



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



**Top Stories in This Issue:**



Study examines dynamics of ASPCA-NYPD partnership  
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How can attorneys help domestic violence survivors with pets? *(Page 8)*



West Virginia finally considers banning sex with animals  
*(Page 16)*

## Building LINK AWARENESS

### Inter/National Policies Recognize The Link

The National Link Coalition is continually working with national, regional and local organizations to advance the concept that by protecting pets we also protect people. We are especially energized by the progress that has already been made as a result of at least 13 international and national associations that have formalized this recognition through the issuance of official Resolutions and Policy/ Position Statements.



The most recent example, the American Bar Association’s Resolution calling for greater protection for pets in domestic violence scenarios (*See the February 2025 LINK-Letter*), prompted us to recall the many Resolutions, representing an impressive diversity of professions, that are advancing Link awareness, legislation, training, and programming. Let’s take a look at some of these policy statements and see how these policies are making a difference:

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# Building LINK AWARENESS

## Policies Recognize The Link

(Continued from Page 1)

### AMERICAN ANIMAL HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

The 2015 [Position Statement](#), “**Animal Abuse Reporting**,” cites The Link in supporting reporting of suspicions of animal abuse to appropriate authorities under laws mandating such reporting with immunity from legal liability for good-faith reporting. Such reports protect both animals and people, uphold the Veterinary Oath, and promote public health.



### AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

[Resolution No. 504](#) in 2025 urges all governments to enact laws that protect people by protecting their pets in family law and civil restraining order proceedings. (See the [February 2025 LINK-Letter](#))



### AMERICAN HUMANE SOCIETY

[Position Statement on Animal Cruelty](#) encourages strong responses because “Acts of intentional animal cruelty may be indicators of serious psychological pathology and are often associated as a precursor to acts of violence perpetrated on vulnerable humans, including women and children.”



### AMERICAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

AVMA’s [2019 Policy](#), “**Animal Abuse and Animal Neglect**,” encourages state legislation providing immunity from liability in any civil, criminal, or state licensing action to any veterinarian who reports, in good faith, a suspected case of animal abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. “Prompt disclosure of abuse is necessary to protect the health and welfare of animals and people.”



### ASSOCIATION OF PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS

A 2016 “[Resolution Regarding Animal Cruelty Crime Prosecution](#)” declares that



ASSOCIATION OF PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS

animal cruelty crimes of violence require prosecutors’ full attention because “There is a direct link between the criminal acts of animal abuse and interpersonal violence including murder, child abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse. Under-enforcement of animal cruelty laws is directly correlated to a host of corrosive societal ills such as animal fighting in gangs and the harming or killing of companion animals in domestic violence situations.”

A 2023 “[Statement of Principles on Animal Fighting](#)”

cites “a direct link between the criminal acts of animal fighting and other serious felonies, such as illegal firearms and gambling, drug distribution, money laundering, aggravated assaults, child pornography, human trafficking, and gang activity” in necessitating higher penalties and warranting felony accountability.

### CANADIAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

The 2024 [Position Statement](#), “**Responsibility of Veterinary Professionals in Addressing Animal Abuse and Neglect**,” states, “All veterinary professionals have an ethical duty to address animal abuse and/or neglect whenever they have reasonable grounds to believe it has occurred.” It adds, “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.”



CANADIAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES MÉDECINS VÉTÉRAIRES

### INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

A 2022 [Resolution](#), “**Support to Enhance Protection of Animal Welfare and Public Safety**,” calls for improved animal cruelty law enforcement because “Commission of violence to animals (abuse) and cruelty by a failure to provide adequate care



(neglect) signal the risk of maltreatment of household members with heightened risk to children, elders and disabled persons” and “Forms of animal maltreatment are often accompanied by domestic violence, financial crimes, drugs, human trafficking, sexual coercion and weapons crimes.”

# Building LINK AWARENESS

## 13 Inter/National Link Policies

(Continued from Page 2)

### INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HUMAN-ANIMAL INTERACTION ORGANIZATIONS

# IAHAIO

A 2018 [“Position Statement Regarding Domestic Violence and Related Animal Abuse”](#) “acknowledges the link between domestic violence and animal abuse. IAHAIO supports the provision of public education, training for professionals, academic research and the promotion of effective and compassionate interdisciplinary partnerships that collaborate with a view to minimizing the incidence of domestic violence and animal abuse in all its forms.”

### NATIONAL ANIMAL CARE & CONTROL ASSOCIATION

A 2016 [Guideline](#), **“Reporting of Suspected Abuse of Dependent Persons”** states, “Animal care and control personnel respond frequently to situations where children, elders or disabled persons are involved or are simply present. NACA supports the requirement that animal care and control personnel be mandatory reporters of suspected abuse of these dependent persons.”



### NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JUVENILE & FAMILY COURT JUDGES

NCJFCJ in 2019 adopted a [“Resolution Regarding Animal Cruelty and its Link to Violence,”](#) emphasizing that because animal cruelty is a crime of violence that potentially impacts the safety of humans, juvenile and family courts should consider: the welfare of abused animals in reaching their decisions; exposure to animal cruelty in disposition orders for juveniles who have committed animal cruelty; and the safety of pets and human household members when assessing domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse and animal cruelty cases and when deciding protection orders, visitation and custody.



### NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

Link-themed Resolutions support: [“The Investigation of Animal Cruelty and the Often-Related Crimes to Human Victims”](#) (March 2019) in order to work “collaboratively to combat animal abuse, which may also include other members of the family; and [“The Child and Animal Abuse Detection and Reporting Act”](#) (August 2021) because child abuse, intimate partner violence and animal abuse often co-occur, “Information on exposure to animal abuse by children and adolescents could lead to early intervention and prevention of later acts of animal cruelty and human violence.: NSA acknowledges [“That Animal Cruelty is a Crime of Violence”](#) (May 2023) to improve public safety; and [“Animal Fighting is a Crime of Violence and Supports Strong Penalties”](#) (May 2024), citing Links with child abuse, murder, assault, theft, organized crime, narcotics, bribery, illegal firearms, and human trafficking.



### ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS (U.K.)

The 2023 Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons [Section No. 14 on Client Confidentiality](#) states that relevant information may be reported to appropriate authorities when “animal welfare or the public interest is compromised,” including suspected animal, child or domestic abuse. “Given the links between animal, child and domestic abuse, a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse reporting suspected or actual animal abuse should consider whether a child or adult within that home might also be at risk.”



### VETERINARY COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND

The 2020 [“Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinarians”](#) states that veterinarians have a legal and a professional responsibility to report suspected violations of the Animal Welfare Act 1999. “VCNZ accepts research linking the association between deliberate physical maltreatment of animals and violence against humans. Veterinarians, when confronted with situations of animal abuse, should consider whether people within that home might be at risk. As well as responding appropriately to the ill treatment of the animal, veterinarians should use their judgment to determine whether the appropriate government authorities (Police, Child, Youth and Family) should be informed.”



# LAW ENFORCEMENT... and THE LINK

## Link Cited in Call for Minnesota Statewide Office of Animal Protection

Link advocates in Minnesota have reintroduced a bill in the state legislature that extensively references The Link between animal abuse and human violence in calling for the creation of a statewide Office of Animal Protection that would address the current inconsistencies in animal cruelty law enforcement and do a better job of protecting both animals and people. A [website](#) has been created to garner additional support for the proposal.

**SF 1163**, sponsored by Sen. John Marty (DFL—Roseville) and Rep. Matt Norris (DFL—Blaine), would create the office in the Department of Public Safety’s Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. It would provide the structure and oversight needed to assist authorities in the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of animal cruelty, which will protect both animals and people. Advocates for the measure cite the FBI and the United Nations in describing animal cruelty as a public safety issue linked to child, elder, domestic, and sexual abuse.

Like all states except Delaware, animal cruelty investigation is handled primarily on a local level. The Animal Humane Society and Minnesota Federated Humane Societies each have a limited number of state humane agents to cover the entire state, but with 87 counties ranging from the major metropolitan areas of the Twin Cities to extremely rural regions, most investigations are handled by local police and sheriffs with little coordination among agencies.

The bill would assist these local entities and create efficiencies, uniform protocols and standards, cross-discipline training and certification, and accountability. The office and its advisory committee would lead discussion and recommendations on such issues as reporting, crime data, victim services, and prevention measures.

Similar measures were introduced in 2024 ([See the April 2024 LINK-Letter](#)) but failed to make it out of committee.

### PROTECTING ANIMALS AND PEOPLE THROUGH CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Support the Minnesota Office of Animal Protection (MN OAP) bill  
Authors: Sen. John Marty / Rep. Matt Norris

#### ANIMAL CRUELTY IS A PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUE

The ongoing occurrence of animal cruelty throughout Minnesota is well-documented. This crime is also linked to human violence, such as domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, sexual abuse, and other crimes against people and property.

#### THE BILL

To protect both animals and people, this bill will establish an Office of Animal Protection under the MN Department of Public Safety. This office will assist authorities in the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of animal cruelty.

#### BENEFITS

- Protect public safety — protecting animals and people
- Promote accountable government — creating efficiencies and standards
- Strengthen communities — building trust and collaboration

#### PROBLEM

Due to lack of standards, training, and resources, the current “system” has failed to support authorities who are tasked to enforce animal cruelty laws. This lack of support and expertise has resulted in inconsistent enforcement efforts throughout Minnesota, resulting in harm to animals and people.

#### STATEMENT OF NEED

The Minnesota Office of Animal Protection will address multiple needs:

- **Expertise.** Crimes of animal cruelty can be complex. The OAP will provide expertise across multiple professions, from investigations to veterinary forensics to prosecution.
- **Accountability.** There is no assistance or support for authorities tasked with the enforcement of these laws. The OAP will provide accountability through uniform protocols.
- **Cross-discipline training.** There is no statewide training for these crimes and laws. The OAP will provide training about animal cruelty and criminal law across multiple disciplines.
- **Resources.** Animal cruelty cases may not be pursued due to a lack of qualified services or a high cost of care. The OAP will work to build funds to help communities stay safe.
- **Issues.** The OAP can lead discussion and recommendations on related topics, such as animal cruelty reporting, crime data, victim services, and prevention measures.



Support the Minnesota Office of Animal Protection bill

MNOAP.org

## Hawai'i Bill Cites Link to Increase Animal Cruelty Penalties

A bill in the Hawai'i State Legislature Proposes increasing the penalties for many animal cruelty offenses based on The Link. **HB 698** was introduced by seven representatives by stating, “Animal cruelty offenders are a threat to the health and safety of all members of our communities, especially vulnerable populations,” “Animal cruelty is a predictive and co-occurring crime with violence against humans, including children, intimate partners, and the elderly,” and “Children who witness animal abuse are also more likely to abuse animals as teenagers and adults.”



The bill would increase the criminal penalties for animal cruelty resulting in an animal’s death, dog fighting, causing the death of a service or law enforcement animal, sexual assault of an animal, and subjecting a minor to sexual contact with an animal.

# LAW ENFORCEMENT... and THE LINK

## Study Examines Dynamics of ASPCA-NYPD Enforcement Partnership

Interest in The Link has accelerated the need for more consistent enforcement of, and data about, animal cruelty cases to aid law enforcement, prosecutors and human and humane services to create effective programs. A new study examines how New York City addressed these issues through a partnership between the ASPCA and the NYPD (See the [September 2013 LINK-Letter](#)).

“Since the inception of organized municipal policing in America, starting with the creation of the Boston Police Department in 1838 and the NYPD in 1845, many resources have been dedicated to monitoring the state of society by looking in great depth at the incidence of criminal activity,” the authors note. “However, until recently, little effort has been made to formally integrate information about animal-related crimes into this picture. In addition, animal cruelty can occur alongside other serious offenses involving human victims, such as domestic violence. Crimes such as dogfighting can involve illegal drugs, illegal weapons, and other serious offenses that are outside of the scope of what animal control and humane law enforcement officers are trained to handle or have authority to investigate.”

Meanwhile, crimes against animals require special resources that include the assessment, housing, care, and treatment of animal victims and responding to associated human resource needs such as homelessness, mental health issues, and concurrent family violence.

The full-scale ASPCA-NYPD partnership went into effect in 2014, propelled by several factors:

- Public interest in animal cruelty cases surged in 2001 - 2008 with the TV program *Animal Precinct*.
- The ASPCA had only 20 Humane Law Enforcement officers to serve a city of 8,000,000 people. By comparison, the NYPD has 36,000 officers.

The study reviewed 5,745 animals in 2,783 cases that the ASPCA received from the NYPD over a nine-year period. The data will help replicate and extend previous findings about suspected animal cruelty in the U.S. and establish metrics for initiatives in New York City. Although the findings are specific to New York’s unique environment, they were consistent with prior literature regarding animal cruelty cases elsewhere:

- The most common forms of cruelty involving dogs were non-violent neglect and abandonment.
- Most cases involving cats had injuries consistent with non-accidental causes.
- Cruelty to cats was believed to be under-reported.
- Veterinarians have high exposure to community animals and became a significant source of reports once mandatory reporting was enacted. However, the veterinary community may have more untapped capacity to report, requiring the rolling out of training and policies.

The authors emphasized a need for inter-agency collaborations, particularly in cases involving animal fighting, hoarding and large-scale neglect. “Cases involving large numbers of animals require expertise, facilities, and resources that can be very demanding for animal welfare organizations, law enforcement, and prosecutors. They also represent a situation where clear and effective coordination is critical for an effective response,” they wrote.

“Animal welfare professionals, law enforcement, prosecutors, and veterinarians have significant and interlocking roles in preventing and responding to animal cruelty and contributing to datasets that can be used to increase the efficacy of these efforts.”

They concluded that more streamlined reporting mechanisms, consistent data gathering and case tracking, and community engagement programs that respond to and prevent animal cruelty “will help agencies to better respond to the animal harm spectrum and prevent abuse and promote the wellbeing of animals and people.”

-- Caldwell, S., Patterson-Kane, E., Brandler, E., Gupta, M., & Lockwood, R. (2025). Animal cruelty in New York City: Cruelty cases presented to the ASPCA in partnership with the NYPD 2013-2022. *Animals*, 15, 662. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani15050662>



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## Momentum Builds for Calling Animal Abuse Coercive Control

In its [annual rankings](#) of states' animal protection laws, the Animal Legal Defense Fund drew special attention to what it called an emerging trend: the enactment of laws adding intimidating acts of animal cruelty to statutory definitions of "coercive control."

In 2024, Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Vermont enacted such laws, bringing the total now to 21 states plus the District of Columbia where threats of harm to animals is defined as acts of either coercion, domestic violence, or stalking.

The recognition of "coercive control" in the domestic violence field has been accelerating in recent years. State laws vary, but the

term is generally taken to mean patterns of behavior intended to intimidate, harass or control a family or household member in such a way as to isolate the victim, deprive her/him of basic needs, or controlling the victim's movements and communications. Given growing evidence of animal harm and threats as a manipulative tool that makes domestic violence survivors fearful of leaving, it is easy to see how acts of animal abuse can — and should — be easily folded into statutory definitions.

"Domestic violence abusers know how much a companion animal means to their human victims — and too often exploit this bond, often threatening or even harming those animals as a means of con-



### ANIMAL PROTECTION

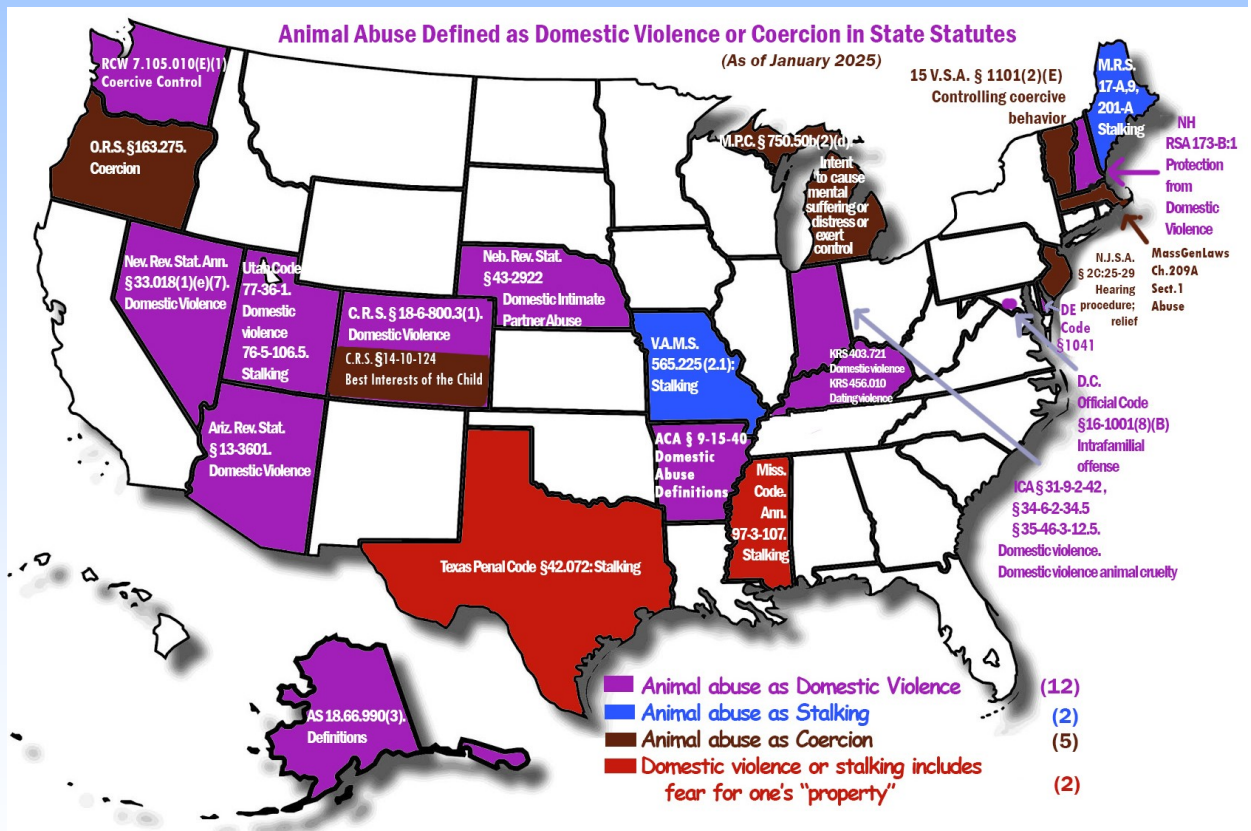
U.S. STATE ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS RANKING REPORT™

2024

COMPARING OVERALL STRENGTH AND COMPREHENSIVENESS



trol," said Lora Dunn, ALDF Criminal Justice Program Director. "It is vital that the law recognize this coercive control as a form of domestic violence, for a very practical reason: so that human victims can obtain a protection order and remove themselves and their animals to safety."



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## British Courses Help Human & Animal Caregivers Respond to The Link

A British program has developed online [all-day trainings](#) to help animal care professionals and social services workers to recognize and respond to animal and domestic abuse.



Maya Badham, Founder/CEO of Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse ([SAHSDA](#)), created the two courses. They provide caregivers with skills and knowledge to recognize and respond to abuse in both humans and animals.

The iPET Network Level 2 Award in Safeguarding for Pet Professionals is a certificate program to sensitize dog groomers, pet sitters, doggie daycare operators,

trainers, kennel assistants, and others that if they're working with animals they're probably also working with victims of domestic abuse. It will be offered on March 31, May 20 and Sept. 11.

The PAWS Champions: Recognizing & Responding to Companion Animal Abuse as a Tactic of Coercive Control course equips learners with the knowledge and skills to recognize how the exploitation of the human-animal bond is used as coercive control, and to include animals within a whole family and whole systems approach to domestic and sexual abuse. It is tailored for frontline workers in such fields as survivor support, housing, social care, and drug and alcohol support. The course will be offered on April 30, June 5 and Oct. 23.

## Co-Sheltering Gets National Exposure

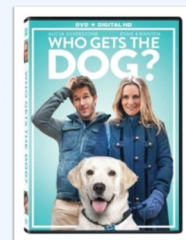
Link awareness was advanced nationally on February 6 when [NBC News](#) featured New York City's Urban Resource Institute's [People and Animals Living Safely \(PALS\) Program](#). National news anchor Kate Snow visited one of URI's 11 pet-friendly domestic violence shelters - PALS Place — describing the program's pet-inclusive housing for survivors of domestic violence.



The 4-1/2-minute segment featured interviews with URI CEO Nathaniel Fields, Chief of Staff & Senior Advisor Jennifer White-Reid, and former URI resident Hope Dawson-Sessoms, alongside her Chihuahua-mix, Coco. The feature highlighted the lifesaving impact of the PALS program in helping survivors like Hope and Coco stay and heal together.

## Who Gets the Pets in a Divorce?

With many marriages marked by domestic violence ending in a divorce, custody of pets can get contentious. Eight states and the District of Columbia now allow courts to award custody in whatever the court determines to be the animals' best interests. We recently came upon this ruling from New York which we thought we'd share with you:



**"If judicial resources can be devoted to such matters as which party gets to use the Escalade as opposed to the Ferrari, or who gets to stay in the Hamptons house instead of the Aspen chalet, there is certainly room to give real consideration to a case involving a treasured pet."**

**-Travis v. Murray, 977 N.Y.S.2d 621 (S. Ct. N.Y. 2013).**

## New Hampshire Proposes Novel Approach to Pet Loss



While multiple states have enacted laws declaring coercive animal abuse as acts of domestic violence or awarding custody of animals in divorces in the animals'

best interests, New Hampshire's **HB 593** takes a unique approach and would allow the aggrieved party

to collect damages for "loss of consortium."

The bill expands the definition of loss of consortium to include the loss of love, companionship, comfort, care, assistance, protection, affection, society, and moral support of a pet. If enacted, a spouse could recover damages for the "loss of consortium" from a spouse who intentionally or recklessly causes the death of that person's pet.

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## How Can Attorneys Assist Domestic Violence Survivors with Pets?

What can attorneys do to assist the plight of domestic violence survivors who have pets that they are afraid to leave behind with their abuser?

That's a question answered by the American Bar Association's Animal Law Committee. Megan Senatori and Allison Palmbach, of the Lewis & Clark Law School, cite the prevalence of domestic violence and concurrent risks to victims' animals described several areas where lawyers can help humans and their animals find refuge. In a recent issue of the Animal Law Committee's newsletter, they offer the following opportunities:



Megan Senatori

### Providing Legal Services to Create and Aid Foster Programs

Legal services are vital to fill the gap in communities where domestic violence shelters are not pet-friendly, they argue. Legal documents are necessary to protect both the survivor and participating organizations from liability, including: a temporary shelter agreement; a waiver and liability release; authorizations to share confidential information among participating organizations (while keeping applicable privileges intact); consent forms; and foster parent contracts.

### Representing Victims to Help Them Protect Themselves and Their Animals

Attorneys may be needed to help survivors obtain protection orders (which can, now in 41 states, include animal companions) and to help retrieve their animals from the abuser. Each state's provisions regarding animals in protection orders is different, and attorneys can help clients navigate the complexities. Lawyers are also needed to represent survivors in restraining order hearings; for a victim in crisis and experiencing the trauma of facing the abuser in court, "the process is far less daunting when survivors have the benefit of legal counsel," they write.

### Helping Facilitate Co-Shelter Opportunities

Given the stress experienced by people and animals when they are separated, co-living arrangements are important for the well-being of all victims of family violence. Lawyers can help shelters navigate the options of grants available under the federal PAWS (Pet and Women Safety) Act and through nonprofit organizations. They can facilitate the details of establishing co-sheltering programs.

"Lawyers have a vital role to play helping those impacted by domestic violence, including working with survivors of abuse, domestic violence and animal protection organizations, and the many volunteers who aid both," they conclude. "Together, we can help pave the way for safety from abuse for all victims."

— Senatori, M.A., & Palmbach, A. (2023, Winter/Spring). Lawyers can play a vital role in facilitating refuge for humans and animals impacted by domestic violence. *ABA Animal Law Committee Newsletter*. <https://law.lclark.edu/live/files/34801-aba-tips-animal-law-committee-newsletter-spring>

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## N.J. Proposes Humane Officers' Mandated Reporting of Domestic Violence

While 12 states specifically require animal control and humane officers to report suspected child or elder abuse, a bill in the New Jersey Legislature would make the Garden State the only one believed to mandate their reporting of suspected domestic violence.



**A 2250** would require humane law enforcement officers who have reasonable cause to believe that a person is a victim of domestic violence to report the situation to a local law enforcement agency, with immunity from civil and criminal liability for making a report in good faith. Currently, they are permitted — but not mandated — to report.

The power of humane law enforcement was transferred several years ago from the New Jersey SPCA to County Prosecutors. Each New Jersey municipality and police department is now required to designate a Municipal Humane Law Enforcement Officer (HLEO). All law enforcement officers tasked with animal cruelty investigations must be certified by the New Jersey Police Training Commission. The law also requires each County Prosecutor to designate an Animal Cruelty Prosecutor to prosecute and take other legal action as appropriate for violations of the animal cruelty laws of the state. In addition to investigating allegations of animal cruelty, HLEOs aid in educating the public on the humane treatment of animals.

## New Mexico, Georgia Consider Adding Protections for Pets

Two more states are considering legislation that addresses the growing recognition that companion animals are harmed or threatened to intimidate the human victims of intimate partner violence.



In New Mexico, **SB 26** would both define coercive-control animal abuse as domestic violence (as 19 other states have done) and allow pets to be included in protection orders (as 41 other states have done). The bill would rename the Family Violence Protection Act as the Protection Against Abuse and Violence Act and replace the term “domestic abuse” with “abuse” that would now include “harm or threatened harm to an animal” within the definition of “abuse.”

The measure would also allow courts to issue orders of protection that would enjoin the restrained party from committing or threatening to commit acts of “abuse” against the protected party or designated household members. Courts could also grant to any party the exclusive or shared possession and control of any animal kept, owned or leased by either party or any minor child in the household. The court could order any party to stay away from the animal and forbid the party from taking, transferring, concealing, mistreating, harming, or disposing of the animal.

In Georgia, **HB 177** would allow protection orders that include “the care, custody and control of any animal owned, possessed, kept, or held as a household pet by either party or by a minor child living in the household or residence of either party.” Orders could also prevent the respondent from harassing, harming, taking, transferring, or concealing pets and committing animal cruelty.



The bill mirrors other state pet-protection-order laws that specifically exclude livestock, laboratory animals, working animals, sport animals, and animals kept for commercial purposes or consumption.



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Thank you for caring!

# CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK

## Veterinarians Sought for Study on Response to Possible Child Abuse

Researchers at Thomas Jefferson University are continuing their study to learn more about how



**Katharine Wenocur, left, & Kirby Wyckoff**

various professionals respond when a case of childhood animal cruelty becomes known. Katharine Wenocur and Kirby Wyckoff are seeking practitioners to participate in a one-hour videoconference focus group at a date/time to be determined later.

The focus group will discuss your experiences working with or hearing about children who have engaged in animal abuse. Confidentiality is a priority for this study, and you may speak in general terms about this subject, rather than discussing specific cases.

Participants must meet the following criteria:

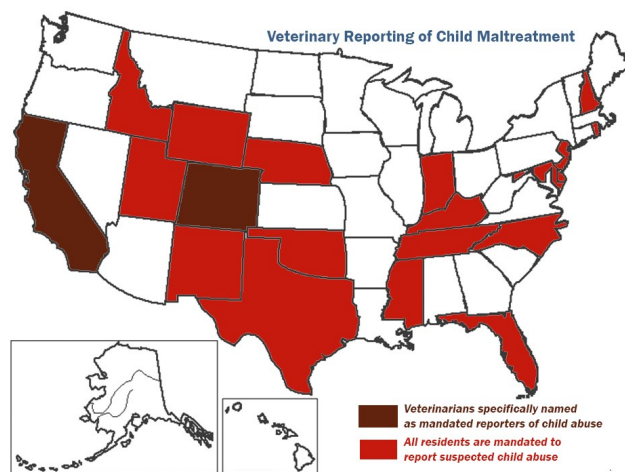
- Have a DVM and directly care for animals in practice.
- Have encountered at least one example of a child harming an animal, either through direct contact with the child or the animal, or hearing about a case from a colleague.

To participate, please email

[Katharine.Wenocur@jefferson.edu](mailto:Katharine.Wenocur@jefferson.edu).

### Veterinarians May Be Mandated to Report Suspected Child Maltreatment

California and Colorado are believed to be the only two states in which veterinarians are specifically identified as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. However, there are 18 other states in which they are also required to report — because all residents in those states are mandated reporters:



Please visit our website's [National Directory of Abuse Investigation Agencies](#) to find the phone number in your state where reports can be made. These offices can also provide you and your staff with valuable information about how to recognize potential signs of child physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect.

## Bill Would Hold Parents Liable for Children's Animal Abuse

A novel approach to preventing children from abusing animals has been proposed in Massachusetts through a bill in the General Court that would hold parents liable for failing to prevent their children's harming animals.

**SD.1450** would make any parent who allows their child to subject

an animal to cruelty or abuse without taking steps to prevent, discourage or correct the action liable for a fine of up to \$500. The parents would also be required to undergo psychiatric evaluation and the child would be required to participate in psychiatric rehabilitation under a psychologist who specializes in bullying.

The family could be prohibited from having any unsupervised contact with animals. All current animals would be relocated either to a foster home or an approved animal welfare sanctuary.

## RSPCA Addressing “Breaking the Chain” of Childhood Animal Cruelty

**G**iven the lifelong risks caused by childhood acts of cruelty to animals, many humane education interventions try to prevent animal harm committed by children and adolescents. A new research study is exploring ways to increase the impact of one such program in the United Kingdom.



The study identified risk factors for childhood animal cruelty that need to be reduced or mitigated in order for animal welfare education to be effective. These include:

- Unintentional harm due to curiosity or lack of supervision;
- Pathological behaviors often linked to psychological issues;
- Delinquent behaviors commonly seen in adolescents and often associated with antisocial behavior;
- Lack of self-regulation;
- Violence against animals depicted on social media;
- Socio-environmental risks such as exposure to violence, gangs, family dynamics and peer pressure;
- The Violence Graduation Hypothesis; and
- The Deviance Generalization Hypothesis.

They cited numerous Link studies in describing the crucial impact of children’s developing empathy in inhibiting aggression and fostering prosocial behavior. However, low empathy and high callous unemotional traits are risk factors for animal harm and may be difficult to change through educational intervention, they wrote.

The researchers interviewed 16 RSPCA employees regarding their “Breaking the Chain” program, an intervention developed in 2010 due to increasing cases of child and adolescent animal harm and calls from professionals working with young people for support. RSPCA studies have reported that 43% of 16–17-year-olds had witnessed animal harm online, almost double the frequency of the wider adult population (22%) (See the [June 2012 LINK-Letter](#)). In 2024, 50% of the 24 young people referred to the RSPCA education team for support following harmful behavior towards animals were diagnosed with one or more mental health concerns or were neurodivergent.

Study participants recommended that Breaking the Chain target two main groups -- primary school children and high-risk youth -- with a preference for in-person school sessions supported by online resources. Participants favored keeping the program’s core topics of sentience and animal welfare, appropriate behaviors, and triggers and consequences of animal harm, while updating resources to address modern challenges such as online animal harm and peer pressure. They emphasized the need to ensure that content is accessible for children with different learning needs, including neurodiverse children.

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*“There is a need to develop effective interventions for children and adolescents most at risk of animal harm.”*

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They called evaluating the program’s short-term and long-term success key – a challenge that has baffled the evaluation of humane education for decades. The next steps proposed include involving young people in the program’s development and addressing practical challenges like referral systems and program delivery.

This study represents the initial phase for redeveloping the intervention. “With thoughtful redevelopment, Breaking the Chain can play a pivotal role in achieving the RSPCA’s goal of reducing animal harm by 50% in England and Wales by 2030, and their vision of creating a world where all animals are respected and treated with kindness and compassion,” they concluded.

- Lawrie, S., Blakey, C., Hawkins, R., & Williams, J.M. (2025). Harnessing RSPCA stakeholder expertise to co-produce a complex intervention addressing childhood and adolescent animal harm. *Animals*, 15(3), 347. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani15030347>

# VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

## Schools Encouraged to Develop Curricula to Identify Animal Abuse

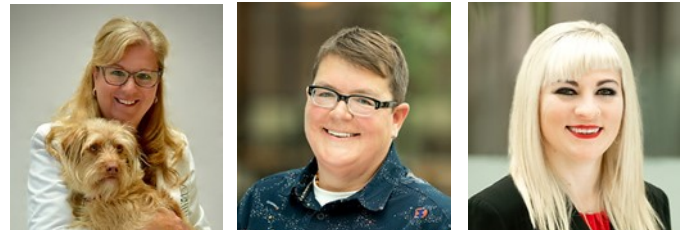
In the ongoing movement to mandate or permit veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse to authorities with immunity from civil and criminal liability, a gap in the system remains: training in colleges of veterinary medicine.

“Veterinary schools teach students to diagnose and treat illness, injury and disease, preparing them for clinical success post-graduation,” write Kris Otteman, Linda Fielder and Emily Lewis in the [Feb. 1 issue](#) of the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*.

However, they add, “Most programs do not include foundational curriculum to equip new graduates with the information they need to participate in animal cruelty cases with the precision and objectivity required to aid investigations and support legal outcomes.”

They describe veterinarians as uniquely qualified to recognize signs of animal abuse and obligated by their oath and, in now 43 states, allowed or required to report their suspicions to authorities for investigation. But without “foundational training in critical skills such as documentation, evidence collection, and collaboration with law enforcement,” graduates lack the ability to contribute to societal efforts to combat animal cruelty.

“A significant gap currently exists between a veterinarian’s proficiency in their field and their confidence to



Kris Otteman (left), Linda Fielder & Emily Lewis

apply those skills to the specific situation of animal cruelty. Animal cruelty is a community health problem— particularly with its documented connection to interpersonal violence—and every veterinarian has the potential to be a first responder for an animal victim,” they write.

They encourage veterinary schools to utilize the growing cadre of veterinary forensics experts and online courses, such as [Victim to Verdict: The Veterinarian’s Role in Animal Cruelty Investigations](#), to furnish students, and therefore the profession, with the education and tools they will need to fulfill their obligations in practice.

Otteman, Fielder and Lewis previously encouraged veterinarians to recognize their roles as first responders in animal abuse cases and to be aware of these cases’ potential Link implications. (See the [November 2024 LINK-Letter](#)).

— Otteman, K., Fielder, L., & Lewis, E. (2025, Feb. 1). A professional imperative: Teaching tomorrow’s veterinarians to confidently identify and report animal cruelty. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 263(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.24.12.0792>

## Iowa Considering Immunity for Reporting Suspected Animal Abuse

Iowa practitioners would enjoy the same securities as their counterparts in 43 other states for making good-faith reports of suspected animal abuse under a bill in the state legislature.

**HF 227** would amend the Iowa Veterinary Practice Act and would grant veterinarians immunity from administrative, civil, or criminal liability or disciplinary action, and not subject to confidentiality requirements, for acting in good faith and reporting to or cooperating

with any peace officer investigating animal mistreatment, animal fighting or bestiality.

Veterinarians would also be immune when providing testimony in any case or assisting in the rescue of a threatened animal. Veterinarians who knowingly make a false report about a client’s alleged conduct would be subject to disciplinary action, civilly liable for damages, and guilty of a misdemeanor.

## VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

### Veterinary Response to The Link Cited in Serbia

**A** 2011 article from Serbia recently surfaced that noted that since the adoption of a Criminal Code by that country in 2005, as well as the Law on Veterinary Medicine, an increasing number of cases involving criminal charges for animal cruelty had been brought to the attention of veterinarians. “The connection between animal abuse, domestic violence and child abuse indicates that there is a significant role of veterinarians in social contexts and in terms of stopping this vicious cycle by preventing, discovering and turning in suspects involved in these crimes,” the authors wrote. “The help that veterinarians provide to public prosecutors is of great importance.”

The authors described animal abuse as a social issue involving a range of harmful behaviors ranging from unintentional neglect to intentional cruelty. Serbian veterinarians were beginning to see a significant in-


crease in the number of cases presented to them to establish forensic evidence and provide expert witness testimony to assist prosecutors.

The paper described: types of animal abuse; signs that indicate animal abuse; and the role of veterinarians in criminal cases of animal abuse. “The connection between animal abuse, domestic violence and abuse of children requires expanding the field of activities of veterinarians in interrupting this cycle,” they concluded. “Recognizing and reporting cases of animal abuse is important not only because veterinarians are responsible for their welfare, but also because of the relationship that exists between abuse of animals and violence against people.”

-- Aleksić, J., Jović, S., & Merćep, D. (2011). Uloga veterinara u prepoznavanju i prevenciji slučajeva zlostavljanja životinja [Role of veterinarians in recognition and prevention of animal abuse]. *Veterinarski glasnik*, 65(1-2), 123-132. [in Serbian]

### Japanese Veterinary Technicians Learn About The Link

A new Veterinary Technicians Act was signed into law in Japan in 2019, mandating that vet techs be nationally licensed. A small portion of their curriculum covers The Link between animal abuse and human violence. Sakiko Yamazaki of the Animal Literacy Research Institute shared with The LINK-Letter [details of the curriculum](#) and its Link component.



**HELP US KEEP THE LINK FREE!**

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

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

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

# The LINK in the LITERATURE

## Ecuador Study Links Animal Abuse to Domestic Violence

**W**hat is believed to be the first Link research emanating from Ecuador is arguing that “Animal abuse must be considered a social problem that goes beyond animal welfare, as it is closely linked to violence towards human beings. The implementation of public policies and educational programs on animal welfare could be a key strategy to prevent violence in general and strengthen the social fabric.”

The researchers, from the University of Guayaquil department of social science communications, analyzed how animal abuse can act as a precursor to domestic violence and its impact on social cohesion. Using a social-constructivist approach, their research focused on exploring individuals’ beliefs and perceptions about this phenomenon, and how continued exposure to animal cruelty desensitizes people to other forms of violence.

At the community level, they found, a decrease in social cohesion is observed in environments where animal abuse is common, increasing mistrust and insecurity. Using both qualitative and quantitative methodology they revealed a widespread perception that animal abuse is linked to domestic violence. The results showed that a high percentage of respondents recognize the relationship between animal abuse and domestic violence, as well as the negative impact on social cohesion. Furthermore, a widespread perception of ineffectiveness in public institutions to address the problem was identified, which contributes to impunity

and perpetuates the cycle of violence.

The study highlighted violence towards animals as not only an ethical and legal transgression, but also as an early indicator of other types of violence, especially in the domestic sphere. Respondents recognized a clear connection between animal abuse and violence towards humans, reinforcing the idea that animal abuse is not an isolated problem, but rather a reflection of a fractured social fabric.

They added that continued exposure to violence, whether against animals or humans, can desensitize people, leading to the normalization of violence in the community, the weakening of social cohesion, and increased distrust and fear within the community. A majority of respondents perceived that public institutions do not act effectively to eradicate animal abuse, creating a sense of impunity and eroding trust in institutions that aggravates violence in general and further weakens the social fabric.

Survey results showed a strong consensus on the need to implement educational programs on animal welfare as a preventive measure to reduce violence in general. In addition, respondents said public policies should strengthen animal protection to address the problem of violence in a comprehensive manner. The findings highlight the interconnection between animal welfare and social security and suggest that addressing both problems together can improve community cohesion and collective mental health.



### What is The LINK?

**L**egislation...

**I**ntervention...

**N**etworking...

**K**nowledge...

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

## SOCIAL WORK... and The LINK

### Veterinary Social Workers Help People and Pets in Animal Shelters

The expansion of Veterinary Social Work (VSW) into animal care and control shelters (See the [July-August 2022 LINK-Letter](#)) has a pivotal role in protecting pets in crisis and bringing families together, according to a new survey of how veterinary social workers view their scope of practice in animal shelters. Respondents reported that — like their colleagues in animal clinics — they support both clients in the community and the well-being of the shelter team. Their work includes case management, psychoeducation, crisis intervention, and suicide risk assessment.

The authors built on the existing four pillars of VSW — the Link

between interpersonal violence and animal abuse, intentional well-being of animal caregivers, grief and bereavement over pet loss, and animal-assisted interventions — and found they all have a place in the animal shelter environment.

The authors noted that animal shelter work requires advanced skills and training in what is already a specialty area of practice. They recommended expanded field placements and internships in shelters, creating employment opportunities in shelters, and educating shelter personnel about the role and scope of practice of social workers. They called for developing a listserve of shelter veterinary social workers, standards of prac-



Clockwise from top left: Aviva Vincent, Mary Rautkis, Laurie Maxwell, and Elizabeth Knudsen

tice and a code of ethics for this niche field.

— Vincent, A., Rautkis, M.E., Maxwell, L., & Knudsen, E. (2025). The role and scope of practice of veterinary social workers in animal shelters. *Pets*, 2(1), 6. <https://doi.org/10.3390/pets2010006>

### Social Work Helper Encourages Recognizing The Human-Animal Bond

Although social work has historically and exclusively focused on the human members of society without much concern for how the lives of animals intersect, “Focusing more on our non-human members of society does not crowd out humans, but rather it increases and enriches our capacity to serve.”

Those are the watchwords in a new article in *Social Work Helper* that encourages practitioners to recognize the intersecting and sometimes tragic situations involving animals, their humans, and complex social issues. These can include:

- A domestic violence victim chooses to stay in an abusive situation because she does not want to leave a companion animal behind to be harmed.
- A veteran experiencing homelessness is forced to surrender a service dog because there are no pet friendly shelters.
- Older adults can't stay to receive hospital treatment because there is no one to watch over their cats during their recovery.

“Humans and animals share an amazingly special bond. Paying close attention to the human-animal relationship can assist social workers in the delivery of services, identifying risks and resiliency factors, promoting social and environmental justice, and expanding attention to all vulnerable members of society,” writes Jennifer Thomas. She notes that an estimated 57% of American households have pets and that “animal welfare penetrates a variety of social work specialties and societal issues.”

The health benefits of pets are particularly important for older adults, those who are at risk of social isolation, and individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability, she adds.

— Thomas, J. (2025, Feb. 5). The intersection of social work and animal welfare. *SWHelper*. <https://swhelper.org/2025/02/05/the-intersection-of-social-work-and-animal-welfare/>



# ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE... and THE LINK

## West Virginia Bill Could Make Sex with Animals Illegal Nationwide

**A**fter conspicuously ignoring the issue for many years, West Virginia legislators could finally enact a law prohibiting sex with animals, as all 49 other states have already done.

**HB 2068**, introduced by Delegate and Minority Leader Pro Tem Kayla Young (D—Kanawha) would add a new section §61-8-19d to the Code of West Virginia’s section on Crimes against Chastity. Morality and Decency prohibiting “sexual abuse of animal.” The measure would outlaw:

- Engaging in sexual abuse with an animal;
- Causing, aiding, or abetting another person to engage in sexual abuse;
- Organizing, promoting, conducting, or participating as an observer, in an act involving any sexual abuse;
- Possessing, selling, transferring, purchasing or obtaining an animal with the intent that it be used for sexual abuse;
- Permitting sexual abuse to be conducted on any premises under his or her charge or control;
- Advertising or accepting the offer of an animal with the intent that it be used for sexual abuse; and
- Forcing or inducing a child under 18 years of age to engage in sexual abuse, or engaging in sexual abuse in the presence of a child under 18 years of age.

Offenses would be considered misdemeanors, or felonies if the offender was previously convicted of a sex crime or causes serious bodily injury or death to the animal. Offenders would also be required to forfeit all animals in their possession and pay any costs needed for their care and maintenance. They would also be barred from owning any animals for at least five years if convicted of a misdemeanor or 15 years if a felony.

They would also be required to undergo a psychiatric or psychological evaluation to be eligible for probation.

Animal sexual abuse has long been Linked with other sex crimes including child pornography and grooming children for sexual abuse. Various studies have indicated that zoosexuals have their first experience at age 13. Animal sexual abuse, **Delegate Kayla Young** particularly when experienced as a child, has been shown to be the single largest risk factor and strongest predictor of increased risk for committing child sexual abuse.

Animal sexual abuse is not “just” an act of animal cruelty; it is an act of sexual assault and exploitation. Perpetrators behave more like pedophiles or rapists than animal abusers. They train their animals, photograph them in sexual situations, collect and share animal and child pornography, talk about their encounters with other animal sex abusers in private chat rooms, and frequently work in and around animal-related organizations such as veterinary clinics, animal shelters, and barns. They are drawn to online “crush videos” depicting elegant women in stiletto heels stomping small pets to death. Predators seek out their victims and trespass or break into properties in order to gain access to their sexual targets. These encounters frequently result in injury or death to the animal.

While laws against what has historically been called “buggery,” a “crime against nature,” or “bestiality” have existed for centuries, growing recognition of its Link with child sexual abuse and other crimes has stimulated a trend in recent years to redefine the crime as “animal sexual abuse” or “animal sexual assault.” The crime was most recently outlawed in New Hampshire and Ohio (2016), Nevada and Texas (2017), Louisiana (2018), Kentucky and Wisconsin (2019), Hawai’i and Wyoming (2021), the District of Columbia (2022), and New Mexico (2023).



# LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

As the 2025 legislative season rolls along, we're following 83 bills that are already working their way through state legislatures, the U.S. Congress, and Canada's Parliament. The bills are color-coded as follows:

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

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

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

## USA—FEDERAL BILLS

**H.R. 712, 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 relating to child abuse and neglect.

## ALASKA

**HB 101** would allow judges to consider a history of cruelty to animals as an aggravating factor in imposing a sentence outside the sentencing guidelines for defendants convicted of domestic violence in the presence of a minor under age 18, or distributing material depicting bestiality to a minor under age 18; current law sets the threshold at age 16.

## ARIZONA

**HB 2211** would allow petitioners to file for a "severe threat order of protection" to prevent a respondent who has threatened or committed an act of violence resulting in injury, death or cruel mistreatment of an animal from possessing a firearm. Violation would be a Class 4 felony.

**HB 2530** would clarify that persons who are experiencing homelessness, such as domestic violence victims, are permitted to bring service animals into homeless shelters as described under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**SB 1038** would define the crime of aggravated assault to include assault on an animal control officer conducting official duties.

**SB 1412** would expand the definition of "domestic violence", which currently includes subjecting an animal to cruel mistreatment or neglect or abandonment that results in serious injury, to also include illegally killing a domestic animal.

## CALIFORNIA

**AB 561** would allow domestic violence survivors to file for protection orders — which can include protection of animals — electronically and to appear remotely at hearings.

## *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.

## GEORGIA

**HB 177** would allow courts to issue protection orders that include “the care, custody and control of any animal owned, possessed, kept, or held as a household pet by either party or by a minor child living in the household or residence of either party.” Court orders could also prevent the respondent from harassing, harming, taking, transferring, encumbering, or concealing pets and committing animal cruelty.

**SB 102** would make it a crime to bring a minor under age 18 to a dog- or cock-fight; first offenses would be “high and aggravated misdemeanors” and subsequent offenses would be felonies.

## HAWAII

**HB 698**, recognizing that “animal cruelty offenders are a threat to the health and safety of all members of our communities, especially vulnerable populations,” that “animal cruelty is a predictive and co-occurring crime with violence against humans, including children, intimate partners, and the elderly,” and that “children who witness animal abuse are also more likely to abuse animals as teenagers and adults,” would increase the criminal penalties for animal cruelty resulting in an animal’s death, dog fighting, causing the death of a service or law enforcement animal, sexual assault of an animal, and subjecting a minor to sexual contact with an animal.

**SB 460** would recognize that children living in a home where domestic violence and threats of animal cruelty occur are victimized even if they have not been physically harmed, and would have standing to file for a protection order or a temporary restraining order.

## ILLINOIS

**HB 72** would amend the Code of Criminal Procedure to provide that a person with three or more pending charges for domestic battery, battery, violation of a protection order, criminal damage to household property, or felony animal cruelty that poses a real and present threat to the safety of any person or the community, may be classified as a habitual misdemeanor offender.

**HB 1903** would create the Human Trafficking Order of Protection Act that would include allowing courts to order respondents to stay away from, taking, harming, or disposing of any animal harmed by the petitioner.

**HB 3367** would allow courts to appoint attorneys or law students to serve as special advocates in the interests of justice in any criminal case involving a dog or cat.

## IOWA

**HF 227** would amend the Iowa Veterinary Practice Act and would grant veterinarians immunity from administrative, civil, or criminal liability or disciplinary action, and not subject to confidentiality requirements, for acting in good faith and reporting to or cooperating with any peace officer investigating animal mistreatment, animal fighting or bestiality. Veterinarians would also be immune when providing testimony in any case or assisting in the rescue of a threatened animal. Veterinarians who knowingly make a false report about a client’s alleged conduct would be subject to disciplinary action, civilly liable for damages, and guilty of a misdemeanor.

## KENTUCKY

**HB 96** would define “coercive control” to include intimidating or controlling or compelling conduct by damaging, destroying, threatening to damage or destroy, or forcing the other person to relinquish domestic animals. It would also include communicating, either directly or indirectly, the intent to harm the other person’s domestic animals, including by use of physical violence; and causing isolation of the other person from domestic animals.

**HB 194 (“Kyan’s Law”)** would require animal control officers to receive training on recognizing child abuse and would add animal control officers to the list of people with a duty to report dependency, neglect or abuse of a child.

**HB 330** would require individuals who are subjects of a domestic violence protection order — which may include courts granting possession of the couple’s animals — to surrender any firearms. Protection orders would be required to include language notifying the respondent about the firearms prohibition.

## MASSACHUSETTS

**SD. 133** and **HD.797** would allow courts handling divorce settlements to consider, in assigning ownership, care and custody of a pet, “the best interests of the animal, including the animal’s health, safety, comfort and well being and whether any party or family member residing with any party has a history of abuse, cruelty or neglect to animals or humans.”

**HD.2347** would add humane officers to the list of professions mandated to report child sexual abuse. Currently, animal control officers are mandated to report, but not humane officers.

**SD.1450** would make any parent who allows their child to subject an animal to cruelty or abuse without taking steps to prevent, discourage or correct the action: liable for a fine of up to \$500; and required to undergo psychiatric evaluation. The child would be required to participate in psychiatric rehabilitation under a psychologist who specializes in bullying. The family could be prohibited from having any unsupervised contact with animals and all current animals would be relocated to foster care.

## MINNESOTA

**SF 1163** would create a statewide Link-based Office of Animal Protection office in the Department Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to be more effective in enforcing animal cruelty laws that protect animals and people.

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

## MISSOURI

**HB 1298, SB 65** and **SB 655** would add animal control officers and humane investigators to the professionals mandated to report suspected elder abuse and child abuse. APS and CPS workers, foster care advocates and volunteers, and psychologists, mental health professionals, social workers, school counselors, teachers, other school professionals, juvenile officers, law enforcement officers, probation or parole officers, and home health aides would be required to report suspected animal abuse to a hotline established by the Missouri Animal Control Association, with immunity from civil and criminal liability for good-faith reporting. APS and CPS workers would be required to complete one hour of training on how to identify and report animal abuse or neglect and The Link between elder and animal abuse. Animal control officers and humane investigators would be required to complete one hour of training on how to identify and report child and elder abuse and their Links with animal abuse.

## NEBRASKA

**LB 80** would amend the state's laws for issuing all-encompassing "protection orders" — which include provisions to award custody of pets to the petitioner and enjoin the respondent from harming the pets — to create new specific categories of "domestic abuse protection orders," "harassment protection orders," and "sexual assault protection orders." Existing pet protection provisions would be retained only under a "domestic abuse protection order."

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

**HB 593** would allow a spouse to recover damages for the "loss of consortium" from a spouse who intentionally or recklessly causes the death of that person's pet.

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## NEW JERSEY

**A291** would expand the statutory definitions of domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and abuse of persons with a disability to include acts of animal cruelty against those persons' animals. They also would require veterinarians, veterinary technicians, domestic violence investigators, employees of the Department of Children & Families, employees of the Department of Human Services, Division of Aging, police officers, and caregivers at residential health care facilities to report suspected animal cruelty to law enforcement with civil and criminal immunity for reporting in good faith.

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

**A 310** would allow employees of the Division of Children Protection and Permanency who investigate child abuse and neglect and have reason to believe that an animal has been subjected to, or who witness an act of animal abuse, cruelty, or neglect, to report the suspected or witnessed act of animal abuse, cruelty, or neglect. Nothing in the bill requires an employee to report such an act. Employees who make a report, provide records or information relating to the report, or who testify in any judicial proceeding arising from the report, would be immune from liability for any actions taken in good faith.

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

**A 1516** would add "coercive control" to the definition of domestic violence in Section 3 of P.L.1991, c.261 (C.2C:25-19) to include acts of cruelty against animals owned or possessed by an adult or emancipated minor.

**A 2250** would require humane law enforcement officers who have reasonable cause to believe that a person is a victim of domestic violence to report the situation to a local law enforcement agency, with immunity from civil and criminal liability for making a report in good faith. Currently, they are permitted — but not mandated — to report.

**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.

**A 3236** would expand the definition of domestic violence to include psychological abuse. While intimidating threats against a person's animals are not specifically included in the state's definition of domestic violence, courts are allowed to consider such acts as coercive control in determining whether to issue a protective order.

**SB 26** would rename the Family Violence Protection Act as the Protection Against Abuse and Violence Act and replace the term "domestic abuse" with "abuse" that would now include "harm or threatened harm to an animal" within the definition of "abuse." Courts would be allowed to issue orders of protection that would enjoin the restrained party from committing or threatening to commit acts of "abuse" against the protected party or designated household members. Courts could also grant to any party the exclusive or shared possession and control of any animal kept, owned or leased by either party or any minor child in the household. The court could order any party to stay away from the animal and forbid the party from taking, transferring, concealing, mistreating, harming, or disposing of the animal.

## NEW MEXICO

**SB 26** would define coercive-control animal abuse as domestic violence and allow pets to be included in protection orders. The bill would rename the Family Violence Protection Act as the Protection Against Abuse and Violence Act and replace "domestic abuse" with "abuse" that would include "harm or threatened harm to an animal" within the definition of "abuse." Courts could also grant to any party the exclusive or shared possession and control of any animal kept, owned or leased by either party or any minor child in the household. The court could order any party to stay away from the animal and forbid the party from taking, transferring, concealing, mistreating, harming, or disposing of the animal.

## NEW YORK

**A 599** would add acts of animal fighting, aggravated cruelty to animals, poisoning animals, injuring certain domestic animals, or harming a service animal to the definition of “serious offense” making it a crime to possess a firearm.

**A 640** and **S 2296** would allow civil and criminal courts to order that a separate advocate be appointed to represent the animal’s interests and help ensure the well-being of any living animal victims.

**A 664, S 1044, S 1562, and S 1563, “Buster’s Law,”** would prohibit persons convicted of animal cruelty from possessing a companion animal until they have undergone psychiatric or psychological counseling establishing their mental capacity and ability to humanely care for the animal.

**A 690** and **S 3491** would increase the potential prison term for acts of animal cruelty when committed in the presence of a child.

**A 730** and **S 1205** would increase penalties for animal fighting and aggravated animal cruelty and requires defendants convicted of aggravated animal cruelty to undergo a psychiatric evaluation.

**A 740** would allow courts to take into consideration the well-being of a companion animal when determining custody of the animal during divorce and legal separation proceedings.

**A 850** would create new crimes of “cruelty to animals to threaten, intimidate or harass” for intentionally injuring or killing, with no justifiable purpose, a companion animal for the purpose of threatening, intimidating or harassing a family or household member. Felony penalties would be enhanced if the act occurred in the presence of a child.

**A 897** would criminalize knowingly causing a minor to attend an animal fight.

**A 1391** would require persons charged with enforcing laws prohibiting cruelty to animals to file a report when, in the performance of their duties, they have reasonable cause to believe that abuse or maltreatment of a child has also occurred. The bill would further provide that persons charged with the responsibility of filing a report of child abuse or maltreatment would also have to file a report of suspected animal cruelty.

**A 1432** and **A 1885** would relocate anti-cruelty statutes into the Penal Code from the Agriculture & Markets Law, where placement suggests that cruelty is not a “real” crime since it is not in the penal law and diminishes the seriousness of such crimes. The bill cites academic studies that “have found a clear link between animal cruelty during youth and violence against humans as an adult” and numerous documented studies that show that “there is a direct link between acts of cruelty to animals and violence toward others, including child abuse, spousal abuse, elder abuse and other violent behavior.”

**A 1530** would establish “care and treatment of service animals, therapy dogs and companion animals in residential programs for victims of domestic violence.” These would include allowing residents’ service animals and therapy dogs full access to the shelters as long as they do not create an undue burden.

**A 1630** would amend provisions for the crimes of “sexual conduct with an animal,” a misdemeanor, and “sexual conduct with an animal resulting in injury or death,” a felony. Convicted offenders would be forced to relinquish all of their current animals and be permanently barred from keeping any animals, or residing, volunteering or working with animals.

**A 1689** cites the prosecution of animal cruelty as a way to protect public safety to require all New York State counties to have an assistant district attorney to oversee animal crimes, as several counties in the state have already done.

**A 1693** and **S 673** would establish the Housing People and Animals Together grant program to expand access for co-sheltering victims of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness with companion animals.

**A 1816, S 3158** and **S 4633** would include animal fighting as a criminal act within the category of enterprise corruption crimes.

**A 1945** would enable veterinarians to earn continuing education credits for providing free veterinary care for individuals residing in domestic violence shelters.

**A 3158** would require courts to require a mental health evaluation for offenders convicted of aggravated animal cruelty or animal fighting.

**A 3206** and **S 1159** would create a new category of “domestic violence crimes” to include interfering, harassing, intimidating, or harming a family or household member’s service animal.

**A 3528** would make the commission of an act of aggravated cruelty to animals in the presence of a child a Class D felony.

**A 4753** and **S 1753, “Bella’s Law,”** would require an investigation into possible domestic violence or abuse for persons who have been accused of animal abuse.

**S 470, “Kirby and Quigley’s Law,”** expands the definition of aggravated animal cruelty to include harm to a companion animal during the commission of a felony.

**S 1411** would require individuals convicted of animal cruelty to undergo a psychiatric analysis and evaluation.

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Brown = Assessments/Interventions  
Light Blue = Link & Other Crimes

**S 4613** would expand provisions of the Family Court Act, the Criminal Procedure Law, and the Domestic Relations Law, which currently allow courts to order respondents to refrain from harming the companion animals of the petitioner or a minor child, to also grant petitioners exclusive care, control or custody of any animal.

## PENNSYLVANIA

**HB 97** would recognize that “companion animals are living beings that are generally regarded as cherished family members that offer their owners companionship, security and assistance,” and as a “special category of personal property” need to be granted special consideration in the division of property during marriage dissolution. Parties could enter into an enforceable agreement regarding the care and/or possession of companion animals, and the court shall consider all relevant factors.

## RHODE ISLAND

**H 5125** would amend existing law, which allows courts to include household pets in domestic violence protection orders, to also allow courts to award custody of pets to plaintiffs and offer an enforcement remedy such as a restraining order or other injunctive relief.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

**H 3143** would allow individuals convicted of felony-level animal cruelty to apply for a limited pardon that would enable them to possess a firearm for hunting purposes only, because animal cruelty is not considered a “crime of violence.”

## TENNESSEE

**HB 540** and **S 916** would expand the definition of “racketeering activity” to include engaging others in the criminal activity of animal fighting.

## TEXAS

**HB 3049** would designate animal control officers as “first responders” whose duties include responding rapidly to an emergency.

## UTAH

**HB 159** would allow Utah authorities to recognize domestic violence protection orders issued in Canada. Utah protection orders already include provisions protecting household animals.

**HB 461** would allow courts to order individuals convicted of animal cruelty to participate in animal cruelty prevention programs, education programs, or psychological counseling for treatment of mental health disorders that the court considers contributed to the commission of the crime.

**SB 24** would replace the definition of child abuse “serious physical injury” with any injury that seriously impairs a child’s health, mental well-being or development including threatening an animal known to the child or forcing or coercing a child to injure an animal.

## WEST VIRGINIA

**HB 2068** would prohibit activities connected with sexual abuse of an animal, establish criminal penalties, provide for forfeiture of animals, and restrict ownership of animals upon conviction.

## CANADA

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

## Permission to Reprint

The news items contained in *The LINK-Letter* are intended to disseminate as widely and as freely as possible information about the connections between animal abuse and interpersonal violence. Permission is hereby granted to re-post these articles in newsletters, websites, magazines, and electronic publications provided that appropriate credit is given to the National Link Coalition and with hyperlinks to [www.nationallinkcoalition.org](http://www.nationallinkcoalition.org).

## For Additional Information

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

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

## The Link Training Calendar

More and more organizations are recognizing the value of training their staffs, multi-disciplinary groups, and the general public that preventing and responding to animal abuse can prevent other forms of family and community violence.

Here are some of the many training opportunities coming up — both in-person and virtual — in coming months. Click on the underlined hyperlinks for specific details and registration information.

If you're conducting a Link training, please let us know at least a month in advance so we can include it in the Calendar. And if you're looking for a speaker, please contact us so we can refer someone to you from our Speakers' Bureau.

## LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

**March 12 — Columbus, Ohio:** Don't Forget the Pets, RedRover and Greater Good Charities will discuss The Link between human and animal violence and explore ways to create and sustain pet housing programs in a [Housing People and Pets in Crisis](#) workshop.

**March 17 — Pachuca, Hidalgo, Mexico (online):** Phil Arkow will present "Using The Link for a Path to Peace: Creating Safer Communities by Protecting People and Animals" in a [webinar](#) for the Asociación Hidalguense para la Protección de los Animales, A.C., in coordination with the Directorate of Human Rights of the Secretariat of Government of the State of Hidalgo, Mexico.

**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," discussing the significance of the human-animal bond for people experiencing homelessness and examining the impact of co-sheltering through a storytelling lens.

**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](#).

**March 25-27 (online):** Pet-inclusive housing will be the underlying theme behind [My Dog Is My Home](#)'s 2025 conference exploring solutions for ending homelessness for people and their pets.

**March 31 — United Kingdom (online):** Maya Badham of Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse (SAHSDA) will present the "Safeguarding for Pet Professionals" [training](#) on how to recognize and respond to domestic and animal abuse.

**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 7 — Wilmington, Del.:** Andrew Campbell will be one of several speakers addressing Link issues at the Animal Welfare and Family Law [Symposium](#).

**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](#).

# LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



**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 12 — Tokyo, Japan (online):** The Animal Literacy Research Institute and the Japanese Association for the Promotion of Canine Good Citizens will conduct a [webinar](#) on “The Association between Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence: Protecting the Human-Animal Bond from Violence.”

**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 24 — St. Louis, Mo.:** Don't Forget the pets will hold a [training workshop](#) on how to create and sustain pet housing programs for survivors of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness.

**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](#).

**April 30 (online):** Phil Arkow, Marie-José Enders-Slegers, Janine Jansen and Rianne Haajema will discuss how animal-assisted service providers can help deepen the community response to the violence Link in a [webinar](#) for the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations.

**April 30 — United Kingdom (online):** Maya Badham of Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse (SAHSDA) will [present](#) “Recognizing and Responding to Companion Animal Abuse as a Tactic of Coercive Control.”

**May 1 — Los Angeles, Calif.:** Don't Forget the pets will hold a [training workshop](#) on how to create and sustain pet housing programs for survivors of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness.

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

**May 7 — 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.

# LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

**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 8 — Dallas, Texas:** Shawn Ashley of the SPCA of Texas will discuss The Link between domestic violence and animal abuse and veterinary reporting of suspected abuse in a presentation, "When Animal Cruelty Walks Through the Door..." at the [Texas Unites for Animals](#) conference.

**May 13-14 — Las Vegas, Nev.:** Phil Arkow and Nancy Blaney will present at a convening of PAWS grantees organized by [Noah's Animal House](#).

**May 13-16 — Clearwater, Fla.:** The 2025 Conference of the [International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association](#)'s programs will include: Roshni Ladny presenting "Childhood Animal Cruelty Exposure as Violence Against Children, Society and the Environment: Implications of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child General Comment 26"; Jeremy Hoffman presenting "Chasing Monsters: Intersections of Paraphilic Behavior in Animal Sexual Offenders"; and Jill Hollander presenting "Animal Cruelty as Coercive Control in Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Cases."

**May 19 — Dallas, Texas:** Allie Phillips will present "Animal Abuse + Family Violence: Investigation and Prosecution Strategies to Keep Families Safe" at the [2025 Conference on Crimes Against Women](#).

**May 20 — United Kingdom (online):** Maya Badham of Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse (SAHSDA) will present the "Safeguarding for Pet Professionals" [training](#) on recognizing and responding to domestic/animal abuse.

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

**May 22 — Ottawa, Ont., Canada (online):** Humane Canada's ACT Project will present its [Spring Community of Practice](#) (COP) on "ACT to Keep Families Safe."

**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 5 — United Kingdom (online):** Maya Badham of Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse (SAHSDA) will [present](#) "Recognizing and Responding to Companion Animal Abuse as a Tactic of Coercive Control."

**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.

**Aug. 22 — Statesville, N.C.:** Phil Arkow will present "The 'Dark Side' of the Human-Animal Bond: Animal Abuse and its Link with Human Violence" to [Equuvation](#).

# LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

**Sept. 11 — United Kingdom (online):** Maya Badham of Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse (SAHSDA) will present the “Safeguarding for Pet Professionals” [training](#) on how to recognize and respond to domestic and animal abuse.

**Sept. 16 — Redmond, Ore.:** Phil Arkow will present “Connecting the Dots in Animal Care & Control and Human Violence: How to Better Protect People AND Animals” at the [Oregon Animal Control Council](#) Training Conference.

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

**Sept. 17-18 — Albuquerque, N. Mex.:** Multiple speakers will present at Positive Links’ [New Mexico Conference on The Link](#).

**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](#).

**Oct. 23 — United Kingdom (online):** Maya Badham of Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse (SAHSDA) will [present](#) “Recognizing and Responding to Companion Animal Abuse as a Tactic of Coercive Control.”

**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.



## THE LINK... in the NEWS

### Man and Dog Found Stabbed to Death

**P**olice in Kenosha, Wis. found an unidentified 52-year-old man and his dog stabbed to death in the basement of their home following an apparent burglary. [ABC News](#) reported that Kenosha Police responded to a suspected break-in but found no one inside. Three hours later they returned to the house following another burglary complaint and found the victims in the basement. An unidentified 41-year-old suspect was arrested. Police declined to identify the names of the victim or the suspect out of consideration for his family.



### Wife Accused of Shooting Dog Because She Was Jealous of Her Husband's Attention To It

**A** Sycamore, Ill. woman who police said was jealous of the attention her husband gave their dog was charged with aggravated animal cruelty for allegedly shooting the animal. [WIFR-TV](#) reported that Tracy Picciariello, 52, told DeKalb County Sheriff's deputies that she had shot the dog during an argument with her husband. Deputies said the husband said the argument had been about his wife being jealous of the attention he gave the family pets. Investigators said the husband later had to shoot the dog to euthanize it.



### Arson Suspect Charged with Strangling His Father's Dog

**A** Michigan man who was facing arson and assault charges was arrested and charged with fatally strangling his father's dog. The [Detroit Free Press](#) reported that William Kucharski Jr., 48, of Richmond Twp. in Macomb County, was hospitalized and arraigned in his hospital bed after sheriff's deputies responded to a welfare check involving a dead pet and possible threat to a family member. The father reportedly returned home and found his son, who had made threats to harm himself, with his arms wrapped around the dead Labrador retriever "Punky". Prosecutors said Kucharski had also been charged in Lapeer County with arson, assault with a deadly weapon and resisting and obstructing a police officer in an unrelated incident.



### Suspect in Torture and Murder of Transgender Man Has Links with Animal Cruelty and Child Abuse

**O**ne of the five suspects charged in the torture and murder of a 24-year-old transgender man who traveled from Minnesota to New York has a history of animal cruelty and was also charged with child abuse. [WHEC-TV](#) reported that the five suspects are accused of physically, sexually and psychologically torturing and murdering Sam Nordquist, who traveled to the Finger Lakes region last September 28 to meet a girlfriend with whom he had connected online, and whose body was found in a field on Feb. 12. One suspect, Precious Arzuaga, 38, had been charged with animal cruelty in 2016 for starving her pitbull, "Princess," and locking her in a shed filled with feces and urine. Arzuaga was also charged in the case with coercion for allegedly forcing two children, aged 7 and 12, to participate in the torture of Nordquist. Arzuaga, who apparently began the online relationship with Nordquist and lured him out to visit her, was also charged in 2023 with a misdemeanor count of filing a false social services assistance application.

## 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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