat against animals is a concern – it's not a predictor, but it is there in some high-profile cases," he said. "It can be a precursor behavior or an indicator of somebody threatening to commit harm to humans."

There's no one risk factor that can predict that somebody will go on to commit targeted violence, he added, but having an awareness of the totality of all risk factors can lead us to better intervention strategies.

"Addressing underlying risk factors can mitigate the risk that individuals consider violence to resolve a grievance."



Jamey Barcomb

Barcomb described four areas that are involved in public health approaches to a problem:

- **Identifying and defining the problem;**
- **Looking for risk and protective factors;**
- **Developing best practices and testing these strategies;**
- **Promoting widespread adoption of the best responses.**

Within this public health approach, CP3 addresses three problems:

- **Attempting to reduce the frequency of acts of targeted violence, which have seen significant increases in volume, lethality and diversity in recent years;**
- **Addressing structural gaps in responses, such as relying primarily on law enforcement and intelligence;**
- **Changing societal norms that accept targeted violence as "just a fact of life".**

We need to dispel the notion that mass shooters just "snapped," he said; they take a logical and deliberate approach and make a conscious decision. "They may have mental health issues, they may or may not have a clinical diagnosis, but they're not crazy," he said. "A lot happens before they make the attack."

Attacks of targeted violence follow a "pathway to violence" often beginning with an attempt to resolve a personal grievance that causes an individual who feels devalued or isolated to commit violence that will "elevate their name for fame." After ideating that violence is the only way to solve their grievance, they fixate on the target with extensive research, planning and preparation utilizing novel forms of aggression. Some individuals target animals initially to test their ability to commit acts of violence, he noted. They then probe and breach the scene, then make their attack.

CP3 emphasizes multidisciplinary and strengths-based approaches to violence prevention that incorporate individuals' protective factors to lead to safer outcomes. Similar to interventions in suicide or gang violence, the CP3 approach explores underlying risk factors that, if examined early, can change the trajectory of individuals and communities.

If we know where and when we are in that pathway to violence and how best to intervene, we can use community partners to participate in the practice of preventing violence, Barcomb said. He called Link advocates "prevention providers" representing many disciplines. And he noted that the relationships between a person and an animal can be "a very powerful protective factor."

# TARGETED VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## Animal Cruelty Called a Potential Warning Sign for School Shooters

Mass shootings in schools are monstrous, but rather than merely considering school shooters as monsters we can be more effective in preventing future tragedies by exploring the “faulty foundations” that triggered these youths’ mental distress and expanding the categories of Adverse Childhood Experiences to include acts of animal cruelty they perpetrate or witness.

Those were the key messages in a [Justice Clearinghouse webinar](#) on “School Shooters and Adverse Childhood Experiences” by Andrew Campbell, who emphasized a preventive approach rather than a reactive one. Steps such as fortifying schools are “fourth quarter efforts,” he said. “By the time the shooter is in the parking lot with a gun it’s already too late. My emphasis is focusing early on.”

Campbell reviewed 218 school shootings and found that many of the shooters haven’t healed from their own experiences and traumas. “A school shooting is not a cry for help -- it’s a final expression of pain.”

Most shooters have a “faulty foundation” – a bad start, he said. These faulty foundations can originate from within, such as mental health depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts, and from without, such as exposure to partner abuse or being a victim of child abuse or neglect

He noted that individuals are considered at risk of violence if they had at least four of the potentially traumatic events listed in the Adverse Childhood Experiences

(ACES) study. But he cited gaps in the study and proposed adding several additional criteria.

“I can think of many school shooters who experienced things that were not on the original ACES list but that affected them the same or possibly even a worse way,” he said. Additional ACES that become potential tipping points and that should be considered include bullying, social isolation, the death of a loved one (either a family member or a pet) and perpetrating or witnessing animal cruelty.

“But we also know that not all school shooters perpetrate acts of animal cruelty,” he said, citing two instances where shooters were dealing with the death of a loved pet or responding to other students’ abusing an animal.

“These acts are monstrous, but rather than just considering shooters monsters, we should consider how they got to the point where they brought a gun to school,” Campbell said, emphasizing the need for early prevention and intervention. “Without effective intervention, faulty foundations will always flow to violent outcomes. Violent starts result in a violent finish.”

He described how shooters are in such a deep state of emotional distress and feelings of worthlessness that the first line that they cross is the belief that violence to oneself is acceptable; school and mass shootings are not just acts of homicide but also of suicide. “Most shooters post-Columbine expect to die.”



**Andrew Campbell**

He called for greater exploration of the healing power of pets to help prevent future mass tragedies.

“Adult survivors of childhood emotional maltreatment said that just having one person show unconditional positive regard was what was critical in ensuring their health, their recovery and their well-being,” he said. “That one person can be a teacher, a coach, a social worker, and for some that one person can be a non-human animal. It’s a dog. It’s a cat. All kids need at least one safe corner, a safe spot.

“One of the go-to responses that we see now in the U.S. to respond to school shootings is teams of therapy dogs in the schools to help students deal with unspeakable trauma. If we know that therapy dogs can help students experiencing this high-level distress from a shooting, why not think about putting therapy dogs in schools before the shooting happens?” he asked. “We know that kids who are abused by other humans are going to struggle to trust humans but maybe they’ll connect better with an animal companion.”

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## Study Identifies Link Issues and Barriers to Reporting in Rural Areas

A [new study](#) detailing specific issues and challenges facing domestic violence survivors in rural areas and barriers to victims reporting is adding new detail to the risk of harm or threats to animals as coercive controls. The study, conducted by Emily Strohacker, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at Penn State University--Harrisburg for the [Center for Rural Pennsylvania](#), notes disparities in domestic violence reporting between rural and urban communities and reveals stark differences in the experiences of survivors.

Among many issues identified, the survey specifically asked respondents located in rural and urban communities to identify “threats” to children and also separately to pets, and to detail those experiences with narratives. Nine rural and eight urban respondents reported their abuser making threats towards their pets. Respondents’ descriptions included:



Emily Strohacker

- *“He had tried to kill my dog twice. The first time he almost succeeded.... He had tied the dog's chain to the bumper of my car so that when I left that day to go...I did not realize that the dog was attached to the car and drove the dog down the road.”*
- *“He beat the animals. The dogs that we had; he beat them. And I think that he murdered my cats because they mysteriously vanished.”*

### Rural Areas Need DVMs Aware of DV

*“It’s a whole different cultural ball game in these areas,” said Grace Coleman, President & CEO of Pittsburgh’s [Crisis Center North](#), describing the critical need to have veterinarians in rural areas trained about domestic violence.*

*“Growing up in an extremely rural area where the nearest grocery store was an hour away and medical assistance equally as far, I can tell you that the veterinarians fill the gaps in everything from medical emergencies for humans to social work. The first intake question I had at my Dad’s clinic was ‘flesh or fur’?”*

*“Often vets in these areas are vital links to social services and all other systems. In economies where animals are business, the local veterinarian is a trusted contact. I still have people calling me from my home area because ‘Doc’ is not there and the trust extended to him has now been passed to me. Lots of work to be done for sure -- and these areas often so resource-deficient with no area foundations or corporations to support services-- if they even exist.”*

“Victims of domestic violence in rural areas face barriers to getting help that are unique,” said Susan Higginbotham, CEO of the [Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#), which serves the state through 59 domestic violence programs, 41 of which are in rural communities. “Feelings of fear, embarrassment, and shame are common, and many rural cases are not reported because victims worry that other people in their small communities will learn about their abuse.”

Barriers to rural victims’ reporting violence included:

- Mistrust of law enforcement, particularly after negative experiences with prior reports.
- Fear of being blamed for the abuse, that crimes would not be taken seriously, that the nature of their abuse would be spread publicly, and that police posed a physical threat to their partners.
- Increased isolation in rural areas, including access to health care, public transportation, cell phone coverage, and affordable safe housing.
- High rates of stalking and tech-based monitoring and harassment.
- Under-resourced and under-staffed domestic violence service agencies in rural communities.

The impact of The Link in rural communities has not been well studied but such work that has been done is quite revealing. In 2003 and 2007, Deborah Doherty and Jennie Hornosty unexpectedly uncovered threats of abuse to livestock, and the presence of firearms, as major barriers affecting Canadian women in rural areas of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

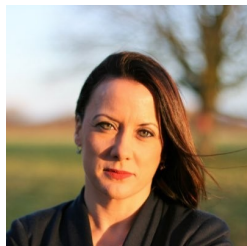
In 2006, Susan Walsh, a farmer’s wife, testified before the Maine State Legislature how her abuser had threatened the farm animals as well as companion animals; her testimony led to Maine enacting the first laws allowing courts to include animals in protection-from-abuse orders, now in place in 40 states.

-- Strohacker, E.R. (2024). *Roadblocks to reporting: Examining barriers that deter domestic violence victim-survivors from reporting to law enforcement in rural communities of Pennsylvania*. Harrisburg: Center for Rural Pennsylvania.

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## British Parliament Learns About The Link

Similar to a presentation to Canada's Parliament ([See the December 2024 LINK-Letter](#)), the British Parliament heard an energetic presentation calling for increased attention to animal-related crimes, in particular The Link between animal offenses and [Samantha Pickles](#) human offenses, and for formal inclusion of this within educational and professional training programs.



Samantha Pickles, Senior Lecturer in Forensic Science with the School of Life Sciences at the University of Bedfordshire, took the occasion of the UK's recognition of National Domestic Abuse Awareness Month to share the work of the Animal Related Crime Working Group (ARCWG) – an initiative which she founded in 2021.

Pickles has already embedded this education within the University's teaching curriculum, leading the way to ensure future professionals understand the impact of animal-related crime and are prepared to address it in their work.

The [Luton News Herald & Post](#) reported on the event, noting that over the last few years, there have been key changes to British legislation with several Acts now recognizing that abusers use pets to control and coerce their owners, as well as also recognizing animals as victims in their own right. The meeting convened several key organizations involved in animal welfare and public safety.

## Australian Courts Must Address Pet Custody in Divorce Settlements



Australia's Parliament on Nov. 29 approved a measure ([See the November 2024 LINK-Letter](#))

that now adds companion animals to the definitions that courts must consider in decisions regarding dispositions of family property in divorce settlements. As with similar laws now enacted in eight U.S. states and the District of Colum-

"I always feel honored to be invited to speak at any event, particularly those which are aimed at raising awareness and bringing about change," Pickles said. "To do so in such auspicious surroundings, and not just on the work of our Group, but as part of a campaign to make a difference to the lives of people and animals, is something that will drive me ever-forward.

"We will continue to seek formal inclusion, in both educational and professional settings, of The Links between animal and human abuse. We now have even greater exposure, and with that, greater accountability. So together, we must act on our words, even when the work is challenging and involves uncomfortable topics. As we often say in the Group: we step up, not back."

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***"We will continue to seek formal inclusion, in both educational and professional settings, of The Links between animal and human abuse."***  
— ***Dr. Samantha Pickles***

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The ARCWG is working towards building greater communication between the various agencies involved in these investigations and lobbying to change sexual offenses legislation in relation to these crimes.

Pickles, who has worked as a veterinary forensic scientist since 2002, has also been writing guidance to support those involved in the investigation of animal-related cases ([See the December 2020 LINK-Letter](#)), most recently fatal and serious dog attacks on humans.

bia, the courts can base their decisions on the animals' best interests, including which party has been the primary caregiver, any history of actual or threatened family violence or animal cruelty by one party, and the emotional attachment to the animal by either party or a child.

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## Tasmania Defines Animal Abuse as Family Violence



David O'Byrne

The Australian state of Tasmania has become the latest jurisdiction to recognize that family violence can take many forms, including abuse of pets intended to intimidate or coerce human family members. On Nov. 26, The Family Violence Amendment MP (Protecting People and Their Pets) Bill 2024 was enacted. It provides that harm (or threats of harm) to an animal with the intent to coerce, intimidate or control a person's spouse or partner, is a form of family violence. This allows instances of family violence involving pets or other animals to be treated similarly to other conduct amounting to family violence. This may empower police officers to issue a Police Family Violence Order or arrest a person without a warrant in instances where family violence involving animal harm (or threats of animal harm) has occurred.

"Causing injury to an animal, including a pet, can be an incredibly distressing form of emotional abuse or intimidation," said MP David O'Byrne in introducing the legislation. "Tragically, research shows that it is common for family violence perpetrators to harm or threaten to harm animals including pets as means to intimidate, control, or coerce a spouse or partner.

"Pets and support animals are so much more than property to many people, often providing critical emotional support for people who are experiencing immense trauma and fear at the hands of a perpetrator of family violence.," he added.

Similar legislation was previously enacted in all other Australian jurisdictions: New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory, and the Australian Capital Territory.

## New Jersey Defines Animal Abuse as Coercive Control

New Jersey has joined the growing list of states that now consider intimidating acts of animal cruelty, abuse or neglect within the domestic violence contexts of coercive control. **A 1475**, amends the Code of Criminal Justice Title 2C:25-29 to direct judges in the Family Part of the Chancery Division of the Superior Court to consider numerous factors in determining whether to issue a protective order. Among the factors to be considered is any pattern of coercive control against a person that in purpose or effect unreasonably interferes with, threatens, or exploits a person's liberty, freedom, bodily integrity, or human rights. "Coercive control" includes "threatening to harm or kill the individual's relative or pet."

Colorado, Oregon, Massachusetts, Vermont and Washington also specifically define animal abuse as acts of coercion or coercive control. A growing list of states list coercive animal abuse within the definitions of the following crimes:

- Domestic violence — Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Kentucky, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, Utah.
- Emotional abuse — Arkansas.
- Abuse—Delaware, Massachusetts., Vermont.
- Stalking—Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Texas.
- Intrafamilial offense—District of Columbia.



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## Prosecutors' Outreach Can Prevent Elder and Animal Abuse

Prosecutors can play a significant role in conducting community outreach programs to educate about elder abuse and animal abuse to ensure better justice and to decrease the barriers of reporting elder abuse, cases of which are extremely underreported.

These were highlights of a webinar presented by Jill Hollander, Deputy District Attorney in the Animal Cruelty and Elder Abuse Unit of Fani Willis' office in Fulton County, Ga. In discussing "Community Engagement: Establishing Relationships and Trust to Raise Awareness" for the [Association of Prosecuting Attorneys](#), Hollander said community outreach – rather than just working in the courtroom – is critical to the unit's motto: "Prevention Over Prosecution".

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***"The animals are usually the first step and the first victim that will escalate into a crime against a human."***  
— Jill Hollander

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"We believe a lot of these crimes can be stopped before they even happen if we get out there in the community and give them the tools to protect themselves, rather than us as prosecutors coming in at the back end, especially when we're dealing with an elderly victim, an animal victim, or any vulnerable victim who doesn't have the power to recover," she said.

The unit started four years ago with a "Break the Silence" campaign to raise awareness about underreported elder abuse. "Elder

abuse occurs in the shadows behind closed doors and hasn't been discussed widely in the community," she said. Reasons for underreporting include: a less accessible population; confusion about many issues; a lack of communications; potential interference by the abuser; emotional involvements; and inadequate budgets.

One surprising area for outreach has been local veterinarians. "The veterinarian is one of the few places where an elder can go by themselves – the abuser doesn't care about the animals," she said, noting that reaching out to physicians is more difficult because the abuser often accompanies the victim to medical appointments.

Another Link aspect involves dog-at-large complaints to Animal Services: while in most instances the elder may have forgotten to close a gate, in some cases the abuser deliberately let the animal escape as a way to get back at the senior.

All of the unit's outreach events highlight how animal abuse is "the canary in the coal mine," how animal abuse is a tool of coercive control against vulnerable seniors, and how intervening early against animal abuse can prevent interpersonal violence. "The animals are usually the first step and the first victim that will escalate into a crime against a human," she said.

Focusing on The Link between animal and elder abuse has also proven to be a more pragmatic strategy and elevates the significance of animal abuse, which is a crime in itself. "It's hard to have an outreach that's just about ani-

mals. It's been more effective to have discussions about the care of



animals and [Jill Hollander](#) crimes against animals Linked to crimes against humans. We've been much more successful with that." Reports of elder abuse have increased, and calls to the prosecutor's office referencing the outreach have quadrupled.

The outreach has had to overcome public cynicism about the old adage, "I'm here from the government and I'm here to help you." "We are doing what we can to combat that. We ARE here to help," she said, describing how the unit is building a network of partners who can answer the public's questions ranging from how to report elder abuse to how to assist an elder who can't afford proper veterinary care.

"We as prosecutors have an incredible amount of power, not just because of what we can charge and the disposition of cases. But we can speak to the community and we have more authority than we know. That engenders quite a bit of respect and also fear. People are afraid of us and they shouldn't be. We can decrease the fear and increase the respect so we can be a lot safer.

"As prosecutors we can speak with authority to show them what the crimes are and what the outcomes can be. By going out and speaking to people we can have a real impact."

# ELDER ABUSE... and The LINK

## Adults in Later Life Have Additional Pet Safety Concerns

The crucial role that companion animals can play in the emotional and physical well-being of older adults, combined with unique factors impacting older adults' health and lifestyles, can conspire to allow exploitive abusers to control and manipulate their victims. Meanwhile, concerns for their animals create barriers to older adults seeking services and age-tailored sheltering in domestic violence situations.

These issues were described in detail in a webinar, "Addressing Pet Safety with Victims of Abuse in Later Life," presented by the [Animal Welfare Institute](#) (AWI) and the [National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life](#) (NCALL). The 90 participants learned about abuse in later life; its intersections with pet safety; challenges that older adults with pets experience; and strategies, community partnerships and funding opportunities that service providers can utilize to assist older adults with pets.



While abuse occurs across the lifespan, elder abuse is often overlooked because the public

**Victoria Ferguson-Young** doesn't think it occurs. But domestic, sexual and elder abuse occurs at "an alarming rate" among elders, and will become increasingly more important with changing demographics, explained Victoria Ferguson-Young, NCALL victim services coordinator.

"Older adults are expected to outnumber children, for the first time in history, by 2034," she said, noting how 11,000 adults are turn-

ing 65 every day and older women outnumber men. "This population is growing and we will have to focus on them and adapt our services to care for older adults."



**Claire Coughlin** Services caseworkers don't routinely ask clients about their pets and their welfare concerns, explained Claire Coughlin, director of AWI's Companion Animal Program. Vulnerable adults often prioritize their animals rather than their own well-being which can then impede their access to services or their relocating when necessary.

Noting gaps in the research about the elder abuse/animal abuse Link, Coughlin said that these forms of family often overlap when home systems are volatile and may be especially relevant for older adults who feel isolated or who have a diminished support system.

"As with younger people, the bond with pets can be manipulated and used against them," Coughlin said. Abusers' targeting pets as coercive control among younger families is exacerbated among older adults, she said, where issues of financial exploitation, self-neglect and stalking present additional concerns. Meanwhile, older adults may be considered less credible when they describe harm to their animals or themselves.

"Another common concern is the hoarding of animals by older adults. It's a significant and unique challenge," Coughlin added. Animal hoarding is three times more likely to be perpetrated by older adults, typically a woman over age 50 and co-occurring with other hoarding behaviors and neglect.

She described three stereotypical animal hoarders:

- **Overwhelmed caregivers:** People who perpetuate a cycle of an ever-expanding population of animals that are not cared for properly.
- **Rescuers:** Mission-driven individuals who feel compelled to save as many animals as possible.
- **Exploiters:** People with antisocial traits who pose as a rescue group, but who have little attachment to the animals and see them as products and a means to an end.

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*"Reporting abuse of any kind to the authorities may be the first step to intervening in a violent household and possibly interrupting a cycle of violence."*

*— Claire Coughlin*

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Coughlin described typical concerning signs and consistent patterns of physical abuse and neglect, animals' environments, and owners' interactions with pets that caseworkers might observe and that should raise red flags.

She offered a series of questions  
*(Continued on Page 10)*

## Adults in Later Life Have Additional Pet Safety Concerns (cont.)

(Continued from Page 9)

that caseworkers should routinely ask older adults about their animals and presented details about [safety planning for pets](#) when their owners are considering leaving, or have already left, an abusive home.

Coughlin reviewed state laws mandating or permitting cross-reporting between adult and animal protection services.

“Reporting abuse of any kind to the authorities may be the first step to intervening in a violent household and possibly interrupting a cycle of violence. Identifying family violence early makes interventions more likely to succeed,” she said. “But we can’t ask professionals to report something outside their area of expertise without giving them the training to do so.”

Building interdisciplinary community partnerships is critical to this work, explained Barbara Huewe, advocacy supervisor for the Fargo, N. Dak. Rape and Abuse Crisis Center.



“One agency can’t do it all by themselves,” she explained, describing her agency’s collaborations with domestic, elder and family violence task forces, volunteers, pet boarding facilities, spay/neuter programs, and doggie day-care centers.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT PETS

- Do you have a pet or pets?
- Does anyone help you care for your pet(s)?
- Are you concerned about your ability to care for your pet(s)?
- Do you have concerns about their safety?
- Has anyone threatened to or actually injured your pet(s)?
- Has anyone in your home ever killed a pet?
- Do you have a safe place for your pet if need be?

— *Animal Welfare Institute*

### SAFETY PLANNING WITH PETS

#### Safety Considerations for At-Risk Adults:

- Keep emergency pet provisions in case an abuser withholds money.
- Always have the number of the nearest 24-hour vet.
- Establish pet ownership by creating a paper trail.
- Pack a bag with pet care essentials and documents.

#### For At-Risk Adults Who’ve Left an Abusive Environment:

- Change veterinarian and pet care providers.
- Keep pets indoors (if possible).
- Supervise pets when they are outdoors.
- Avoid public parks/dog parks.
- Think carefully about where and when pets are walked.
- Do not walk with pets alone.

— *Animal Welfare Institute*

Huewe described how her crisis center is pet-friendly and even offers leashes and pet crates at the front door to make the center more welcoming to survivors already in crisis mode. “Coming to a crisis center is already scary, so

allowing them to bring their animals while they meet with an advocate – especially if the animal is protective of its owner – allows the client to access services. “It’s been huge; it creates a much better environment.”

# VETERINARY MEDICINE... and The LINK

## Canadian VMA Updates Position Statement on Reporting Animal Abuse

In the wake of all 10 Canadian provinces enacting laws requiring veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association has updated its Position Statement on the [“Responsibility of Veterinary Professionals in Addressing Animal Abuse and Neglect”](#) with an increased emphasis on the practitioner’s ethical responsibility as well as legal requirements.

The Position Statement, published on August 19, 2024, updates the earlier 2018 statement. The new statement again emphasizes how animal abuse may be an indicator of human violence, but replaces “overwhelming evidence” with “evidence” of these connections and replaces the 2018 version’s use of the word “link” with “association” between animal abuse and human violence. It makes a slight change in perspective, modifying the 2018 language of veterinarians’ “identifying those who may be victims in conjunction with animal abuse” to now read “identifying animal abuse which might give rise to concerns about the welfare of members of a household.”

The new background statement refines the definitions of animal “distress,” “abuse,” cruelty” and “neglect”. It addresses aspects of veterinarians’ roles in educating clients about animal maltreatment. Where the 2018 statement encouraged veterinary associations to work with provincial governments to enact laws requiring veterinarians to report abuse with immunity for doing so in good faith, the 2024

version references the varying provincial requirements and now calls for veterinary associations to seek “harmonized” legislation common among all the provinces and territories.



Canadian Veterinary Medical Association  
Association canadienne des médecins vétérinaires

Canada’s 10 provinces exercise constitutional powers in their own right and all have laws requiring veterinary reporting of abuse. The three Canadian Provinces (Nunavut, Yukon and Northwest Territories) exercise delegated powers under the authority of the Canadian Parliament and still lack mandatory veterinary reporting provisions.

### Canadian Veterinary Medical Association Position Statements Responsibility of Veterinary Professionals in Addressing Animal Abuse and Neglect (Revised August 19, 2024)

#### Position

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) holds that veterinary professionals, including veterinarians and registered veterinary technologists/technicians, have a duty to protect the health and welfare of animals. While a veterinarian may have a legal obligation to report suspected abuse and/or neglect depending on the jurisdiction in which they practice, all veterinary professionals have an ethical duty to address animal abuse and/or neglect whenever they have reasonable grounds to believe it has occurred.

#### Summary

- Veterinary professionals have an ethical duty to address animal abuse and/or neglect whenever they have reasonable grounds to believe it may have occurred, up to and including reporting to the relevant authorities. This includes reporting concerns regarding their own clients and any observed or suspected acts of neglect or abuse.
- Veterinary professionals play an important role in educating their clients about humane animal care, which can prevent or interrupt the occurrence of animal abuse or neglect.
- Veterinarians should verify reporting requirements and protection from liability within their jurisdiction and whether these also apply to non-veterinarian coworkers.
- There is evidence of an association between abuse of animals and violence towards people. Veterinary professionals play an important role in identifying animal abuse which might give rise to concerns about the welfare of members of a household.
- The CVMA supports engagement between veterinary professionals, family services agencies, and appropriate law enforcement authorities for the benefit of both people and animals.

(Continued on Page 12)

# VETERINARY MEDICINE... and The LINK

## Canada Updates Position Statement on Reporting Animal Abuse (*cont.*)

### Background

- 1.** Veterinary professionals have a duty of care regarding animal welfare and have an ethical duty to address animal abuse or neglect when suspected or confirmed. Addressing abuse or neglect may include educating the client, intervention, or reporting suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate animal welfare enforcement authority. The CVMA supports engagement between veterinary professionals, family services agencies, and appropriate law enforcement authorities for the benefit of both people and animals.
- 2.** Veterinary professionals are trained to recognize the signs of animal distress and understand the differences between abuse and neglect. Any person may be engaged in acts of abuse and neglect, which may in rare instances even include veterinary professionals and staff. Cases may be complicated and involve multiple parties. Animal welfare must be a priority in all situations with understanding that there may be difficult but necessary actions.
  - a.** Definitions of animal “distress” vary between provincial and territorial legislative documents. Generally, an animal is in distress if experiencing physiological or psychosocial consequences related to: (1) deprivation of adequate shelter, ventilation, space, exercise, protection from extreme temperatures, deprivation of food, water, or necessary veterinary care, (2) being injured, sick, in pain, or suffering, or (3) being subjected to harms resulting from privation, neglect, or abuse.
  - b.** Animal “abuse” or “cruelty” includes any intentional activity that causes unlawful and/or unnecessary distress, pain or suffering, injury, disability, or death to an animal. Categories of animal abuse include: (1) physical abuse, (2) mental/psychological abuse, (3) sexual abuse, (4) purposefully withholding basic needs and medical attention, (5) administration of noxious substances, and (6) performing unauthorized veterinary procedures.
  - c.** Animal “neglect” refers to failure to provide adequate basic needs or failure to continually support health for extended periods of time leading to distress, suffering, permanent injury, or death. Neglect may be intentional or unintentional. Unintentional neglect may potentially be corrected with client education. Categories of neglect include: (1) failure to provide animals with adequate necessities to support health and well-being, (2) lack of knowledge of appropriate animal husbandry and care, (3) neglect to remove pests or wildlife (refer to “Pest Management PS”), and (4) failure to seek veterinary care when required.
- 3.** Veterinary professionals have an important role in educating clients about animal welfare and best care practices. Nationally recognized codes of practice and standards, and guidelines for care and handling of various species of animals are valuable references to inform clients about accepted practices and standards for animal care. Veterinarians must commit to helping clients prioritize medical care and decisions including the recognition of humane endpoints and end of life decisions regardless of client constraints (financial, schedule, ability, etc.).
- 4.** The legal determination of animal abuse or neglect is the responsibility of the animal welfare enforcement authorities in the jurisdiction in which the harm occurred and not the duty of the person who reported the concern. However, veterinary professionals may be asked to provide evidence to authorities to aid in determining whether a violation occurred or may be called upon to testify in court.
- 5.** There is evidence of an association between abuse of animals and violence towards people. Veterinary professionals play an important role in identifying animal abuse which might give rise to concerns about the welfare of members of a household.
- 6.** Veterinary professionals need to be aware of reporting requirements in the jurisdiction in which they practice. In most areas in Canada, reporting of suspected animal abuse is mandatory for veterinarians, and immunity from prosecution for acting in good faith is afforded.
- 7.** The CVMA advocates for mandatory reporting of suspected animal abuse by individual veterinary professionals with immunity from prosecution in all jurisdictions. In addition, the CVMA advocates for harmonized animal welfare legislation and definitions of key reporting requirements, such as ‘distress’, ‘abuse’, ‘cruelty’ and ‘neglect’.
- 8.** The CVMA encourages all provincial or territorial veterinary medical associations to work with provincial or territorial governments to support the development of harmonized legislation requiring veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse, and to provide immunity to veterinarians who do so in good faith using their best professional judgement. Safeguards for anyone reporting suspected animal abuse should always be in place.
- 9.** The CVMA encourages all veterinary professionals, teaching institutions, and provincial and territorial veterinary associations to include information on the recognition, documentation, management, and reporting of animal abuse in their curricula and continuing education programs to improve animal protection and empower individuals to report concerns without fear of reprisal.

# VETERINARY MEDICINE... and The LINK

## Brazil Veterinarians Develop Animal/Domestic Violence Questionnaire



**Talia Missen Tremori**

A team of Brazilian veterinarians has developed a tool for detecting animal cruelty in homes where domestic violence against women occurs and for conducting clinical evaluation of animal victims. The researchers, based at three universities and the federal police's national criminology institute, surveyed women who were motivated enough to file domestic violence incident reports with police.

Of the women who had pets, 45% reported physical violence against the animals by the same aggressor. Clinical examinations of the animals confirmed that 11 animals had a poor body score index and had been mistreated.

The veterinary questionnaire provided valuable information and represented a potential tool that could be used by veterinarians, law enforcement and social services to assess cases of domestic violence that incorporate incidents to animal welfare concerns.

***“Veterinary medical professionals play a vital role in curbing the cycle of violence involving animal and people.”***

***— T.M. Tremori et al.***

They cited numerous Link studies in the U.S. and Europe, and the small but growing number of similar reports from Brazil. They noted that in situations of co-occurring domes-

tic and animal abuse, the animals had a greater affective bond with the victim than with the aggressor.

“This is possibly one of the determining factors for the occurrence of mistreatment of animals in homes,” they wrote.

In encouraging the development of partnerships between veterinary, law enforcement and domestic violence institutions, they encouraged veterinarians to

examine the animals for evidence of crime quickly after the incident in order to evaluate the lesions properly.

The report includes the interview questions which they described as a potential instrument to identify the correlation between violence against women and crimes against animals. “Furthermore, when appropriate, in future studies the questionnaire could collect data on whether the victim’s offspring witnessed the aggressions,” they wrote. “This issue is particularly relevant because victims with children are pretty common, and the fact that they have witnessed aggression may suggest that they have grown up exposed to violence, a situation that may perpetuate the cycle of violence for humans and animals, as reported in previous research.”

The authors concluded that the development of this questionnaire is a practical application of public measures related to gender equality, violence against women and crimes against animals that could be expanded and implemented elsewhere, and could help correct the fragmentation of agencies involved in this work in Brazil and elsewhere.

In particular, they noted, “Veterinary medical professionals play a vital role in curbing the cycle of violence involving animals and people since they are the only professionals who can assess and diagnose animal injuries resulting from ill treatment. In addition, they are the professionals most likely to identify cases of correlation between violence against animals and people in under-notified cases.”

**- Tremori, T.M., Everson, M.A., Santeramo, J., Gomes, L.B., & Reis, S.T.J., et al. (2024). A tool for detection of the connection between domestic violence and companion animal mistreatment in Bocucatu, São Paulo, Brazil. *Brazilian Journal of Veterinary Research and Animal Sciences*, 61: e215417. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1678-4456.bjvras.2024.215417>.**

# VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

## Swedish Veterinarians Aware of Link, But Need More Training

An overwhelming number of veterinarians in Sweden are aware of The Link, but fewer of them are unsure about differentiating accidental from non-accidental injuries, who to report suspected animal abuse to, and fewer still know how to react when domestic violence is suspected. Improving the ability of veterinarians to act appropriately requires more integrated theoretical and practical training during their university studies.

These are the findings from a new survey of 362 respondents to a questionnaire distributed by the Swedish Veterinary Association. Among the findings' highlights:

- **90%** were aware of The Link.
- **24%** had experienced The Link in their clinical work.
- **68%** did not know or were unsure about the concept of non-accidental injury (NAI).
- **44%** were unsure about how NAI should be diagnosed.
- **56%** did not know how NAI should be documented.
- **34%** did not know which authority to contact if animal abuse was suspected.
- **17%** knew how to act when there was reason to suspect domestic violence.
- **17%** knew of action plans or procedures for dealing with suspected animal abuse.
- **16%** said The Link had been included in their veterinary education.

The study's authors, based at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences at Uppsala, composed a survey using 19 questions and an open comment section based on four themes: the veterinarian's professional role; The Link; injuries and violence; and knowledge and routines in their workplace. Respondents' open comments reinforced the survey's One Welfare framework regarding the practitioner's responsibility as a veterinarian.

"The most frequently mentioned concepts were: suffering, reporting, obligation, responsibility, suspicion, act, protection, animal advocacy, unnecessary suffering and treatment," they wrote. "These concepts



From left: Lisa Oellig, Johan Lindsjö and Helena Röcklinsberg

paint a picture of their moral standpoints and considerations in relation to their own role as veterinarians and further in their own perceived role as fellow human beings and in society."

The authors identified three main areas where development could help veterinarians in their professional role to better identify and deal with cases of animal and human abuse:

- Giving veterinary students a good basic theoretical and practical education in Link subjects.
- Promoting further competence development through continuing education and training and implementing guidelines and action plans in veterinary clinics.
- Strengthening the cooperation between veterinary clinics and other involved stakeholders.

"The role of the modern veterinarian mirrors the development of society's perspective on the value and use of domestic animals, but also the development and purpose of the profession itself," they concluded. "The primary responsibility of clinical veterinarians relates to their animal patients, but they also have obligations and moral duties to other stakeholders who may have conflicts of interest, such as animal owners, veterinary colleagues or other clinics, and society."

—Oellig, L., Lindsjö, J., & Röcklinsberg, H. (2024). Exploring Swedish veterinarians' awareness of non-accidental injuries, animal abuse and the Link to domestic violence, and their role in addressing this societal issue. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2024.1439106>

## Challenges Remain in Humane Law Enforcement Despite Link Awareness

Citing how “animal cruelty has received growing research attention over the past few decades, in part due to the associations found with interpersonal violence,” but recognizing that “animal cruelty is widespread, yet it is often overlooked by professionals as a form of trauma and not perceived as a serious crime,” researchers at Colorado State University have identified systemic barriers to the effective management of animal abuse and neglect cases. They offer recommendations for a trauma-informed model to meet the psychological needs of animal control and humane officers.

Rebecca Niemiec, in the Clinical Sciences Department, and Lori Kogan, in CSU’s Animal-Human Policy Center, interviewed 24 agents of Colorado’s Bureau of Animal Protection and law enforcement officers who named the four most common barriers to addressing animal cruelty cases:

(1) A lack of places to take removed animals and resources to care for them, particularly livestock. Some agents reported housing animals in their own home and personally paying for the costs of care due to lack of resources.

(2) Challenges working with DAs’ offices. Participants noted lack of communication between the DA’s office and law enforcement and DAs dropping charges or not addressing cases correctly because of a perceived lack of understanding of these types of cases.

(3) A general lack of training on how to address and document cases. The definitions of cruelty and neglect for different species were particularly challenging.

(4) A lack of enforcement personnel to conduct investigations and follow-up, especially in rural areas.

Issues identified as hindering effective animal cruelty enforcement included:

- Despite educational efforts by national law enforcement and prosecution agencies, many local agents feel that animal abuse is not within their sphere of responsibility or that these cases are a low priority.
- Many officers who investigate animal-related complaints feel undervalued within the law enforcement hierarchy.
- Compassion fatigue is a common factor among these officers, as dealing with animal abuse and neglect cases involves risk of physical harm, emotional distress and role strain as officers often must act as both law agents and mental health professionals.

They offer concrete suggestions for improvement:

- Expanded capacity for housing animals (especially livestock). A state-run impound facility, or a group of state-certified facilities, could meet this need.
- Increased access to expert investigators to help manage criminal cases, care for seized animals, and serve as expert witnesses.
- Expanded training for law enforcement, prosecutors and judges on animal cruelty/neglect cases.
- Creation of a statewide position to advise district attorneys, such as Oregon has done



Rebecca Niemiec (left) & Lori Kogan

(See the [January 2024 LINK-Letter](#)).

- Expanded training in forensics for veterinarians, and adding animal crime forensics centers dedicated to these cases.
- Increased mental health and social work support for humane law enforcement agents, including Veterinary Social Workers at animal shelters, to implement a trauma-informed model that better meets agents’ psychological needs.
- Amended state statutes that better clarify and address different types of animal cruelty, abuse and neglect, such as animal collecting, lack of timely veterinary care, animal fighting, and what differentiates standard livestock husbandry practices from cruelty.
- Increased ability to keep perpetrators away from animals. Civil remedies, such as administrative warrants and cease-and-desist orders, have not been comprehensive enough.

- Niemiec, R., & Kogan, L.R. (2024).

[Animal abuse investigations: Challenges and recommendations to improve animal and human welfare.](#)

*Animals*, 14,3602.

<https://doi.org/10.3390ani14243602>

# 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

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

**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.

**Purple = Domestic Violence**  
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**Red = Animal Hoarding**  
**Brown = Assessments/Interventions**  
**Light Blue = Link & Other Crimes**

## 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

**SUCCESS!!! SB 248** defines 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, or a vulnerable adult.

**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.

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

**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.

## 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** died when the general assembly adjourned. It would have allocated \$2,000,000 per year to local law enforcement agencies to investigate and enforce violations of gambling and animal fighting laws.

**HB 1108 died when the General Assembly adjourned.** 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," it would have allowed 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.

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**HB 1928 died when the General Assembly adjourned.** It would have required would 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.

**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 died when the General Assembly adjourned.** It would have required 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 died when the General Assembly adjourned.** It would have permitted 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,** died when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have required 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

**Jan. 15 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania's [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**Jan. 21 — Kansas City, Mo. (online):** Zoë Agnew-Svoboda of BestyBnB will present a [webinar](#), "Bridging the Gap: Establishing Relationships between Social Services and Animal Welfare."

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

**Feb. 18 — Kansas City, Mo. (online):** Zoë Agnew-Svoboda of BestyBnB will present a [webinar](#), "Safety Planning with Survivors of Domestic Violence and Their Pets."

**Feb. 19 — 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](#).

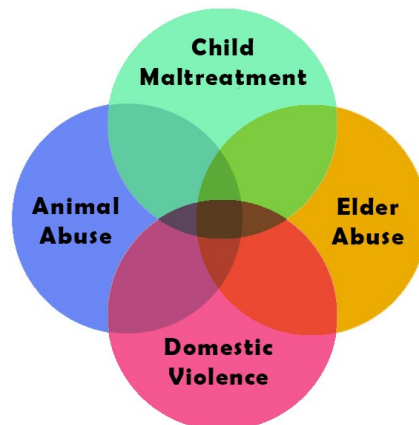
**Feb. 19 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania's [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**Feb. 20 (online):** Marc Kissel and AnnMarie Gaudio of the Hudson Valley, Humane Society will conduct a [webinar](#), "Animal Hoarding: The Challenges," for the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys.

**February 20-21 — 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. Other speakers will present: "Blunt Force Trauma: Accident or Abuse?"; "Responding to Large Animal Cruelty Cases Without Veterinary Support"; and "Unchaining the Truth: Forensic Examination of Dogfighting Cases."

**February 27 (online):** RedRover and Greater Good Charities will discuss the impact of the human-animal bond and explore ways to create and sustain pet housing programs for people and pets in crisis in a [webinar](#) for Don't Forget the Pets.

**March 6 (online):** Oregon's Animal Cruelty Resource Prosecutor Jake Kamins will present "Oregon's Animal Cruelty Laws: Strengthening Charging Decisions and Prosecutions through Legislation" in a [webinar](#) for the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys.



### What is The LINK?

Legislation...

Intervention...

Networking...

Knowledge...

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

# LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



**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 17-18 — Boston, Mass.:** “Equine-Assisted Services to Address Childhood Trauma and Enhance Family Well-Being” and “Creature Comforts: Including Animals to Reduce Stress, Fear and Anxiety in Children and Adolescents Involved in the Court System and Beyond” will be presented at the National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges’ [National Conference on Juvenile Justice](#).

**March 19 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**March 19 — Brookfield, Wis.:** Phil Arkow will present “Connecting the Dots in Family Law: Protecting People by Focusing on Animal Abuse” at the Wisconsin Office of Judicial Education’s [Family Law Seminar](#).

**March 20 (online):** Don’t Forget the Pets will present a [webinar](#), “Keeping Families Together: The Impact of Co-Sheltering.”

**March 25 — Hurst, Texas:** Phil Arkow will present “Connecting the Dots in Crime Prevention: Using The Link to Address the ‘PAWS Gap’” at One Safe Place’s 2025 [Stop Violence Conference](#).

**April 1 (online):** Former Florida prosecutor Betsy Biffel will discuss addressing domestic violence and animal cruelty as emotional topics that require additional sensitivity to witnesses’ experiences in “Witness Preparation: It’s Not Just About the Facts,” a [webinar](#) for the Justice Clearinghouse.

**April 9 — Honolulu, Hawaii:** Phil Arkow will present “It’s Either You or the Dog!” Animal Abuse and Other Family Violence in Military Households” and “LINKing Communities into Action by Closing the ‘PAWS Gap’,” at the Institute on Violence, Abuse & Trauma’s [22<sup>nd</sup> Hawaii International Summit](#).

**April 10 — Saskatoon, Sask., Canada:** Margaret Doyle will present a workshop on identifying animal cruelty red flags on behalf of the [Saskatchewan SPCA](#).

**April 11-12 — Dakota Dunes, Sask., Canada:** Several Link programs will be offered at the Saskatchewan SPCA’s [Gathering for Animal and Human Welfare](#).

**April 15-18 — 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 16 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**April 22 — Bryn Mawr, Pa. (online):** Phil Arkow will present “The ‘Dark Side’ of the Human-Animal Bond: A Species-Spanning Approach for Social Workers to Break the Cycle of Violence” to a Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work [class](#) on animal-assisted interventions.

**April 27-29 — Montreal, Que., Canada:** Humane Canada’s [Summit for Animals](#) will include presentations on: Atira and La Maison Benoit Labre, Vancouver and Montreal supportive housing providers with pet outreach programs to assist domestic violence survivors and homeless pet owners; and Sophie Gaillard presenting “Who Gets the Dog Matters to the Dog: Advocating for Pet Custody Legislation.”

**April 29—May 1 — San Diego, Calif.:** Katie Campbell of RedRover will present “Getting to ‘Yes!’ and Staying There: Building Support for Pet Housing Programs” at the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual [International Family Justice Center Conference](#).

# LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

**April 30 (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 — Washington, D.C.:** The NCJFCJ’s [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 — Alexandria, Va. (online):** Phil Arkow will present “Connecting the Dots in Preventing Domestic Violence: Animal Abuse’s LINK with Family Violence in Military and Civilian Families” in a [webinar](#) for the National Organization for Victim Advocacy’s Victim Assistance Academy.

**May 7-9 — 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 — Clearwater, Fla.:** Temple Grandin and Marty Becker will headline the 2025 Conference of the [International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association](#).

**May 21 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**June 3 — 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 18 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**June 24 (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](#).

**June 26 — New Orleans, La.:** Phil Arkow will present “Moms, Kids & Critters: Connecting the Dots between Child, Domestic and Animal Abuse” at the [32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Colloquium](#) of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC).

**July 16 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**July 23 — San Francisco, Calif.:** Phil Arkow will present “Closing the ‘PAWS Gap’ in Victim Advocacy through Pet-Inclusive Services” at the National Organization for Victim Advocacy’s [51<sup>st</sup> Annual Training Event](#).

**Aug. 20 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

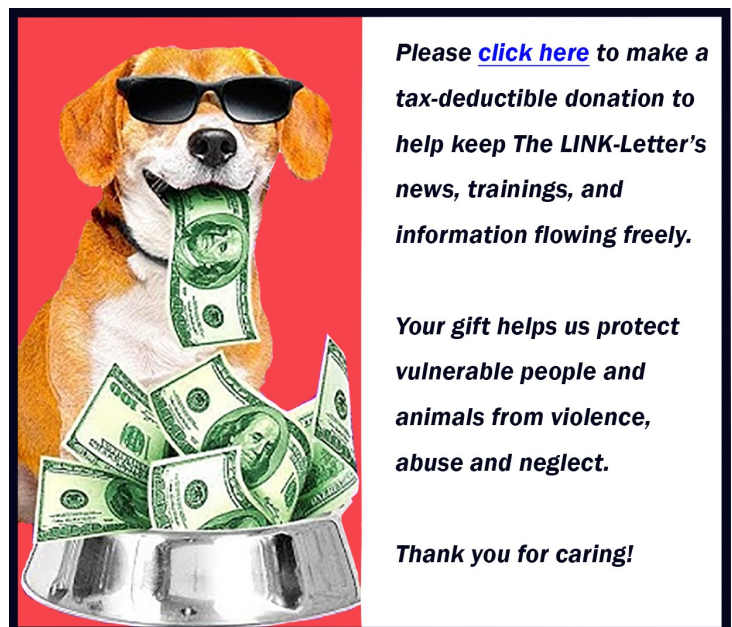
**Sept. 17 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**Oct. 15 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**Oct. 17-18 — Atlanta, Ga.:** Phil Arkow will present at the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual [Animal Protection & Wellness Expo](#).

**Nov. 19 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**Dec. 17 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.



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!**

## THE LINK... in the NEWS

### Woman with Child Abuse History Sentenced to Prison in Cat-Eating Case that Triggered National Alarms in Presidential Race

Unsubstantiated allegations that Donald Trump and JD Vance made during the 2024 Presidential campaign that Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio were “eating dogs and cats” were apparently based on a police bodycam video taken in Canton, Ohio, where police arrested a woman with a history of endangering children was convicted for killing and eating a cat. The [Canton Repository](#) reported that Allexis T. Ferrell, 27, of Canton was sentenced to one year in prison after pleading guilty to a felony charge of cruelty to a companion animal.

A spokesman from the Stark County Prosecutor’s Office said Ferrell did not have time to eat much of the cat because police were called promptly while multiple people in a housing complex witnessed the incident. “Officers were able to determine that Allexis had smashed the cat’s head with her foot and then began to eat the cat,” read an officer’s report. “I did observe blood on Allexis’ feet, hands, and fur on her lips.”

Court reports indicated Ferrell has had substance abuse issues with drugs and alcohol and previously had committed the crime of endangering children while on probation for theft and misuse of credit cards. In imposing the maximum sentence, Stark County Common Pleas Judge Frank G. Forchione said Ferrell had learned virtually nothing from her previous appearance in his courtroom.

“To me, you present quite a danger to our community. This is repulsive to me, I mean, that anyone would do this to an animal. And an animal’s like a child. I don’t know if you understand that or not,” he said. “They bring a lot of love to a lot of people. They don’t have a voice. But their only voice today is me and I’m going to exercise this voice very loudly.”

### Animal Cruelty Suspect Who Missed Court Date Nailed for Blowing Through a Stop Sign

A Fort Lee, N.J. woman who has been accused of mistreating numerous pets was arrested after she failed to stop at a stop sign and was found with an expired driver’s license in an unregistered car. She was taken into custody because a warrant had been issued for her arrest after she failed to appear in court on the animal cruelty charges. The [Wyckoff-Franklin Lakes Daily Voice](#) reported that Julia Daniltchenko, 44, was taken into custody in Rutherford on Nov. 25, Fort Lee police said. The animal cruelty charges stem from a June 5 investigation at Daniltchenko’s home where Bergen County Animal Control, Fort Lee Fire Prevention, and police officers found mistreatment of cats, dogs, and birds, police said. Daniltchenko was cited for failing to provide necessary care and improper shelter for the animals.



### *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.

## THE LINK... in the NEWS

### Couple Charged with Killing Animals Also Accused of Planning to Torture a Child

A Winnipeg, Manitoba couple who had been arrested on multiple counts of animal cruelty and creating “crush” videos (*See the [December 2024 LINK-Letter](#)*) were subsequently also charged with bestiality, child pornography offences and for planning to torture a child. The [CBC](#) reported that Chad Kabecz, 40, and Irene Lima, 55, were re-arrested after police searched their home, where officers reportedly seized several electronic devices containing hundreds of videos and photographs,

Police alleged that between May 20 and Oct. 7, 2024, more than 75 animals were filmed or photographed being tortured and killed; in some cases, there was also a sexual component to the actions. Kabecz allegedly had established an exclusive underground network on the “dark web” which required prospective members to submit a video of them-



selves killing an animal to gain entry. Lima and Kabecz not only facilitated the creation and distribution of the content but also profited financially from it, police said.

Police say they also discovered tens of thousands of encrypted communications between the couple which included discussing their intention to torture a child, also with a sexual component.

Lima and Kabecz were rearrested and charged with additional offenses, including conspiracy to commit an indictable offense, possession of proceeds of crime, numerous counts related to bestiality, killing or injuring animals, and causing unnecessary suffering to an animal.



## 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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