



A monthly report of news from

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



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EXPANDING THE LINK GLOBALLY



LINK-Letter readers will have noticed an increasing number of articles in recent months describing research and programs in foreign countries. In 2025 we began a campaign to promote The Link in “Link Deserts” — underserved countries where a few solitary souls are pioneering this awareness. On Pages 13-14 you can learn how America’s experience is triggering dynamic developments worldwide to protect pets and their people from Linked harm.

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VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

Link Featured Prominently at IVFSA Conference

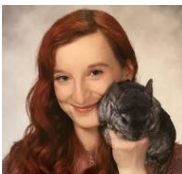


Veterinary and prosecutors' responses to acts of animal cruelty connected with interpersonal violence will be featured prominently at the 19th Annual International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association [Conference](#) in Banff, Alta., Canada, on May 12-15. In addition to numerous presentations on clinical diagnoses of non-accidental injuries, the conference will feature U.S. and Canadian Link authorities in the following programs:



Melinda Merck

Diane Balkin, Melinda Merck, Rosalind Greenwood, and Margaret Doyle will present a half-day workshop on [Court Testimony](#) to help ease the anxiety about reporting suspected animal abuse and then testifying in court.



Kali Griffith

Kali Griffith, Doris Miller, and Jill Hollander will present three case studies from Fulton County, Ga. in [Crossing Disciplines to Combat Cruelty: Veterinary Forensics and Law Enforcement Partnerships in Domestic Violence and Animal Cruelty Cases](#). A core theme is the empirical Link between animal cruelty and violence against humans, emphasizing animal abuse as a warning sign of domestic violence and an opportunity for broader public safety intervention.



Jessica Rock

Jessica Rock will also highlight the importance of coordinated multi-disciplinary responses to ensure both animal welfare and case integrity in [Animal Crime Investigations: The Law Enforcement, Animal Control and Veterinary Roles](#).



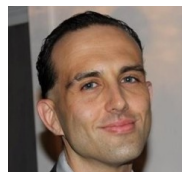
Kris Otteman

Kris Otteman and Melinda Merck will discuss conflicting issues in a case involving the death of a human and an animal in [Death on the Mountain of a Hiker and His Dog: Politics, Ethics and Consulting Experts in a Small Town](#).

Dennis Smithson of the Calgary Police Service will present [The Animal Abuse-Interpersonal Violence Link: Why It Matters for Everyday Police Work and How Agencies Can Adapt](#). The program will help overcome the obstacle that despite the connection between animal abuse and interpersonal violence being well-documented for decades, its relevance to everyday policing is still underestimated.

Sally Johnston will present [From Philosophy to Practice: Embedding the Link & One Welfare into Shelter Operations](#), describing how the Calgary Humane Society integrated these concepts into Community Services in collaboration with the Prosecution & Investigation team. By engaging with human social services, the society is addressing animal welfare upstream.

Joyce Glass will describe [Veterinarians as Stakeholders in Animal Cruelty Cases](#) who can often save both animal and human victims because animal cruelty is a gateway crime to human violence and a crime of escalation and victims are more likely to report cruelty to their veterinarian than law enforcement or a humane society.



David Rosengard

David Rosengard and Kris Otteman will help practitioners navigate thorny decision-making in [Finding the Line: The Role of Veterinary Forensics in Distinguishing between Lawful and Unlawful Animal Killing](#).



Liz Pearlman

Diane Balkin and ASPCA forensic veterinarian Liz Pearlman will similarly address ethical dilemmas in [Navigating Ethical Challenges for Prosecutors and Veterinarians](#).

Elaine Fehrs will describe the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office's response to [Link Theory: The Overlap between Animal, Child, Elder, and Domestic Abuse](#).

For Additional Information About Any LINK-Letter Articles

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

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

Collaborative Veterinary Forensics Can Aid Animal Welfare in Thailand

New research from Thailand is reporting that pet abuse and inadequate animal welfare in that country are driven by multiple, interrelated factors spanning individual, structural, legal, and sociocultural domains in areas not unlike those experienced in other countries. The authors, based in veterinary colleges and forensic institutes, argue that their study's findings highlight the need for a more integrated and operational approach to addressing pet abuse and animal welfare that includes strengthening investigations and prosecutions through greater use of veterinary forensics, harmonized protocols, and coordinated efforts working within a One Welfare framework.

Thailand has had a Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Animal Welfare Act only since 2014. While there is a legal framework to address animal abuse, effective enforcement remains constrained by limitations in investigative procedures and the lack of integration of veterinary forensic science.

"Despite the presence of such legislation, the investigation of animal cruelty cases and situations involving inadequate companion animal welfare remains challenging for responsible authorities. The acquisition of

reliable and objective evidence is therefore critical for effective legal adjudication," write the authors, explaining how veterinary forensics can enhance evidentiary reliability and investigative consistency.



Source: [Thailand map](#)

The primary drivers that constrain companion animal welfare and its investigation and prosecution in Thailand would sound familiar to any other country striving for better animal care and enforcement:

- a lack of owner responsibility and preparedness;
- insufficient knowledge and ethical awareness regarding animal care;
- socioeconomic constraints;
- deficiencies in stray animal management systems;
- weaknesses in law enforcement;
- cultural attitudes that undermine animal welfare;
- ambiguous legal definitions;
- inconsistent enforcement; and
- limited public awareness.

Greater use of standardized veterinary forensic protocols, forensic training, and increased inspection authority would allow for a more comprehensive assessment of animal health, living conditions, and owner or perpetrator behavior, particularly when distinguishing intentional harm from deliberate neglect, they write.

"By strengthening investigative capacity, standardizing procedures, and fostering interagency collaboration, Thailand can enhance animal welfare protection and ensure the consistent application of animal cruelty legislation. These efforts align with the One Welfare concept and reinforce the expanding role of veterinarians in safeguarding animal well-being, supporting justice systems, and contributing to broader societal benefits," they conclude.



-- Lorisrigool, A., Sudjaroen, Y., Kulnides, N., Pumipunto, N., & Roongsithichai, A., et al. (2026). Veterinarians' perspectives on animal welfare, legal enforcement, and forensic readiness in companion animal cruelty investigations in Thailand: A cross-sectional qualitative study. *Vet World*, 19(2), 725-744.

Suspicious Deaths of Girlfriend's Cats Prompts DVM to Call Police

When an Island County, Wash. veterinarian said "It was 'highly unusual' for two healthy cats to choke on the same toy simultaneously," a call to the Sheriff's Office resulted in a forensic necropsy and a 25-year-old man being arrested on two counts of animal cruelty in the asphyxiation deaths of his girlfriend's cats, "Francisco" and "Mila." The [Whidbey News-Times](#) said that because Kristian Rokita is a Navy service member, the Naval Criminal Investigation Service was also involved.



A [national news media](#) source noted "Cases of intentional animal abuse are increasingly recognized as linked to other forms of violence, with the FBI classifying animal cruelty as a serious felony offense. This incident highlights the importance of veterinary forensics and public awareness in detecting and preventing animal abuse, which often goes unreported."



Link Seen as Driving Interest in Veterinary Forensics in Ukraine

Veterinary forensics in foreign countries is actively developing as an independent field of veterinary medicine, which is largely driven by increased awareness of animal cruelty and the establishment of a link between such acts and violence against humans.”

That’s one of the key conclusions in a new research article from Ukraine that details the forensic diagnosis of sharp-force injuries. While most of the article focuses on the clinical, laboratory, and instrumental diagnostic features that make it possible to clearly distinguish the injury and classify it into an appropriate group of conditions with



Ivan Yatsenko

similar etiology and pathogenesis, the article emphasizes that the worldwide growth of the veterinary fo-

rensic field – and its emergence as an independent field of study – is driven by awareness of The Link between animal abuse and human violence.

Ivan Yatsenko, Leading Researcher in the Forensic Research Laboratory of the National Scientific Center’s Forensic Science Institute, and Valentyn Kozachok of the State Biotechnological University, conclude that a unified approach to the formulation of forensic veterinary diagnoses should be introduced in Ukraine where this work is still in its infancy.

– Yatsenko, I., & Kozachok, V. (2026). Features of structuring a forensic veterinary diagnosis caused by sharp instruments. *One Health Journal*, 4(2), 55-65.



Domestic Violence Link Drives New Dutch Veterinary Forensics Center

Yet another recognition that The Link between animal cruelty and domestic violence is driving global interest in veterinary forensics was just reported in the Netherlands, where the [Faculty of Veterinary Medicine](#) at Utrecht University has launched the Veterinary Forensic Expert Center (Landelijk Expertisecentrum Dieren mishandeling, LED) “to prevent more serious abuse from occurring in the future.”

The Center’s formation was announced in the [Academic Digest](#), prefaced with the statement that “research indicates that there is a relationship between animal abuse and domestic violence.” The veterinary forensics field is still a relatively new field in the Netherlands, but the Center’s combining the knowledge of specialist veterinarians with that of forensic medical experts is intended to assist practitioners in not misdiagnosing non-accidental injuries from disease, accident or animal behavioral causes. The staff of the Center will work with criminologists and psychologists to conduct scientific research into the phenomenon of animal abuse in the Netherlands.

“The relationship between animal abuse and domestic violence is so strong that indications of animal abuse can serve as an ‘early warning sign’ of the development of psychopathology in children and adults. Early intervention is essential in order to prevent more serious abuse from occurring in the future,” the article said.



Wouder Dhert

“Animal Welfare is very important to our society,” said Dean Wouter Dhert of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. “The Expert Centre can address these concerns in society at large by providing information about the issue and raising awareness.”



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Shelter Extols Value of Pets as Emotional Anchors for Survivors

For many individuals experiencing domestic violence or homelessness, a companion animal is far more than a pet—they are family, comfort, safety, and hope. In moments of crisis, when stability, trust, and security have been shattered, companion animals often provide something profoundly steady: unconditional love.”

“When shelters provide pet-friendly options, barriers fall.”
— Christine Toedebusch, Empower Yolo

That was the advice given by Sandra Solorzano, Director of Safehouse Programs at Empower Yolo, a pet-friendly domestic violence shelter in Woodland, Yolo County, Calif., in a [February 26 blog](#) that described the incredible attachments that survivors of domestic violence and homelessness

have with their pets — and how those bonds are weaponized by abusers.

For people experiencing the traumas of domestic violence and the instability that accompanies homelessness, pets can be “emotional anchors,” offering a nonjudgmental presence when stigma and shame feel overwhelming, the blog continued. Pets’ emotional security is especially important when the survivor’s sense of trust has been deeply damaged.

The blog cited ASPCA, RedRover and Animal Welfare Institute statistics about the barriers that pet ownership can create for domestic violence and homelessness survivors. But “when shelters and service organizations provide pet-friendly options or foster partnerships, something powerful happens—barriers fall. Survivors are more likely to seek safety sooner, and families can begin to heal



Promoting safe, healthy & resilient communities

without the added trauma of separation,” added Empower Yolo board member Christine Toedebusch.

Empower Yolo became a pet-friendly shelter in 2018; in 2025, 40 pets stayed with their families in the shelter. The organization also coordinates community pet clinics that reduce other barriers to care.

“Companion animals are not just pets—they are family. And when everything else feels uncertain, that bond offers unconditional love—a powerful source of strength, healing, and hope that helps families move forward together,” the blog concluded.

Indiana Expands “Domestic Violence Animal Cruelty” Law

Indiana has expanded its unique “domestic violence animal cruelty” law to not only increase the penalty for harming an animal as a means of coercive control but also to expand the types of actions that constitute this crime.



HB 1165, authored by Rep. Wendy McNamara (R—Posey County), was signed into law on March 4 by Gov. Mike Braun. It amends I.C.A. § 35-46-3-12.5 which made it illegal to knowingly or intentionally kill a vertebrate animal with the intent to threaten, intimidate, coerce, harass, or terrorize a

family or household member. The new provisions, which take effect July 1, also make it illegal to abuse, abandon or neglect an animal under these circumstances.

The new law also increases 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.

While 20 states and the District of Columbia have laws that define acts of intimidating animal abuse as domestic violence, coercion, coercive control, or stalking, Indiana is the only state with a specific crime of “domestic violence animal cruelty”.

Two other Indiana statutes, I.C.A. § 31-9-2-42 and § 34-6-2-34.5 include acts of animal abuse or death within the definition of “crime involving domestic or family violence.”

Connecticut Bill Would Publish Statewide List of Safe Havens for Pets

When a domestic violence survivor needs to find either a co-shelter or foster care for her pets, how does she know where to turn to find a safe haven for her furry family members?

A novel bill in the Connecticut General Assembly would help solve that dilemma for survivors in that state. In addition to the national directories available online (*See accompanying article*), **S.B. 318** would require the State Veterinarian to identify animal rescue organizations, dog pounds and animal control



Rep. Nicholas Menapace

facilities in Connecticut that could serve as an immediate point of contact for domestic violence victims.



Sen. Martin Looney

The list would be updated regularly and distributed to the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, other domestic violence agencies, and each police department, animal control facility and animal rescue organization in the state.

The bill was introduced on Feb. 26 by the Environment Committee. It was co-sponsored by Sen. Martin Looney (D—New Haven) and Rep. Nicholas Menapace (D—East Lyme).

Several national organizations publish online resource lists to help provide safety for the pet victims of domestic violence. These include:

[Sheltering Animals and Families Together \(SAF-T\)](#)[®] — a list of 300 shelters in the U.S. that accept family pets. (Note: all shelters are required to accept Service Animals). It also includes pet-friendly shelters in other countries.

[DomesticShelters.org](#) — Enter a ZIP Code or city to locate local shelters, hotlines and assistance organizations. Shelters with both onsite and offsite pet programs are included.

[Safe Havens for Pets](#) — The Animal Welfare Institute's searchable directory of resources for domestic violence survivors and people experiencing homelessness with pets. Agencies listed include those providing pet sheltering, or have a relationship with an entity that does, or that provide referrals to such facilities.

[BestyBnB](#) — helps individuals to become pet caregivers who can provide foster care for animals surviving domestic violence.

[Don't Forget the Pets](#) — partners with RedRover to provide training, coaching and construction assistance to help domestic violence and homeless shelters become pet-friendly

The National Link Coalition's **[National Directory of Abuse Investigation Agencies](#)** — does not list pet-friendly shelters but maintains a list of who to call to report animal abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse in 6,500 cities and counties in the U.S.

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.

Children's Book Praises the Courage to Speak Up About The Link

What happens when one small voice finds the courage to speak? Because sometimes the smallest voice can make the biggest difference. And sometimes the bravest thing a child can do...is to tell their story.

That's the message embedded in a new children's book describing two young girls navigating challenges within their homes, where both child and animal welfare are concerned. Through their friendship, one finds the courage to speak up, and together they reach a trusted adult. From there, compassionate community helpers step in, creating safety and support for both the child and the animal, and helping the family begin to heal.

The Courage to Tell: The Power of Friendship, Compassion & Healing Grace was written and published by an authority in the field.



Jacqueline Ford

Jacqueline Ford is an advocate for children, families and animals whose career has been dedicated to strengthening communities and supporting those in need. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Quinnipiac University and a master's degree in social work from Southern Connecticut State University. In addition to her professional work supporting chil-

dren and families, she serves as an adjunct professor, helping prepare the next generation of human service professionals.

Ford also is the recipient of two national honors for her leadership and advocacy: the 2024 Nexstar Remarkable Woman Award and the 2026 Ujima Award from the National Adoption Association.

"My hope is truly to provide a meaningful resource and help educate communities in a way that is accessible, compassionate, and impactful," Ford tells *The LINK-Letter*.

The book tells the story of Rebecca who loves animals and believes every creature deserves kindness. When a new neighbor named Addie moves in with her dog "Lily", Rebecca begins to notice things others might miss — a chain tied too tight, an empty water bowl, and a friend carrying worries too big for her heart.

As their friendship grows, Addie bravely shares the struggles happening inside her home. With compassion and courage, Rebecca helps her find the strength to tell someone who can help.

Soon, caring adults and community helpers step in, showing that speaking up can bring safety, healing, and hope—not only for Addie, but for Lily too.



The Courage to Tell is a tender and powerful story about friendship, bravery, and the caring adults who step forward when children need them most. Through the journey of two brave girls, this book gently reminds children that they are never alone and that telling a trusted adult can lead to help and hope.

Inspired by Ford's lifelong passion for protecting both children and animals, the story also highlights an important truth: when children are unsafe or hurting, animals in the home may be hurting too. By recognizing these connections, communities can respond with compassion and support.

Written with heart and purpose, *The Courage to Tell* is a story for children, families, educators, and community professionals who believe that courage, kindness, and caring adults can change lives.

The book is available on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com).

Paraguay Mandates Animal Welfare Education Based on The Link

The government of Paraguay has taken the bold step of mandating that Animal Welfare be integrated into the curriculum of both basic and secondary education nationwide with a [new law](#) whose underlying premise is the recognition that cruelty toward animals often serves as an early indicator of violent behavior within society.

On Feb. 26, the Ministry of Education and Sciences changed Animal Welfare from a tangential topic to a mandatory one beginning with the 2026 school year. The Ministry called the new law No. 7513/25 a milestone that promises to transform the foundations of social coexistence and ethical formation within the country.

“Paraguay has the opportunity to transform its schools into laboratories for social peace.”

Integrating animal welfare into the classroom acts as a tool for primary social prevention, said the Ministry. The

public policy aim is to ensure that the 21st-century Paraguayan student not only masters technical-scientific competencies but also cultivates the emotional and ethical intelligence necessary to coexist harmoniously within a bio-diverse environment through a “pedagogy of care” instilled into the very core of learning. The new law transitions from a purely biological approach to teaching toward a form of civic education grounded in respect for sentient beings.

The Ministry, in collaboration with the National Directorate for Animal Defense, Health, and Welfare, has structured this new curricular component not as an optional workshop, but as a distinct subject with its own allocated instructional time and clear learning objectives.

The directive recognized the challenges on school time and resources when introducing a mandated subject. But it called on school principals to use adaptive leadership as an opportunity to utilize the subject matter as a unifying theme for innovative institutional projects. Successful implementation will not stem from merely “filling the hour”, but rather from the leadership team’s capacity to foster transdisciplinary Project-Based Learning that enables students to investigate real-world problems within their communities — such as stray animal overpopulation, wildlife protection, or responsible pet ownership — and to propose concrete solutions.

The mandate sees the curriculum as infusing a sense of empathy in students that will result in a substantial improvement in school climate. By teaching children and young people to recognize the suffering and needs of a being unable to express itself through human language, their skills in listening and compassion toward their own peers will be strengthened. Institutions that have implemented pilot programs in other countries have reported a decrease in bullying rates and an increase in the sense of community responsibility. “Paraguay now has the opportunity to validate these theo-



ries on a national scale, transforming its schools into laboratories for social peace,” the Ministry added.

The Ministry sees the new mandate as positioning Paraguay as a model for all of South America, particularly for educational policymakers in Argentina, Chile and Colombia.

“The question is no longer whether this content belongs in schools, but rather how it can be integrated in a way that generates a tangible impact on students’ academic profiles upon graduation. Paraguay’s educational leadership now faces the challenge of demonstrating that this innovation is not merely a cosmetic change on a report card, but a profound transformation of institutional culture,” they concluded.

“The lesson from Paraguay is clear: the most powerful curricular innovation is not always the one that incorporates the most technology, but rather the one that reclaims ethics as the central pillar of knowledge. Educational administrators now face the mission of transforming this legislation into a vibrant learning experience — one that turns every school into a sanctuary of respect and a driving force for change toward a more just and compassionate society.”



HUMANE EDUCATION... and THE LINK

French Humane Education Tools Include “Le Lien”

Our French counterpart organization, [AMAH](#) (Association contre la Maltraitance Animale et Humaine) has produced a pair of educational tools designed to increase families’ awareness of what their dogs and cats need to be happy — and the actions, including those involving The Link (“Le Lien” in French) that make their lives difficult.

Two posters titled “Violent Mon Maitre?” list, in a color-coded scale sliding from green to red, situations that cause a dog or a cat to lead a good life or a difficult one. The lists start out with needs for fresh food, water, shelter, veterinary care, and grooming. At the bottom of each list, in deep red, are three Link-based symptoms of maltreatment (as translated into English):

- My master **threatens/hits** the humans I live with.
- My master threatens to **kill** me if my mistress leaves.
- I am a **victim of zoocriminal acts**, including rape.

The posters accompany an educational guide to pet care and instructions on how to report abuse if you are a victim or a witness.

AMAH Founding President Anne-Claire Gagnon tells The LINK-Letter that the informational materials also include a guide to train veterinarians to be alert for signs of possible animal abuse.



LAW ENFORCEMENT... and THE LINK

Link Cited in Call for Tougher Laws in Chicago

Steve Dale, the [nationally-syndicated radio host](#) about animal behavior and welfare issues and a member of the National Link Coalition’s Professional Advisory Committee, testified in March before the City of Chicago’s Committee on Public Safety. Dale, who broadcasts on Chicago’s WGN radio station, referenced The Link in speaking in support of a proposal to hold animal cruelty offenders more accountable and in support of the city’s Animal Care & Control program.

Citing statistics describing what Dale called “the well-documented connection between animal abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and other violent crimes,” he noted the unfortunate reality that “Chicago does

not currently have a domestic violence shelter that allows families to flee with their pets. While PAWS Chicago and Anti-Cruelty can temporarily house animals, most people want to escape with their entire family. Many victims don’t escape the violence because they have nowhere to go with their pets. We must do better.”



The proposal, which would increase animal cruelty fines to \$5,000 with higher penalties for repeat offenders, passed the committee and went to the full City Council.

SOCIAL WORK... and THE LINK

Why Do Social Work Ethics, Training and Practice Ignore Animals?

Why should social workers care about animal welfare?

That's the key question raised in a provocative article that extensively cites Link literature in arguing that the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics and the Council on Social Work Education's curriculums are so anthropocentric that by ignoring the impact of human-animal interactions and acts of violence the profession itself is actually oppressive.

Paul J. Silverberg at Tulane University argues that the absence of references to human-animal interactions in the moral and professional framework of the Code of Ethics is a glaring omission. A more inclusive value system that is not limited to just the human species, he argues, would be more just and complete and help to advance the cause for the rights and wellbeing of non-human animals on a wider national as well as international scale.

“Social workers do not typically assess for animal abuse in the field, an oversight which can put our human clients at risk.”

— Paul J. Silberberg

when examining psychosocial factors such as family systems, support, stressors, trauma, as well as death and dying.”

Social work's failure to include animals results in confusion and suboptimal practice while encountering them – and the humans whose lifestyles and decisions are intertwined with them -- in the field. “For this demographic of Americans, these companion animals may hold a central place within the family system and thus are an important part of the lives of our clients and patients,” he continues. “Is this in itself not a reason for a more progressive, open-minded stance towards animal welfare and expanded (i.e., nonhuman)

notions of justice in the social work profession?”

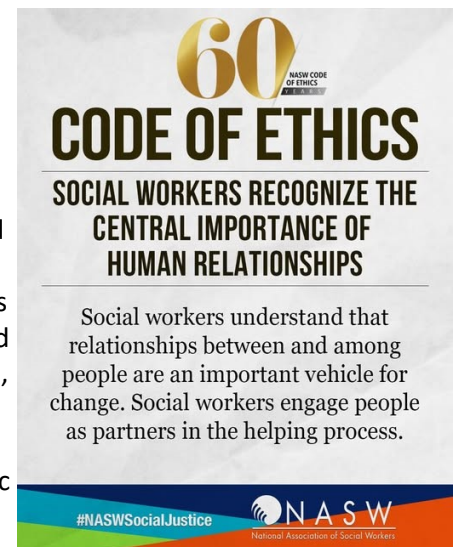
He describes the shared history of social welfare and animal welfare, such as early Links between child and animal protection, and the more recent coexistence between domestic violence and animal abuse. “For

social workers focused in on their human clientele, this should have meaning on multiple levels – from a (1) treatment perspective, (2) to reporting, (3) to structural matters within the shelter system – such as the need for more facilities to be pet friendly,” he notes. “Yet, these glaring gaps remain.”

He criticizes the field because despite a considerable body of research documenting the physical, psychological and social benefits of human-animal interaction and the critical Link between interpersonal violence and animal abuse, these topics are not typically a part of mainstream social work education and training, “which is a significant detriment to the individuals and families that we work with.”

Social work has always been a progressive field that has advocated for the rights of the oppressed, the marginalized, and those within society without a voice, he concludes. Social work continues to evolve, and has already added “environmental social work” and incorporates big ideas and concepts from such other fields as psychology, nursing, education, sociology, economics, and law. But by ignoring “the global oppression of trillions of terrestrial and aquatic animals per year,” social work ethics as currently defined is in itself oppressive and a prejudiced form of justice favoring those in power (i.e., human beings).

-- Silberberg, P.J. (2023). *Animal ethics, animal welfare, and speciesism: Considerations for social work. International Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics, 20(2), 72-111.* <https://doi.org/10.55521/10-020-206>



ELDER ABUSE... and THE LINK

Atlanta D.A. Organizes Animal/Adult Protection Collaboration

One of the few multi-disciplinary teams addressing The Link between elder abuse and animal abuse is taking action steps in Atlanta, where Fulton County District Attorney Fani T. Willis has organized an Elder Abuse, Neglect, & Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team (EMDT) to improve detection and intervention strategies for cases involving older adults subjected to financial exploitation and various forms of abuse. Fulton County Animal Services is one of 15 core members and supporting organizations that are building more collaboration between adult protection, animal protection, domestic violence, law enforcement, and judicial officials to protect elders.

“Animals can serve as instruments of control for abusers and act as key indicators of increased risk to both the senior and the pet.”

— Fulton Co, EMDT

Elder Abuse Prevention presentations at senior facilities throughout the county.

Multiple issues were identified in a report such as the need for additional cross-reporting, specialized training on elder abuse, polyvictimization, and prioritizing coordinated support services rather than prosecution. An entire section of the team’s report focuses on animals and elder abuse:

“Emerging evidence points to a significant connection between animal cruelty and elder abuse in Fulton County, similar to the Link between animal cruelty and other crimes against people. This relationship is often overlooked, yet cases show a high frequency of coercive control where abusers exploit seniors’ bonds with their pets through threats, neglect, or actual harm to instill fear and compliance,” the report states.

“In 2025, among seniors who reported both a com-

panion animal in the home and an abuser known to them, the animal was used as a tool of abuse in every case where data was available. This pattern indicates that animals can serve as instruments of control for abusers and act as key indicators of increased risk to both the senior and the pet.”



D.A. Fani T. Willis

The report’s findings mirror what has long been known in the domestic violence/animal abuse Link:

“Seniors may stay with an abuser out of fear of losing their pet, either because they cannot care for the animal alone, because housing restrictions prohibit pets, or because leaving could mean losing a vital source of companionship. Companion animals lessen loneliness, promote physical activity, reinforce daily routines, and foster social connections, all of which protect older adults,” the report continues.

“To improve safety for people and animals, measures such as implementing standardized screening for pet-related coercion into elder abuse assessments, establishing cross-reporting and referral protocols among Adult Protective Services, law enforcement, domestic violence organizations, animal services, and veterinarians, along with expanding pet-inclusive safety planning, temporary foster and boarding programs, and pet-friendly shelters should be considered.”

The report calls for targeted training, public education, and enhanced data collection on pet-related abuse dynamics that can help define the scope, guide resource allocation, and strengthen prevention and intervention efforts. It also calls for further research and a coordinated response.

The EMDT is already piloting these and other recommendations by developing a detailed organizational framework, maintaining regular case review meetings to encourage collaboration, and engaging in community outreach to share information. Ongoing efforts will focus on understanding the connection between animal abuse and elder victimization and using that knowledge for prevention. “Such programs should encompass scam awareness, the psychological effects of aging, and the link between animal cruelty and elder victimization,” it concludes.

— Fulton County District Attorney (2026). Elder Abuse, Neglect, & Financial Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team. Atlanta: Fulton County District Attorney’s Office.

THE LINK in THE LITERATURE

“Ecologies of Violence” Develop in Public Health Emergencies

The two-way interface between acts of violence and public health emergencies is part of what Brazilian researchers called the “ecologies of violence” that can affect humans and animals in “urban peripheries” where both are victims of violence and where pathogens and opportunities for zoonotic spillover appear.



The researchers, based in the medical and veterinary medical faculties at the University of São Paulo, addressed five pathogenic processes of the ecologies of violence in urban peripheries during the Covid pandemic: urban

Oswaldo Santos Baquero capitalism; forced displacement and occupations; unhoused situations; imprisonment; and families and domestic environments. Using data from a low-income urban settlement in São Paulo, they explored the violence that aggravates and is aggravated by health emergencies triggered by infectious diseases.

Echoing multiple studies that reported increased rates of domestic and animal abuse during the pandemic, they noted that the fear of consequences for those who consider seeking help and for other victims, or potential victims, discourages people from seeking shelter, and even more so from reporting aggression. Exacerbating this dilemma is that shelters’ refusal to accept animals acts as a further barrier.

“Since the fear of what might happen to their companions may dissuade the victims from seeking help, the bond between humans and their animal companions works as a form of coercion in such cases,” they wrote.

They also addressed the restricting absence of pet-friendly shelters for Brazil’s homeless populations. The affective bonds between humans and their animal companions are particularly important in unhoused situations since these bonds provide mutual support and care for humans and other animals alike, they added.



-- Santos Baquero, O., Aparecida da Silva, S.C., & Faria, J.A. (2025). Ecologies of violence in urban peripheries in times of multispecies health emergencies. *Physis – Revista de Saude Coletiva* 35(2). <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-73312025350201en>

Dutch Study Examines Behavioral Signs of Child and Animal Abuse

Citing several Link-themed publications that describe the veterinarian’s role in detecting and responding to animal abuse, a new study from The Netherlands is reporting that animal shelter staff and adopters both believe that behavioral signs of fear, such as fear of the owner, are relevant indicators of possible abuse. However, possible behavioral signs of animal abuse are understudied, in contrast to extensive studies of behavioral signs of child abuse.



Ineke van Herwijnen and colleagues in the University of Utrecht Faculty of Veterinary Medicine wrote that timely and adequate recognition of animal abuse is as important to animal welfare as it is to child abuse.

Ineke van Herwijnen However, studies on behavioral signs of animal abuse have received less attention than the physical signs, perhaps because behavioral signs are less likely than physical signs to show up in a veterinary clinical setting. An animal shelter setting may be a more appropriate venue for future studies, they wrote.

Person-specific fear was indicated by shelter staff and animal adopters as a more accurate indicator of animal abuse than aggression, problems with human-social bond formation and person-specific pleasing behavior.

The authors wrote that the findings indicate a possible use of behavioral signs in studying animal abuse among a broader population. They suggested that to further assess the validity of animal behavioral signs as a source of animal abuse recognition, future studies will need to observe animals known to have previously suffered abuse.

-- van Herwijnen, I.R., Reinders, N., Buis, E.M., & Vinke, C.M. (2026). Abuse recognition by shelter staff and shelter animal adopters.



PLoS One 21(3): e0343066. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0343066>

Growing GLOBAL LINK AWARENESS in “Link Deserts”

When the National Link Coalition was created in 2008, we could not envision how rapidly our premise would inspire others in foreign countries and gain traction on a global scale. Within a few years, similar Link groups began to emerge, primarily in Eurocentric and Western nations: Sweden, the UK, Portugal, Spain, Canada, Latin America, Japan, Australia, France, Italy, and others.

Our American experiences, programs, research and legislation have inspired a worldwide network of academic and advocate changemakers for systemic pet welfare initiatives that prevent animal cruelty more effectively by demonstrating how it also impacts human well-being. The LINK-Letter has been instrumental in nurturing this progress and channeling this dramatic growth: over 20% of our multidisciplinary readers are in 86 countries; 93 of the 349 articles published in 2025 (26.6%) covered news and research in “Link Deserts” and other foreign countries.

Here are a few recent examples of how our efforts are succeeding:

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND: Continued its groundbreaking work by publishing 14 articles (including one from the National Link Coalition) urging **the inclusion of the human-animal bond and animal abuse in social work training and practice.**

AUSTRALIA: Parliament added the welfare of companion animals to what courts must consider in divorce case dispositions. Tasmania now **defines animal abuse as family violence** or coercive control. New South Wales affirmed a resolution that **animals are also victims of domestic and family violence.**

BELGIUM: A Link training module was developed for veterinary students.

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA: A criminology student conducted that country’s **first research on the complex interactions of violence against humans and animals** and the inconsistencies of criminal law prosecutions that hinder effective protections.

BRAZIL researchers reported: a **Link between animal hoarding cases and human and animal fatalities** from fires; a **Link between cockfighting, child abuse and domestic violence**; and a tool for **veterinarians to identify animal cruelty in homes with domestic violence.**

CZECH REPUBLIC researchers reported that domestic violence is a cause for people to become homeless, and because these individuals’ emotional bonds with pets can be very strong more **homeless shelters should allow pets to remove a barrier to finding shelter.**

ECUADOR, experiencing high rates of intimate partner violence, reported that **animal maltreatment by abusive partners operates in parallel with intimate partner violence**, particularly in the societal norms of a *machista* culture.

FINLAND farmers’ rationalizations and denials of animal abuse were found to be similar to those employed by domestic violence abusers, suggesting **similarities and connections between domestic violence and animal abuse.**

FRANCE convened its **first conference on animal abuse for veterinarians.**

HUNGARY: Veterinarians conducted that nation’s **first study of public attitudes towards animal sexual abuse**, observing that “zoophilic acts often serve as a predictor for other criminal offenses, and perpetrators of such acts are frequently observed to commit additional crimes, as well.”

INDIA is **training police officers and calling for more stringent anti-cruelty laws** based on how people who harm animals often hurt more animals and humans.

INDONESIA: Psychologists conducted that nation’s first study of **childhood acts of animal cruelty as a crucial marker for mental health** that relates to Conduct Disorder and Antisocial Personality Disorder.

IRELAND launched its **first pet safekeeping program** for domestic violence survivors.

ITALY: Health and veterinary authorities are proposing a structured operational protocol to support **multidisciplinary assessment and management of animal hoarding cases.**

JAPAN: Veterinarians reported they need more training on The Link. Other researchers found that **pets are often killed in murder-suicide cases.**

KAZAKHSTAN: Researchers called for joint assessment and intervention programs between animal protection and domestic violence services in describing **animal abuse as “a growing public health concern” and “an early indicator of domestic violence,”** especially when directed against pets.

MEXICO enacted a law allowing courts to award custody of pets in the animals’ best interests during divorce property settlements in recognition of pets’ emotional and social significance, particularly if they have been threatened as part of domestic violence’s coercive control.

THE NETHERLANDS: The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Utrecht University launched the Veterinary Forensic Expert Center **“to prevent more serious abuse from occurring in the future.”**

(Continued on Page 14)

Growing GLOBAL LINK AWARENESS in “LINK DESERTS”

(Continued from Page 13)

NIGERIA: Researchers called for taking animal cruelty more seriously as it is **a form of violence whose study will help give insight into other social vices** and results in more stray dogs and rabies epidemics.

PARAGUAY mandated the inclusion of Animal Welfare as a **distinct core curriculum topic in primary and secondary education** based on the underlying premise that the recognition that cruelty toward animals often serves as an early indicator of violent behavior within society.

THE PHILIPPINES: A prominent newspaper columnist published “Dark Link Between Animal and Human Abuse”, citing Link statistics in calling for support of a Senate bill that would enact stricter standards, harsher penalties, and a national Animal Welfare Task Force that **“could help prevent future crimes against animals and humans alike.”**

PORTUGAL: A study of **mothers and children in domestic violence shelters** reported the beneficial aspects of animal-assisted interventions.

ROMANIA: We conducted a podcast with animal welfare advocates **trying to establish a Link coalition.**

SERBIA: Researchers called for **more severe sentences in animal cruelty convictions** due to the fact that scientific research and practice have shown that violence against animals often leads to violence against people and that punishing perpetrators actually protects both animals and people. Two studies gave **veterinarians guidance on how to recognize non-accidental injury committed by juveniles** in a country where “The social and legal responses to crimes of animal abuse committed by juveniles and children are often inadequate or entirely absent.”

SOUTH KOREA: Veterinarians recommended that they receive training and legal protections to be **mandated to report suspected animal abuse** to fill a crucial gap in ethical responsibilities and as a way to improve animal protection. A women’s study journal proposed four **recommendations to protect human and animal survivors of domestic violence.**

SPAIN: Canary Islands veterinary students’ attitudes about **animal abuse** were explored. Another study cited The Link in calling for **more training in veterinary forensics.**

THAILAND: Veterinarians and prosecutors need a **more integrated approach and harmonized protocols** to address pet abuse and animal welfare enforcement.

TURKEY’s courts are having a national discussion about **awarding pet custody in divorce settlements** following a case that may set a precedent for treating companion animals as family members rather than property. The **need for veterinary forensics and Link training** was cited to better protect animals. Link issues were found to be part of **veterinary pathology cases.**

UNITED KINGDOM: Pilot programs are introducing **the first Veterinary Social Work programs** in Jersey and Northern Ireland. **100% of police departments** now include Link information and resources on their websites.



And Here’s What Researchers Are Telling Us...

UKRAINE: “Veterinary forensics in foreign countries is actively developing as an independent field of veterinary medicine, which is largely driven by increased awareness of animal cruelty and the establishment of a link between such acts and violence against humans.”

ARGENTINA: “Thank you very much for your interest in our work and for helping to raise awareness of this important issue. We highly value your outreach and engagement. Research on the intersection of domestic violence and animal welfare is of great importance. Unfortunately, this area has not yet been sufficiently developed in our country, and we hope to contribute more substantially to it in the future. We sincerely appreciate your willingness to share The Link’s resources with us.”

INDIA: “Addressing animal abuse as a potential sentinel indicator of broader family and community violence is an area that urgently needs greater research, policy attention, and public sensitization in India. Understanding animal abuse as part of the broader continuum of human violence can significantly strengthen prevention, early intervention, and protection frameworks.”

ITALY: “The Link between animal abuse and human violence remains largely unexplored in Italy: the available evidence is still extremely limited and confined to very specific disciplinary contexts. We warmly welcome the opportunity to access the resources made available by the Coalition and are open to considering possible forms of collaboration that may help strengthen awareness and research on the Link in the Italian context.”



Malaysian Op-Ed Cites Link in Call for Tougher Enforcement

Describing how “numerous international studies show a strong Link between animal abuse and violent crimes against humans,” an [op-ed](#) in the March 14 *Star Malaysia* newspaper encouraged readers to treat animal cruelty as a serious crime rather than a minor offense, and called on lawmakers and judges to strengthen enforcement as a way to deter future offenders.



In “More bite needed against abusers,” animal welfare advocate Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye wrote that although Malaysia’s 2015 Animal Welfare Act allows for stiff fines and imprisonment, courts generally hand down only minimal fines, resulting in “a frustrating gap between the Act and its actual enforcement.”

The op-ed emphasized that:

- Animal cruelty reflects a moral failing in society and erodes our collective compassion.
- A society that ignores cruelty to animals risks normalizing violence in other forms.
- When Parliament enacts tough laws, it reflects the will of the people. If courts consistently impose minimal penalties, the deterrent effect is weakened. Lenient sentences may embolden offenders.
- A meaningful sentence serves three purposes: punishment, deterrence, and public confidence in the justice system. Without adequate sentencing, the law becomes symbolic rather than effective.

“Animal cruelty is sometimes viewed as a low priority misdemeanor. The courts should instead view animal abuse as a precursor to social instability or future violence against humans,” the op-ed concluded.



ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE...and THE LINK

Norwegian Podcast Investigates “The Dog Brothel”

The issue of animal sexual abuse is being raised in Norway, where the national broadcaster NRK published a three-episode [podcast](#) recently on sexual abuse of dogs, called The Dog Brothel (Hundebordellet) inspired by investigations by the news outlet Nidaros into 260 members of the Zooville animal abuse forum.

Police opened an investigation but after six months were unable to



Anja Vaskinn

find out who was behind the group and the case was dropped. In May 2024, the Storting parliament approved a proposal to make possessing and sharing animal abuse material a criminal offense. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food proposed amendments. All responses were posi-

tive and several respondents believed that criminalization will increase the focus on the problem.

Anja Vaskinn, senior researcher at the Regional Competence Center for Security, Prison and Forensic Psychiatry at Oslo University Hospital, tells *The LINK-Letter* that the topic aroused disbelief, disgust and anger.



LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

A dozen state legislatures have adjourned; others are busily working on proposed legislation in their 2026 sessions. We're following 196 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.

H.R. 7544, the Illegal Alien Animal Abuser Removal Act, would make any illegal alien convicted of animal cruelty or fighting subject to immediate deportation.

H.R. 7567, the Farm, Food and National Security Act of 2026 (the "Farm Bill") would reauthorize Protecting Animals With Shelter funding of \$3,000,000 annually through 2031 to make domestic violence shelters pet-friendly

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

AB 119 would require the Department of Social Services to develop a standardized curriculum for mandated reporters of child abuse, which include animal control officers.

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.

S.B. 318 would require the State Veterinarian to identify animal rescue organizations, dog pounds and animal control facilities that could serve as an immediate point of contact for domestic violence victims needing to place their companion animals in the care of another due to such circumstances. The list would be distributed to the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, police departments, and animal facilities.

FLORIDA

SB 468 and **HB 921** died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have required 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have allowed the Board of Veterinary Medicine to rescind the registration of any veterinary professional associate, veterinary technician, or veterinary technologist 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

SUCCESS!! **HB 1165** increases 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. It also updates its unique “domestic violence animal cruelty” statute to now include abusing, abandoning or neglecting an animal, as well as killing it, as a method of coercive control. It is a Class 6 felony.

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. Local government units can opt out of the training.

HB 418 was attached as an amendment to **SB 122**. It requires courts determining child custody to consider whether there are allegations of domestic violence and abuse against either party; it would be a presumption that joint custody and equally shared parenting time would not be in the best interests of the child if one party has committed two or more acts of domestic violence and abuse. Kentucky’s definition of domestic violence and abuse includes acts against animals intended as coercion, control, punishment, intimidation, or revenge against a household member.

HB 637 would require veterinarians to report if an animal for which they have a veterinarian-client-patient relationship has been abused.”

LOUISIANA

HB 126 would allow victims of sexual abuse to be accompanied by a facility dog. The dog would need to be obscured from the jury at all times

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 and **SF 3847** would expand the definition of a “crime of violence” to include conviction for felony animal cruelty.

HF 3946 and **SF 4301** would amend the definition of domestic abuse to include “manifesting a purpose or intent to injure any pet or companion animal owned, possessed or kept by the family or household member.”

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”.

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

MISSOURI

HB 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.

LB 1000 was indefinitely postponed. It would have increased 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.

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.

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 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.

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



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.

S 9427 would define threats or harm to animals as coercive control.

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.

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.

SB 393 would make it illegal to create, record, photograph, film, develop, reproduce, or publish any obscene material that depicts another person engaging in sexual conduct with an animal. Bona fide uses would be exempted.

OKLAHOMA

HB 2058 would expand provisions to include pets in domestic violence protection orders, to also include any adult victim of a crime with a need to prevent further victimization.

SB 1728 would add a new category of “coercive control”, which would include committing or threatening to commit cruelty to an animal that intimidates a household member, to the Protection From Domestic Abuse Act.

SB 1982 would add a new crime of “unlawful pornography” which would include images of sexual activity with an animal.

PENNSYLVANIA

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

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.

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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 and **S 2723** 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 3046, H4123 and **S 919, 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.

H 5505 would create a new crime of “sexual abuse of an animal”. South Carolina already has an archaic statute criminalizing “buggery with mankind or with beast”.

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SOUTH DAKOTA

SUCCESS!! SB 81 clarifies 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. It was signed into law on March 9.

UTAH

HB 23 would have increased the penalty for injuring, harassing or endangering a service animal from a misdemeanor to a felony, but that provision was deleted in an amended version that was signed into law.

HB 341 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have made it a Class B misdemeanor to cause or allow a minor to attend a dogfight or a cock fight.

SUCCESS!! SB 72 creates a new definition and standalone criminal offense of “obscene animal abuse material”; separates animal sexual abuse from the current definition of pornography; adds animal crushing to the offense of distributing obscene animal abuse material; and ensures that obscene animal abuse material is treated throughout the code as pornographic materials.

SB 102 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have added 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 died when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have added 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 have protected the petitioner, family and household members and include granting the petitioner possession of any companion animal.

HB 266 died when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have created 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 was sent to the Governor. It 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 was sent to the Governor. It 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, “providing equal protections for children and pets”, died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have required 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. The bills would have established a new crime of hoarding of animals. Offenders would have faced misdemeanor fines of up to \$500 and risk having their animals turned over to an animal shelter for proper care and relocation.

SUCCESS!! **HB 4412** was signed into law by the Governor on April 1. It establishes liability for publishers and distributors of sexual material harmful to minors, including “patently and sexually offensive” materials including bestiality.

HB 4725 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have added a new section to West Virginia Code 61-9-19 (Crimes Against Chastity, Morality and Decency) to make the commission of a sexual act with an animal a felony, punishable by a fine of \$1,000 to \$5,000.

HB 5322 and HB 5335 died when the Legislature adjourned. The bills would have made 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 have been guilty of a felony.

HB 5419 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have defined 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have created a new misdemeanor crime of Assault Upon a Service Animal and subject the offender to making financial restitution for costs.

SB 714 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have allowed 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.

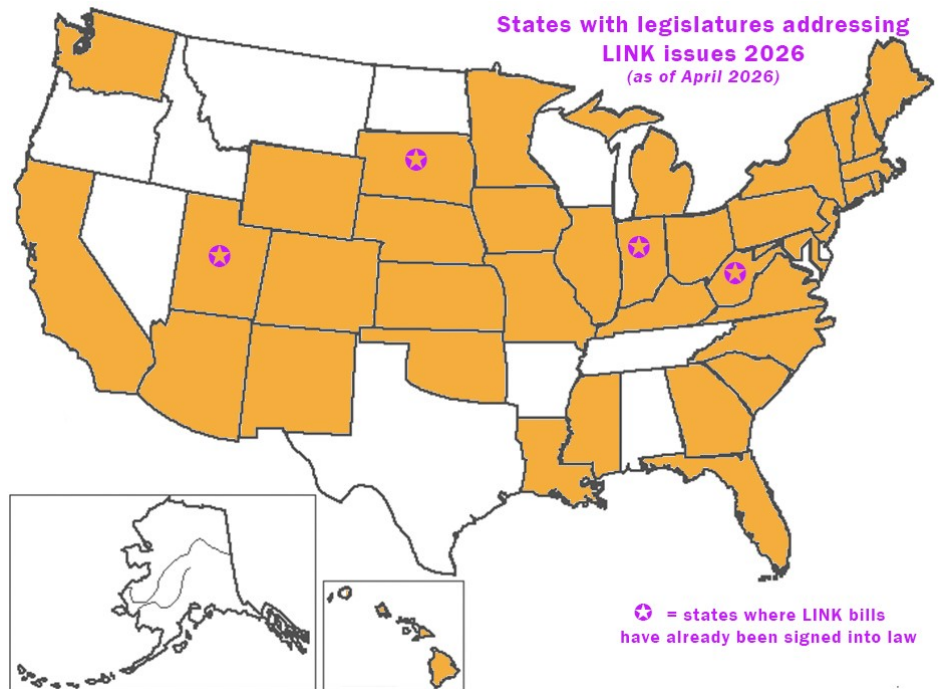
WYOMING

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.



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

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

April 15 — Statesville, N. Car.: Joyce Glass, Clarissa Nouredine, and Stasia Dempster will present “Animal Cruelty Cases and Stakeholders: Investigation, Prosecution, Resolution and The Link to Interpersonal Violence” at the [NC Animal Cruelty Collaboration](#).

April 19 — Whistler, B.C., Canada: Alexa Place will present results of the Edmonton SPCA's Link humane education program at Humane Canada's [Summit for Animals](#).

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 Griffitheth 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](#).

April 30 — (online): Don't Forget the Pets will hold a virtual presentation, [One Health, Two Patients: The Human-Animal Bond in Homeless Health Services](#), with Seattle's One Health Clinic to learn how integrating veterinary medicine and human healthcare can improve outcomes for pet owners experiencing homelessness.

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 12-13 — Loretto, Penna. (online): The connections between human and animal traumas in Israel, Gaza and Arab countries will be the focus of the “Shared Spaces: Reciprocity, Vulnerability and Healing in Human-Animal Relationships” [conference](#) organized by St. Francis University.

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 18-19 — Columbus, Ohio: Vicki Deisner, Aviva Vincent and Alana Van Gundy will present on The Link at the Ohio Attorney General's [Two Days in May Conference](#) on Victim Assistance.

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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 19: Dallas, Texas: Allie Phillips will present "The Link between Animal Abuse & Family Violence: Investigation & Prosecution Strategies to Keep Families Safe" at the [Conference on Crimes Against Women](#).

May 20 — Minneapolis, Minn.: Don't Forget the Pets will hold a [training workshop](#) on how to create and sustain pet housing programs for survivors of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness.

May 21 — (online): Don't Forget the Pets and the California Civil Rights Department will present [Fair Housing and Assistance Animals](#), discussing the laws that protect assistance animals of individuals with disabilities.

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 10 — (online): Don't Forget the Pets and Minnesota's Alexandra House will present [Fundraising and Storytelling for Pet-Safe Shelters](#), to explore how data, donor strategy, partnerships, and compelling storytelling can turn an idea into meaningful impact.

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

June 27 — Tokyo, Japan (online): Sakiko Yamazaki and FRANCESCA Care Partner will conduct a [webinar](#), "Applying the LINK to Practice to Protect both Humans and Animals: Cross-Reporting and Safe Haven Programs," for the Animal Literacy Research Institute.

July 21 — Nashville, Tenn.: Phil Arkow will present "Protecting Woman's Best Friend: Assessing the Impact of 'Pet Protection Orders'" at the National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges' [89th Annual Conference](#).

July 28 — Colorado Springs, Colo. (online): Danielle Works from RedRover will present "Integrating Pets into Survivor-Centered Care" in a [webinar](#) for the Justice Clearinghouse.

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](#).



LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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](#).

Sept. 17 — Canton, Ga.: Dan Ettinger will present “Foundations of Animal Hoarding, Cruelty, and Neglect” at the Southeastern Animal Control Association [Conference](#).

Oct. 1 — Allegan, Mich.: [Allie Phillips](#) will present on “When Animal Abuse Links to Family Violence: Strategies for Safety” for the Allegan County Coordinating Council on Domestic Violence.

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: Phil Arkow will present “Protecting ‘Woman’s Best Friend’: Assessing the Impact of Animal-Inclusive Protection Orders at the International Association of Veterinary Social Work’s [9th Summit](#).”

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

Oct. 22 — Colorado Springs, Colo. (online): Michelle Welch will present “The Investigation and Prosecution of Hoarding Cases” in a [webinar](#) for the Justice Clearinghouse.

Nov. 3 — Colorado Springs, Colo. (online): Danielle Works of RedRover will present “Safety Planning with Pets” in a [webinar](#) for the Justice Clearinghouse.

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.



HELP US KEEP THE LINK FREE!

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

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

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

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

Three Charged with Dogfighting, Narcotics and Weapons Offenses

Three suspects were arrested on charges of dogfighting and narcotics, weapons and probation offenses after Jackson County, Miss. Sheriff's deputies raided a facility on a secluded wooded property in Vancleave and confiscated 67 dogs believed to have been used in dogfights. [WLOX-TV](#) reported that Sheriff John Ledbetter said the dogs were in rough shape with broken bones, scratches, gouges, homemade stitches using staples, and substantial cuts. Princeton Knox, 45, was charged with dogfighting and possession of controlled substances; Tracy Daniels, 63 was charged with conducting or promoting a dogfight. Jaswan Butler, 29, a convicted felon, was arrested on charges of violating probation, possession of paraphernalia and illegal gun possession, and being a dogfighting spectator. As the investigation continues, the Jackson County Animal Shelter



Kentucky Man Charged with Having Sex with Dead Deer

Police in Central City, Ky., arrested Allen Osborne, 32, of Daviess County, Ky., and charged him with sexual crimes against animals after a motorist called 911 to report a man appearing to having sexual intercourse with a dead deer on the side of the road. [WEHT-TV](#) reported that officers were dispatched and allegedly found Osborne covered in the deer's blood and fur. Osborne was being held in the Muhlenberg County Detention Center on the felony charge.

Parrot Breeders Charged in Apparent Hoarding Situation

After a woman attempted to purchase a bird from a parrot breeder and reported a tip about potential neglect of a juvenile in a home "dense and full of ammonia and feces," with "an inch thick of poop covering the floors and maggots and flies

everywhere," authorities indicted the couple each on 62 counts of complicity to animal cruelty and one count of criminal abuse. [WKYT-TV](#) reported that Tabitha Crawford, 36, and Gregory Crawford, 35, of Harrodsburg, Ky., were charged after officials visited the

Australian Charged in Alleged Satanic Child and Animal Sex Abuse Ring

Sydney, Australia Sex Crimes Squad detectives charged Colin Milne, 62, as the 6th person in an alleged "satanic" child sex abuse ring after they allegedly found "extremely graphic, violent and depraved" material on his devices including "a large volume of material in relation to the physical and sexual abuse of animals. The [Australian Broadcasting Corporation](#) reported that Milne was charged with transmitting and accessing child abuse, bestiality and animal crush materials and participating in a group contributing to criminal activity. Investigators said they had identified 145 additional alleged offenders in the ring in Australia, the U.S., Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, and throughout Europe, South America and Southeast Asia, and made referrals to law enforcement agencies in those countries.

Florida Man Charged with Child Sex Abuse Re-arrested for Bestiality

A Bay County, Fla. man who had been arrested in February on child sexual abuse charges was re-arrested less than a month later when sheriff's deputies accused him of having sexual contact with an animal. [WMBB-TV](#) reported that David Frank Gurganus, Jr., 49, had been arrested on Feb. 13 on charges of sexual battery on a victim under the age of 12, allegedly involving oral contact with a 4-year-old boy. After meeting his \$100,000 bond, he was released on Feb. 16 but deputies arrested him again on March 2 on the animal sex abuse charge. Details of the subsequent arrest have not been made public, but Gurganus was reportedly being held without bond for violating his earlier conditional release.



THE LINK... in the NEWS

Kentuckian Charged with 63 Counts of Child & Animal Online Sex Abuse

In another Kentucky incident, Christopher Alan Price, 26, of Louisa was charged with 63 counts of child and animal sexual abuse after the Kentucky State Police Electronic Crime Branch learned he had been allegedly distributing sexually explicit images and videos of children and animals. [WDKY-TV](#) reported that Price allegedly admitted that he produced the child sexual abuse materials, sexually abused an animal, and committed sodomy with a child under age 12.



Price was charged with: first-degree sodomy; 25 counts of promoting a minor under age 16 in a sexual performance; 28 counts of possessing and distributing matter portraying a minor under age 12 in a sexual performance; and nine counts of sexual crimes committed against an animal.

Sheriff Arrests 13-Year-Old for Allegedly Choking Puppy and Stabbing Brother



Sheriff Carmine Marceno

Lee County, Fla. Sheriff Carmine Marceno, who has established a national reputation as being extremely tough on animal cruelty offenders, took the highly unusual step of not only arresting but also naming a 13-year-old juvenile who allegedly choked his family's dog and then slashed his brother.

[Gulf Coast News](#) reported that Alexander Chambers, 13, is said to have choked the family's puppy

after it peed on the floor, then chased his older brother, hit him in the head with a rock, and slashed him on the arm with a knife.

The puppy was not hurt. Chambers, who is said to have a history of mental health illness, was being evaluated by the Department of Juvenile Justice.

"It takes a very specific person to try to stab another person. It takes an evil person to grab a puppy, a defenseless puppy, and try to choke it to death. So it's very disturbing. And this person has severe, severe issues," said Marceno, who has been known to personally escort animal cruelty suspects into the jail and who has an extensive billboard campaign against animal cruelty in the Fort Myers area.

Police Reportedly Recover Thousands of Images of Child & Animal Sex Abuse

When police in Evendale, Ohio, a suburb of Cincinnati, said they had received a tip of a local man possessing sexually oriented material depicting a minor engaged in sexual acts with adults and animals, they charged Rain Phoenix-Brown, 24, with the alleged offenses. [WXIX-TV](#) reported that police investigators said they recovered more than 15,000 videos and several hundred thousand electronic images on several electronic devices. Police said they also recovered statements Phoenix-Brown made in online chats in which he described his desire to commit sexual acts and violence against young children, self-identified as a pedophile, and admitted to allegedly committing such acts previously.



"If you abuse an animal in Lee County, I myself personally will utilize every resource that we have to track you down and to charge you to the fullest extent of the law," he added.

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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.

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You Can Help Us Create Safer Communities!

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

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