



A monthly report of news from

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



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Thank You For the Progress we Accomplished in 2025 — with More to Come in 2026!

Thanks to the generosity of our *LINK-Letter* readers and supporters, the National Link Coalition continued to make remarkable gains in 2025 to educate people about how animal abuse is Linked with human violence — and get critical legislation passed, programs implemented and collaborations launched to carry forth our important message. Beginning on Page 16 you can read about what your gifts have helped us achieve as we continue to create a safer, healthier world for vulnerable animals and their people.

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!



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CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK

Animal Abuse Called a Critical Marker for Child Abuse

The presence of animal abuse, in any form, increased the likelihood of child abuse by 641%.”

That's the dramatic finding of a study just published in *Child Abuse & Neglect* that may be the first to examine whether the species of animal abused (dog, cat or small pet) is specifically Linked with specific forms of child abuse (psychological, physical, and very severe physical) among men and women perpetrators.

“The presence of animal abuse, in any form, increased the likelihood of child abuse by 641%.”

—Chelsea Spencer et al.

The study also examines if the type of dog and cat abuse (neglect, emotional abuse, threats, physical, and severe physical) are related to various forms of child abuse.

The researchers were led by Chelsea Spencer, a research assistant professor in the Couple and Family Therapy program in the Department of Applied Human Sciences at Kansas State University, and Claire Coughlin at the Animal Welfare Institute. They interviewed 626 individuals who identified being in a relationship in the past year and whose partner had interacted with children. Among the other findings:

- Cat abuse, dog abuse, and small pet abuse were all significantly related to child physical abuse.



Claire Coughlin (left) & Chelsea Spencer

- For men perpetrators, cat abuse, dog abuse, and small pet abuse were significantly associated with very severe physical child abuse perpetration.
- Severe physical cat abuse perpetration was most strongly associated with psychological, physical, and very severe physical child abuse.

The study's overall conclusion was that dog abuse, cat abuse, and small pet abuse are critical risk markers for perpetration of child abuse.

—Spencer, C.M., Renken, N.D., Moore, M.M., & Coughlin, C. (2025, November). An exploration of the relationship between cat, dog, and small pet abuse and child abuse.

Child Abuse & Neglect, 169 (Pt.1):107747.
doi: 10.1016/j.chabu.2025.107747.

SOCIAL WORK... and THE LINK

Pioneering Veterinary Social Work Center Seeks New Director

Applications are being accepted until January 15 for a highly regarded scholar to serve as the Director of the [Center for Veterinary Social Work](#) at the University of Tennessee—Knoxville. The new Director will be awarded the All Things Great and Small Endowed Clinical Professorship in Veterinary Social Work to support their work.

The pioneering Center is the only program in the country that represents a partnership be-

tween a College of Social Work and a College of Veterinary Medicine. The Center is an interprofessional, transdisciplinary collaborative unit that addresses the four areas of Veterinary Social Work: Intentional well-being; Animal-related grief and bereavement; Animal-assisted interventions; and The Link between human and animal violence.

Candidates for the 9-month position must have earned their Ph.D. in social work or a related

field. Successful candidates with the required qualifications for Associate or Full Professor can be considered for tenure.

Details and an online application are available [online](#).



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Is There a Link between Dog Bites and Domestic Violence?

There is substantial evidence linking incidents of animal abuse with domestic violence. And Andrew Campbell's research in Indianapolis has linked animal control incidents with cases of domestic violence (*See the July 2019 LINK-Letter*). But is there a link between dog bites and domestic violence?

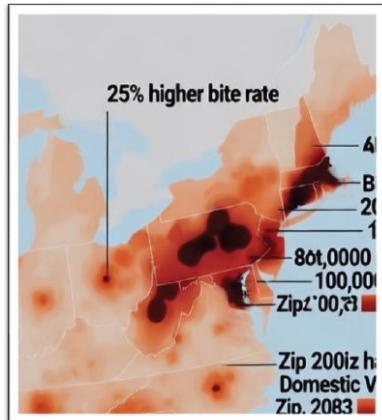


That's a question being explored by Daniel Ettinger, host of the [Keep it Humane](#) podcast and a Field Services Manager for animal control in Southern California. While emphasizing that not all dog bites are triggered by domestic violence, animal care and control officers,

Daniel Ettinger veterinarians, animal behaviorists and public health officials should be aware that some bite incidents may reveal underlying violence, abuse or chronic stress in the home.

Dogs that are exposed to the trauma of domestic violence may develop fear-based, defensive, hypervigilant, or protective aggression behaviors, or PTSD, which can increase the risk of biting. The environmental cues of raised voices, interpersonal tension, substance abuse and sudden movements, plus experiences of isolation, separation anxiety or lack of socialization, can trigger defensive reactions, Ettinger argues.

He notes a 2023 study by the CDC that mapped 1.7 million dog bite incidents across the U.S. By overlaying a map of domestic violence incidents over the dog bite cases, remarkable co-occurrences appear. He calculates there are 24.8% more dog bites in ZIP codes marked by higher rates of domestic violence.



Map shows overlapping incidents of dog bites and domestic violence incidents

Ettinger recalls cases in which domestic violence abusers, or officers responding to a domestic violence call, were attacked by dogs. "It is reasonable to think dogs that bite, in some cases, are defending themselves. They may have a lower bite inhibition," he suggests.

Ettinger recommends that animal control professionals recognize that canine aggression may stem from environmental trauma, ask domestic violence victims about their pets' safety, and collaborate with domestic violence agencies. "Consider trauma-informed approaches in handling and assessment," he says.

RedRover Announces Latest Grants for Pet-Friendly Shelters

Six additional Purple Leash grants totaling over \$345,000 have been awarded by [RedRover](#) to help domestic violence shelters and service providers to assist survivors with pets. The grants, supported by Purina, will help:

- **Women and Children First**, in Pulaski County, Ark. (\$60,000), to build a Safe Paws kennel and secure outdoor play area.
- **International Women's House**, in DeKalb County, Ga. (\$24,200), to build two secure outdoor play areas.
- **Mountain Comprehensive Care Center**, Floyd County, Ky. (\$26,360), to build a secure outdoor pet play area.
- **YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, Ohio** (\$115,000), to renovate shelter rooms, create two pet-relief yards, and other activities.
- **One Safe Place**, Tarrant County, Texas (\$60,000), to build a secure pet relief area and veterinary exam space.
- **New Horizons Crisis Center**, Sevier County, Utah (\$60,000), to create indoor and outdoor sheltering spaces and for pet care items.

"Our work with Purina and the Purple Leash Project has shown what's possible when you remove one of the biggest barriers survivors face – not being able to bring their pets with them," said Katie Campbell, President and CEO of RedRover.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

“Jennifer’s Law”: Animal Abuse is Coercive Control in Connecticut



Jennifer Dulos (left) and Jennifer Magnano

It recently came to our attention that we need to add Connecticut to the list of 19 other states and the District of Columbia where acts of animal abuse intended to intimidate a family member are also defined as acts of domestic violence, coercion or stalking.

In its 2021 legislative session, the Connecticut General Assembly enacted [PA 21-78](#) that established a general definition of domestic violence that includes coercive control as a form of domestic violence. The law was coined “Jennifer’s Law.”

Jennifer’s Law’s definition for “domestic violence” applies to all provisions related to family relations matters and support under Title 46b (Family Law). Coercive control of a family or household member – “a pattern of behavior that in purpose or effect unreasonably interferes with a person’s free will and personal liberty” -- was specifically identified in C.G.A. Sec. 46b-1 as a form of domestic violence.

Under the law, “coercive control” includes “unreasonably committing or threatening to commit cruelty to animals that intimidates the family or household member.”

The measure was named “Jennifer’s Law” in memory of two women, both named Jennifer, who were victims of domestic violence. Jennifer Farber Dulos had been missing since 2019 in the middle of divorce and child custody proceedings which included allegations of abusive behavior by her then-husband, who was subsequently arrested for her murder but died by suicide before a court hearing. Jennifer Magnano was fatally shot in front of her children in 2007 in a murder-suicide by her estranged husband, also in the middle of divorce and child custody disputes. Magnano’s children helped push for passage of the law named after her.

State lawmakers and courts are increasingly coming to recognize the significance of victims’ emotional attachments and caregiving responsibilities to their companion animals being used as a point of attack and vulnerability in domestic violence cases. By weaponizing these human-animal bonds, the animals become collateral damage both during the intimate partner violence and even post-separation.

In response, 20 states have enacted laws (*See the April 2025 LINK-Letter*) that define these acts as not just animal cruelty, but also as domestic violence, coercion, coercive control, or stalking:

Alaska: AS 18.66.990(3). Domestic violence.

Arizona: Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 13-3601. Domestic violence.

Arkansas: ACA § 9-15-403. Spousal abuse and emotional abuse.

Colorado: Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 18-6-800.3(1). Domestic violence and domestic abuse.

Connecticut: C.G.A. Sec. 46b-1. Domestic violence and coercive control.

Delaware: § 1041, Title 10 of the Delaware Code. Abuse.

Indiana: Ind. Code Ann. § 31-9-2-42 and

§ 34-6-2-34.5. Domestic or family violence.

Ind. Code Ann. § 35-46-3-12.5 Domestic violence animal cruelty.

Kentucky: KRS § 403.720. Domestic violence and abuse.
KRS § 456.010. Dating violence and abuse.

Maine: Maine Revised Statutes § Title 17-A, Part 2, Chap. 9, Sec. 201-1. Stalking.

Massachusetts: Mass. Gen. Laws Chapter 209A, Section 1. Abuse and coercive control.

Missouri: V.A.M.S. 565.225 (2.1). Stalking.

Nebraska: Nebraska Revised Statutes § 43-2922. Domestic intimate partner abuse.

Nevada: Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 33.018(1)(e)(7). Domestic violence.

New Hampshire: RSA 173-B:1. Abuse.

New Jersey: Code of Criminal Justice C.2C:25-29. Coercive control.

Oregon: O.R.S. § 163.275. Coercion.

Texas: Texas Penal Code §42.072. Stalking

Utah: Utah Code 77-36-1. Domestic violence.

Utah Code 76-5-106.5. Stalking and emotional distress.

Vermont: 15 V.S.A. § 1101. Abuse and coercive controlling behavior.

Washington: RCW 7.105.010. Coercive control.

District of Columbia: Official Code §16-1001. Intrafamilial offense.

Tennessee’s **Code Ann. § 36-3-601(1)** which defined inflicting or attempting to inflict injury on an animal as “abuse,” was inexplicably deleted in 2023.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Rescue Offers Foster Care for Dogs of Domestic Violence Survivors

When Tim Lydon was working the pet help-line at a western Pennsylvanian animal shelter, a disturbing call came in late on a Friday afternoon. A woman was sleeping in her truck with her two dogs after leaving a violent home. He offered to leave the shelter to meet her, but managers told him he couldn't.

"The only thing I could say to this woman who was obviously in crisis was, 'Call us back Monday,'" he recalled to [Next Pittsburgh](#). "We never heard from her again. I'll never forget that woman's voice, the terror in her voice, and it still haunts me."

It caused Lydon and his wife, Molly, to found [Harmony Dog Rescue](#) (*See the March 2024 LINK-Letter*). Initially, the Lydons' mission was to care for the pets of domestic violence survivors while they found safe new homes. But they soon realized they would have to expand their mission as they started getting calls from people who were unhoused, going to rehab or in the midst of a medical emergency.

"I'll never forget that woman's voice. It still haunts me."
— Tim Lydon

Two years later, the program has moved out of the Lydons' basement to a 3-acre property, they have financially supported 112 dogs with medicine, vet visits, bedding, food and more, and they work with community agencies, 30 to 40 volunteer

foster homes and volunteers who walk the dogs and help socialize them.

Harmony Dog Rescue offers 40 days of emergency foster care which can be extended to 60 or even 90 days. The dogs stay with volunteer fosters in their homes. Fosters end in reunification more than half the time, Lydon said; the others are placed up for adoption.



Molly and Tim Lydon with a foster dog

Paws Across Pittsburgh, Animal Friends and Humane Animal Rescue also provide emergency housing. Lydon noted that they often don't advertise emergency boarding because of the risk of owners abandoning pets. Allegheny County has reported rising cases of people experiencing homelessness and an increase of dog abandonment in area animal shelters.

"The dog stuff's easy, but the human side has been very challenging because my wife and I are not social workers," Lydon said. "It's really hard to love someone who's overdosed on fentanyl for the third time, and it's 11 o'clock at night and I have to drive downtown to get their dog. That has tested my compassion for people. But it's what we signed up for."

"Whenever they eventually get clean ... and they get in a house with their pet, it makes it all worth it for us."

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.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

British Violence Against Women and Girls Plan Includes The Link

On Dec. 18, the British Government's Home Office published its long-awaited **Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy Delivery Plan** which, through the efforts of our UK counterparts, addresses The Link between animal abuse and domestic abuse. The Strategy, which aims to cut domestic abuse in half within 10 years by preventing radicalization of young men, stopping abusers and supporting victims, includes four components focused on improving safety and support for survivors and their animals:

- Funding key research;
- Raising awareness of services that support survivors and their animals;
- Reducing risks to survivors and their animals related to pets' microchips; and
- Promoting training about identifying Non-Accidental Injury.

"We welcome that the strategy's action plan acknowledges the importance of safeguarding both people and their pets, ensuring that survivors can flee abuse without leaving beloved animals behind," said Paula Boyden, Chair of [The Links Group UK](#).

The action plan, [Freedom from Violence and Abuse: A Cross-Government Strategy to Build a Safer Society for Women and Girls](#), presents 241 specific commitments:

- to ensure safe and supporting spaces online (21 commitments), in schools (8), in relationships (3), and in the community (9);
- to identify harm and provide a route to change (13);
- to provide wrap-around family support and break the cycles of intergenerational abuse (8);
- to embed protections for women and children as a priority within police agencies (10);
- to improve inter-professional collaborations that respond to risk (14);
- to develop technology tools normally used for counterterrorism and organized crime to pursue perpetrators (19);
- to manage perpetrators across all criminal justice agencies to stop future harm (27);

- to invest significant funding in victim support services (22);
- to deliver therapeutic support for victims of child sexual abuse (1);
- to improve victims' and survivors' experience of the justice system (26);
- to ensure that domestic abuse victims and survivors have access to safe and stable housing (6); financial independence (8); and access to employment opportunities (3);
- to strengthen multi-agency collaborations that address and prevent violence against women and girls (7);
- to improve public awareness of violence and create lasting change (9);
- to make the healthcare system better to tackle violence against women and girls (14);
- and ensure every corner of public life, workplaces and the armed forces will be safe (31).



FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE AND ABUSE: A CROSS-GOVERNMENT STRATEGY TO BUILD A SAFER SOCIETY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Volume 2

Action Plan

December 2025



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Report Offers Multiple Recommendations to Address The Link in Ontario

A 1,018-page [Study](#) on the Prevention and Response to Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence, commissioned by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in Canada's Standing Committee on Justice Policy, includes numerous recommendations to update provincial legislation and programs to better recognize The Link between animal abuse and intimate partner violence.



Authored by Member of Provincial Parliament Jess Dixon, the report includes a specific 48-page section on "Animal Cruelty and The Link". This section included numerous recommendations, including:

- **Update Police and Animal Welfare Services (AWS) training to support criminal enforcement of animal cruelty and identify associated risk.**
- **Integrate the Violence Link into mandated Children's Aid Society (CAS) training** to ensure training explicitly recognizes animal cruelty as a form of environmental violence and a potential risk factor for child maltreatment, coercive control, or escalating family violence.

- **Amend Ontario's *Keira's Law* provision to include the Violence Link and encourage federal alignment.** This would ensure that federally appointed judges sitting in Ontario receive training that includes the Violence Link and its relationship to coercive control.
- **Establish a dedicated training stream for animal cruelty prosecutions within Crown foundational and continuing education programming.**
- **Assign policy responsibility for animal cruelty to Crown Law Criminal's Domestic Violence team.**
- **Amend Ontario's Family Law Act to allow possession orders for companion animals.**
- **Amend Ontario's Civil Protection Order legislation to include companion animals.**
- **Evaluate the inclusion of animal cruelty in Ontario's risk assessment tools and triage protocols.**
- **Recognize livestock-related coercive control in rural DV screening and triage.**
- **Establish a northern and remote companion animal veterinary access fund.**



Ontario Report Highlights Need for Pets in Protection Orders

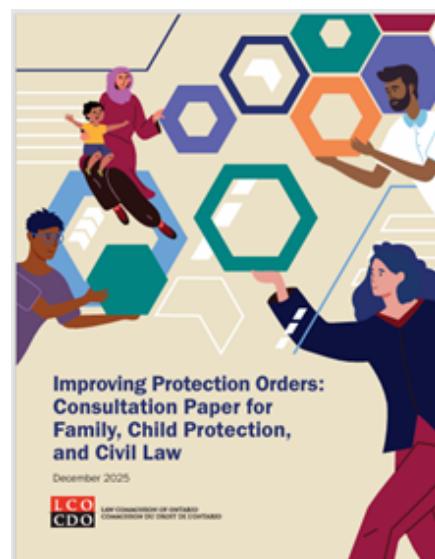
Another high-level report from the Government of Ontario is highlighting the need for protection of pets in a comprehensive review of ways to improve domestic violence protection orders.

The Law Commission of Ontario published in December *Improving Protection Orders: Consultation Paper for Family, Child Protection, and Civil Law*. Within the 109-page report's review of the statutory authority giving Ontario's judges the ability to order broad and creative restraining orders tailored to the safety needs of the individual

being protected, Sec. 6.8 emphasizes that "Violence towards animals is another common harm in intimate partner and family violence cases" and a strategy to manipulate survivors into staying or returning. It cites the province's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee which determined that prior violence against family pets is a risk factor for intimate partner homicides.

The report reviews 42 U.S. states' laws that can include pets, and provisions in Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland & Labrador in which civil protection orders can include pets and where

threats to pets are emotional abuse that can justify the need for a protection order.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Canadian Report Calls for Recognizing Animal Abuse as Coercive Control

A powerful report on the role of coercive control in domestic violence includes two recommendations addressing animal abuse and was presented to Canada's House of Commons by Parliament's Standing Committee on the Status of Women.



MP Marilyn Gladu *Coercive Control in Canada*, a 72-page report by the Committee, acknowledges the deeply harmful effects that coercive control has on women and their families and that addressing the issue will not be accomplished through a single solution. Consequently, the report makes 16 Recommendations and Committee Chair MP Marilyn Gladu on Nov. 25 requested that Parliament consider its findings. The recommendations include:

- “That the Government of Canada recognize animal mistreatment as a form of coercive behavior and train justice personnel as well as law enforcement to assess this during intimate partner violence investigations”; and

- “That the Government of Canada support initiatives with women’s shelters whereby a companion animal can be accommodated, within reason.”

The Committee heard from numerous witnesses regarding how fear for animals’ welfare prevents survivors from escaping domestic abuse. Representatives from Humane Canada told the Committee that “Perpetrators of abuse use animal abuse to coerce, control, and intimidate women, children and elders into staying silent about their abuse, preventing them from leaving, or forcing them to return.”

Witnesses also testified that in order for legislation criminalizing coercive control to be effective, supports and services need to be provided to victims and survivors. This should include dignified emergency, transition and affordable housing options for victims and survivors and their children and that these facilities accommodate pets.



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 COURTS... and THE LINK

Study Reviews Impact of Desmond's Army Animal Law Advocates

When Connecticut's groundbreaking Desmond's Law was enacted in 2016 (*See the June 2016 LINK-Letter*), in memory of a canine victim of domestic violence who was starved and strangled when his pregnant owner left, it was hailed as the nation's first program to provide victim services for animals in cruelty cases and give them a voice in court. The case led to the formation of [Desmond's Army Animal Law Advocates](#) which has just published a new study analyzing all animal cruelty cases in Connecticut and the impact of animal attorney advocates since the law was passed.

Among its findings, the analysis of 533 animal cruelty cases from October 2016 to June 2025 reported:

LINKS TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

- **16.3% of animal cruelty cases also involved domestic violence**
- **38.9% of felony cases involved domestic violence**
- **79.8% of violent animal cruelty crimes involved domestic violence**
- **In cases that also involved domestic violence, 58.9% of animal cruelty cases were charged as misdemeanors; 38.9% were charged as felonies**

LINKS TO PRIOR CRIMINAL RECORDS

- **32.1% of individuals charged with animal cruelty had a prior criminal record**
- **52.3% of those charged with felonies had a prior criminal record**
- **24.8% of those charged with neglect had a prior criminal record**
- **39.5% of those charged with animal abandonment had a prior criminal record**
- **13.8% of those charged with animal hoarding had a prior criminal record**

IMPACT OF ANIMAL ATTORNEY ADVOCATES

- **63% of felony cases with an assigned attorney advocate resulted in a jail sentence**
- **25% of felony cases without an assigned attorney advocate resulted in a jail sentence**

The study's authors argue that by prosecuting animal crimes communities are safer, the cycle of violence is stopped, and animal cruelty does not become a gateway crime to human violence. "Animal cruelty does



not occur in a vacuum," they conclude. "There is always a human connection that must be considered and should be addressed when consequences are imposed for abusers."

The report follows an earlier study (*See the September 2023 LINK-Letter*) that found that pandemic-interrupted court operations made it difficult to fully assess the impact of Desmond's Law, but preliminary data suggested that the law was being used and may be impactful. At that time, researchers found no association between the use of advocates and convictions, but that the presence of advocates increased the likelihood of defendants receiving probation, and that courts were using advocates at an increasing rate. The presence of advocates was also seen as leading to greater likelihood of courts imposing financial restitution and no-contact orders upon offenders.

That study concluded that "An advocate's presence can sensitize courts to the needs, interests and experiences of animal victims, including their right to be free from harm and their right to be considered crime victims."

The original case involved an abuser who went "judge shopping" by strategically waiting for a sympathetic judge. He was awarded accelerated rehabilitation that would expunge his record after two years of compliance and receive no jail time. The verdict outraged the community and the resulting law allows courts to now appoint volunteer attorneys or supervised law students to review documentation, obtain records, visit victims, collaborate with stakeholders, present facts, and ensure that the court considers the animal's interests.

-- Cannamela, R.Z., Glass, J., & Dorian, O. (2025, November). *Desmond's Army Animal Law Advocates, the Passage of Desmond's Law in Connecticut and Analysis of Animal Cruelty Cases and Attorney Advocate Appointments from 2016-2025*. Winsted, Conn.: Desmond's Army Animal Law Advocates.

CYBERCRIMES...and THE LINK

Animal Cruelty, Torture Linked with “Dark Web” Violence Networks

Our counterparts at Humane Canada, home of Canada’s Violence Link Coalition and the National Centre for the Prosecution of Animal Cruelty, shared the following with us in their November [NCPAC Newsletter](#). We thought we’d bring this information to you as it opens up a whole new cyber-dimension of animal cruelty Linked to crimes against humans:

Humane Canada hosted a presentation provided by the RCMP’s Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team who have been collecting research on violent online groups and networks that have proliferated on the Internet. They identified four main ideological categories that motivate entities in this threat landscape:

- anti-government/authority;
- xenophobic, motivated by racial or ethnic grievances;
- gender or identity-driven, focused on gender identity or orientation;
- other grievance-driven and ideologically motivated criminality (e.g. anti-abortion).

Animal torture material is often observed within occult accelerationist networks and nihilistic violent networks, which fall within the xenophobic category.

Within occult accelerationist and nihilistic violent networks, individuals and groups often promote animal torture and share animal torture content to desensitize themselves to sadism and violence, and to radicalize others to accept their moral nihilistic worldview.

Threat actors in these spaces create and glorify chaos, indiscriminate violence and destruction because of their hatred for humanity

and modern society. Members of these groups valorize school shooters, serial killers, terrorist attackers, and animal or child sexual predators.

The most well-known group is “764”, located on Discord and Telegram, where threat actors systematically seek out vulnerable young people to exploit them after grooming them to build trust and connection. Offenders leverage personal information and content collected from victims to extort them into committing and sharing content with acts of violence such as animal torture, child sexual abuse and self-harm, which is then used to further extort them into producing more extreme content.

Since most members in this network are likely minors, pedophiles have become drawn to the network because of the child sexual exploitation material. These groups are also popular with other paraphilics, some of whom create professional gore content like animal crush videos for sale on Telegram. Some groups splice together other extreme, graphic footage into edited gore montages that often contain animal torture content.

Content depicting animal torture, child sexual abuse, and human gore is shared as a recruitment tool as well as for vetting new members to ensure they are not undercover law enforcement.



Groups in the network require individuals to commit acts of criminality as conditions of gaining membership, which often include animal torture, extortion, or acts of violence.

CANADIAN EXAMPLES OF YOUTHS DRAWN IN TO ONLINE OCCULT ACCELERATIONIST AND NIHILISTIC VIOLENCE NETWORKS:

The impacts of the 764 network are making themselves known in mainstream media. In October, [Halifax Regional Police](#) arrested and charged a local youth with several counts of child pornography after an investigation revealed that they were an active participant in 764.

In May, a [15-year-old](#) in Alberta was arrested by the RCMP Federal Policing Northwest Region’s National Security Enforcement Team (INSET) in connection with terrorism-related offences related to the COM/764 violent online network.

In February 2024, a [youth in Lethbridge](#), Alberta was also charged with child sexual abuse material and other offences linked to their participation in the 764 network.

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

Veterinary Reporting Could Improve Animal Welfare in the United States, South Korea and Canada

The first [study](#) to compare mandates for veterinary reporting of suspected animal abuse among Western and Eastern nations is reporting that adopting a gradual mandatory reporting system in South Korea — supported by legal safeguards, professional training, and public education, similar to the processes initiated in the U.S. and Canada — could improve animal protection.

Gina S. Rhee, at the Catholic University of Korea, and Rahyeon Ahn, at the Ontario Veterinary College in Canada, emphasize that “veterinarians play an essential role in identifying and reporting animal abuse.”

“Veterinarians play an essential role in identifying and reporting animal abuse.”

— Gina S. Rhee & Rahyeon Ahn

in lower reporting rates due to social pressures, limited legal protection, and cultural barriers,” they write.

CHALLENGES TO REPORTING IDENTIFIED

South Korea’s animal protection legal framework relies on a voluntary reporting system established under the Animal Protection Act. With recent rapid growth in pet ownership in South Korea, new legislative developments have strengthened penalties for animal abuse while maintaining the voluntary nature of veterinary reporting, reflecting ongoing tensions between conventional cultural values and evolving animal welfare consciousness. These tensions include:

- 86.5% of surveyed South Korean veterinarians had encountered suspected cases of animal abuse in their practice, representing one of the highest witness rates documented worldwide. However, only 48.6% of these veterinarians expressed willingness to report such cases to authorities.



Gina S. Rhee (left) and Rahyeon Ahn

- The notion of “face” in Confucian societies generates social pressure that discourages reporting misconduct; fears of social conflict and damaging relationships frequently override professional duties in East Asian settings. “Korean veterinarians navigating complex social dynamics that prioritize relationship harmony and face-saving behaviors frequently conflict with formal reporting obligations,” they note.
- Systemic issues in Korea’s animal welfare policies — including “emergency unawareness” — affects veterinary practitioners, resulting in weak infrastructure for protecting animals.

They find stark contrasts between voluntary and mandatory systems. “Jurisdictions with mandatory reporting requirements consistently exhibit higher compliance rates, better integration with animal welfare agencies, and more systematic approaches to abuse prevention and investigation,” they write. However, “Mandatory systems also experience implementation challenges, including professional resistance, resource requirements for enforcement, and potential conflicts between legal obligations and professional judgment in complex situations. To achieve optimal outcomes, successful mandatory systems require comprehensive legal protections, professional education programs, and institutional support.”

South Korea’s voluntary framework causes significant underreporting. Canada’s provincial mandatory frameworks exhibit significantly higher levels of compliance, as a result of the strength of their statutory enforcement mechanisms.

(Continued on Page 12)

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

Veterinary Reporting of Animal Abuse in Three Countries

(Continued from Page 11)

A CRITICAL “EVIDENCE GAP”

They acknowledge “A critical evidence gap exists regarding the direct causal relationship between increased reporting rates and measurable improvements in animal welfare outcomes. Empirical evidence directly linking these increased reports to reduced recidivism, improved animal welfare conditions, or long-term protective outcomes remains sparse.”

They recognize that reporting is only the first step in the chain of intervention, prosecution and remediation; animal welfare outcomes are also highly dependent

on enforcement capacity and judicial responses, and longitudinal studies detailing rates of recidivism are “methodologically challenging and largely absent from the literature.”

Benchmarking against Canadian and American models demonstrates that mandatory reporting with appropriate enforcement mechanisms shows potential to enhance

animal welfare protection through increased reporting rates and systematic intervention pathways, though direct causal evidence linking reporting to measurable welfare outcomes remains limited. They note some research suggesting that the implementation of veterinary reporting may create barriers to veterinary access among owners fearing legal repercussions.

RECOMMENDATIONS OFFERED

They offer recommendations, including:

- A two-tier reporting framework differentiating immediate reporting for animal fighting cases and broader abuse reporting obligations for less serious offenses.
- Similar to the U.S. and Canada, laws should include clear legal safeguards that protect veteri-

narians who report from digital reputation threats, administrative penalties and conventional litigation risks.

- The Korean Veterinary Medical Association should be granted comprehensive disciplinary powers, including the authority to impose license suspensions, mandate additional training, and ultimately revoke professional licenses for veterinarians who repeatedly fail to report cases of severe animal abuse.
- Community education programs should underscore connections between animal welfare and broader societal values, highlighting veterinarians’ roles as protectors while respecting traditional values of social harmony.
- Financial incentives should support veterinarians reporting suspected abuse, including fee reimbursement for court testimony, practice insurance premium reductions, and continuing education credits.

They cite Link theory, extensively documented in criminological and veterinary literature, establishing compelling associations between animal abuse and interpersonal violence, suggesting that veterinarians’ role in identifying and reporting abuse extends beyond animal welfare to encompass broader public safety concerns.

“Animal abuse reporting represents a crucial ethical responsibility for veterinarians globally,” they conclude.

- Rhee, G.S., & Ahn, R. (2025). Animal abuse reporting and the ethical role of veterinarians: A comparative review of practices in South Korea, Canada, and the United States. *Animals*, 15(23), 3408.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/ani15233408>



VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

Why Are Veterinarians Reluctant to Report Suspected Abuse?

With animal cruelty and domestic violence so often intertwined, this reporting gap raises urgent questions about protection and prevention.”

“There’s a high likelihood that there’s domestic violence swirling around any vet office.”

— Phil Arkow

that “veterinarians are in a critical but complicated position” due to unclear laws, safety concerns and financial pressures, Stephanie Thurrott argues that “Closing reporting gaps could save lives.”

WHY VETERINARIANS ARE RELUCTANT

- Animal abuse isn’t always considered important by government officials.
- A fear that nothing will be done once a report is made.
- They’re not sure that what they’re seeing is abuse.
- They don’t know how to report.
- They fear economic damage, physical retaliation, making matters worse for the animal or the family, negative reviews on social media, or possible legal action. “The veterinarian may prefer to err on the side of silence rather than risk bad things happening,” Landis-Hanna says.

HOW TO OVERCOME THESE OBJECTIONS

- The Veterinary Oath “requires us ethically and morally to protect animals, be a trusted advisor and be an advocate for animals. So there is a re-

sponsibility ... that if there is suspicion of animal abuse, whether it’s direct or indirect, to report it,” says Landis-Hanna.

- Animal abuse is often Linked with physical and emotional domestic abuse. Veterinarians who recognize and report animal abuse can play a crucial role in preventing domestic violence before it escalates. Because the majority of veterinarians, technicians and clients are women, “There’s a high likelihood that there’s domestic violence swirling around any vet office,” says Arkow.
- Laws mandating or permitting veterinarians to report their suspicions, particularly in states where such reports can be made without fear of civil or criminal liability, removes a roadblock.
- Admittedly, community responses to reports vary and further investigations may be limited. But, “The veterinarian is the animal’s first line of defense. You have to make a report and hope the system works,” Arkow says.
- “The veterinarian may fear reporting potential abuse when it’s actually physical disease,” Landis-Hanna says. But veterinarians do not have to know that it is abuse — they just have to report their suspicions when something doesn’t match up.
- The National Link Coalition’s [National Directory of Abuse Investigation Agencies](#) offers a quick list of who to call in 6,500 communities.
- There’s little evidence that physicians have faced retaliation or legal action for good-faith reports of suspected child or elder abuse. If veterinarians don’t intervene, “We know more bad things are going to happen,” Arkow says.

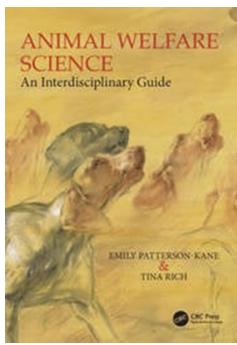
“The veterinarian may prefer to err on the side of silence rather than risk bad things happening.”

— Amanda Landis-Hanna

THE LINK in THE LITERATURE

Link Aspects Considered within Animal Welfare Science

A new textbook is offering a framework for the practice of animal welfare, suggesting that animal welfare science could be considered a discipline in and of itself traversing multiple areas of human-animal interaction. *Animal Welfare Science: An Interdisciplinary Guide* argues that animal welfare scientists have varied backgrounds, ranging from a veterinarian sitting on an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee to an investigator of an animal hoarding case.



Written by Emily Patterson-Kane, Director of Research at the ASPCA and who has served with the National Link Coalition, and Tina Rich, a generalist scientist, the book distills and interprets core concepts and language of animal welfare science with practicalities, theories, history, stories, and difficulties of dealing with people and animals.

By fostering a “big tent” ethos, animal welfare can become a recognized science in and of itself and foster a shared understanding of what animal welfare is, how it might be protected, and how clarity and a shared mission can transform research into tangible improvements for animals.

The book delves into areas where people and animals impact each other in such realms as human health, humane education, breed-specific legislation, the role of domesticated animals as a general class and therapeutically, veterinary clinical studies, biophilia, zoobiquity, and hoarding.

Chapter 17 on “norms” touches on The Link among the less dramatic but still revolutionary changes in social movements, social engineering, and developments in science and technology. They describe recent sensitivity to the links between animal and human violence among other forces, including persistent patterns of violence for marginalized groups who cope with inter-generational poverty and prejudice.

- Patterson-Kane, E., & Rich, T. (2026). *Animal Welfare Science: An Interdisciplinary Guide*. CRC Press.

British Domestic/Animal Abuse Survivors Asked to Participate in Research Study

A British researcher is inviting individuals whose lives were affected by fatal animal abuse and domestic violence to participate in a study about the use and abuse of animals in domestic abuse-related deaths. Mary Wakeham says this includes homicide, suicide and unexplained deaths.



Mary Wakeham

The survey is getting responses from: people who were at risk from the perpetrator; family, friends and witnesses who were impacted by domestic abuse-related death; and professionals working in the human and/or animal health and welfare sectors.

Participants must be aged 18 or older and currently living in the UK. Individuals reluctant to provide information online are invited to contact Wakeham for a personal interview.

The overall aim of the research is to reduce harm to people and animals, and domestic abuse-related deaths where there are animals involved. It has been funded by the UK Government as part of its commitment to reducing violence against women and children. The study will make legislative, policy, and practice recommendations which inform the implementation of an effective integrated approach to safeguarding people and animals victimized by perpetrators of domestic abuse.

To participate, [click on this link](#).



THE LINK in the Literature

2nd Brazilian Study Explores “Link Theory”

Another article exploring what veterinary researchers at Brazil's Universidade São Judas Tadeu call “Teoria do elo” (Link Theory) (*See the July 2025 LINK-Letter*) reviews 15 years of research and presents the current state of knowledge regarding the relationship between mistreatment of animals and interpersonal violence.

The authors present studies that identify profiles of aggressors against vulnerable beings and describe how the correlation be-

tween animal abuse and public health has led to the undertaking of various studies on criminal and domestic violence.

They note that the most recent studies demonstrate that there are still significant gaps in the care of animal victims of aggression. These include the training of veterinarians, the lack of a standard for diagnoses that suggest mistreatment, and the lack of harmony between the areas of health, public security and professionals.

- Neto, O.P.R., Rocha, A., Alkimim, A.L.D., Vinho, G., & Alkimim, I.L.D., et al. (2025). *Teoria do elo – uma breve revisão literária dos maus-tratos aos animais e o ser humano* [The link theory – a brief literary review of the mistreatment of animals and humans]. [In Portuguese]. *Brazilian Journal of Animal and Environmental Research*, 8(3), 1-15. DOI: 10.34188/bjaerv8n3-061



Stray Dogs Can Trigger Link Cruelty Concerns in Developing Nations

A study recently came to our attention that cited Link research in emphasizing that in developing nations such as Nigeria, cruelty to animals by dog owners can lead to more stray dogs, a major concern in the epidemiology of rabies. “Animal welfare studies should be taken seriously, given that cruelty to animals is a form of violence and its studies will help give insight into other social vices,” the authors concluded.

Interest in The Link between animal abuse and human violence is nascent in Africa, so it is encouraging to see this study from Africa’s most populous nation. The authors are veterinarians who examined a two-year-old mongrel dog who had strayed from its house in search of food and returned five days later with injuries suggestive of having been burned with a corrosive or hot liquid. The dog fully recovered after four weeks.

They noted that in developing countries such as Nigeria, many people keep dogs for pets, security or hunting without adequate care, leading to high incidence of straying, scavenging for food and being abused by neighbors. This, in turn, can be a harbinger of issues affecting public health and safety, including violence against other people, property crimes and drug or disorderly conduct and offenses, they wrote.

“Studies have suggested that persons who are cruel to animals are linked to one form of violence or the other. Adequate legislation, education and psychological counseling of people involved in acts of cruelty to animals are some of the approaches to curb violence to animals,” they explained.

“It is important that the general public should take the issue of cruelty to animals very seriously because cruelty to animals is

linked to cruelty to humanity. In combating animal cruelty effectively, the government, individuals and non-governmental organizations (NGO) should be actively involved in education and sensitization of the general public. The government creates and implements the law, the individuals ensure reporting of cases of animal cruelty, while the NGOs will carry out campaigns on animal welfare.”

- Bosha, J.A., Tion, M.T., & Agbo, J.O. (2018). A case of cruelty in dog and its management. *GSC Biological and Pharmaceutical Sciences*, 3(3), 6-9. <https://doi.org/10.30574/gscbps.2018.3.3.0034>



News from LINK Coalitions: 2025 in Review: Ongoing Progress

What Your Gifts Made Possible in 2025 –

A Safer World for Vulnerable People and Animals

In this issue – as in all issues of our free monthly *LINK-Letter* -- you can read how the National Link Coalition and our partners are conducting training, publishing research, developing programs, creating collaborations, and disseminating information on a global scale to better prevent and respond to acts of violence against vulnerable people and animals. This is real progress – and it's all made possible with generous support from our followers.

In 2025, here's what we were able to accomplish; with your ongoing support we can do even more in 2026!

THE LINK-LETTER

We initiated over **500** new contacts in 2025 – a 9% increase over 2024!



We published **349** articles addressing The Link. As our work in the U.S. continues to inspire advocates around the world, it is intriguing that **93 (26.6%)** of these articles described research and programs emanating from other countries.

Our issues covered major Link developments in 2025 that included:

- A national outcry **saved federal funding** to help domestic violence shelters build pet co-housing facilities.
- The **American Bar Association adopted a Resolution** urging all governments to enact laws that protect people by also protecting their pets.
- The American Veterinary Medical Association published **three templates to help practitioners** respond to suspected animal abuse.
- The International Association of Veterinary Social Workers published **Guidelines** to protect people and animals.
- The National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges developed **Link bench tools** for family law courts in five states, and for judges working with military-connected families.
- The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association updated its **Position Statement** on Addressing Animal Abuse and Neglect.
- The nation's domestic violence shelters that are receiving **federal funding to become pet-inclusive** held their first convening.
- The Department of Homeland Security is exploring **animal abuse as risk factor for targeted violence**.
- Two pioneering Link **textbooks were made open-access**.

COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS

"Think globally... and act locally." The National Link Coalition is constantly showcasing great innovative collaborations and programs on the local level that continue to inspire us and advance progress in interspecies violence prevention. In 2025 we spotlighted many exciting programs, including:



- The prosecutor in DuPage County, Ill., created a Link-based **Animal Protection Unit**.
- The Staten Island, N.Y. district attorney published a **Protect Our Pets calendar** featuring Link resources.
- A Minnesota domestic violence shelter used pooper-scoopers to break ground for a **pet refuge**.
- **Pet-friendly domestic violence shelters** opened in Cincinnati, Ohio and Bedford County, Va.
- A **pet-friendly homeless shelter** is planned for Columbia, Mo.
- A Maine shelter is preparing to provide **housing for the horses of domestic violence survivors**.
- A Kansas YWCA listed threats to pets as a **"red flag" for domestic violence**.
- A **training program for attorneys** in Tulsa, Okla. addressed The Link in animal cruelty and domestic violence cases.
- RedRover awarded **\$500,000 for pet care** at 12 domestic violence and homeless shelters.
- The Milwaukee Police Department's **animal cruelty incident report** includes questions about potential child abuse.
- The Animal Care & Control agency in Fort Wayne, Ind. now **publicizes animal cruelty cases** to raise awareness of The Link.

2025 in Review: A Year of Ongoing Link Progress

BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

The Link -- by definition -- is multidisciplinary. It takes teams of professionals working together to make lasting change to prevent, prosecute and punish offenders of animal cruelty, intimate partner violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse. The National Link Coalition is working with many of these groups on the state, national and international levels. 2025 saw much progress including:



- We conducted a **national survey of physicians** and other medical providers to identify their knowledge of recognizing and reporting animal, child and elder abuse.
- We are helping to develop a **Toolkit** to help members of the [Family Justice Center Alliance](#) become pet-inclusive.
- We conducted **podcasts** for the [SAFeTy Chronicles](#) and [Steve Dale's Pet World](#).
- We wrote an article on foster care for pets of military domestic violence survivors for [Dogs On Deployment](#).
- We are working on a unique collaborative, "**DV and the DVM**", to identify veterinary interest, concerns, and ability to respond to suspected cases of domestic violence.
- We are establishing connections with the [National Alliance for Drug-Endangered Children](#) and the [Uniform Law Commission](#).
- We expanded our ongoing collaborations with the [Animal Welfare Institute](#), the [National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges](#), the [American Veterinary One Health Society](#), [RedRover](#), the [Animal Legal Defense Fund](#), the [American Veterinary Medical Association](#), the [National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life](#), the [National Adult Protective Services Association](#), the [ASPCA](#), the [Small & Rural Law Enforcement Executives Association](#), and the [International Association of Veterinary Social Workers](#), among many others.
- The [American Veterinary Medical Association](#) and the [American Bar Association](#) collaborated to offer guidance on identifying domestic violence and animal abuse.
- Prosecutors in 13 counties collaborated to create a multidisciplinary North Florida **Animal Cruelty Task Force**.
- The [Animal Welfare Institute](#) expanded its pets co-sheltering initiative to include **shelters for the homeless** – many of whom are survivors of domestic violence.

LINK LEGISLATION

2025 saw **142** Link-themed bills introduced in **32** state legislatures, Congress and Canada's Parliament. We are encouraged that, as of this writing, **12** measures have been signed into law. Among our successes:



- **Georgia** became the 42nd state to include pets in domestic violence protection orders.
- **Florida** enacted "Dexter's Law," with tougher penalties for aggravated animal cruelty, based on the premise that "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."
- **California** added threats to animals to its definition of stalking and simplified procedures to include pets in domestic violence and elder abuse protection orders
- **South Carolina** created a sex offender registry that includes acts of animal sexual abuse.
- **Tennessee** expanded its definition of racketeering to include engaging others in animal fighting.
- **Idaho** included bestiality among two new crimes of Aggravated Lewd Conduct with a Minor Child.
- **Louisiana** included veterinarians among other health care professionals protected from assault and battery.
- **New Hampshire** expanded its definition of coercive-control animal abuse as acts of domestic violence to include military-connected families.
- **New Mexico** added dog- and cock-fighting to the crimes of racketeering.

In addition, we supported proposals to:

- Ban bestiality in **West Virginia** – the only state where sex with animals is still legal.
- Expand bestiality prohibitions and allow courts to issue Extreme Risk Protection Orders in **Pennsylvania**.
- Define coercive animal abuse as domestic violence, and require animal control officers to cross-report, in **Kentucky**.
- Allow courts to award custody of pets in **Massachusetts** and **Rhode Island** divorce cases;
- Create interagency cross-reporting in **Missouri** and **Colorado**; and
- Clarify jurisdictional conflicts in enforcing animal cruelty laws in federally-inspected slaughterhouses.

2025 in Review: A Year of Ongoing Link Progress

EXPANDING OUR GLOBAL REACH

As Link work conducted in the U.S. has continued to inspire people and organizations around the world, a major focus for us in 2025 was to tap into this growing global awareness and help nurture it – particularly in countries we're calling "Link deserts" where one or two lonely individuals are trying to raise awareness in their countries that the abuse of animals and humans are often inextricably Linked. The results of this globalization campaign are bearing fruit:



27.9 % of references in our bibliography originate in foreign countries.

26.6% of articles in 2025 issues of The LINK-Letter described exciting news and research in such "Link desert" countries as Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Romania, Ecuador, and South Korea.

We presented a seminar to **Mexico**'s Asociación Hidalguense para la Protección de los Animales.

We helped update the **International** Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations' position statement on animal abuse and domestic violence.

We liaised with leaders trying to establish Link coalitions in **Portugal** and **Romania**.

We assisted researchers with Link information for their work in **Mexico, Romania, New Zealand, India, Australia, Canada, South Africa, Nepal, and the United Kingdom**.

We met with animal welfare advocates in **Taiwan** and **Indonesia** regarding children's exposure to acts of animal cruelty depicted online.

Pilot programs will introduce Veterinary Social Work to **Australia** and the **United Kingdom**.

100% of police departments in the **United Kingdom** now include Link information and resources on their websites.

The **Links Group UK** launched an online training course to help recognize and respond to The Link, and initiated a training program for veterinarians in Jersey.

Police officers in **India** are receiving training on The Link.

Prosecutors, veterinarians and criminologists are raising awareness of The Link in **Portugal, The Netherlands, and Turkey**.

France convened its first conference on animal abuse for veterinarians.

Ireland launched its first pet safekeeping program for domestic violence survivors.

The **Australian** Parliament added welfare of companion animals to what courts must consider in divorce case dispositions.

Animal abuse is now defined as family violence or coercive control in the Australian state of **Tasmania**.

The Australian State of **New South Wales** affirmed a resolution that animals are also victims of domestic and family violence.

An anti-cruelty bill in **The Philippines** triggered national news media interest in The Link.

GLOBAL LINK RESEARCH

A notable highlight in 2025 was a remarkable increase in Link-based academic research from other countries, including:

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

- 14 articles promoted pet- and Link-inclusive social work.

AUSTRALIA

- Gaps were described in child and animal abuse reporting systems.
- Self-neglect and animal hoarding were identified as risk factors for elders.

BELGIUM

- A Link training module was developed for veterinary students.

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

- Animal cruelty was found to have social implications, resulting in a need for more criminological research.

BRAZIL

- A tool was developed for veterinarians to identify animal cruelty in homes with domestic violence.
- Link Theory was called part of One Health.
- Animal abuse was correlated with domestic violence.
- Cockfighting was Linked with domestic violence and child abuse.

CANADA

- A study identified family law's responses and barriers to The Link.
- Veterinarians were urged to report suspected abuse.
- The concerns of staff in pet-friendly domestic violence shelters were identified.
- Animal abuse questions were recommended to be included in child abuse forensic interviews.
- Pets' custody in divorces is being reimagined.
- Canine-assisted interventions were found to have mixed results.

2025 in Review: A Year of Ongoing Link Progress

CZECH REPUBLIC

- Benefits were found for allowing pets in shelters for the homeless.

ECUADOR

- Domestic violence was Linked with animal cruelty.
- Animal/domestic abuse was called part of *machista* culture.

FRANCE

- The criminological roots of animal cruelty were explored.

HUNGARY

- A “deadly Link” was identified between animal cruelty and other violent crimes.
- The public was found to need more information about animal sexual abuse.

INDIA

- A change in the national legal code inadvertently legalized bestiality.

INDONESIA

- A literature review explored childhood acts of animal cruelty.

ITALY

- The importance of veterinary forensics was described.
- A protocol was suggested to support multidisciplinary responses to animal hoarding.

JAPAN

- Veterinarians reported that they need more training on The Link and veterinary forensics.
- Pets are often also killed in murder-suicide cases.

KAZAKHSTAN

- Animal abuse was Linked to domestic violence prevention.

PORUGAL

- A study of children and mothers in domestic violence shelter reported animal-assisted interventions are beneficial.

SERBIA

- Veterinarians were given guidance on how to respond to animal abuse.
- The criminological evolution of The Link was described.
- A veterinary forensics study called for greater response to non-accidental injury.



SOUTH KOREA

- A women’s studies journal proposed four recommendations to protect human and animal survivors.

SPAIN

- The Link was cited in calling for more training in veterinary forensics.
- The perceptions of Canary Islands veterinary students about animal abuse were explored.

SWEDEN

- Veterinarians reported need more training on The Link and veterinary forensics.
- A dissertation explored the impacts of pets on children in domestic violence shelters.

SWITZERLAND

- Animals were said to be defined as “more than property” based on their inherent “dignity”.

TURKEY

- Veterinary forensics and Link awareness are needed to better protect animals.
- Link issues were found to be part of veterinary pathology cases.

UNITED KINGDOM

- Humane education was seen as a way to break the chain of childhood acts of animal cruelty.
- The Link was called a factor that is changing the nature of dog welfare laws.
- The effectiveness of interventions for childhood animal abusers in Scotland was explored.
- Patriarchal oppression was identified in the animal abuse/domestic violence Link.
- Bestiality was found to be extremely common in extreme pornography cases.

Links to these and over 2,400 scholarly articles can be found in our online Bibliography at <https://nationallinkcoalition.org/resources/bibliographies>

2025 in Review: A Year of Ongoing Link Progress

ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Our bibliography of Link research now contains **2,535** references, a **6% increase** over 2024.

In addition in 2025 we:

- Wrote articles for the *Juvenile & Family Court Journal*, *Sheriff & Deputy* magazine, *Annals of Pediatrics and Child Health*, the *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work Journal*, and the *South Asia Social Science Journal*, and book chapters in *Forensic Interviewing: A Canadian Critical and Practical Perspective* and the *Handbook on Animal Assisted Therapy*, 6th ed.
- Reviewed manuscripts of academic journal articles slated for publication in the *Canadian Veterinary Journal*, *Violence Against Women*, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *Veterinary World*, *Veterinary Sciences, Social Sciences, Behavioural Sciences*, *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, and *Human-Animal Interactions*, among others.
- Co-taught the Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Violence course in the University of Florida's veterinary forensics curriculum

In addition to the foreign research, new American academic studies published or reported in 2025 included:

- Identifying Link issues and barriers to reporting animal abuse in rural areas of Pennsylvania.
- Identifying systemic barriers to managing animal cruelty cases in Colorado.
- Examining the unique partnership between the NYPD and the ASPCA in New York City.
- Calling veterinarians the “first line of defense” in breaking the cycle of violence in California.
- Offering ideas to attorneys to help domestic violence survivors who fear leaving their pets behind with their abusers.
- Surveying issues affecting Veterinary Social Workers in animal shelters.
- Encouraging all social workers to also focus on the non-human members of families.
- Surveying the impact of therapy dogs on domestic violence victims.
- Recognizing the need for veterinarians to receive more training on The Link, veterinary forensics, and Veterinary Social Work.
- Documenting the impact of animal-assisted interventions for youth offenders.

- Studying how prison dog programs build offenders' sense of empathy.

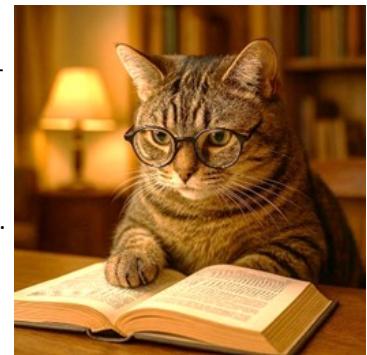
- Promoting how the “pet effect” can be leveraged to affect public policy.

- Exploring juvenile sex offenders' likelihood of also harming animals.

- Identifying Link issues faced by judges working with military-connected families.

- Encouraging Veterinary Social Workers to address domestic violence and homelessness as part of One Health community medicine.

- Recommending new rules of evidence for defendants with histories of animal cruelty.



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.

EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Thanks to a generous grant, we greatly expanded our in-person training opportunities in 2025. Our personnel, members, allies and advocates conducted more than **128** in-person and virtual trainings to multidisciplinary audiences including:



Academy on Violence and Abuse ACES
Champions Health Gathering, Jacksonville

Academy on Violence and Abuse Global
Health Summit, Salt Lake City

American Bar Association & American Veterinary Medical Association, Washington

American Veterinary Medical Association annual convention, Washington

American Veterinary One Health Society, Washington

Animal Literacy Research Institute, Tokyo, Japan (3 trainings)

Animal Welfare Association of Colorado Animal Welfare Conference, Lakewood

Asociación Hidalguense para la Protección de los Animales, Hidalgo, Mexico

Association of Professionals Solving the Abuse of Children, New Orleans

Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, Washington (5)

Atlantic Health System Soothing Paws Conference, Morristown, N.J.

Besty BnB, Kansas City (8)

British Association of Social Workers, London

British Veterinary Receptionist Association's 2025 Congress, Warwickshire

Canadian Animal Law & Advocacy Conference, Toronto

City of West Des Moines, Iowa

Conference on Crimes Against Women, Dallas

Connecticut Children's Alliance Response to Recovery Conference, Hartford

Connecticut DCF & Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Hartford

Crimes Against Children Conference, Dallas

Dallas-area Philanthropic Funders Group, Dallas, Texas

Delaware Animal Welfare & Family Law Seminar, Wilmington

Delaware Veterinary Medical Association Spring Conference, Wilmington

Don't Forget the Pets, Sacramento (4)

Downstate Conference on Child Abuse, Fairview Heights, Ill.

Equuvation, Statesville, N. Car.

First Emergency and Transitional Pet Shelter Housing Assistance Grant Program Convening, Las Vegas

Florida Animal Protection & Advocacy Association, Orlando

Humane Canada's Summit for Animals, Montreal

Humane Canada's ACT Project, Ottawa

Humane Canada & World Animal Protection's One Health, One Welfare Conference, Ottawa

Humane Society of the U.S. Expo, Las Vegas

Indiana University School of Social Work Alumni Association

Institute on Violence, Abuse & Trauma International Summit, Honolulu

International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations, Seattle

International Association of Veterinary Social Work (3)

International Family Justice Center Conference, San Diego

International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association conference, Clearwater, Fla.

Justice Clearinghouse, Colorado Springs (5)

Keystone Link Coalition, Pittsburgh (10)

The Links Group UK, United Kingdom (5)

Lucy's Project, New South Wales, Australia

Missouri Alliance for Animals' Safer Together Missouri seminar, St. Louis

My Dog Is My Home, Ridgewood, N.Y. (3)

National Animal Cruelty Prosecution Conference, Pittsburgh

National Association of Veterinary Physiotherapists Annual Conference, Leicestershire, U.K.

National Conference on Domestic Violence, Kansas City

National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges National Conference on Juvenile Justice, Boston

National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges Judicial Institute, Washington

National Organization for Victim Advocacy, Alexandria (4)

New Mexico Positive Links Conference, Albuquerque

New York State Office of Victim Services, Albany

New York State Unified Court System's Permanent Commission on Women in the Courts, New York City

Noah's Animal House, Las Vegas, Nev.

NC State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Raleigh

North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association, Greensboro

Office of Victims of Crimes Training & Technical Assistance Center, Reston, Va.

Ohio Peace Officers' Training Academy (3)

One Safe Place Stop Violence conference, Hurst, Texas

Oregon Animal Control Council, Redmond

Prairie States Animal Welfare Conference, Bloomington, Ill.

Prevent Child Abuse – Illinois, Springfield

RedRover, Sacramento (6)

Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse, United Kingdom (5)

Saskatchewan SPCA, Saskatoon (2)

Society for Companion Animal Studies, London (2)

Tennessee Animal Care & Control Conference, Chattanooga

Texas Adult Protective Services Conference, Austin

Texas Animal Control Association conference, Abilene

Texas Unites for Animals conference, Dallas

University of Connecticut Law School, Hartford

University of Florida Animal Forensic Investigations Conference, Daytona Beach Shores

University of Illinois College of Medicine Medical Evaluation Response Initiative Team, Rockford

William J. Neff Symposium on the Prevention of Crimes Against Older Adults, Newtown, Pa.

Wisconsin Office of Judicial Education Family Law Seminar, Brookfield

News from LINK COALITIONS

Animals & Society Institute Work to be Carried On By Other Groups

Over the past 40 years, we have been fortunate to be able to partner with many collaborative organizations to advance Link research and programs. One such organization – the Animals & Society Institute – has brought its extensive history to a close with the retirement of founder Ken Shapiro. However, Shapiro has informed us that much of ASI's work and legacy will be carried on by other institutions – living proof of the power of collaborations. We salute Shapiro and the ASI team for their extensive work to advance and share knowledge that improves animals and society.

The transition includes:

Society & Animals: Journal of Human-Animal Studies is now managed by the **Sheffield Animal Studies Research Centre** at the University of Sheffield in the UK.

The ***Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*** is now under the management of the **Center for Animals and Public Policy | Cum-**

Mings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University.

The management of ***Sloth: A Journal of Emerging Voices in Human-Animal Studies*** has been taken over by the **Anthrozoology Program at Canisius University**.

The ***Animal History*** journal will be published by the University of California Press and managed through the Department of History at the University of Dayton's Department of History (animalhistory@udayton.edu).

The ***Animals & Society Colloquium Series*** will continue to be co-sponsored by the **Animals & Society Section of the American Sociological Association** now joined by the **Culture & Animals Foundation**.

The ***Defining Human-Animal Studies Video Series*** has been transferred to Carroll College.

The Center for Advanced Study (CAS) at the University of Illinois



Ken Shapiro

Urbana-Champaign, through its **Human-Animal Studies@Illinois Initiative** has produced the **first issue** of the new Human-Animal Studies Report. CAS will continue to host the **Human-Animal Studies Summer Institute**.

The **Human-Animal Studies Facebook group** will continue under the management of ASI's former Human-Animal Studies Program Director, Gala Argent.

ASI's intervention program for animal maltreatment offenders, **BARK: Behavior, Accountability, Responsibility, and Knowledge**, has been transferred to the University of Tennessee's **Center for Veterinary Social Work**. Based on the AniCare Adult intervention, a self-directed version of the program will be launched in 2026.

The North Carolina State University Library will house the digital archival collections of the **Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals** (PsyETA) and the Animals & Society Institute.

The **Brill Human-Animal Studies Book Series** will continue to be edited by Kenneth Shapiro, Thomas Aiello, Ivy Collier, and Gala Argent.



To subscribe to *The LINK-Letter*, just [click here](#).

Please tell us where you're located and if you're with an agency.
THANK YOU!

LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

A key premise underlying The Link is that legislators at all levels are more inclined to support animal welfare bills when they can see that harming animals also harms humans. Once again, this Link approach led to many significant victories in state legislatures across the U.S in 2025. Here are some of the notable successes we saw this past year:

ANIMAL ABUSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

CALIFORNIA

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.

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.

GEORGIA

HB 177 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.

NEBRASKA

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

HB 62 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.

UTAH

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

ANIMAL ABUSE AND OTHER CRIMES

FLORIDA

CS/HB 255, and CS/SB 494 "Dexter's Law", 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 took effect Jan. 1, 2026.

LOUISIANA

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.

NEW MEXICO

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

TENNESSEE

HB 540 and **S 916** expand the definition of "racketeering activity" to include engaging others in the crime of animal fighting.

ANIMAL ABUSE AND SEXUAL ABUSE

IDAHO

HB 380 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.

SOUTH CAROLINA

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

LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

Several state legislatures and Congress are on two-year-long sessions which continue into 2026, while a majority of states are just now beginning to introduce proposed legislation. We're beginning to track these new bills. Meanwhile, look elsewhere in this issue of The LINK-Letter to see the remarkable Link legislative gains we made in 2025!

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

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

SB 468 (pre-filed for 2026) would require veterinarians, technicians and other employees to report suspected animal cruelty with exemption from criminal and civil liability, professional disciplinary action and employer retaliation for making reports in good faith. Medical records could be released without violating confidentiality. Altering medical records would be a misdemeanor; failure to report would subject the veterinarian to disciplinary action.

HB 277 (pre-filed for 2026) would add animal cruelty to the statutory definition of domestic violence and add a respondent's intentional injuring or killing a family pet, service animal or emotional support animal or using the animal as a means of coercive control as grounds for issuing a protection 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.

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

SB 899 would require animal control officers and animal humane investigators to report suspected elder abuse and child abuse. Child and adult protective services workers, psychologists, mental health professionals, social workers, school counselors, educators, and law enforcement, probation and parole officers would be required to report suspected animal abuse to a Missouri Animal Control Association hotline. All reporters would be exempt from civil and criminal liability for good-faith reporting. Reporters would have to complete one hour of training on The Link between animal and human abuse and how to identify and report suspected abuse

NEW HAMPSHIRE

HB 1438 would require mental health caseworkers to report instances of animal abuse by their clients, to law enforcement or the NH SPCA. Reporters would not face monetary liability or cause of action for reports made in good faith.

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 sus-

pected 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 to include acts of cruelty against animals owned or possessed by an adult or emancipated minor.

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 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.

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.

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 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.

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.

CANADA

Bill C-16, the Protecting Victims Act, would criminalize images of animal sexual abuse and the use of animals as tools of coercive control in intimate partner violence.

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

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Orange = Court Animal Advocates

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Light Blue = Link & Other Crimes

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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.

Jan. 14 — Washington, D.C. (online): The American Bar Association's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence will present an [Emerging Issues Webinar](#), "Pets and Domestic Violence."

Jan. 14-15 — 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. 20 — Kansas City, Mo. (online): Zoë Agnew-Svoboda of Besty BnB will present a [webinar](#) on "Pets and People: Safe, Together, Connected."

Jan. 21 -- 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."

Feb. 4 — 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."

Feb. 17 — Dunadry, County Antrim, Northern Ireland, U.K.: Paula Boyden, David Martin, Rebecca Stephens, and Andrea Lynch of The Links Group UK will present a [Links Veterinary Training Initiative](#) in conjunction with the BSAVA.

Feb. 18 — Pennsylvania (online): The [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular bi-monthly meeting.

Feb. 20 — London, U.K. (online): The Links Group UK will present a [webinar](#), "Animal Abuse as a Strategy of Coercive Control: Safeguarding People and Animals."

Feb. 23 — Cincinnati, 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 2 — Honolulu, Hawai'i: Paul Needham will present "Elder Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation and What Can We Do To Help? A Trauma-Informed Approach" at the 23rd annual Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma [International Summit](#).

March 3 — Orlando, Fla.: Phil Arkow will present "Bridging the Animal Rights/Welfare/Control Gap by Focusing on The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence" at the [Florida Animal Protection Conference](#).

March 4 -- Elyria: 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 — 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 — Edinburgh, Scotland: The Links Group UK will conduct its [Links Veterinary Training Initiative](#).

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

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

March 25 -- 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 — 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 — 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.

April 15 — Pennsylvania (online): The [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular bi-monthly meeting.

April 30 — Oakland, Calif.: 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" for the [Association of Professional Humane Educators](#).

May 5 — Las Vegas, Nev.: Phil Arkow will present "Kids, Critters & Drugs: Connecting the Dots between Child, Animal and Drug Abuse" at the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children's [26 National Conference](#).

May 6 — Orlando, Fla.: Jessica Rock and other speakers will present at the International Society for Animal Forensic Sciences' [2026 Animal ForensiCon](#).

May 12-15 — Banff, Alta., Canada: The International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association will hold its [19th Annual Conference](#).

May 18-19 — 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 — Austin, Texas: Phil Arkow will present on The Link at a [conference](#) of central Texas Children's Advocacy Centers.

June 17 — Pennsylvania (online): The [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular bi-monthly meeting.

Aug. 18-20 — Lakewood, Colo.: Phil Arkow will present "Protecting 'Women's Best Friend': Assessing the Impact of Animal-Inclusive Protection Orders" at the [Colorado Animal Welfare Conference](#).

Aug. 19 — Pennsylvania (online): The [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular bi-monthly meeting.

Sept. 1 — 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. 6 — Red Lodge, Mont. (online): Phil Arkow will highlight Link issues in rural areas in a webinar for [Domestic and Sexual Violence Services](#).

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

Oct. 21 — Pennsylvania (online): The [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular bi-monthly meeting.

Nov. 25 — London, U.K.: Phil Arkow will speak at The Links Group UK's [25th Anniversary celebration](#) inaugurating 16 Days of Activism 2026.

Dec. 16 — Pennsylvania (online): The [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular bi-monthly meeting.



THE LINK... in the NEWS (as if we need more proof...)

Couple Facing 64 Counts of Child and Animal Abuse

A couple from Elizabethtown, Pa., is facing a combined total of 64 counts of child abuse, animal cruelty, and other crimes for allegedly abusing their six children for years in a deplorable home before the father kidnapped the children to escape Children & Youth Services taking them into emergency custody.

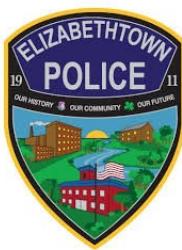
[WHP-TV](#) reported that police said that since 2019 Robert Christensen Jr., 39, and Ashley N. Dishart-Christensen, 35, had repeatedly struck their children, now ranging in ages from 4 to 11, with baseball bats, choked them, and made them stand on their heads or with their noses pressed against the bedroom door as forms of punishment. An 8-year-old said the children had been warned, "CYS is coming after us."

After the father was found 171 miles away with the children, a search warrant of the house revealed what police called deplorable conditions, including extreme clutter and trash, strong smells of urine and feces, and two dogs in cages covered in feces and urine with no access to water. The children were turned over to CYS, the animals to the Pennsylvania SPCA, and the house was condemned as being unfit for human occupancy.

Woman Charged Again with Animal Cruelty

Tabitha Ballew, of Warren, Ohio, who had been charged with domestic violence and convicted in 2019 for animal cruelty and endangering children, is facing new allegations of animal cruelty after a humane agent found a dog allegedly living in unsanitary conditions at her residence.

[WKBN-TV](#) reported that authorities said the dog, a shepherd-mix, was inside a wire crate on urine-soaked blankets with piles of feces and was scratching non-stop with significant hair loss. No food or water was available and a strong odor of ammonia was coming from the crate. Court records revealed that she had been sentenced to five years probation in the 2019 case after a neighbor reported finding two dead dogs and a third near death in her apartment.



Teacher Gets 135-Year Sentence for Child and Animal Pornography

The Christian school teacher who is believed to have used Artificial Intelligence to produce child pornography involving his students and who performed sex acts on the family pet ([See the July 2025 LINK-Letter](#)) received what is believed to be a record sentence of 135 years in prison. Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier announced the sentence against David Robert McKeown, 47, of Holly Hill.



Following a cybertip, **JAMES UTHMEIER** police launched an investigation that revealed that McKeown, a sixth-grade teacher at UBIC Academy, used school wi-fi to send and receive child sexual abuse materials during school hours. They also found videos of him sexually abusing the family pet.

He was charged with 19 counts of possession of child pornography and six counts of sexual conduct with an animal. He is now registered as a sexual offender and will not be allowed to have any animals once his 135-year sentence is complete.

Mother Charged with Child Abuse and Starving 35 Dogs to Death



Nash County, N. Car. Sheriff's deputies arrested Nancy Beth Gupton, of Nashville, on 35 counts of willfully starving her dogs to death and one count of abusing her 10-year-old daughter. [WRAL-TV](#) reported that deputies assisted animal control and found numerous dead animals in pens and skeletal remains from decomposed animals at her home. Officers also found the girl who appeared to be malnourished, had sores on her feet, and was dressed in filthy clothes. Deputies said Gupton had disclosed that the daughter lacked access to education, medical care and dental services. They took her to a hospital and later turned her over to the Department of Social Services. Authorities removed 32 animals, including goats, parakeets and chickens, from the home.



THE LINK... in the NEWS

Cross-Reporting Cases from Ohio

Animal Cruelty Complaint Rescues 13 Children from "Deplorable" Home

A report of a paralyzed kitten being thrown down a staircase led police officers in Toledo, Ohio into an investigation that resulted in rescuing 13 children from a home that was called "deplorable" and "unsafe." [USA Today](#) reported that officers responding to the animal complaint found the children, filthy and bug-bitten, ranging in age from 1 to 13, in a home infested with insects, no working toilet or shower, no food in the kitchen, and human and animal feces on the floor. Police arrested family members Angel Lambert, 32, Cassandra Lambert, 27, and Angel Oliveri, 28. "What is that stench?" asked an officer approaching the house. "These kids didn't sign up for that."



Child Abuse Complaint Leads to Animal Cruelty Conviction

An investigation by Noble County, Ohio Children's Services about the suspected abuse of a 4-year-old child uncovered additional evidence of long-term abuse of five children, all under age 10, and the deaths of two dogs, leading to convictions on felony charges. [WTRF-TV](#) reported that a jury found Charles Long, of Caldwell, guilty of five counts of endangering children and two counts of cruelty to animals. During the investigation, Sheriff's deputies said Long admitted to repeatedly beating the children and withholding food from one of the dogs, which led to its death.



Domestic Violence Incident Leads to Police Shooting Dog

Dayton, Ohio police responding to a domestic violence incident encountered a knife-wielding woman, a missing man, and a dog that had been shot. Montgomery County Sheriff's deputies told [WKEF-TV](#) that they found the couple arguing with the woman holding a knife to the man's throat. A deputy who was attacked by a dog that came out of the home shot the dog who then ran away. The dog was later found and treated for a gunshot wound by Montgomery County Animal Resource Center officers and was expected to recover. Officers were searching for the man, and medics took the woman to a hospital for evaluation.



Couple with Hoarding History Facing Child and Animal Abuse Charges

Police in Shadyside, Ohio responding to a domestic violence incident were shocked to find a "horrendous" house in which four children and 38 cats had to be removed. The [Wheeling, W.V. Intelligencer](#) reported that James Groh was charged with domestic violence and child endangerment; his wife Debora Groh was charged with child endangerment. Prosecutors were also seeking to file charges for animal neglect. The couple has a history of animal hoarding: humane officers removed 35 cats from the residence three years ago.

"The living conditions were extremely deplorable. There were no litter boxes, and no beds," Shadyside Police Chief Don Collette said. "You couldn't get down-stairs because they dumped all of the trash in the basement. It was so full that you couldn't even get down the steps. It's horrible, it's basically a landfill. It's horrendous. No child should have to live like that."

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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