



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

The LINK-Letter
Vol., 18, No. 11
November, 2025

A monthly report of news from

***THE GLOBAL RESOURCE CENTER ON THE LINK BETWEEN
ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE***



Top Stories in This Issue:



**Threats to animals
defined as stalking in
California (Page 2)**



**Veterinary social
work expands to
Australia (Page 6)**



**Podcasts, webinar
build resilience and
empowerment
(Page 13)**

Our “Big Ask”

Thanks to the generosity of our *LINK-Letter* readers and three very generous philanthropic supporters, the National Link Coalition has been in a fortunate position in 2025 where we have not had to badger you with repetitive fundraising appeals. This has enabled us to devote more time and energy to our critical work. If you’ve been following our progress, you know how much we have accomplished, how much more we have to do — and how much we appreciate your support!

We’ll have an end-of-year report for you once we’re able to compile all our 2025 results. But as we approach the holiday season, we’re asking you to consider including the National Link Coalition in your end-of-year charitable giving. Together, we can continue to make a lasting impact in the lives of vulnerable people and animals affected by crime and crisis.

Please visit our website at <https://nationallinkcoalition.org/donate-to-the-national-link-coalition> to make a safe and secure contribution. Your gift will help us make a significant difference. Thank you!



Inside this issue

Domestic Violence & The LINK.....	2
Animal Sexual Abuse & The LINK.....	3
Social Work & The LINK.....	5
Law Enforcement & The LINK	7
Veterinary Medicine & The LINK	8
The LINK in the Literature.....	10
The LINK in the Courts... ..	12
News from LINK Coalitions.....	13
Legislation & The LINK.....	14
LINK Training Calendar	20
The LINK in the News	22

Phil Arkow, Editor

The National Link Coalition

16 Grasshopper Drive

Etowah, NC 28729

<https://NationalLinkCoalition.org>

arkowpets@snip.net

**The National Link Coalition is a
501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation.
Federal Tax ID: 92-2607909.**

**Donations are tax deductible as
permitted under law.**

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



California Enacts Two Laws To Assist Domestic Violence Survivors

Definition of Stalking Expanded to Include Threats to Animals

California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Oct. 10 signed into law **SB 221** which continues the growing national trend of recognizing that threats to animals are powerful tools employed by abusers to coerce and control their human victims.



Rosilice Ochoa Bogh

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Rosilice Ochoa Bogh (R - Redlands), expands the definition of stalking to include not only willfully, maliciously and repeatedly following or harassing another person, but also making a credible threat to place that person in reasonable fear for the safety of their pet, service animal, emotional support animal, or horse. It amends Section 646.9 of the Penal Code.

Twenty-one other states define intimidating acts or threats against a person's animals as crimes of domestic violence, coercion or stalking; Missouri, Utah, Mississippi and Maine specifically define such acts as crimes of stalking. Texas includes "fear for one's property" in its statutory definition of stalking.

Simpler and Safer Provisions Enabled for Protection Orders

California has also simplified the procedures by which domestic violence and elder abuse survivors can file for an order of protection that includes safeguards for their animals -- and add additional safety measures for themselves -- by allowing such processes to be filed electronically.

AB 561, sponsored by Assemblymember Sharon Quirk-Silva (D— Orange County), was signed into law on Oct. 3 by Gov. Gavin Newsom. California has allowed credible threats of violence to pets to be included in protective and restraining orders since 2007.



The new law, which will take effect on Jan. 1, 2027, will allow petitions prohibiting harassment and all related filings to be submitted electronically. It also will allow parties and witnesses to appear remotely at the hearing on the petition for a protective order. Such provisions reduce the risk of the petitioner encountering the respondent during the volatile process of filing for relief.

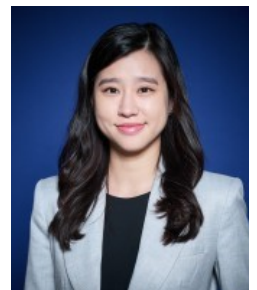
Sharon Quirk-Silva

Canadian Journal "Reimagines" Pet Custody in Divorce Settlements

The evolving discussion regarding treating pets as "more-than-property" during divorce settlements (See the [December 2024 LINK-Letter](#)) is the focus of a new scholarly article in the *Canadian Family Law Journal*. Sian Shin examines how Canadian courts are increasingly addressing "pet custody" disputes in the context of divorce and separation, reflecting society's growing view of companion animals as family members.

While pets are still legally treated as property, the article highlights cases showing courts recognizing the strong emotional bonds between owners and their animals. The author argues for a "best interests for all concerned" framework, which balances the well-being of pets with the needs of family members, and reviews recent amendments such as the 2024 amendments to

British Columbia's Family Law Act (See the [August 2023 LINK-Letter](#)) which outlines factors for determining companion animal custody post-separation such as each person's ability and willingness to care for the pet, the relationship between the child and the animal, and the risk of family violence or threat of cruelty. Shin also reviews key court decisions shaping the future of pet custody law in Canada.



Sian Shin

-- Shin, S. (2025). **Paws in the law: Reimagining legal frameworks for pet custody.** *Canadian Family Law Quarterly*, 44, 121.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Canadian Federation of University Women Calls on Governments to Recognize The Link

The call for governments to recognize The Link between domestic violence and animal abuse and to implement policy and action plans that support programs that provide immediate and continued safety for the animals of domestic violence survivors got an additional boost recently from the Canadian Federation of University Women.

CFUW adopted a [resolution](#), “Strengthening the Awareness



and Safekeeping of Individuals and Their Animals Experiencing domestic Violence.” The Resolution calls for all governments to recognize “that cruelty to animals and domestic violence are often con-

nected, known as the Violence Link.” It calls for policy and action plans that support victim-survivors while recognizing the importance of animals in their lives, and to review and initiate programs dedicated to providing immediate and continued care for animals that are also at risk.



ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE... and THE LINK

Change in Indian Legal Code Legalized Bestiality

What one author called “a severe legal gap” in “one of the most extreme yet overlooked forms of cruelty in India” has been addressed in an Indian legal journal. Bestiality, which was once regulated by the Indian Penal Code, was entirely repealed in 2023 in a transition to a new legal system.

Writing for *Legal Service India*, law student Aashika Ambi explained that enforcement agencies are now left to rely only on the 1960 Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, which is rarely applied and allows only minimal or no penalties, especially for first-time offenders. “This greatly reduces the seriousness of sexual violence against animals,” Ambi wrote, emphasizing that bestiality should be recognized as cruelty. “Furthermore, criminology research shows alarming connections between animal sexual abuse and other types of violence, especially child sexual assault and domestic violence. Therefore, animal welfare must be viewed as a public safety issue.”

The lack of laws explicitly criminalizing bestiality represents a significant gap in animal welfare and criminal law in India, Ambi said, calling for a specific anti-bestiality law that should include “a series of graded offenses, mandatory forensic analysis, clear sentencing

guidelines, and provisions for fines and remedial orders. Remaining inactive only continues a cycle of silence and suffering, undermining not only the well-being of animals but also the fundamental ideals of justice and compassion that should define the Indian Republic.”

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which defined the crime of “carnal intercourse against the order of nature” with any man, woman or animal, was narrowed down in 2018 to decriminalize consensual adult same-sex relationships, but retained provisions prohibiting bestiality and non-consensual acts. However the transition to a new legal code system resulted in the provision disappearing completely. (In the U.S., bestiality is prohibited in similar laws prohibiting “crimes against nature” including same-sex relationships in Kansas, Michigan, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and South Carolina.)



-- Ambi, A. (2025, Aug. 13). Silent suffering: Why India needs a dedicated law against the sexual abuse of animals. *Legal Service India*. <https://www.legalserviceindia.com/Legal-Articles/silent-suffering-why-india-needs-a-dedicated-law-against-the-sexual-abuse-of-animals/>

ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE and THE LINK

Pennsylvania Legislation Would Expand Anti-Bestiality Provisions

Pennsylvania's bestiality law would be expanded dramatically if a bill just introduced in the General Assembly – **HB 1932** – is enacted.



Reps. Klunk (left) & Shusterman

Current Pennsylvania law (§ 3129), enacted in 2019, defines “sexual intercourse with an animal” as a second-degree misdemeanor. The statute, while a step forward, fails to address the serious harm to animals related to the broader nature and societal impact of sexual contact with an animal and other critical aspects such as trafficking, the use of objects, or advertising animals for sex.

HB 1932 would expand Pennsylvania's law to prohibit any form of sexual contact with an animal as well as organizing, promoting, aiding or participating in any such acts; committing such acts in the presence of a minor; and elevating the crime from a misdemeanor to a felony.

The bipartisan measure is being sponsored by Reps. Kate Klunk (R – York County) and Melissa Shusterman (D – Chester County). In a [memorandum](#) to other legislators, they cite The Link as a rationale for the bill:

“In recent years, several deeply disturbing cases of animal cruelty and sexual abuse in Pennsylvania have shocked the public conscience and exposed troubling gaps in our criminal statutes. These incidents have not only drawn national media attention but have also highlighted a dangerous nexus between animal abuse and more serious crimes, including sexual offenses against children and violent assaults against humans,” they wrote.

HB 1932 would these loopholes by:

- Prohibiting any form of sexual contact with animals, including with any part of the human's or animal's body.
- Banning the use of objects to sexually abuse animals.
- Outlawing the promotion, trafficking, advertising, or solicitation of animals for sexual purposes.
- Prohibiting sexual contact with animals in the presence of minors or coercing others to participate.
- Elevating the penalty from a misdemeanor to a felony and barring offenders from state-licensed programs such as driving school buses, operating daycares, or participating in foster care.
- Prohibiting convicted individuals from possessing animals or working/volunteering in roles with animal access for a minimum of five years.

The bill was “laid on the table” by the Judiciary Committee on Oct. 27, which means it could be revived.

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.

SOCIAL WORK... and THE LINK

Veterinary Social Work Guidelines Include Link Recommendations

The first professional practice guidelines for social workers employed in animal welfare settings, such as veterinary hospitals and animal shelters, include numerous references to The Link with calls for Veterinary Social Workers to use their unique positions to address clients' needs, cross-reporting, and public policy to better ensure "more just and humane systems for people and animals alike."

[Social Work in Animal Welfare: Best Practices Guidelines for Practitioners & Organizations](#) was just published by the International Association of Veterinary Social Workers. The 51-page guidelines were developed over an 18-month period by 25 full-time American and Canadian Veterinary Social Workers through funding from the ASPCA'S campaign to increase access to veterinary care in underserved communities. Among the guidelines offered are:

SERVICE ACCESS, EXPANSION AND EVALUATION:

Social workers should advocate for and help implement community-based shelter models that support keeping pets and people together as integral to family and community health, in such venues as domestic violence shelters. Such partnerships can ensure that "clients never have to choose between safety and their pets."

Veterinary Social Workers should strengthen cross-reporting protocols by applying a Link framework which facilitates coordinated responses between animal welfare, child protection, and adult protective services.

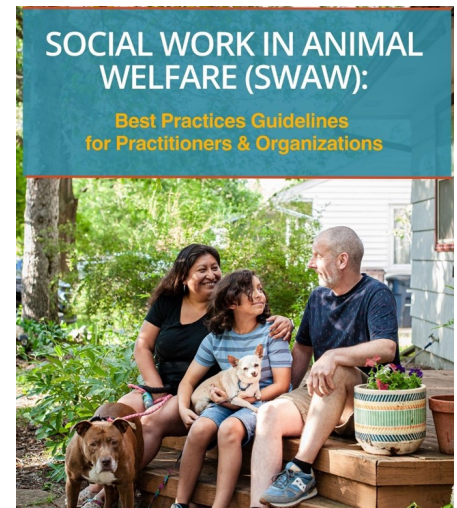
"The social worker must be familiar with their state's specific cross-reporting requirements, which can vary widely and may involve different reporting pathways depending on the county or agency," it advises. "Guidance should include how to identify and respond to suspected abuse or neglect, whether of animals or humans, and how to determine what, when, and to whom to report."

"Cross-training is essential to help inter-disciplinary teams understand one another's mandates, roles, and documentation styles."

CLIENT INTERACTION AND SUPPORT:

The social worker should recognize the human client-pet dyad as a family unit and offer assessment with the family to address safety and emergent needs and concerns, including domestic violence. The social worker should provide client linkage/advocate for client access as needed to human services, including domestic violence shelters.

Crisis and safety planning interventions should be immediate, inclusive, trauma-informed, and client-led, especially in domestic violence, and in compliance with mandated reporting laws, including cross-reporting of suspected human or animal abuse, neglect, elder abuse, or suicidality. Veterinary Social Workers can create pet-inclusive safety plans that identify trusted individuals, temporary housing, or foster options for animals.



DOCUMENTATION, ETHICS AND LAWS:

The social worker should be knowledgeable about and comply with all state/province laws and professional licensure requirements related to mandatory reporting, including cross-reporting of suspected human and animal abuse under The Link. They should also ensure that organizational leadership is aware of these obligations and any related actions taken. This promotes legal compliance, ethical practice, and coordinated safety planning.

MACRO-LEVEL:

Social workers in animal welfare settings can become involved in legislative and policy issues, such as becoming familiar with and advocating for policies that positively impact the intersections of animal welfare, human well-being, and social work, including laws related to domestic violence protections.

SOCIAL WORK... and THE LINK

University of Michigan Offers Certificate in Animal-Assisted Social Work

The University of Michigan's School of Social Work has become one of the field's rare example of recognizing the impact of the human-animal bond in social work education and practice with the introduction of a new Certificate program in Animal-Assisted Social Work Interventions.

The Certificate program, led by Professor Laura L. Sanders, consists of 39 instructional hours in a series of four courses addressing:

- The Human-Animal Bond and Competencies in Animal-Assisted Social Work Practice
- The Animal-Assisted Interventions Team
- Implementing Animal-Assisted Interventions with Diverse Populations
- Experiential Exercises in Embodied Social Work Practice

National Link Coalition co-founder Allie Phillips is a part of the program. She is providing legal education on the different laws regarding working animal titles and where they have rights and access to spaces.



Laura Sanders

The certificate aims to harness the power of the human-animal bond in ethical partnerships between humans and animals to meet the mental health goals of people and enhance the overall well-being of all involved. Participants will learn the fundamental principles, standards, and competencies for the safe, ethical and just inclusion of animal partners in social work interventions.

Pilot Veterinary Social Work Course Planned in Australia



Wendy Till and "Harriet"

The Veterinary Social Work movement -- which includes addressing The Link between animal abuse and human violence in veterinary facilities and animal shelters -- is expanding to Australia, where a pilot program will train social workers to specialize in the veterinary or animal care sectors.

Thanks to an AU\$280,000 (US\$184,000) grant from the Western Australia state govern-

ment, Veterinary and Community Care (VaCC), a NGO based in Perth, is developing a program for animal-care-focused social workers that will be the first of its kind in Australia. It will be called One Welfare Social Work because the word "veterinary" is protected by law while recognizing that human and animal welfare are inextricably Linked.

Wendy Till, a social worker and the program's lead developer, told the [VIN News Service](#) that the pilot program will have only five students. The nonprofit hopes the pilot will provide a blueprint for universities or registered training organizations to develop programs of their own, and that graduates will be champions and change agents for One Welfare Social Work.

VaCC is [seeking expressions of interest](#) from prospective stu-

dents with undergraduate qualifications in social work. Training will be completed toward the end of 2026 and will be free to students selected for the pilot. It will have theoretical and practical elements including placements in partner veterinary clinics. Partner practices will keep graduates on for six months as part-time employees, paid from the government grant.

"It'll be a win-win," Till said. "They'll get some paid practical experience, and the vet teams will get the benefits of having a specialized social worker around."

Veterinary Social Work is also gaining traction in the U.K. where two large veterinary employers are considering hiring social workers following the development of a training course.



SOCIAL WORK... and THE LINK

Tennessee Veterinary Social Work Program Seeking Social Worker

The groundbreaking Veterinary Social Work program at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville's College of Veterinary Medicine is inviting applicants to apply for the position of Social Worker, located within the Veterinary Social Work Services arm of the Office of Outreach and Engagement umbrella.

The social worker position will provide social work care, support, and services to UTCVM students, clients, faculty, and staff, as well as community clients. The position's primary purpose is to help individuals improve their quality of lives through counseling and advocacy and to lead and oversee Animal Loss Programming.

Details about the position's responsibilities, applicant's qualifications, compensation and benefits, are available [online](#).



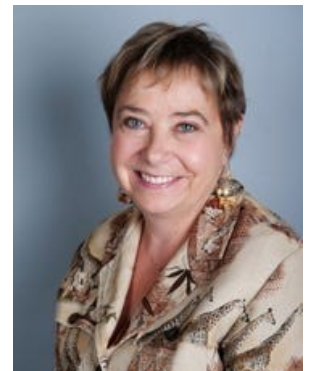
LAW ENFORCEMENT... and THE LINK

Ohio Workshops to Introduce The Link to Law Enforcement

The second in a series of seven full-day in-person workshops conducted by Ohio Animal Advocates in partnership with the Animal Welfare Institute and the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy will be held on Friday, Nov. 14, at the Twinsburg campus of Kent State University. The Close to Home programs on "The Link between Animal and Human Violence: Fundamentals for Law Enforcement" are CPT approved for OPOTA members.

including social workers, caseworkers, humane agents, attorneys, and prosecutors. Seven Ohio authorities on The Link will be presenting during the series, said Vicki Deisner, Executive Director of Ohio Animal Advocates.

Topics to be addressed include: Ohio's cross-reporting law, the inclusion of pets in Ohio protective orders, safe havens for pets of survivors, applicable statutes and statistics, case studies, and how animal abuse is linked with child maltreatment, domestic violence, elder abuse, and community violence. There will be case studies which highlight the link between animal and human violence, a discussion of Ohio's felony strangulation law, and information about utilizing threat assessments for better case resolution and officer safety.



Vicki Deisner

While the target audience is law enforcement, other professionals who deal with The Link are invited,

Register for the workshop at <https://forms.gle/hoW1SKEPTsGr5c4u8>

Free Dogfighting Training Video Offered to Law Enforcement

In the Line of Duty, the world leader in reality-based law enforcement video training, is offering law enforcement and humane officials a free copy of its pioneering [training video](#), "Dogfighting: Still America's Blackest Eye." The 33-minute video, a newly-updated version of a much older training video, includes graphic undercover images of actual dogfights.

"When you're dealing with dogfighting and cockfighting you're not just dealing with the animals, but you're also frequently dealing with gambling, drugs, narcotics, weapons, and you're certainly dealing with conspiracy," explains humane investigator Eric Sakach in the video.



**IN THE
LINE OF DUTY**

"Perhaps no other single crime gives law enforcement the incredible opportunity to resolve other crimes in one fell swoop than dogfighting," adds company president Ron Barber.

"It is being provided free of charge to all law enforcement and animal welfare organizations worldwide," explains Barber. "We hope it will be of immense value to all of the amazing people who truly care and want to end it. We hope that includes you."

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

Pennsylvania Mulls Expanding Cross-Reporting Requirements

Pennsylvania could become the latest state to implement mandatory reporting of suspected animal cruelty, abuse and neglect if a recently introduced bill is signed into law.



Rep. Christina Sappey

HB 1933 would require veterinarians, humane societies, and animal control agencies to report suspected instances of animal cruelty to law enforcement. The bill is sponsored by Rep. Christina Sappey (D – Chester County). In a [memorandum](#) to other House members, Sappey cited The Link as a reason for the bill to be enacted:

“In recent years, several deeply disturbing cases of animal cruelty and sexual abuse in Pennsylvania have exposed troubling gaps in our criminal statutes. These incidents have not only drawn national media attention but have also highlighted a dangerous nexus between animal abuse and more serious crimes, including sexual offenses and violent assaults against children and adults.

“Modeled after laws in states like Kansas and Louisiana, this bill ensures earlier intervention and recognizes the link between animal abuse and broader public safety threats.”

Currently, Pennsylvania veterinarians, technicians and assistants are permitted — but not required — to report suspected animal abuse, with civil immunity for making a report in good faith. Kansas veterinarians are mandated to make such reports with immunity from civil or criminal liability. Louisiana veterinarians and technicians are permitted to report with immunity from civil and criminal liability. Louisiana law enforcement officers and child/adult protective services workers are mandated to report.

Veterinarians, and in many cases their staffs, are mandated to report suspected animal abuse in 23 states and are permitted to do so in 20 other states; they have immunity from civil liability and/or criminal prosecution for making good-faith reports in 38 of those states.

NCVMA Addresses The Link



The National Link Coalition’s Phil Arkow (right) was a featured speaker at a regional Continuing Veterinary Medical Education program of the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association. The “Compassionate Care Symposium: Animal Abuse Basics and Beyond” emphasized using a One Health lens to guide care. 40 veterinarians, staff members, and animal services representatives attended. From left, Sandra Strong, Lisa Olsen and Clarissa Nouredine joined Phil on a program that included the veterinarian’s role in responding to animal abuse, domestic violence, and animal hoarding, and veterinary forensics techniques.

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 repost 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.

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.

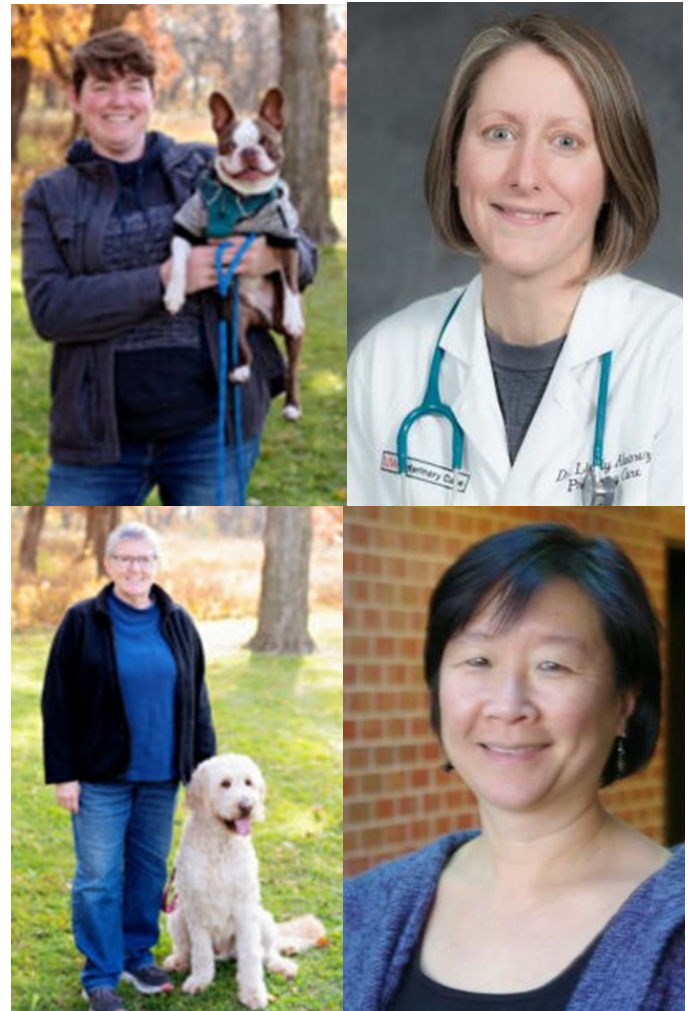
Social Work Helps Expand One Health Community Medicine

When a majority of veterinary clients indicate that in addition to their pets' medical care they need better access to, and information about, local social services agencies, it puts veterinary practices into an extension of One Health community medicine where clients' issues such as domestic violence and homelessness can be addressed by social work.

These are among the findings of a survey conducted by [WisCARES](#), the Wisconsin Companion Animal Resources, Education, and Social Services program at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. The program was created in 2013 as a collaboration among the Schools of Veterinary Medicine, Pharmacy and Social Work, and today sees some 3,000 cases a year, 70% of which engage with the social work team.

"There is a wealth of social services in Dane County, and yet people in need are not always able to find them," the authors write. These needs frequently include the challenges of finding pet-friendly stable shelter and permanent housing in cases of domestic violence and homelessness.

"Helping a family keep a pet (and subsequently keeping that pet healthy) can be viewed as an extension of One Health community medicine," they conclude. "Clients experiencing poverty require more than basic veterinary care to maintain the health and well-being of their pets. The result is an interprofessional clinic that provides compassionate care for the entire family unit, offering greater patient/client support and bridging potential gaps in care."



Clockwise from top left: Kelly Schultz, Elizabeth Alvarez, Jennifer Wheeler Brooks, and Ruthanne Chun

- Schultz, K., Alvarez, E., Brooks, J., & Chun, R. (2025). Assessing client needs in community veterinary care: A case study from WisCARES. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 12, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2025.1675984>



HELP US KEEP THE LINK FREE!

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

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

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

THE LINK in the Literature

Link Cited in Need for Veterinary Forensics in Spain

Despite the “well-established” and “predictive” Link between animal abuse and interpersonal violence, animal maltreatment remains a global issue and is a serious and under-reported problem in Spain, according to a new analysis of abuse of cats in Madrid. Citing the common universal challenges of inconsistent legislation, limited training of veterinary pathologists, a lack of international collaboration among forensic veterinarians, and the unknown incidence of animal abuse, the researchers evaluated the cause, manner and mechanisms of death from 53 cats over a five-year period.

The findings suggested a possible upward trend in the number of cats who were the victims of suspected animal abuse, including eight new cases of antifreeze poisoning. The article examined challenges related to animal violence with particular emphasis on feline colonies.

“If animal welfare is not protected globally, veterinary forensics will not be able to grow to its full potential, making collaboration between human medicine and veterinary forensics essential, especially in countries with limited resources dedicated to the One Welfare concept,” they emphasized.

“The accurate identification of violence towards animals is not only essential but also imperative to underscore the critical societal importance of establishing a precise diagnosis in each individual case,” they concluded, citing the One Welfare approach of the “fundamental interconnections between animal and human well-being.”



- Aradilla, A., De Pablo-Moreno, J., Porras, N., Chinchilla, B., & Rodriguez-Bertos, A. (2025). Evolution of suspected cat abuse between 2020 and 2024 in the community of Madrid (Spain). *Animals*, 15, 2892. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani15192892>

First Link Study from Bosnia Raises Criminology Awareness

The cruelty and killing of animals represent a complex form of violence that, in addition to having serious negative consequences for animals, can also have significant social implications due to its connection with other forms of violence against humans. Despite growing public and scientific attention, this phenomenon in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains insufficiently explored from a criminological perspective, and the normative inconsistency of criminal law provisions further hinders effective protection.



Lejla Smajević

That’s the conclusion of what may be the first Link research study to emerge from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a Master’s thesis submitted to the University of Sarajevo’s Faculty of Criminalistics, Criminology and Security studies, Lejla Smajević analyzes the etiological, phenomenological, and social aspects of animal cruelty and killing, with particular emphasis on endogenous and exogenous factors, as well as different forms of violence (physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect).

The paper also analyzes Bosnia’s criminal law framework with a quantitative analysis of 10 years’ worth of data from the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council. The paper contributes to a better criminological understanding of The Link in Bosnia and Herzegovina, thereby potentially improving the system of social response to this highly harmful form of crime in that country.



-Smajević, L. (2025). Mučenje i ubijanje životinja u Bosni i Hercegovini: Etiologija, fenomenologijai društvena reakcija [The cruelty and killing of animals in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Etiology, phenomenology and social reaction] [In Bosnian].

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/396147249_MUCENJE_I_UBIJANJE_ZIVOTINJA_U_BOSNI_I_HERCEGOVINI_ETIOLOGIJA_FENOMENOLOGIJA_I_DRUSTVENA_REAKCIJA

THE LINK in the Literature

Canary Islands' Vet Students' Perception of Animal Abuse Explored

Veterinary researchers in Spain's Canary Islands have expanded an earlier study that examined adolescents' attitudes toward animal abuse (See the [April 2024 LINK-Letter](#)) into a more focused study of the perception of animal welfare among veterinary students. Noting that animal welfare and animal abuse, although measurable, are subject to a high degree of subjectivity and individuals' level of sensitivity, both elements are influenced by individual and sociodemographic factors, they wrote.

Responses to a 20-question survey administered to 223 students at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine revealed that sensitivity to animal welfare, including academic training on how to respond to animal abuse, increased as students progressed through their studies. However, as students approached the end of their studies, they became less willing to make voluntary efforts.

The profile of the veterinary student least sensitive to animal abuse appeared to be men without dogs who reside in rural habitats and who have family members involved in hunting or fishing. The authors proposed implementing intensive courses on animal welfare throughout the veterinary curriculum, along with an understanding of the veterinarian's role in reporting animal abuse to foster a foundation of critical awareness and commitment to animals.

- **Henríquez-Hernández, L.A., Estévez-Pérez, L., Luzardo, O.P., & Zumbado, M. (2024).** Perception of animal welfare and animal abuse among veterinary students: Role of individual and sociodemographic factors. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 52(3), iv-vi.



Indonesian Study Explores Childhood Animal Cruelty

While the study of childhood animal cruelty being treated as a mental disorder has received considerable attention in the West, what may be the first study from Indonesia examining this question defined childhood animal cruelty as a crucial marker for mental health that relates to Conduct Disorder and Antisocial Personality Disorder. The authors emphasized the vital role of adults in minimizing children's acts for committing animal cruelty by nurturing empathy.



They examined childhood animal cruelty in a literature review exploring five perspectives:

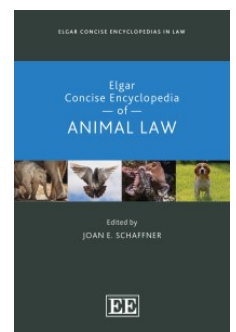
- (1) An animal cruelty framework.
- (2) Animal cruelty's relation to child abuse and domestic violence.
- (3) Developmental psychology references of children's aggressive acts toward animals.
- (4) Animal cruelty and psychology disorders.
- (5) Clinical pathways of childhood cruelty to animals.

- **Juliadilla, R., & Noveni, N.A. (2021).** Are childhood cruelty to animals indicates as mental disorder? *Psychosophia: Journal of Psychology, Religion, and Humanity*, 3(1), 56-72. doi: <https://doi.org/10.32923/psc.v3i1.1748>

Link Featured in Animal Law Encyclopedia

The newly-published Elgar [Concise Encyclopedia of Animal Law](#) features a chapter on "The Link between Animal Maltreatment and Human Violence." Authored by the Animal

Welfare Institute's Nancy Blaney and Mary Lou Randour, the chapter is one of 119 chapters contributed by 135 international authorities. The 498-page book is edited by Joan E. Schaffner, Associate Professor at George Washington University's School of Law.



The LINK in THE LITERATURE

South Korea Calls to Address Animal Abuse/Domestic Violence Link

What is believed to be only the second research article to address Link issues in South Korea has reviewed the extensive research from the U.S. to propose four recommendations to protect both human and animal survivors from domestic violence.

The article, in the *Journal of Korean Women's Studies*, explores Link concepts and theories and ways to respond to and intervene in the overlap between animal cruelty and domestic violence, as no research on systemic response to such issue has been discovered in South Korea. The authors' investigative findings resulted in four recommendations:

1. Policies should be enacted to develop a response system to the overlap between domestic violence and animal abuse and to provide victims of domestic violence and animal abuse with integrated, government-funded services;

2. Formal services providers should increase their capacity to provide assistance to multiple victims of domestic violence and animal abuse and reduce the barriers that prevent victims from seeking assistance.

3. Changes to the legal status of animals should ensure the safety of victims of domestic violence and animal abuse and enhance their support.

4. It is necessary to understand that the overlap between domestic violence and animal abuse is an issue of ethics founded on the value of life and the interconnectedness of all living things.

Earlier research (See the [June 2020 LINK-Letter](#)) reported on South Korean veterinarians' willingness to intervene in cases where animal abuse is suspected.

- Park, E., Kim, H., & Ryu, D. (2023). Domestic violence and animal abuse: Issues and interventions.

Journal of Korean Women's Studies, 39(2),

283-316. DOI: [10.30719/JKWS.2023.06.39.2.283](#)



The LINK in THE COURTS

NY Commission of Women in the Courts Addresses The Link

National Link Coalition Professional Advisory Committee Member and Animal Legal Defense Fund Senior Staff Attorney Kathleen Wood was the introductory speaker at an Oct. 30 seminar entitled "The Link Between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse: Why it Matters." The seminar, held in honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, was presented by New York's Hon. Betty Weinberg Ellerin of the Permanent Commission of Women in the Courts. It was moderated by the Commission's Executive Director, Felicia Raphael. The seminar was hosted in-person in a law office in Times Square and was also offered remotely, with over 100 attendees including judges, prosecutors, court staff, victim advocates, and others.

Wood started the session with an overview of the extensive research into the Link between animal cruelty and domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse. Nicoletta Caferri, the founder of the Queens County District Attorney's Office's animal cruelty prosecutions unit, and Sherwin Figueroa Safir, ADA for Nassau County who leads their animal cruelty prosecution unit, shared their experiences prosecuting Link-related cas-

es, bringing to life these abstract concepts with real-world examples within the context of New York State laws. They also highlighted services for domestic violence survivors and alternative sentencing options for convicted offenders to help stop cycles of violence.



Kathleen Wood

Beth Calcaterra shared her perspective on these issues as an appellate attorney with 15 years of prior experience litigating criminal defense and family law matters with Brooklyn's Legal Aid Society. She noted the importance of offering rehabilitative sentencing options, as well as the value of Integrated Domestic Violence Courts having jurisdiction over animal cruelty committed in domestic violence contexts in order to promote sustainable, safe solutions for all family members.

News from LINK COALITIONS

Podcasts and Webinar Build Empowerment and Resilience to Protect Vulnerable Staff



Allie Phillips

I let my career make me sick. Don't let it happen to you. It's not worth it!"

Those were the words of advice from Allie Phillips, a co-founding member of the National Link Coalition and a member of our Professional Advisory Committee. Phillips, who created the SAF-T (Sheltering Animals and Families Together) program to assist domestic violence shelters to co-house survivors' pets, has created four podcasts to help build empowerment and resilience.

The [podcasts](#), part of her SAF-T Chronicles series ([See the August 2023 LINK-Letter](#)), include: "Recovery, Resiliency and Empowerment" (Episode 40); "How Gratitude Shifts Mindset" (Episode 41); "Emotional Regulation Techniques" (Episode 42); and "Shift Your Mindset Into Motivation" (Episode 43).

The podcasts and a recent webinar conducted by Phillips, are aimed at not only domestic violence survivors, but also shelter staffs and federal criminal justice investigators and prosecutors who were severely impacted by the lengthy federal government shutdown.

Link Featured in Radio Podcast

Steve Dale's widely broadcast radio show, *Steve Dale's Pet World*, features an interview conducted with the National Link Coalition's Phil Arkow. The broadcast on Chicago's [WGN radio station](#), offers an important legislative update regarding the Link and efforts to change laws which actually benefit people as well as animals.

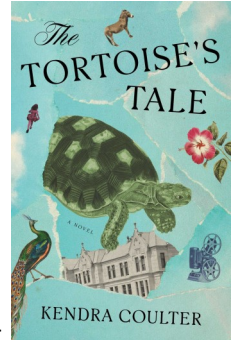
Arkow also discusses how the American Veterinary Medical Association is encouraging veterinarians to speak out to identify abuse, how increasingly veterinarians can get training in veterinary forensics, and how the National Link Coalition is also training prosecutors. The program also reviews how Purina and the Purple Leash Project and others are supporting the need for people to be able to flee a violent situation to find a shelter that allows pets.

Dale serves on the National Link Coalition's Professional Advisory Committee.



Link Researcher Publishes Debut Novel

Congratulations go out to National Link Coalition board member Kendra Coulter on the release of her fiction debut, *The Tortoise's Tale*. The book is a whimsical yet profound book about animals, people, and the roots and branches that connect us. Violence Link experts will be pleased to see the issue gently interwoven throughout this moving story.



The Tortoise's Tale is published by [Simon & Schuster](#) and [Simon & Schuster Canada](#) and available wherever books are sold.

Coulter, Professor of Management & Organizational Studies and Coordinator of Animal Ethics and Sustainability Leadership at Huron University College at Western University in Ontario, has published extensively on such topics as: the increased safety risks to female animal cruelty investigators; various professionals' awareness of The Link; how animal shelters are addressing human abuse; the need for a national animal cruelty reporting hotline; how The Link exacerbates pre-existing stressors in animal cruelty investigations; gaps in cross-reporting; and the value of interagency collaborations.

LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

While most state legislatures have adjourned for the year, we're still following 140 bills that were introduced this session in state legislatures and Congress. 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.

H.R. 1477, the Animal Cruelty Enforcement (ACE) Act, would establish an Animal Cruelty Crimes Section within the U.S. Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division.

H.R. 3683, the FBI Animal Cruelty Taskforce Act, would establish an animal cruelty crimes taskforce within the FBI to investigate and enforce federal laws, including cases of dogfighting, cockfighting, and crush videos.

H.R. 3946, the Fighting Inhumane Gambling and High-risk Trafficking (FIGHT) Act would make it illegal to engage a minor under age 16 in animal fighting ventures, including cockfighting.

H.R. 4921, the Providing for Unhoused People and Pets (PUPP) Act, would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to make grants to modify and upgrade structures to serve as interim and permanent housing to accommodate unhoused individuals with pets

ALASKA

HB 101 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have allowed judges to consider a history of animal cruelty as an aggravating factor in imposing a sentence outside the sentencing guidelines for domestic violence or distributing material depicting bestiality to a minor under age 18..

ARIZONA

HB 2211 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have allowed petitioners to file for a "severe threat order of protection" to prevent a respondent who has threatened or committed injury, death or cruel mistreatment of an animal from possessing a firearm.

HB 2530 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have clarified that persons who are experiencing homelessness, such as domestic violence victims, are permitted to bring service animals into homeless shelters.

SB 1038 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have defined aggravated assault to include assault on an animal control officer.

SB 1412 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have expanded the definition of "domestic violence", which includes cruelty, neglect or abandonment, to also include illegally killing a domestic animal.

CALIFORNIA

SUCCESS!!! AB 561 allows domestic violence and elder abuse survivors to file for protection orders — which can include protection of animals — electronically and to appear remotely at hearings.

SUCCESS!!! SB 221 expands the definition of stalking to include willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly following or harassing another person and who makes a credible threat to place that person in reasonable fear for the safety of that person's pet, service animal, emotional support animal, or horse.

FLORIDA

SUCCESS!!! CS/HB 255, and CS/SB 494 "Dexter's Law", were enacted on May 29. They provide harsher penalties for aggravated animal cruelty cases because the bill's sponsor wrote, "Individuals who commit these heinous acts typically don't stop at animals; they are better indicators of future violence, harassment, assault, rape, murder, and arson cases as found by the FBI. Animal abuse is a strong predictor of potential aggravated violence towards humans and animal abuse can serve as an early warning sign for family violence." It takes effect Jan. 1, 2026.

GEORGIA

SUCCESS!!! **HB 177 was signed into law on May 13 and takes effect July 1.** It allows 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 can also prevent the respondent from harassing, harming, taking, transferring, encumbering, or concealing pets and committing animal cruelty.

SB 102 died when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have made it a crime to bring a minor under age 18 to a dog– or cock-fight.

HAWAII

HB 698 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have increased 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. The bill was based on the recognition 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.”

SB 460 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have recognized 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 given them standing to file for a protection order or a temporary restraining order.

IDAHO

SUCCESS!!! **HB 380 was signed into law on March 26.** It creates two new crimes of Aggravated Lewd Conduct with a Minor Child, including bestiality. Penalties for offenders are mandatory 25 years-to-life if the victim is aged 13-16, and life imprisonment or the death penalty if the child is aged 12 or younger.

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 and HF 869 died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have amended the Iowa Veterinary Practice Act to 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 have been immune when providing testimony in any case or assisting in the rescue of a threatened animal. Veterinarians who knowingly made a false report about a client’s alleged conduct would have been subject to disciplinary action, civilly liable for damages, and guilty of a misdemeanor.

KENTUCKY

HB 96 died when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have defined “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 have included 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 330 died when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have required 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 have been required to include language notifying the respondent about the firearms prohibition.

HB 194 (“Kyan’s Law”) died when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have required animal control officers to receive training on recognizing child abuse and would have added animal control officers to the list of people with a duty to report dependency, neglect or abuse of a child.

LOUISIANA

SUCCESS!!! **S.B. 21** expands the definitions of “healthcare professional” and “healthcare facility” to include veterinarians, veterinary staff, and veterinary clinics for the purpose of including them in existing law penalizing assault and battery of human health care personnel and unlawful disruption of the operation of a human health care facility.

MAINE

H.P. 621 died in committee. It would have created a new Class C criminal offense of Aggravated Operating a Motor Vehicle Under the Influence if the incident resulted in the death of a pet. Offenders would have faced a mandatory fine, incarceration, suspension of the driver’s license, mandatory community service related to animal welfare, and financial restitution to the pet’s owner.

MASSACHUSETTS

H.1817 and S.1206 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.”

H.1832 would update Sec. 21 of Chapter 119 to 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.

S.1234 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.

MICHIGAN

HB 4300 would create a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program allowing judges to appoint a volunteer pro bono attorney or law student to represent the interest of the animal or of justice in prosecutions involving welfare or custody of animals.

HB 4993 would require landlords to release tenants from their rental agreement obligation upon presenting evidence of a reasonable apprehension of present danger to the tenant or the tenant's child from domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. Acceptable documentation could include a protection order; Michigan has allowed pets to be included in protection orders since 2016.

SB 111 (Sub. S-1) would allow elders and disabled and vulnerable adults to petition for a personal protection order that would include restraining an individual from harming, killing, torturing, neglecting, or removing an animal

MINNESOTA

HF 1816 and **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. The bills will carry over to the 2026 session.

MISSOURI

HB 1298, HB 1513, SB 65 and **SB 655** died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have added 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

SUCCESS!!! LB 80 amends 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

SUCCESS!!! HB 62 was signed into law. It expands the state's current provisions that include animal cruelty within the definition of domestic violence abuse to include this definition within military protective orders for active U.S. military and National Guard members.

HB 593 was declared **inexpedient to legislate**. It would have allowed 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.

NEW JERSEY

A291 would expand the definitions of domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and abuse of persons with a disability to include acts of animal cruelty against their animals. 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 would be required 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 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.

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

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 and **S 966** 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.

A 3836 and **S 3362** would establish a \$1,000,000 Domestic Violence Shelter Pet Grant Program to provide funds to house pets in shelters with their owners. Qualifying shelters could apply for up to \$50,000 in grants.

S 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have defined coercive-control animal abuse as domestic violence and allowed pets to be included in protection orders. The bill would have renamed 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 have granted to any party the exclusive or shared possession and control of any animal and forbid the party from taking, transferring, concealing, mistreating, harming, or disposing of the animal.

SUCCESS!!! SB 50 adds dogfighting and cockfighting to the list of crimes defined as "racketeering".

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 prison terms 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 and **S 5544** 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 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 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.

Purple = Domestic Violence
Dark Blue = Child Abuse
Grey = Elder/Disabled Abuse
Pink = Animal Sexual Abuse
Green = Cross-Reporting
Orange = Court Animal Advocates
Red = Animal Hoarding
Brown = Assessments/Interventions
Light Blue = Link & Other Crimes

A 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 2387 and **S 6812** would establish a 24-hour toll-free animal abuse reporting hotline.

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.

A 5815 and **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.

A 6194 and **S 5998, “Kyra’s Law,”** would require courts determining child custody and visitation rights to consider credible evidence that includes any party’s history of domestic violence, child abuse, and threats to harm or kill companion animals.

A 6397 and **S 7350** would expand the definition of aggravated animal cruelty to include causing serious physical injuries or the use of a weapon.

A 6556 and **S 5514** would require courts to consider recent acts of aggravated cruelty to animals in determining whether grounds exist for issuing a temporary extreme risk protection order.

A 7831, S 6986 and **S 7010** would make it a crime to assault a child protective services worker by releasing or failing to control an animal with the intent to obstruct the completion of their duties.

S 470, “Kirby and Quigley’s Law,” expands 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.

S 6880 would authorize a lengthier prison sentence for committing aggravated animal cruelty during an incident of domestic violence.

A 8375 and **S 7612** would establish a co-shelter toolkit of best practices, resources, case studies, and information to inform and encourage implementing and sustaining co-sheltering models for victims of domestic violence and persons experiencing homelessness with companion animals.

S 8030 would require certain animal cruelty offenders to undergo a presentencing forensic psychological evaluation and, based on such evaluation, to attend counseling, humane education, a rehabilitation program, or other such treatment.

S 8035 would expand protection orders which allow courts to enjoin an individual from harming an animal to also allow courts to grant the petitioner exclusive care, custody or control of the animal.

NORTH CAROLINA

S 274 would repeal the archaic “crime against nature, with mankind or beast,” and replace it with the crime of “bestiality” as a Class I felony.

S 573 would require judges to order convicted companion animal hoarders to undergo psychological evaluation and treatment.

S 591 would make it a Class H felony to bring a minor under the age of 18 to a dog- or cock-fight.

OHIO

HB 417 would require 2 hours of peace officers’ required 24-hour annual continuing education to be dedicated to education about laws governing animal welfare and cruelty.

OREGON

SB 626 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have expanded the definition of child sexual abuse to include exposing children to acts of bestiality created by artificial intelligence.

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.

HB 1611 would amend the Older Adults Protective Services Act to prohibit adult care homes, assisted living, home health care agencies, long-term nursing care, older adult daily living centers, and hospitals from employing someone within 20 years of having been convicted of sexual abuse of animals or children, among other crimes.

HB 1859 would allow courts to issue Extreme Risk Protection Orders, prohibiting persons with histories of domestic abuse or cruelty to animals from possessing firearms due to a substantial risk of suicide or causing the death of or serious bodily injury to another person.

HB 1932 would expand Pennsylvania's bestiality law to prohibit any form of sexual contact with an animal as well as organizing, promoting, aiding or participating in any such acts; committing such acts in the presence of a minor; and elevating the crime from a misdemeanor to a felony.

HB 1933 would require veterinarians, technicians and assistants, humane societies, and animal control agencies to report suspected aggravated animal cruelty to law enforcement, with immunity from civil and criminal liability and state licensing action.

SB 823 would allow state grants to law enforcement agencies to be used to investigate and enforce animal fighting.

RHODE ISLAND

H 5125 died in committee. It would have amended 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.

H 5669 died in committee. It would have added animal cruelty offenses of "unnecessary cruelty," malicious injury, killing, and abandonment to the definition of domestic violence crimes.

SOUTH CAROLINA

H 3143 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have allowed individuals convicted of felony animal cruelty to apply for a limited pardon that would enable them to possess a firearm for hunting purposes because animal cruelty is not considered a "crime of violence."

H 3641 and H 4123 died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have expanded the definition of child sexual abuse and obscenity to include exposing children to acts of bestiality created by computer generated images.

SUCCESS!!! S 28 was signed into law. It creates a sex offender registry in which "buggery" (South Carolina's archaic term for bestiality) is defined as a Tier 1 offense.

TENNESSEE

SUCCESS!!! HB 540 and S 916 were signed into law on April 24. They expand the definition of "racketeering activity" to include engaging others in the criminal activity of animal fighting.

TEXAS

HB 3049 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have designated animal control officers as "first responders" whose duties include responding rapidly to an emergency.

HB 4563 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have allowed children or persons with a disability to be accompanied by a therapy or facility dog in various criminal proceedings.

SB 1658 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have allowed courts to issue Extreme Risk Protective Orders, prohibiting respondents from possessing firearms; Texas protection orders already prohibit respondents from harming, threatening or interfering with the custody of the plaintiff's pet, companion animal or therapy animal.

SB 1673 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have required courts to order individuals convicted of cruelty to non-livestock animals to undergo psychological counseling.

UTAH

SUCCESS!!! HB 159 was signed into law on March 25. It allows Utah authorities to recognize domestic violence protection orders issued in Canada. Utah protection orders already include provisions protecting household animals.

HB 461 failed to pass. It would have allowed courts to order animal cruelty offenders to participate in animal cruelty prevention or education programs, or psychological counseling for treatment of mental health disorders that the contributed to the commission of the crime.

SB 24 failed to pass. It would have included threatening an animal or forcing or coercing a child to injure an animal to the definition of child abuse.

VERMONT

H.492 died when the General Assembly adjourned. It introduced the concept of "coercive control" within the animal cruelty context. It proposed that persons who commit or threaten to commit animal cruelty upon an animal to influence a victim of domestic abuse may face additional criminal penalties.

WEST VIRGINIA

HB 2068 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have prohibited 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-225 would extend the Uttering Threats offense of the Criminal Code from five to 10 years for intimate partner violence offenders who threaten to kill, injure or poison an animal or bird that is the property of that person. The new bill would recognize that animals are also at risk of harm in relationships where there is intimate partner violence.

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

Nov. 11 — Glastonbury, Conn. (online): Phil Arkow will present a webinar on "Kids, Critters and Vulnerable Women: Connecting the Dots Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence" for the [Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#).

Nov. 12 — Sketchley Grange, England: The Links Group UK and the BSAVA will present a [Links Veterinary Training Initiative](#) for large, small and equine veterinary teams on a multi-agency approach to recognize and act on non-accidental injury and domestic abuse.

Nov. 14 -- Twinsburg, Ohio: Ohio Advocates for Animals, the Animal Welfare Institute, the Ohio Police Officer Training Academy, and the Ohio Domestic Violence Network will present a [workshop](#) on "The Link Between Animal and Human Violence: Fundamentals for Law Enforcement."

Nov. 14 — San Diego, Calif.: My Dog Is My Home will host an [Open House](#) at pet-friendly co-sheltering Father Joe's Villages.

Nov. 18 — Morristown, N.J.: Phil Arkow will present on "The 'Dark Side' of the Human-Animal Bond" to the Soothing Paws Program at the [Morristown Medical Center](#).

Nov. 18 — Kansas City, Mo. (online): BestyBnB will present a [webinar](#), "Supporting Client Autonomy: Integrating Trauma-Informed Care into Pet Programs," by Kate Rachiele, Pet Programs & Operations Coordinator for Willow Domestic Violence Center in Rochester, N.Y.

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

Nov. 20 — Ridgewood, N.Y. (online): My Dog Is My Home's quarterly co-sheltering [collaborative meeting](#) will feature Chantelle Wilkinson, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships at the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

Nov. 25-26 — Ottawa, Ont., Canada: Sue O'Neill of Humane Canada's ACT program will present "The Impact of the Bond Between Survivors of Gender-Based Violence, Larger Companion, Farmed, and Working Animals" at the inaugural [One Health, One Welfare Conference](#) hosted by Humane Canada and World Animal Protection.

Dec. 4 — Colorado Springs, Colo. (online): Andrew Campbell will present "No Safe Place: How Domestic Violence Harms Children" in a [Justice Clearinghouse webinar](#).

Dec. 5 — Hartford, Conn.: Phil Arkow and Diane Rosell will present on "The Link Between Animal Maltreatment and Intimate Partner Violence" at the [University of Connecticut Law School](#). Other programs will feature case discussions of animal hoarding, assault, neglect, civil welfare, and animal fighting.

Dec. 12 — Raleigh, N. C. (online): Phil Arkow will present "Practical Guidance for the Effective Response by Veterinarians to Suspected Animal Cruelty, Abuse and Neglect" to the [North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine](#).

Dec. 21 — Tokyo, Japan (online): The Animal Literacy Research Institute will conduct a [webinar](#), "The Impact of Witnessing Animal Abuse: The Possible Risks of Being Exposed to Animal Abuse."

Jan. 14-15, 2026 — Ottawa, Ont., Canada (online): Forensic veterinarian Margaret Doyle, police investigator Sgt. Dennis Smithson, and criminologist Amy Fitzgerald will be among the speakers at the National Centre for the Prosecution of Animal Cruelty's [Student Symposium](#) on the Prosecution of Animal Abuse.

Jan. 21, 2026 -- Springfield, Ohio: Ohio Advocates for Animals, the Animal Welfare Institute, the Ohio Police Officer Training Academy, and the Ohio Domestic Violence Network will present a [workshop](#) on "The Link Between Animal and Human Violence: Fundamentals for Law Enforcement."

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Feb. 4, 2026 — Warren, Ohio: Ohio Advocates for Animals, the Animal Welfare Institute, the Ohio Police Officer Training Academy, and the Ohio Domestic Violence Network will present a [workshop](#) on "The Link Between Animal and Human Violence: Fundamentals for Law Enforcement."

March 4, 2026 -- Lorain County, Ohio: Ohio Advocates for Animals, the Animal Welfare Institute, the Ohio Police Officer Training Academy, and the Ohio Domestic Violence Network will present a [workshop](#) on "The Link Between Animal and Human Violence: Fundamentals for Law Enforcement."

March 19, 2026 — Albuquerque, N. Mex. (online): Phil Arkow will present "Protecting 'Woman's Best Friend': A Call to Action for Pet Protection Orders in New Mexico" in a webinar for [Animal Protection New Mexico](#).

March 24-26, 2026 — Ridgewood, N.Y. (online): My Dog Is My Home will hold its [Annual Conference](#).

March 25, 2026 -- Nelsonville, Ohio: Ohio Advocates for Animals, the Animal Welfare Institute, the Ohio Police Officer Training Academy, and the Ohio Domestic Violence Network will present a [workshop](#) on "The Link Between Animal and Human Violence: Fundamentals for Law Enforcement."

March 25, 2026 — 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 DoD Domestic Abuse Advocate Training Program.

March 26, 2026 — Colorado Springs, Colo.; (online): Phil Arkow will present "Learn What the Monster Likes... and Feed It! Bridging the Animal Rights/ Welfare/Control Gap by Focusing on The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence" in a [Justice Clearinghouse](#) webinar.

May 18-19, 2026 — Washington, D.C.: The National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges will conduct the 3rd [Judicial Institute](#) on the Human Animal Bond and the Link between Animal Cruelty and Interpersonal Violence: Issues in Family Law Cases at the George Washington University Law School.

June 8-9, 2026 — Austin, Texas: Phil Arkow will present on The Link at a [conference](#) of central Texas Children's Advocacy Centers.

Sept. 1, 2026 — Colorado Springs, Colo. (online): Phil Arkow will present "Closing the 'PAWS Gap' in Victim Advocacy through Pet-Inclusive Services" in a webinar for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

Oct. 14-16, 2026 — Toronto, Ont., Canada: The International Association of Veterinary Social Work will hold its [9th Summit](#).



THE LINK... in the NEWS

Police on Long Island Rescue 200 Animals and 95-Year-Old Woman

Following a tip from a suspicious wildlife rehabilitator, police in Northport, Long Island, N.Y. reportedly found more than 200 pets and exotic animals and a 95-year-old woman living in squalor that Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond Tierney called “a deeply distressing situation.”



D.A. Raymond Tierney welfare of a vulnerable elderly person; her partner, Neal Weschler, was also charged with animal cruelty.

Authorities said cats, dogs, parrots, hamsters, hedgehogs, chinchillas, flying squirrels, ferrets, ducks, chickens, geese, turkeys, chipmunks, rabbits, crows, starlings, doves, guinea pigs, voles, parakeets, and tortoises were in cages strewn with waste in a house infested with insects and so full of trash and clutter that some areas were impassable. The elderly woman was trapped in her second-floor room by so much trash and debris. “The level of neglect was unconscionable,” said Police Commissioner Kevin Catalina. The woman and the animals were all removed from the home.

Oshkosh Man Charged with Animal Abuse and Intimidating Witness

After a 13-year-old girl sent a video to a friend allegedly showing Travis Gant, 39, beating and kicking the family dog, the video's recipient contacted Oshkosh, Wis. police. Gant was arrested and charged with five counts of intentionally mistreating an animal and intimidating a witness. [WLUK-TV](#) reported that Gant allegedly threatened a woman in the home and the girl for recording and sharing the video. Agents from the Oshkosh Area Humane Society removed three adult dogs and four puppies from the residence.



Fight Escalates into Assault and Animal Cruelty Charges

Police in Shepherdsville, Ky. responding to a complaint about an assault also charged David Craig, 39, with cruelty to animals, torture of a dog, and menacing. [WHAS11-TV](#) reported that the victim told police he had been assaulted the night before while walking his dog. Surveillance footage from a nearby business allegedly showed the suspect grabbing the dog's leash after the victim lost control of it and swinging the dog overhead multiple times before it struck a dumpster. The condition of the dog was not known.



Man Charged with Trespassing, Animal Cruelty, and Assaulting Police Officer

After a series of incidents involving animal cruelty, trespassing and assaulting a police officer, Decatur, Ill. police arrested Justin S. Shadwell, 41. [WICS-TV](#) reported that police were initially called to a residence on a trespassing complaint, where Shadwell was allegedly looking into windows in a house from which he had been barred.



Later, police responded to a report of Shadwell allegedly strangling a cat, then swinging it and attempting to burn its face with a lighter. After struggling with officers, he was eventually arrested and charged.

You Can Help Us Create Safer Communities!

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

I.R.S. 501c3 tax ID
#92-2607909.

Join us!



NationalLinkCoalition.org



arkowpets@snip.net

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



National Link Coalition Leadership Team Board of Directors

[Phil Arkow, President/Secretary](#)

Instructor, Animal Abuse & Family Violence, University of Florida
Adjunct Faculty, Animal-Assisted Therapy & Activities, Harcum College
Etowah, N. Car.

[Randall Lockwood, Ph.D., Vice President/Board Chair](#)

Consultant, ASPCA
Leesburg, Va.

[Ann Laatsch, J.D., Treasurer](#)

Justice System Coordinator, National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life
Milwaukee, Wis.

[Barbara W. Boat, Ph.D.,](#)

Associate Professor *emerita*, University of Cincinnati Academic Health Center
Past Director, Childhood Trust, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
Cincinnati, Ohio

[Kendra Coulter, Ph.D.](#)

Professor, Management & Organizational Studies
Coordinator, Animal Ethics and Sustainability Leadership
Huron University College at Western University, London, Ont., Canada

[Mark Kumpf, CAWA](#)

Principal Director, Animal Control & Care Academy
Dayton, Ohio

[Paul Needham, MBA](#)

Chair, Education Committee, National Adult Protective Services Association
Shawnee, Okla.

Professional Advisory Committee

[Lesley Ashworth,](#)

Former Domestic Violence Program
Director, Columbus OH City Attorney's Office,
Boone, N. Car.

[Diane Balkin, J.D.](#)

Retired Chief Deputy District Attorney
Denver, Colo.

[Nancy Blaney](#)

Director, Government Affairs
Animal Welfare Institute, Washington, D.C.

[Claire Coughlin](#)

Director, Companion Animal Programs
Animal Welfare Institute, St. Louis, Mo.

[Steve Dale](#)

Nationally Syndicated Radio Host and Author
Chicago, Ill.

[The Hon. Rosa C. Figarola](#)

Retired Circuit Probate Judge, 11th Judicial
Circuit, Miami, Fla.

[Maya Gupta, Ph.D. \(Alternate\)](#)

Vice President, Research,
ASPCA Department of Strategy & Research-
Woodstock, Ga.

[Joey Orduna Hastings](#)

CEO, National Council of Juvenile & Family
Court Judges, Reno, Nev.

[Kendall Houlihan, DVM](#)

Assistant Director, Animal Welfare Division
American Veterinary Medical Association
Schaumburg, Ill.

[Emily Patterson-Kane, Ph.D.](#)

Director, Research
ASPCA Department of Strategy & Research
Chicago, Ill.

[Allie Phillips, J.D.](#)

Director, Sheltering Animals and Families
Together (SAF-T)
Grand Haven, Mich.

[The Hon. Gale Rasin, J.D.](#)

Senior Judge, Mental Health Court, Maryland

[The Hon. John J. Romero, Jr.](#)

Retired District Judge, Children's Court Division
2nd Judicial District, Albuquerque, N. Mex.

[Sue Skinner, MD](#)

Child Abuse Pediatrician, CARES Northwest
Portland, Ore.

[Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM](#)

President, Forensic Veterinary Investigations, LLC,
Boston, Mass.

[John Thompson](#)

Executive V.P., Small & Rural Law Enforcement
Executives Association
Executive Director, Deep Roots Homeless Shelter,
Earleville, Md.

[Kathleen Wood, J.D.](#)

Staff Attorney, Criminal Justice Program
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Portland, Ore.