



A monthly report of news from

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



Top Stories in This Issue:



**Pets seen as
“progressive
property” in divorces
(Page 4)**



**Bill would create
child and animal
safety planning
(Page 10)**



**Rationalizations
similar in animal
abuse, domestic
violence (Page 14)**

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

**World Veterinary Association Model
Oath Omits Response to Abuse**

The World Veterinary Association has published a [Model Veterinarians’ Oath](#) as a pledge for incoming veterinarians to abide by the ethical and professional standards of the profession. The WVA Oath is intended to serve as a template for member associations that have not yet developed their own Oath or are considering revising theirs.

What struck us as unusual in that, while specifically promoting the U.S., U.K. and Canadian statements of professional ethics as models for countries currently lacking such statements, the WVA document conspicuously omitted those three nations’ addressing the issue of the veterinarian’s responsibility to recognize and report suspected animal, child or domestic abuse.



While the WVA Model Oath takes a One Health approach and requires adherents to swear to contribute to animal, human and environmental health and promote health and welfare of humans and animals, it lacks the detail in the veterinary medical ethics statements referenced in its preamble:

(Continued on Page 2)



Inside this issue

Veterinary Medicine & The LINK1
 Domestic Violence & The LINK.....4
 Child Maltreatment & The LINK6
 Law Enforcement & The LINK.....11
 The LINK in the Literature.....12
 Interventions & The LINK.....14
 Building Global LINK Awareness15
 Legislation & The LINK.....19
 LINK Training Calendar24
 The LINK in the News26

Phil Arkow, Editor

The National Link Coalition

16 Grasshopper Drive

Etowah, NC 28729

<https://NationalLinkCoalition.org>

arkowpets@snip.net

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

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

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



VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

World Veterinary Association Model Oath Omits Response to Abuse

(Continued from Page 1)

Veterinary Medical Ethics Statements from U.S., Canada, and U.K.

USA

The [Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics of the AVMA](#) explicitly state in the section to “Uphold standards of professionalism” under “honesty and integrity,” the provision that “A veterinarian has an ethical responsibility to report suspected animal cruelty and/or abuse.” The Principles further allow the release of otherwise confidential information and records if “required to do so by law or it becomes necessary to protect the health and welfare of other individuals or animals.”



Meanwhile, the AVMA’s Veterinarian’s Oath states, “The AVMA recognizes that veterinarians may observe cases of suspected animal abuse or neglect as defined by federal or state laws, or local ordinances. The AVMA encourages state legislation providing immunity from liability in any civil, criminal, or state licensing action to any veterinarian who reports, in good faith, a suspected case of animal abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. Additionally, the AVMA encourages state legislatures to pass legislation that client/patient records related to suspected cases of animal abuse or neglect provided to proper authorities are exempt from confidentiality restrictions. Prompt disclosure of abuse is necessary to protect the health and welfare of animals and people.”

Forty-three states now require or permit veterinarians to report suspected abuse; 36 of these states offer immunity from civil and/or criminal liability for good-faith reporting.

CANADA

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association’s [Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics](#), published in 2016, state that “A veterinarian should obey all laws of the jurisdictions in which they reside and practice veterinary medicine. They shall also recognize a responsibility to seek changes to laws and regulations which are contrary to the best interests of the patient and public health.”



The Principles add that “Veterinarians should not reveal confidences unless required to by law or unless it becomes necessary to protect the health and welfare of other individuals or animals.”

While the primary professional responsibility is to their patients, they must balance this with responsibilities they also hold to their clients, to the public, to the profession, to their colleagues and to themselves. “Veterinarians should take all reasonable steps to prevent harm to patients. Should harm occur, this information should be immediately disclosed to the client.”

The Canadian Veterinary Oath requires practitioners to “protect the health of the public and the environment” while “in keeping with the principles of veterinary medical ethics.”

The CVMA’s [Position Statement on Responsibility of Veterinary Professionals in Addressing Animal Abuse and Neglect](#), revised in 2024, goes further, taking the position that “While a veterinarian may have a legal obligation to report suspected abuse and/or neglect depending on the jurisdiction in which they practice, all veterinary professionals have an ethical duty to address animal abuse and/or neglect whenever they have reasonable grounds to believe it has occurred.” Currently, all 10 southern-tier Canadian provinces have enacted mandatory reporting of suspected animal abuse by veterinarians with immunity from liability for good-faith reporting.

UNITED KINGDOM

The RCVS’ [Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons](#), updated in 2023, has a section on Client Confidentiality that goes the farthest in recognizing the veterinarian’s responsibility in preventing not only animal abuse but also child and domestic abuse. After establishing that client confidentiality is “important but not absolute,” it states that information can be disclosed when “justified by animal welfare concerns or the wider public interest” or when required by law.



Circumstances where veterinary surgeons and nurses may disclose information include when “an animal shows signs of abuse or neglect,” “child or domestic abuse is suspected,” “where the information is likely to help in the prevention, detection or prosecution of a crime,” and when “there is some other significant threat to public health or safety or to the health or safety of an individual.” The RCVS refers veterinary professionals to The Links Group UK’s [Guidance Document on Suspected Abuse of Animals and People: Guidance for the Veterinary Team](#) for further details and to specific phone numbers of authorities who can investigate cases further.

“Given the links between animal, child and domestic abuse, a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse reporting suspected or actual animal abuse should consider whether a child or adult within that home might also be at risk. Suspicions of abuse may also be triggered by a separate issue arising out of the relationship with the client,” the Code adds, in similarly providing telephone numbers of appropriate investigatory authorities.

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

AAHA One Health Guidelines Address Intimate Partner Violence

The American Animal Hospital Association has just published unique [One Health Guidelines](#) that, in addition to addressing the intersections between animal and human health in protecting people, animals and the environment, specifically help professionals to navigate cross-disciplinary partnerships that involve intimate partner violence.

The Guidelines offer a Roadmap – a decision tree to help determine whether a One Health system response is appropriate. Factors in the decision-making process include if there has been “abuse of a person or animal” and, if so, whether the situation is urgent or a potential emergency if an animal or person is in imminent danger. Applicable mandatory legal reporting requirements to police or animal protection officers must also be considered, and the Guidelines provide a downloadable form whereby the veterinary team can create a list of easy-to-access interdisciplinary contacts, including animal control and humane law enforcement, human health care and veterinary social workers, police, and Child Protective Services, who can address the situation.

The Guidelines conclude with four scenarios in which a One Health response might be appropriate:

- A zoonotic disease impacting the whole family;
- Compassionate care for an older adult pet owner with cognitive function issues;
- Respectful strategies and accommodations for ADA-eligible clients; and
- Providing a safe place and support for humans and animals affected by intimate partner violence.

The latter scenario describes recognizing signs of suspected abuse, taking action, supporting staff’s mental health needs, and debriefing. It offers resources and strategies for:

- Preparing the veterinary team;
- Learning about harm reduction for mandatory reporters;
- Identifying the signs of IPV and animal abuse;
- Providing resources for staff and clients; and
- Developing a plan.



The Standard of
Veterinary Excellence

“Health professionals within the One Health framework must address violence within the home from a holistic perspective considering the well-established Links between violence against animals, children, and vulnerable adults,” they note.

The Guidelines repeatedly refer to the human-animal bond, emphasizing that humans and animals share special, mutually beneficial relationships; “When this bond is challenged by illness, violence or lack of resources, it can have negative impacts for both people and animals,” they write.

The Guidelines, created by a task force of human and veterinary medical professionals, are designed to improve communication and collaboration between professions to facilitate better outcomes for families with pets.

“Veterinary teams are well versed in addressing the clinical aspects of disease and injury, but they may not be aware of the many ways in which they can support human family members to improve health outcomes for the whole family,” the authors write. “Human health care professionals may benefit from veterinary professionals’ insights into zoonotic disease, animal behavior, and the human-animal bond.

“By working together and breaking down barriers between human and veterinary medicine, practitioners can better understand and address the complex health issues that affect both humans and animals.”

-- McNeil, C., Roth, C., Sick, B., Blackwell, M., & Edwards, J., et al. (2025, Sept. 1). 2025 AAHA One Health guidelines: Navigating cross-disciplinary partnerships. *Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association*, 61(5), 117-145. doi:10.5326/JAAHA-MS-7530

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Pet Protection Orders, Divorce Custody in “Progressive Property” Law

In the [December 2024](#) and [September 2025 LINK-Letters](#), we discussed a new legal construct that considers animals as “more-than-property,” in an effort to harness our emotional attachments to animals as an evolutionary way to consider them as more than strictly property in the eyes of the law. A new article builds on this framework by including animals within a concept law scholars are calling “progressive property” and cites several Link issues as components.

Sarah Schindler, law professor at the University of Denver, observes that although animals are personal property, they are rarely discussed in property law or progressive property law scholarship. She argues that because the notion of property is malleable, taking a more expansive view of property law could yield additional legal protections for animals.

Progressive property theory moves away from looking primarily at the economic values that property serves, toward an acknowledgement that property serves other values as well, including dignity, morality, flourishing, virtue, and equal treatment, she writes. While traditional notions of property prioritize the interests of the owner, a progressive view of property incorporates a broader constituency of value-holders.

She cites several areas in which animals are already being considered within a progressive property framework, including custody in divorce cases and their inclusion in domestic violence protection orders. These allow consideration of the animal’s interests without disturbing the underlying animal-as-property status.

In divorce cases, courts historically have applied traditional notions that treat the pet as property, awarding custody and visitation rights based upon objective ownership criteria such as who bought the animal and pays its food and veterinary expenses. Progressive approaches – now embodied in statutes in several states and Canadian provinces – use a “best interests” analysis that considers which party was the primary caregiver, who has the strongest emotional attachment to the pet, and what would be in the pet’s best interests.

“These laws recognize that it is not only the interests of the property owner that should be considered, but rather the interests of the animal-as-property, the being, and in turn, society’s interest in having the companion animal live with the caretaker that best suits its needs,” she writes. “This is a classic progressive property approach and presents yet another example of



Sarah Schindler

the fact that it is possible to move beyond traditional property frames and analysis even while retaining the status of property.” Similarly, in the 42 states that now allow pets to be included in protection orders, a traditional approach would have already allowed a victim to take with her whatever property she owned. But by specifically including the animals and, in many states, allowing courts to grant custody to the victim and bar the respondent from harming or taking the animal, “These laws take a more relational view of the pet as property, rather than a purely ownership view.

“Rather than hewing to a pure ownership analysis, the courts (and legislatures) here instead look at the interests of the pet in avoiding harm, and the interests of the victim of abuse in having an emotional attachment to the animal.”

-- Schindler, S. (2025, December). *Progressive property and animal law*. *UC Davis Law Review*, 59(2), 657-730.

Illinois Bill Would Award Animal Custody for Non-Married Couples

The most recent bill addressing these issues was just introduced in the Illinois General Assembly. **HB 4540**, the “Companion Animal Custody Equity Act,” would consider the well-being of a dog or cat during a possession dispute regardless of the marital status of the parties. The bill would further authorize a court to issue orders related to temporary possession, caregiving, or limited visitation during the dispute, “if necessary to reduce stress or disruption to the companion animal.” It also would enable additional court consideration of “factors including continuity of environment, emotional stability, stress minimization, and maintenance of established routines” for animals who are at least 10 years old.

This law, if enacted, would expand Illinois’ existing pet custody law by avoiding the complication that occurred in Delaware where that state’s divorce custody law did not pertain to a couple who were not married ([See the June 2025 LINK-Letter](#)).

Link a Factor in Proposed Colorado, Massachusetts Pet Custody Bills

With eight states now having enacted laws that allow courts to award sole or joint custody of pets in the disposition of property during marriage dissolutions -- many of which result from domestic violence scenarios -- the latest bills to propose such a law are unique in that they give courts the opportunity to take histories of Link activities into account.



Rep. Alex Valdez

is that the court's decision could also specifically include whether either party has committed abuse, cruelty, neglect, or violence toward an animal or human. The bill is sponsored by Rep. Alex Valdez (D-Denver).

Colorado's **HB 26-1131**, like other states' existing provisions, would give courts authority to make determinations for the care and custody of pet animals in proceedings for dissolution of marriage and legal separation, taking into account the health, safety, well-being, comfort, and best interest of the pet. What is unique in this bill

Two similar bills featuring the history-of-abuse provision were introduced earlier this year in Massachusetts (**H.1817** and **S.1206**).

Since 2007, Colorado has enabled plaintiffs requesting domestic violence protection orders to include provisions for the safety of their pets. **HB 26-1131** would extend those features by also permitting a court to award temporary custody and care of a pet animal when issuing an emergency protection order.

Pet divorce custody laws have been enacted since 2016 in Alaska, California, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and the District of Columbia. These states' laws all include consideration of the animals' best interests but not specifically whether there has been a history of human or animal abuse. Other bills currently working their way through legislatures include New York's **A 740** and **S 8927**, Illinois' **HB 4540**, and Pennsylvania's **HB 97**, which do not include the history-of-abuse provision.

Workshop Helps North Carolina Shelter House People and Pets in Crisis



[RedRover](#) and [Greater Good Charities](#) collaborated on a [Don't Forget the Pets](#) training workshop about options and how to overcome the challenges in housing people and pets in crisis for the [Center for Domestic Peace](#) in Sylva, N. C. "Sometimes pets are their only families and support. It's so important what we do," said Elizabeth Rigdon of the Center. Sixteen persons from domestic violence, mental health, social work, academia, humane societies, legal aid, and maternal and child health agencies heard Bryna Donnelly and Gabbie Leister, left, of Greater Good Charities, and Katie Campbell of RedRover discuss The Link, pet-friendly design and construction options, operations, policies and procedures, and addressing PTSD in pet survivors of domestic violence. "Don't be afraid to think outside of the litter box," said Campbell, in encouraging participants to reach out to identify potential community collaborative partners.

New Biography Sheds Little Light on Early Child/Animal Abuse History

The prevailing narrative underlying The Link between child abuse and animal cruelty is that Henry Bergh – a wealthy scion of a New York shipbuilding family stationed as an American diplomat in Russia during the Civil War – saw a man beat a horse. During his return from St. Petersburg he visited the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in London, decided we needed a counterpart in the U.S., and formed the ASPCA in 1866.

Eight years later, the story goes, the case of an abused girl, “Little Mary Ellen” Wilson, captured his interest, and Bergh rescued her. She became the first ward of the state, Bergh went on to form the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and many humane organizations began protecting children as well as animals.

The reality, however, is more complex (See following page), and while the most recent biography of Bergh sheds little light on his work in child protection, it presents an illuminating look into the personality of a man described as a mover, a shaker, and most importantly an actor – a showman whose need for celebrity status and media attention was matched only by his contemporary P.T. Barnum.

In *The Second Greatest Show on Earth*, historian Darcy Ingram repeatedly describes Bergh as a frustrated writer, poet and playwright whose patrician upbringing and life of leisurely gentility conflicted with a need to find a more meaningful purpose of contributing to the greater good. He found that

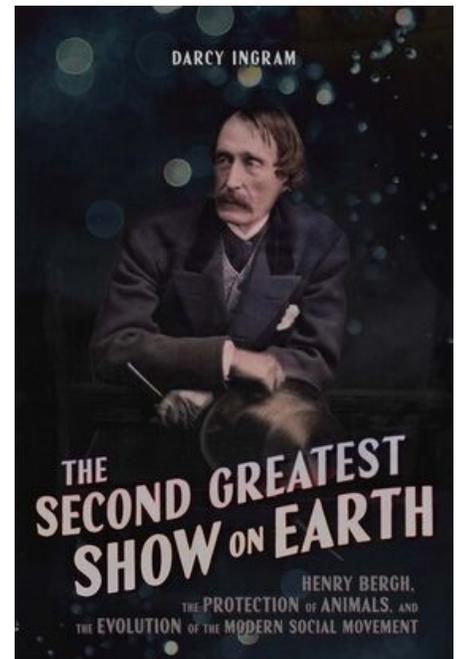
purpose only late in life by transforming the St. Petersburg incident into his ascendancy at the ASPCA during an era of unprecedented social movements.

Ingram describes in depth how Bergh’s staged, shrewd and calculated performances of direct action harnessed the power of the news media to his maximum advantage – “theatrically-infused tactics” that generated constant publicity through “spectacle, novelty, drama, and controversy”. These captured the imagination of audiences in New York and beyond.

Ingram portrays Bergh not as a left-leaning political radical or even someone with a special dedication to the cause but rather as an authoritarian who saw animal protection as a way to maintain the social order and fulfill the artistic, intellectual and theatrical ambitions that had long eluded him – “a means of self-actualization and thus a vehicle for an identity he had long cultivated but failed to find a stage.”

While references to children are notably limited, Ingram makes several references to The Link, describing an ethos of the age that cruelty or an absence of mercy toward animals was a sure path to cruelty directed at fellow humans.

However, Ingram makes only four fleeting references to Bergh’s work vis-à-vis child protection and his posthumous reputation as a founder of the child welfare movement – a reputation sometimes built on fictionalized accounts. Given the book’s second focus – the evolution of the mod-



ern animal welfare and rights movements – this omission is perhaps not surprising.

But it leaves many questions unanswered. “Two centuries after his birth, Bergh continues to await his biographer,” Ingram concludes, even after citing dozens of biographies and hundreds of contemporary references. So perhaps one of those biographies awaiting publication will shed more light on the intersection of child and animal welfare in Bergh’s world. What is clear is that his founding of the SPCC was an individual act and not part of the ASPCA – although later organizations did take up the dual Link-based causes. Was his intervention another outcome of his unfulfilled need for performance?

-- Ingram, D. (2025). *The Second Greatest Show on Earth: Henry Bergh, The Protection of Animals, and the Evolution of the Modern Social Movement*. McGill-Queen’s University Press.

CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK

What Is the Real Story Behind “Little Mary Ellen”?

The definitive account was written by Bernard Unti. According to Unti, child abuse and neglect only began to attract public notice in the post-Civil War years, but law enforcement and charitable responses were minimal. Within a year of the ASPCA’s founding in 1866, New York news media began calling for a similar establishment to protect children. Bergh declined to intervene on the grounds that child maltreatment was outside the ASPCA’s domain – and was criticized accordingly.

In June 1871, Bergh and ASPCA attorney Elbridge T. Gerry interceded in the case of Emily Thompson, an exploited and abused child. The girl’s guardian was found guilty of assault, Bergh and Gerry secured a writ of habeus corpus and the child was removed to her grandmother’s home in New Jersey. Their legal ploy remains unknown, but news media praised Bergh as a “determined and fearless man” who proved parental brutality of a child is no more acceptable than cruelty to a horse.

In 1874, missionary Etta Wheeler related to Bergh the case of Mary Ellen who was beaten and imprisoned in her home. When the Children’s Aid Society declined to intervene, Bergh sent an ASPCA inspector, posing as a census worker, into the home to confirm the sensational details which captured public attention.

Bergh, acting as a private citizen, petitioned the court for Mary Ellen’s removal. Gerry secured a writ of habeus corpus which permitted ASPCA officers to take her into custody. In court, she related how Mary Connolly, to whom she had been indentured, had whipped her and cut her with scissors.

Mary Connolly denied the accusations, but she was indicted, arrested, convicted of felonious assault, and sentenced to one year in prison. Mary Ellen was eventually placed in Wheeler’s care.

The intervention “had fateful consequences for the course of the humane movement,” Unti wrote, as it demonstrated how abused children were “falling through the cracks” of a patchwork system of child welfare.

Gerry, Bergh and Quaker merchant John D.

Wright incorporated the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Wright and then Gerry served as Presidents while Bergh served on the Board of Managers until his death in 1888. A nationwide proliferation of child protection agencies followed, courts became increasingly instrumental in determining appropriate child-rearing standards, and many cities organized dual-purpose humane societies addressing relief and prevention of suffering of children and animals – a larger, Link-based movement.



-- Unti, Bernard, "The Quality of Mercy: Organized Animal Protection in the United States 1866-1930" (2002). *Animal Abuse, Animal Welfare, and Animal Protection*. Paper 40. http://animalstudiesrepository.org/acwp_away/40

UN Scrutinizes Spain's Allowing Children to Hunt with Firearms

Following the landmark declaration in 2023 by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child that children must be protected from exposure to domestic violence and violence inflicted upon animals (See the [October 2023 LINK-Letter](#)), the Committee has questioned a country – Spain – for allowing children and adolescents to participate in hunting activities involving firearms.

The Committee's *General Comment No. 26* cited scientific evidence regarding detrimental effects of exposing children to violence against animals. On Jan. 21-22, the Committee met in Geneva to assess Spain's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been in force in Spain since 1991.

The meeting was triggered by [CoPPA](#) -- the Coordinadora por la Prevención de Abusos – who submitted a report warning of the risk of physical or psychological harm to children and adolescents. The report documented numerous cases of hunting accidents involv-



CoPPA

Coordinadora de Profesionales por la Prevención de Abusos

ing firearms in Spain, as well as incidents in which minors were witnesses to, or even responsible for, the death of other persons — including that of a child who accidentally killed his father. This is believed to be the first time the hunting issue has been brought before the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

CoPPA documented that hunting activities involving firearms combine multiple risk factors, including: children's and adolescents' exposure to the inherent violence of the activity; accidents and deaths arising from access to firearms and proximity to gunfire; psychological trauma from normalization and early exposure to violence; and elevated risks of adolescent suicide. "Occurring together, these factors increase the likelihood of physical injuries and psychological harm, with potentially long-lasting—or even tragic—

consequences," CoPPA said, highlighting children's hunting as being incompatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Spain allows minors to use firearms for hunting beginning at age 14, although some communities permit or even encourage children even younger to attend hunts. CoPPA added that the presence of family members not only fails to mitigate many of these risks but can, in some cases, even exacerbate them.

The UN Committee and the General Comment have also been cited in efforts to restrict children from participating in trophy hunts across the African continent (See the [December 2025 LINK-Letter](#)).



Vermont Bill Would Criminalize Animal Sexual Abuse Involving Children

A bill introduced into the Vermont General Assembly would add engaging in sexual conduct with an animal in the presence of a minor or in which a minor is a participant to the existing crime of aggravated animal cruelty.

H.578, sponsored by Rep. Emilie Krasnow (D—South Burlington) would add to other types of aggravated animal cruelty new categories of animal sexual abuse in which a minor is present, a participant, or an observer. It would include: engaging in sexual contact with an animal; advertising, purchasing or otherwise obtaining an animal for these purposes; and organiz-

ing, promoting, abetting or participating or allowing one's premises to be used for these events.

Aggravated animal cruelty in Vermont is punishable by a fine of \$5,000 and/or five years in prison. Subsequent convictions increase the penalties to \$7,500 and/or 10 years.

If enacted, the new law would take effect July 1, 2026.



Rep. Emilie Krasnow

CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK

Childhood Exposure to Animal Cruelty Can Impact Adult Mental Health

A notable gap in the child abuse/animal abuse Link is that the seminal Centers for Disease Control & Prevention’s ACES study that identified lifelong psychological and physiological risks of childhood exposure to trauma never considered a child’s committing or witnessing animal cruelty as an Adverse Childhood Experience. A new multidisciplinary study is shedding light on how co-occurring exposure to animal cruelty and recognized ACES relate to adult mental health.

The survey interviewed 1,072 adults to fill in the gaps created by the fact that while animal cruelty is a recognized correlate of interpersonal violence within family systems, children’s exposure to this form of harm remains absent from most standardized assessments of childhood adversity. Participants reported on childhood experiences of emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, exposure to domestic violence, and exposure to animal cruelty, along with current symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.

While 29.6% of participants had had no childhood adverse experiences, 34.8% had been exposed to interpersonal violence and 35.6% had experienced both interpersonal violence and animal cruelty. This latter group was more likely to be younger, Hispanic or Black, and members of a minoritized gender or sexual orientation. This latter group also reported the highest rates of depression, anxiety and stress.

The researchers concluded that future studies should test whether animal cruelty in models of adversity improves identification of high-risk sub-groups and whether such information can inform multi-species approaches to prevention and intervention.

Previous studies, they noted, “underscore the importance of recognizing animal cruelty exposure as both a form of adversity and a potential early marker of broader psychosocial risk.” They cited studies finding that “witnessing or learning about violence toward a companion animal can elicit anticipatory fear, helplessness, and relational distress, which are core features of threat-based experiences” and which can disrupt multiple systems central to emotional regulation and relational security, particularly in homes or communities marked by other forms of violence.

But while exposure to animal cruelty “may contribute to children’s psychological distress and long-term well-



Shelby McDonald
Colorado State
University School
of Social Work



Camie Tomlinson
University of
Louisville School of
Social Work



Nicole Nicotera
University of Denver
Graduate School of
Social Work



Lori R. Kogan
Colorado State
University College
of Veterinary
Medicine



Tiarra Abell
University of
Louisville Depart-
ment of Psychologi-
cal & Brain Sciences



Jada Ford
Colorado State
University School of
Social Work

being, it remains absent from most standardized assessments of childhood adversity. As a result, even though research has demonstrated that exposure to animal cruelty is often linked with other adverse childhood experiences and concomitant health outcomes, it continues to be overlooked in child welfare and population health research.”

The study reported that animal cruelty exposure, while not ubiquitous, is elevated in settings of complex family violence and that prevalence may vary across population subgroups. “From a clinical perspective, these findings emphasize the importance of integrating animal welfare considerations into trauma-informed assessment and intervention.”

They recommended that clinicians should anticipate complex presentations involving disruptions in trust and attachment, heightened physiological arousal, and grief or guilt tied to harm of companion animals. They called for comprehensive screening protocols to be

(Continued on Page 10)

Childhood Exposure to Animal Cruelty Can Impact Adult Mental Health

(Continued from Page 9)

targeted and trauma-informed and explicitly include questions about animal-directed harm to improve detection of complex household violence.

“These findings emphasize the importance of integrating animal welfare considerations into trauma-informed assessment and intervention.”

“Pets often function as emotional and relational agents within families, and discussing their wellbeing can

surface information about caregiving, attachment, and household stress that individuals may be hesitant to disclose through more direct questioning.”

They called for cross-sector collaboration between child welfare, domestic violence services, and animal protection organizations on the systems, prevention and policy levels to strengthen early detection and coordinated responses, particularly among individuals and groups identified as being at higher risk.

“The emergence of a class characterized by high co-occurrence of human- and animal-directed violence underscores the importance of applying a multispecies lens to the study of childhood adversity and developmental risk, particularly given prior research suggesting that exposure to animal cruelty is associated with compromised socioemotional functioning among children and adults,” they concluded.

“Our findings underscore the value of incorporating animal cruelty exposure into ACE assessments, advancing translational efforts that align trauma-informed clinical care with coordinated responses across child welfare, domestic violence, and animal-protection systems.”

— McDonald, S.E., Tomlinson, C., Nicotera, N., Kogan, L.R., Abell, T., & Ford, J., et al. (2025). Integrating animal cruelty exposure into person-centered models of childhood adversity: Latent classes and associations with depression, anxiety, and stress. *Frontiers in Psychiatry, 16*:1701584. doi: 10.3389/fpsyt.2025.1701584

Bill Would Create Child and Animal Safety Planning and Cross-Reporting

An intriguing bill in the Washington State Legislature would not only create a new cross-reporting policy between animal control officers and law enforcement when child abuse is suspected, but would also create joint safety planning for both the children and animals involved.

SB 6306 would require animal control officers to notify law enforcement when they have probable cause to believe that a child is also present in a home that they are investigating and that circumstances affecting the animal may also affect the child. Law enforcement would then follow existing protocols in reporting the case to the Department of Children, Youth and Families.

The unusual provision in this proposal is that children taken into custody as a result of these reports could not be returned home **Sen. Leonard Christian** until a court has determined that the home is safe for both the child and the animal and a joint safety plan for both has been developed.



The bill, entitled “Providing Equal Protections for Children and Pets,” was introduced by Sen. Leonard Christian (R—District 4). It is in the Senate Law & Justice Committee.

Permission to Reprint

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

Bill Would Define Working K-9s as Law Enforcement Officers

In the [December 2024](#) and [September 2025](#) issues of *The LINK-Letter*, and elsewhere in this issue, we reviewed a new legal construct that is attempting to redefine animals as “more-than-property” or part of “progressive property” based in part on Link issues. Precedents cited for this change in animals’ status from objects to subjects include taking animals’ interests into consideration in divorce property settlements, inclusion in domestic violence protection orders, and designating police and military working K-9s as personnel entitled to special protections.

The newest representation of this concept is an intriguing bill in the West Virginia Legislature, where [HB 5419](#), sponsored by Delegate Jonathan Pinson (R—Mason Coun-

ty) would define law enforcement and Search & Rescue dogs specifically as law enforcement officers. This designation, if enacted, would allow law enforcement and Search & Rescue personnel to use whatever reasonable force is necessary to defend that animal if it is attacked.

Any crime of assault or battery committed against the animal while on duty would carry the same penalties as if the crime were committed against a human law enforcement officer. There is a military precedent for this: an attack against an MP’s K-9 is pun-



Del. Jonathan Pinson

ishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice as an assault upon an officer.

The bill, however, clarifies that the animal “is not an employee of the state and is entitled to neither the administrative protections nor personnel status afforded to other employees.”

By contract, at least three state legislatures have seen bills introduced that would clarify that certain entities — including animals, environmental elements, and artificial intelligence objects — are not legally defined as people: Alaska [HB 251](#), Missouri [HB 2286](#), and Oklahoma [HB 3546](#). It’s not clear if these bills, if enacted, would impact such issues as veterinary malpractice liability.

Cleveland Animal Crimes Unit Finds Links, Gets TV Coverage

Fighting crimes against our pets could help people at risk of violence.”

That’s how Brian Duffy of Channel 19 News in Cleveland, Ohio introduced a [four-minute news](#) story about Cuyahoga County’s new Animal Crimes Unit which was [introduced on January 27](#). A station reporter looked at “how animal abuse goes hand in hand with dangerous crimes against people.”

The station interviewed Todd Staimpel, a retired police detective now heading up the Unit in the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor’s Office. “It surprises me that there’s as much of this going on as there is and it surprises me the depraved

type of mind it would take to harm an animal like that,” said Staimpel.

The office recently tracked a 77% increase in animal cruelty in the county -- from 40 cases in 2024 to 71 cases in 2025. Investigators found numerous examples where charges of felonious assault or domestic violence also uncovered hurting an animal. The animals “are used as a tool for hurting people, to set an example for that person” said Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Isadora Almaro. “And when you have a neglected animal in the home, more often than not when there are children in the home they very well may be neglected as well.”



Almaro said the Unit hopes to bridge interagency communication and collaboration gaps. “We want animal control and the police to work together because this is pretty serious.”

THE LINK in THE LITERATURE

Reciprocal Causes and Effects in Animal Cruelty and Other Crimes

There is ongoing debate as to whether animal cruelty is part of a violence graduation hypothesis – the animal abuser needs greater and greater thrills and moves on to crimes against humans – or a pattern of social deviance – animal abuse is just one part of a broader constellation of antisocial activities. A new theoretical treatise examines a two-way street between animal abuse and other factors – how each one can influence the other.

Glenn D. Walters, Professor of Criminal Justice at Kutztown University, developed a model consisting of three elements: animal cruelty, low empathy, and moral neutralization. These were each believed to be bidirectionally related to one another and either unidirectionally or bidirectionally linked to certain environmental/external events and experiences, to include victimization, opportunities for social learning, and schedules of reinforcement.



He concluded that: animal cruelty can be both a cause and effect of low empathy; moral neutralization is just as likely to shape animal cruelty as animal cruelty is to shape moral neutralization; and low empathy both drives and is driven by neutralization.

— Walters, G.D. (2025). A developmental antecedent-reciprocal effects model of the animal cruelty-later offending relationship. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 82:102053. doi: 10.1016/j.avb.2025.102053

Study to Examine Social Services' Support for Families with Pets

The University of Tennessee's Program for Pet Health Equity is seeking input from social service agency staff to learn how social service agencies support families with pets and collaborate with animal welfare organizations.

Claire Schuch in the College of Social Work is seeking to understand whether social service agencies have any formal programming or if there is the capacity to expand offerings to include pets. Participants will remain anonymous as they complete a 15-minute survey. Details about the study are [online](#).

Animal Hoarding Case Exposes Risk of Fire-related Fatalities

It has long been recognized that animal hoarding cases require a multidisciplinary response to deal with the complications involving humans living in such squalor as well as the animals. Code enforcement, public and mental health agencies, law enforcement and other departments must be coordinated as well as the animal rescue and veterinary teams. But a new research study from Brazil highlights a lesser-recognized complication: the risk of fire and, in particular, fatalities resulting from the flames.

The report is a case study of a 2013 house fire in which an elderly woman with a long history of animal hoarding and animal cruelty offenses fled the scene when a fire, triggered by candles that were lit because the electricity and water had been disconnected three years earlier, broke out. 43 dogs were found dead from asphyxiation and 29 more were later recaptured after they escaped.

The authors note that hoarding behavior is associated with a high risk of fatal fire accidents, often because hoarders tend to be reclusive elderly individuals with increased medical comorbidities and cognitive impairments, and accumulated and disorganized hoarded objects provide highly flammable fuel and restrict passageways for rapid exit. They explore whether animal hoarding adds additional risks to these conditions.

Calling hoarding disorder a classic example of the World Health Organization's One Health approach, they suggest that the impact of animal hoarding on human health, animal welfare and environmental safety amounts to the need for a multidisciplinary "One Unhealth" approach.

— Kmetiuk, L.B., Santos da Silva, J., Guedes Correa, R., Brositti Terzian, C.C., Midori Morikawa, V., & Welker Biondo, A. (2026). Case report: "One Unhealth" approach on fatal consequences of a fire in an animal hoarded home. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 13:1719824. doi: 10.3389/fvets.2026.1719824



Link Cited in Review of People's Relationships with Their Dogs

A new study that interviewed Brazilian pet owners about their perceptions and expectations of their relationships with their dogs cites The Link in general, and the specific increases in domestic violence and animal abuse during the COVID pandemic, in calling for more educational outreach by veterinarians and public health officials to promote responsible care, prevent neglect, and reduce risks to both animals and people.

The study identified that dogs are often viewed as family members, which strengthens emotional bonds but can also lead to misunderstandings about animals' real needs. While many guardians demonstrated strong commitment to care, gaps in knowledge about responsible guardianship, health risks, and animal behavior were observed in the 40 interviews.

The study found pet guardians generally categorize their dogs' roles in their lives in three distinct ways: as "everything" or



Tatiane Aparecida de Castro

as just a pet or watchdog. "The intensity of these perceptions also shaped guardians' emotional expressions during the interviews, reinforcing the emotional depth of the human-companion animal bond and its relevance to social life and public health," they wrote. The social and cultural implications should inform the development of culturally sensitive policies and educational programs, they advised.

Of interest to *LINK-Letter* readers, the study noted that "An interesting point that emerged during the interviews was participants' perception of increased awareness of animal mistreatment during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, through abandonment." The authors cited a study which analyzed

"someone who changed my life"; as family members or companions; or

the relationship between animal mistreatment and domestic violence in 2020 that showed that confinement during the pandemic significantly increased aggression suffered by both women and animals. They cited several references to what Brazil calls "Link Theory" that have demonstrated a relationship between animal mistreatment and various forms of violence against people.

"This theory is characterized by work identifying individuals' capacity to act violently, directly or indirectly, toward animals and people, particularly the most vulnerable. Domestic violence, child abuse, and animal cruelty are thus closely connected, and this cycle will persist until somehow interrupted," they concluded.

-- Aparecida de Castro, T., Pegolo da Gama, C.A., Alves Guimarães, D., Assis, I.Y., & Pereira Horta, M.A., et al. (2026). *The dog-guardian relationship and its meanings: Perceptions, expectations and impacts on guardians' lives. Animals, 16, 523.* <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani16030523>





Similar Rationalizations Seen for Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence

The techniques that animal cruelty offenders use to rationalize their actions often vary, but a new study from Finland describes interesting commonalities among farmers and companion animal hoarders and also among those who commit domestic violence.

In reviewing 1,443 judgments in criminal cases over a 10-year period, the researchers found defendants charged with offenses against production animals offered more rationalizations than the other defendants and often denied their responsibility for the animals, or having caused them any harm, and appealed to financial problems, weather conditions, and having too many animals. They frequently challenged societal norms and vehemently viewed animal welfare authorities negatively, using rationalizations similar to those voiced by animal hoarders.

One-third of all defendants deflected responsibility by blaming others for what had happened to the animals. Animal hoarders were more likely than other companion animal offenders to offer a rationalization or blame what they perceived to be a limited role in what had happened. Financial problems were a common explanation among all defendants. One-third of violent offenders neutralized their behavior by claiming that

the animal was not hurt or had died without suffering, and nearly one in five explained that they were ill or intoxicated when committing the offence and/or had no memories of the situation.



“The neutralizations that the defendants offered for their violent behavior resembled those utilized by other violent perpetrators: blaming the victim, stating that the victim needs to obey and be punished, denying their responsibility as the victim provoked the violence, and appealing to intoxication, amnesia, or accidentally hurting the victim,” they concluded. “Thus, our results suggest the similarities and connection between domestic violence and animal abuse well demonstrated in research.”

-- Valtonen, E., Hänninen, L., Valros, A., & Koskela, T. (2024). Neutralisation techniques used by defendants charged with animal welfare offences in Finland. *Animal Welfare*, 33, e33. doi:10.1017/awf.2024.32



THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS... and THE LINK

Therapy Dog Consoling Survivors of Sexual Assault in New Mexico

The use of therapy dogs in children’s advocacy centers, family justice centers, courtrooms, and domestic violence shelters has been long established, but what might be a unique intervention is under way in Santa Fe, N.

Mex., where a black English Labrador named “Betty” is consoling survivors of sexual assault.

Betty is the newest staff member at [Solace Sexual Assault Services](#). The four-year-old dog, trained by Assistance Dogs of the West, has her own office and will be available to help the center serve hundreds of victims



of sexual violence in northern New Mexico each year. Betty sits with children and teenagers during their forensic interviews and will soon accompany clients to therapy sessions as well, helping clients regulate while undergoing acute trauma.

Betty also provides support to Solace’s staff and the detectives in the Santa Fe Police Department’s SVU, which is located in Solace.

“One of Betty’s superpowers is that she will be non-judgemental,” Betty’s handler, Jacquelyn Belinsky, who is also a nurse practitioner and sexual assault nurse examiner, told the [Santa Fe New Mexican](#). “There’s non-judgement coming from her eyes, and also she emits a sense of safety. And with those two qualities, she helps people — they feel safe, they don’t feel judged, they can just go ahead and tell their stories.”

Growing GLOBAL LINK AWARENESS

Steve Dale's Pet World Heightens Awareness of The Link

Nationally-syndicated radio host and human-animal bond authority Steve Dale has added a [blog](#) to his website describing The Link and its significance, and how we can no longer afford to ignore animal cruelty as it could be a warning sign of incipient violence against humans. We're pleased to reprint his blog here. Thank you, Steve!

What Happens When Animal Abuser Gains Power



Experts caution that individuals who engage in deliberate cruelty to animals, particularly as part of a broader [pattern of control or violence](#), should first be psychologically evaluated *before* being placed in positions of power or authority. The potential for abusing others — human and/or animal — remains a significant concern within psychological assessment and risk-management frameworks. Given power, these individuals often take advantage of vulnerable individuals. This individual could be a megalomaniac if not a down-right psychopath, clearly giving such a person power is never a good idea.

When someone intentionally kills a healthy dog without provocation, experts say it likely signals deeper problems than a momentary lapse in judgment. The connection between animal cruelty and other forms of violence — often referred to as [The Link](#), — has been established over decades of research and multidisciplinary professional practice and is today widely accepted.

This concept is medically and forensically described by clinicians, and by law enforcement professionals as a predictor and indicator of other violent behaviors, not

an isolated aberration or merely animal cruelty, which it clearly is. [FBI analysis of animal cruelty as a predictor of other violence](#).

[The National Link Coalition](#) (which I serve on an Advisory Board) — the leading nonprofit authority on this topic — defines The Link “Over the past 40 years, researchers and professionals in human services and animal welfare have established significant Links between animal abuse, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, elder abuse and other forms of violence. Mistreating animals is no longer seen as an isolated incident that can be ignored: it is often an indicator or predictor crime and a red flag warning sign that other family members in the household may not be safe.”

There's also a well-documented correlation between violence toward animals and later violence against humans. Studies have shown that animal abusers are significantly more likely to harm people, and that a high percentage of domestic violence victims report threats, harm or killings of pets by their abusers as a tool of intimidation and control.

Research additionally suggests that individuals who commit intentional harm to animals often repeat this behavior, demonstrating a propensity toward violence, lack of impulse control, and impaired empathy and good conscience. This consistent pattern is why animal cruelty is widely taken seriously by criminal justice systems and social service professionals.

The good news — the warning signs of animal abusers are now understood. The bad news is that these red flags are too often ignored.

Multi-Disciplinary Link Awareness Grows in Northern Ireland

The work of our colleagues in The [Links Group UK](#) to expand Link training across the British Isles expanded into Dunadry, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland on Feb. 17 with an all-day workshop on “Recognizing & Acting on Non-Accidental Injury and Domestic & Child Abuse”.

The Veterinary Training Initiative, co-sponsored by the [British Small Animal Veterinary Association](#), attracted an enthusiastic and multi-disciplinary audience, which was reflected in the topics and backgrounds of the speakers:

- Paula Boyden, Rebecca Stephens, Andrea Lynch, and David Martin of The Links Group UK described the shades of violence and complexities of The Link, how to recognize non-accidental injury in animals, challenges and opportunities for addressing The Link in Northern Ireland, and clinical forensics in small, farm and equine animal practice.
- The Harrow Safeguarding Children Board described the dynamics of an abusive household.
- Kerrie Flood of the Fermanagh and Omagh Women’s Aid described the complexity of domestic abuse in rural communities.
- Ineke Houtenbos of the NSPCC discussed the impact of domestic and animal abuse on children.



- Det. Supt. Lindsay Fisher described police responses to domestic abuse in Northern Ireland.
- Lauren Sutor of Cats Protection Lifeline offered options for fostering the animal victims of domestic abuse.
- Ryan Somerville of The Executive Office gave an update on the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls’ Strategy.

The presentations were followed by panel discussions and opportunities for participants to discuss how they could implement these ideas in practice.



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.

LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

The majority of states are busily working on proposed legislation in their 2026 sessions. We're following 176 new and carried-over measures:

Purple bills address domestic violence and pet protection orders

Dark blue bills address child abuse and maltreatment

Grey bills address abuse of the elderly and disabled

Pink bills address animal sexual abuse

Green bills address cross-reporting among animal care & control, veterinary and human services professionals

Orange bills address court-appointed advocates for animals

Red bills address animal hoarding

Brown bills address psychological assessments, interventions and treatments for animal cruelty offenders

Light blue bills address 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.

HR 7544, the Illegal Alien Animal

Abuser Removal Act, would make any illegal alien convicted of animal cruelty or fighting subject to immediate deportation.

ARIZONA

HB 2995, which would allow courts to include a history of domestic violence coercive control in determining child custody and parenting time, would add to the definition of coercive control "threatening to harm or kill an animal that a person, child or relative has an emotional bond with." Arizona already includes acts of animal cruelty within its definition of domestic violence.

HB 2997 would impose additional penalties for individuals who commit acts of animal abuse or neglect in the presence of a minor.

SB 1587 would allow parties to a dissolution of marriage to enter into an enforceable agreement or ask the court to enter an order regarding the possession or care of a companion animal and outline factors the court is to consider. It would create a rebuttable presumption that service animals should remain with the party for whom they provide a service. "Companion animals" would be defined as including pets, service animals, and animals acquired for business purposes.

CALIFORNIA

SB 1276 would extend existing provisions prohibiting the production and distribution of online sexual content, including animal sexual abuse, involving a minor to also prohibit the downloading or streaming of that sexual content.

COLORADO

HB 26-1131 would give courts authority to make determinations for the care and custody of pet animals in proceedings for dissolution of marriage and legal separation, taking into account the health, safety, well-being, comfort, and best interest of the pet. The court's decision would also include whether either party has committed abuse, cruelty, neglect, or violence toward an animal or human. It would also permit a court to award temporary custody and care of a pet animal when issuing an emergency protection order.

CONNECTICUT

H.B. 5264 would expand "Desmond's Law's" provisions allowing courts to appoint an advocate in proceedings concerning the welfare or custody of a dog or cat to all defined companion animals. It would also expand 3rd-degree assault to include domestic animals, and establish an animal abuse task force.

FLORIDA

SB 468 and **HB 921** 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.

SB 676 and **HB 559** would make it a felony for an adult to commit aggravated animal cruelty in the presence of a minor, or cause a minor to commit aggravated animal cruelty, animal fighting, or sexual activity with an animal.

SB 796 would allow the Board of Veterinary Medicine to rescind the registration of any veterinary professional associate, veterinary technician, or veterinary technician who is convicted of animal cruelty or animal fighting.

HB 277 and **SB 682** 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.

GEORGIA

HB 1409 would add animal service workers, animal control officers, humane society employees, animal cruelty investigators, and animal shelter personnel to the list of professions mandated to report suspected child abuse to the Division of Family and Children Services.

SB 102 would extend existing prohibitions against dogfighting to include cockfighting, including: owning, training, transporting, selling, charging admission, permitting a minor to attend, or wagering on any cock for the purpose of fighting.

HAWAII

HB 698 would increase criminal penalties for various forms of animal cruelty because "The legislature finds that animal cruelty offenders are a threat to the health and safety of all members of our communities, especially vulnerable populations. Recent research has shown that animal cruelty is a predictive and co-occurring crime with violence against humans, including children, intimate partners, and the elderly."

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 1904 would require, rather than permit, courts to award petitioners costs and attorney's fees if a civil no-contact order is granted. These orders include requiring the respondent to stay away from and not harm any animals.

HB 3028 would expand the definition of prohibited dissemination of bestiality and other obscene sexual materials to include computer-generated images.

HB 3367 and **HB 4475** 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.

HB 4540, the "Companion Animal Custody Equity Act," would consider the well-being of a dog or cat during a possession dispute regardless of the marital status of the parties.

SB 1716 would expand the definition of prohibited dissemination of bestiality and other obscene sexual materials to include the use of "end-to-end encryption messaging systems or devices," such as encrypted messaging and email services.

SB 2091 would make it a felony to injure or kill a service animal.

SB 2103 would expand protections granted to petitioners' pets under Stalking No Contact Orders to Harassment No Contact Orders.

INDIANA

HB 1165 would increase the penalty for animal cruelty from a Class A misdemeanor to a Level 6 felony if the offense is committed in the immediate presence of a minor.

IOWA

HF 227 and **HF 869** would grant veterinarians immunity from administrative, criminal or civil liability for making good-faith reports of alleged animal misconduct. Veterinarians who knowingly make false reports would be subject to disciplinary action and civil liability and would be guilty of a misdemeanor.

HF 670 would give juvenile courts jurisdiction in proceedings concerning a child under 17 years of age if the alleged offense is animal torture.

SF 2159 would include bestiality among prohibited Internet materials considered harmful to minors

KANSAS

HB 2707 would modify the definition of abuse in the Protection From Abuse Act to include acts or threats relating to pets, and allow courts to include pets in protection orders. Such orders could grant the plaintiff with custody and control of the pets and restrain the defendant from harming or coming into contact with the pets.

KENTUCKY

HB 125 would create new crimes of possession of a firearm by convicted domestic violence abusers and subjects of domestic violence protection orders.

HB 246 ("Kyan's Law") would require animal control officers to receive training on recognizing child abuse., with immunity for acting in good faith.

MAINE

LD 962 died in committee. It would have created a new crime of Aggravated Operating Under the Influence for causing the death of a pet.

MARYLAND

HB 282 and **SB 182** would add “psychological harm” to the definition of abuse of a vulnerable adult, “the observable, identifiable and substantial impairment of a vulnerable adult’s ability to function due to severe emotional distress caused by an intentional act or series of acts.” It is not clear whether threats to, or harm of, a vulnerable adult’s animal could be specifically categorized as psychological harm.

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 4542 would make an individual responsible for the death or injury of a service animal liable for economic damages.

HB 4648 would add sentencing enhancement points for causing the death of a companion animal during the commission of another crime.

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 in the Department Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to be more effective in enforcing animal cruelty laws that protect animals and people.

HF 3696 would expand the definition of a “crime of violence” to include conviction for felony animal cruelty.

MISSISSIPPI

HB 730 died in committee. It would have removed the phrase “mankind” from the archaic definition of “the detestable and abominable crime against nature committed with mankind or with a beast”.

MISSOURI

HB 1839, HB 2921, and HB 3025 would impose civil penalties on commercial entities that allow minors to harmful sexual material, including bestiality.

HB 2292 and **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.

HB 3048 and **SB 1497** would allow courts issuing protection orders, which already allow awarding care and custody of pets, to impose a ban on the respondent from possessing or acquiring firearms.

NEBRASKA

LB 172 would expand the definition of child pornography, which includes exposing children to online acts of bestiality, to include computer- or AI-generated visual imagery.

LB 753 would allow courts hearing requests for domestic violence protection orders, which include protections for and possession of pets, to allow existence of military protection orders issued against members of the armed forces to be offered as evidence of the respondent’s past conduct and the need for a protection order.

LB 876, the Immediate Protection from Abuse Act, would allow law enforcement officers to issue an Immediate Protective Order against a restrained person whom the officer has reasonable grounds to believe poses a threat of harm against the victim or family or household member. The order would require the restrained person to relinquish sole possession of pets to the victim or household/family member and to be prohibited from coming into contact with, harming or killing the animals.

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

LB 1000 would increase penalties for repeated violations of domestic violence protection orders, which include protections for and possession of pets.

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.

HB 1522 would expand the definition of domestic violence abuse (which already includes acts of animal cruelty) to add “coercive control” which would include acts intended to threaten, intimidate, harass, isolate, coerce, control, or compel compliance of a petitioner to reasonably fear for their physical safety, consisting of harming, or threatening or attempting to harm, a petitioner’s child, relative, or animal.

NEW JERSEY

A 369 and **S 1916** 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.

A 814 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.

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 1951 and **S 405** 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 3809 and **S 1150** would expand the definition of domestic violence to include psychological abuse. While threats against a person’s animals are not specifically included in the definition of domestic violence, courts are allowed to consider such acts as coercive control in determining whether to issue a protective order.

S 2974 would require the Attorney General and the Administrative Director of the Courts to add training about recognizing the indicators of coercive control to domestic violence training requirements for law enforcement officers, judges and court personnel. Under New Jersey law, threatening to harm or kill an individual’s pet is defined as an indicator of coercive control by an abuser.

NEW MEXICO

SB 80 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have added harm or threatened harm to an animal within the definition of “abuse” under the Family Violence Protection Act, and allow courts to issue protection orders granting one party exclusive or shared possession and control of any animals and prohibiting one party from harming or taking the animals.

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, A 1885 and **S 5895** 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 memo describing the bill cites academic studies that “have found a clear link between animal cruelty during youth and violence against humans as an adult” and numerous documented studies that show that “there is a direct link between acts of cruelty to animals and violence toward others, including child abuse, spousal abuse, elder abuse and other violent behavior . . .”

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

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

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

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

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

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

A 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 4899 and **S 2280** would require law enforcement officers to conduct a lethality assessment as part of the standardized domestic incident report form. One question to be asked on the assessment form would be “Did they ever threaten to kill you, your children, or your pets?”

A 5815 and **S 4613** would expand provisions of the Family Court Act, the Criminal Procedure Law, and the Domestic Relations Law, which currently allow courts to order respondents to refrain from harming the companion animals of the petitioner or a minor child, to also grant petitioners exclusive care, control or custody of any animal.

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

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

A 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.

S 8927 would direct courts considering the awarding of possession of a companion animal in a divorce settlement to include: whether the animal was acquired before or during the marriage; which party generally provides the animal with veterinary care, social interaction and compliance with regulations; and which party has the greater ability to financially support 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.

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

SB 265 would add a history of conviction for animal cruelty offenses to the other violations that would disqualify individuals from being allowed to foster or adopt a child.

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.

HB 2018 would allow Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board investigators to access and review records of reports to local animal control agencies.

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

SB 906 would have the Department of Labor and Industry establish a Family and Medical Leave Fund allowing employees to take paid leave for a qualifying act of violence. These would include “abuse of a vulnerable adult”, which would include an act of violence against that person’s service or emotional support animal.

RHODE ISLAND

H 7133 would extend provisions for including household pets in protection orders to also allow courts to award plaintiffs custody of the animals and grant a restraining order or other injunctive relief if necessary.

H 7194 would add crimes against companion animals to the definition of domestic violence under the Domestic Violence Prevention Act.

S 2489 would include “coercive control,” including committing or threatening to commit cruelty to animals that intimidates another, within the definition of “domestic abuse”.

SOUTH CAROLINA

H 4123, the Protection of Minors from Pornography and Obscenities Act, would close a loophole and make it illegal to expose children to sexual activity, which includes bestiality, that is present in only part of materials. Currently, such acts must comprise the totality of the materials.

SOUTH DAKOTA

SB 81 would clarify the definition of the crime of harming a service animal belonging to a person with a disability to remove the requirement that the animal be in its harness at the time of the injury.

UTAH

HB 23 would increase the penalty for injuring, harassing or endangering a service animal from a misdemeanor to a felony.

HB 341 would make it a Class B misdemeanor to cause or allow a minor to attend a dogfight or a cock fight.

SB 72 would: create a new definition and standalone criminal offense of “obscene animal abuse material”; separate animal sexual abuse from the current definition of pornography; add animal crushing to the offense of distributing obscene animal abuse material; and ensure that obscene animal abuse material is treated throughout the code as pornographic materials.

SB 102 would add animal control officers to the list of professionals designated as first responders.

SB 115 died in committee. It would have required animal control officers to report suspected child maltreatment to the Division of Child and Family Services if: there is a child in the home with the alleged abused or neglected animal; a child safety concern is observed during the animal abuse investigation; or if the officer takes “serious enforcement action” in a home with a child. All animal cruelty convictions would be reported quarterly to DCFS to determine if the conviction warrants a child abuse investigation. DCFS caseworkers investigating alleged child abuse or neglect would have been permitted to report a concern of animal abuse or neglect to local animal control or law enforcement authorities. Veterinarians, who are already permitted to report suspected animal abuse, would have been protected from an employer’s prohibiting such reports or penalizing the veterinarian making the report.

VERMONT

H.492 would introduce “coercive control” into the animal cruelty context. Individuals who commit or threaten animal cruelty in order to influence a victim of domestic abuse would face additional penalties.

H.578 would add engaging in sexual conduct with an animal in the presence of a minor or in which a minor is a participant to the crime of aggravated animal cruelty.

H.841 would prohibit individuals from owning more than 35 non-neutered dogs.

H.875 would expand the prohibition against promoting and possessing sexual content involving children, including bestiality, to include computer-generated images.

VIRGINIA

HB 208 would add a new procedure for issuing “anti-harassment” orders to existing provisions that already include granting possession of pets in protective orders. The anti-harassment order would protect the petitioner, family and household members and could include granting the petitioner possession of any companion animal.

HB 266 would create a new centralized system for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect, whereby reports would go to the state Department of Social Services rather than local departments. Virginia animal control officers are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect with immunity from civil and criminal liability for reporting in good faith.

HB 901 would allow courts to issue an emergency substantial risk order against individuals believed to pose a substantial risk of personal injury to himself or others. The order would include a ban on possessing firearms. Evidence courts could consider in issuing the order could include “any recent act of violence, force or threat by the subject of the petition toward an animal.”

SB 495 would allow courts to include recent acts of violence, force or threat toward an animal as cause for issuing an Emergency Substantial Risk order prohibiting a respondent under a protective order from possessing firearms for the duration of the order.

WASHINGTON

SB 6306 would require animal control officers to notify law enforcement when they have probable cause to believe that a child is also present in a home and that circumstances affecting the animal may also affect the child. Children taken into custody as a result of these reports could not be returned home until a court has determined that the home is safe for both the child and the animal and a joint safety plan for both has been developed.

WEST VIRGINIA

HB 4130 and **HB 5207** would establish a new crime of hoarding of animals. Offenders would face misdemeanor fines of up to \$500 and risk having their animals turned over to an animal shelter for proper care and relocation.

HB 4412 would establish liability for publishers and distributors of sexual material harmful to minors, including “patently and sexually offensive” materials including bestiality.

HB 5322 and **HB 5335** would make sexual abuse of an animal and related activities a misdemeanor; offenders with prior sexual abuse convictions, or who cause serious bodily injury or death to the animal, or who engage a minor would be guilty of a felony.

HB 5419 would define working law enforcement and Search & Rescue K-9s as law enforcement officers; assault or battery of an on-duty animal would be treated similar to a crime against a human law enforcement officer.

SB 192 and **SB 688** would create a new misdemeanor crime of Assault Upon a Service Animal and subject the offender to making financial restitution for costs.

SB 714 would allow the Board of Veterinary Medicine to punish or suspend the license of veterinarians and technicians to practice upon conviction for acts of cruelty, abuse or sexual abuse to an animal or human.

WYOMING

HB 72 died in committee. It would have created a new crime of promoting obscenity to a minor that would have included depictions of sex between a human and an animal.

CANADA

Bill C-16, the Protecting Victims Act, would amend the Criminal Code to create a new offence that prohibits engaging in a pattern of coercive or controlling conduct toward an intimate partner, and also criminalize the distribution of visual representations of bestiality.

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

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



HELP US KEEP THE LINK FREE!

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

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

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

The Link Training Calendar

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

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

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

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

March 18 — Sacramento, Calif.: RedRover and Greater Good Charities will conduct a [workshop](#) on "Housing People and Pets in Crisis."

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's [Annual Conference](#) will include: Phil Arkow presenting "Protecting 'Woman's Best Friend' and the Homeless through Pet-Inclusive Protection Orders"; Sarah Reidenbach and Kate Kuzminski from Ruthless Kindness presenting "Not Without Our Pets: Keeping Women and Their Pets Safe"; and Monique Dam from Lucy's Protect presenting "Insights from a National Roundtable on Domestic Violence Perpetrated Against People and Animals".

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 "'It's Either You or the Dog!' The Increased Risks of Animal Abuse and Other Family Violence in Military Families" in a [webinar](#) for the National Organization for Victim Advocacy's DoD Domestic Abuse Advocate Training Program.

March 26 — Sacramento, Calif. (online): Kathleen Wood and Emily Lewis will present a webinar on "Protecting All Victims: How the Law Addresses Animal Abuse, Family Safety, and Professional Reporting," in a [webinar](#) for DontForgetThePets.org.

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.

March 27 — Los Angeles, Calif. (online): Phil Arkow will present "The Link between Animal Cruelty and IPV — and Effective Strategies to Protect Pets and People BEFORE They Batter!" for the [Association of Batterer Intervention Programs](#).

April 2 — (online): Four panelists from the National Sheriffs Association's Animal Cruelty and Abuse Committee will discuss the implications of The Link in a [webinar](#) on "Incorporating Animal Services into Traditional Law Enforcement Models."

April 2 — Nantes, FRANCE: AMAH will host a [colloquium](#), "Enfants et animaux, victimes des violences domestiques."

April 8 — (online): Vicki Deisner and Alana Yoder will present "Save a Pet—Save a Family" in a [webcast](#) for the Ohio Bar Association.

April 15 — Pennsylvania (online): The [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will meet.

April 24-26 — Austin, Texas: Gillian Robles of Dallas Pets Alive will present "Keeping Families Together: Temporary Care Solutions in Times of Crisis" to help animal shelters provide foster care for pets of domestic violence survivors, and Janel Griffith of Orphan Kitten Club will present "Understanding Domestic Violence to Better Support Survivors and Their Pets" at the Texas Unites for Animals Conference.

April 29 — West Olive, Mich.: Allie Phillips will present "When Animal Abuse Links to Family Violence: Strategies for Safety" for [Resilience: Advocates for Ending Violence](#).

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](#).

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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 14 — East Windsor, Conn. (online): Phil Arkow will present “The Link between Animals Abuse and Human Violence: Creating Safer Communities by Protecting Animals AND People” in a webinar for [Connecticut for Animals](#).

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.

May 18-21 — Dallas, Texas: Claire Coughlin and Nancy Blaney will present “Getting Everyone to Safety: Animal Abuse & Interpersonal Violence” at the [2026 Conference on Crimes Against Women](#).

May 28 — Colorado Springs, Colo. (online): Bill Loucks will present a [webinar](#) on “The Intersectionality of Drugs, Dog Fighting, and Human Trafficking” for the Justice Clearinghouse.

May 31 — Bloomington, Ill: Adam Stern will present three sessions on veterinary forensics at the [Prairie States Animal Welfare Conference](#).

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. 19 — 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. 6 — Raleigh, N. Car.: Phil Arkow will present “Another One Health Role for Veterinarians: Responding to Animal Cruelty and Other Family Violence” at the [North Carolina Veterinary Conference](#).

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.



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.

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

Indiana Man Convicted of Murdering Father, Mutilating Dogs

After hearing what prosecutors called several days of “horrific evidence of unspeakable crimes,” a Switzerland County, Ind. jury convicted Ryan S. Uopasarn, 32, of Vevay, for murdering his father and then mutilating the father’s four small dogs. A Switzerland County Prosecutor’s Office news release said the son had stabbed his father, Sulasak “Mike” Uopasarn over 25 times with a butcher knife before attacking Mike’s four dogs, “Mickey”, “Red”, “Bruno”, and “Star”. A young mother and her children in the adjoining apartment were evacuated from the scene. The jury did not accept the defendant’s claim that he was insane at the time of the attacks. A forensic and veterinary forensic pathologist testified in the case. Uopasarn faces a possible 65 years in prison.



Man Charged with Killing Friend’s Dog and Making Him Bury It

James Charles Morales, 57, of Winton, Calif., was booked on charges of animal cruelty, kidnapping, assault with a firearm, and being a felon in possession of a gun for allegedly forcing his friend at gunpoint to shoot, kill and bury his own dog. KFNS-TV reported that the Merced County Sheriff’s Office Animal Services Division responded to the call where the victim recounted the alleged incident.



Floridian Facing 7 Years in Prison for Distributing “Crush” Videos

Federal prosecutors in Miami, Fla. invoked the Animal Crush Video Prohibition Act to charge Francisco Javier Ravelo, 47, with distributing internet videos showing animals from dogs to primates being severely injured or killed for viewers’ sexual gratification on at least 42 occasions. The [Miami Herald](#) reported that Ravelo, a former contractor for the Air Force, was scheduled to plead guilty to a single count of distributing animal “crush videos,” which carries up to seven years in prison.

Couple Get Longest Prison Sentence for Animal Cruelty in Canadian History in Crush Video Case

The Canadian couple who had pled guilty to charges of torturing and killing 90 animals in a series of “crush videos” that they sold online ([See the December 2025 LINK-Letter](#)) Irene Lima & Chad Kabecz have been sentenced to 12 years in prison, believed to be the longest sentence for animal cruelty in Canadian history. The court also imposed a life-long ban on Irene Lima, 56, and Chad Kabecz, 41, ever owning animals or having any contact with them.



[CTV News](#) reported that in handing down the sentence, Justice Jeffrey Harris said “I cannot begin to perceive the suffering” and cited a community impact statement from the Winnipeg Humane Society that described the significant trauma experienced by staff who had to field distressing reports from the public when the case came public attention.

Woman Gets 10-15 Years for Arson Fire That Killed Cat

Coventry Township, Ohio woman who set a fire in an apartment building that killed a resident’s cat was sentenced to 10-to-15 years in prison. [WOIO-TV](#) reported that Courtney Cooney, 33, pled guilty to four felony counts of aggravated arson, burglary and cruelty to companion animals, and a misdemeanor count of damaging or endangering property. She was also placed on the Ohio Arson Registry and will be required to register with her local county sheriff’s office once a year for the rest of her life after she is released from prison.



A resident called authorities in November, 2024, saying that after he had been involved in a verbal altercation with Cooney, she returned to the apartment building and warned him to evacuate because she had set fire to another apartment. A cat named “Lily” died in the blaze.

You Can Help Us Create Safer Communities!

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

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

Join us!



NationalLinkCoalition.org



arkowpets@snip.net

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



National Link Coalition Leadership Team Board of Directors

[Phil Arkow, President/Secretary](#)

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

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

Consultant, ASPCA
Leesburg, Va.

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Mark Kumpf, CAWA](#)

Principal Director, Animal Control & Care Academy
Dayton, Ohio

[Paul Needham, MBA](#)

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

Professional Advisory Committee

[Lesley Ashworth,](#)

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

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

Retired Chief Deputy District Attorney
Denver, Colo.

[Nancy Blaney](#)

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

[Claire Coughlin](#)

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

[Steve Dale](#)

Nationally Syndicated Radio Host and Author
Chicago, Ill.

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

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

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

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

[Joey Orduna Hastings](#)

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

[Kendall Houlihan, DVM](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Senior Judge, Mental Health Court, Maryland

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

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

[Sue Skinner, MD](#)

Child Abuse Pediatrician, CARES Northwest
Portland, Ore.

[Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM](#)

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

[John Thompson](#)

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

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

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