



A monthly report of news from

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



Top Stories in This Issue:



Resources now available for domestic violence survivors with horses (Page 2)



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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Kansas, New Mexico Fail to Enact Pet Protection Order Laws

Despite having 34 of the House’s 125 representatives as cosponsors and the track records of 42 other states upon which to draw, the Kansas State Legislature failed to take action on **HB 2707**. The bill, which never made it out of the House Judiciary Committee on the day it was introduced last February, would have modified 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 have granted plaintiffs with custody and control of the pets and restrain the defendant from harming or coming into contact with the pets.

Since pioneered by Maine, Vermont and New York in 2006, 42 states have now enacted laws that allow courts to award custody and control of household animals, and enjoin respondents from harming or threatening animals, in domestic violence protection orders.

The remaining states still lacking these critical Link provisions are predominantly rural: Kansas, North and South Dakota in the Midwest; Idaho, Montana and New Mexico in the West; and Alabama and Mississippi in the South. A similar bill in New Mexico, **SB 80**, died earlier this session when that state’s legislature adjourned.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Resources Becoming Available for Survivors with Horses

While the majority of the 300 pet-friendly shelters to help the animal survivors of domestic violence have focused on dogs, cats and other household pets, an increasing number of agencies are challenged with assisting survivors who have horses. We reported earlier on an equine rescue in Maine that is expanding its programs for this purpose ([See the August 2025 LINK-Letter](#)) and now a second program has been developed in Illinois. Meanwhile, a national equine organization has added a domestic violence survivor category to its resource database.

The Hooved Animal Humane Society, based in Woodstock in



Northern Illinois, announced that after being repeatedly frustrated by seeing abuse and neglect

Cynthia Glensgard of horses in domestic violence situations they launched [Safe Havens for Survivors](#). The program is aimed to help survivors in McHenry and nearby counties to know that they don't have to choose between their own safety and the animals they love.

Hooved Animal Humane Society will work with local domestic violence centers to connect with survivors. From there, they will work with each case to provide confidential horse care planning, short-term care options, transportation and coordination with other organizations.

“By helping survivors plan for their horses, we can remove one more barrier to safety while preventing neglect before it happens,” Executive Director Cynthia Glensgard said. “We know that domestic violence survivors stay in relationships” out of fear for their animals, “and they are used as coercive control measures,” she added, noting that horses in domestic violence situations are at an increased risk of neglect due to financial strains, displacement or retaliation by an abuser.

The initiative is based upon the premises that horses are often deeply bonded companions and working partners of survivors, and their care needs make emergency planning much more complex. Protecting horses can help survivors move toward safety sooner.

For safety considerations, survivors are urged to reach out to their local domestic violence shelter which will then, in turn, contact the Hooved Animal Humane Society.

Glensgard hopes other horse organizations can take Safe Havens for Survivors as a blueprint to launch similar programs.

“I really do hope this helps somebody get out of a bad situation,” she said.

A NATIONAL DATABASE RESOURCE

Meanwhile, last August the [United Horse Coalition](#) added a new searchable category of domestic violence survivor to its free, publicly accessible equine resource database. The feature is specifically designed to assist equine owners

facing a domestic violence crisis. This new category will help connect victims in



Ashley Harkins

need with rescues, sanctuaries, and programs that offer temporary emergency boarding or foster care for their equines, ensuring both the safety of the equine and the well-being of the owner.

The resource expansion comes in response to a growing recognition of the urgent need for specialized equine assistance in domestic violence situations, the Coalition said. Much as with the more common situations of victims with household pets delaying or avoiding leaving abusive environments due to fear for their animals' safety, by including this new category in the UHC's centralized, searchable directory of programs equipped to provide crisis boarding, UHC aims to remove this barrier and support safe transitions for both horses and owners.

“The Link between domestic violence and animal welfare is well documented and ensuring there are safety net programs for horses in these situations can save lives, both human and equine,” said Ashley Harkins, UHC Operations Manager. “By adding this category to our Equine Resource Database, we are giving horse owners one more tool to protect their animals during a time of crisis.”

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

British 5-Year Animal Welfare Strategy Includes The Link

The British government has unveiled a groundbreaking *Animal Welfare Strategy, 2025* that seeks to completely review and overhaul England's approach to animal welfare by 2030, including taking significant steps to respond to The Link between domestic abuse and animal abuse.

[Animal Welfare Strategy for England, 2025](#) is a Policy Paper presented to Parliament by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs on Dec. 22, 2025. It serves as a manifesto pledging extensive government actions as a strategy setting out the UK Government's priorities for England, focusing on the changes and improvements it aims to achieve by 2030. Using a new integrated and dynamic-systems approach, it pledges to deliver ambitious, sustainable and embedded improvements to animal welfare in England with multiple reforms across four key areas: companion animals, wild animals, farmed animals and internationally.

One section of the manifesto specifically addresses "Tackling pet abuse and domestic abuse". Citing studies by Mary Wakeham showing a strong Link between pet and domestic abuse, the policy paper writes, "In cases where a pet is present, pet abuse can be used as a coercive control strategy to manipulate and exploit victim-survivors in the abusive relationship.



"Raising awareness of the link between pet abuse and domestic abuse and working with stakeholders to

support current initiatives will help to protect pets facing harm in domestic violence settings and will also further the delivery of the government's Tackling Violence Against Woman and Girls Strategy." (See the [January 2026 LINK-Letter](#))

In response the manifesto pledges to take the following actions:

- Consider the outcomes of the research project commissioned in summer 2025 to explore the Link between animal abuse and domestic abuse and identify intervention opportunities.
- Work with the veterinary profession to support initiatives designed to help vets and practice staff recognize potential signs of domestic abuse through non-accidental injuries to pets.

- Work with charities to increase the awareness of fostering services available for the pets of victim-survivors to encourage them to flee from abuse.
- Strengthen the pet microchipping regime to prevent victim-survivors' personal information potentially being accessed by perpetrators.

"This government is committed to safeguarding the welfare of animals for the long term, and we are changing how we will deliver the improvements needed," the paper states. "Rather than piecemeal legislation, we will take a more strategic approach - one that targets intervention where it's most needed."



The manifesto sets forth a coherent framework for lasting change in a country that can boast of caring deeply for animals and having "a proud and long history of supporting animal welfare — from the world's first known animal welfare law in 1822 to the animal welfare pioneers and organizations known across the globe today. As a government, we are committed to delivering the most ambitious animal welfare program in a generation."

Many of the action steps, particularly vis-à-vis farmed animals, are framed in a politically pragmatic approach — emphasizing the need for change is also a matter of enormous economic importance. The paper also emphasizes that while legislation plays a vital role in setting minimum standards, prohibiting harmful practices, and setting expectations for animal welfare, regulations alone will not drive meaningful and lasting change; enforcement and public buy-in are also required.

The policy paper was the result of extensive series of roundtable discussions on priorities and collaborative work with government, scientists, industry, charities and civil society organizations to understand the underlying issues that lead to poor animal welfare. "Continued engagement with stakeholders is a vital part of our ongoing work, facilitating the partnership approach we seek to build," it concludes.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Virginia Joins States Allowing ERPOs Based on Animal Cruelty History

Virginia Gov. Abigail Spanberger on April 13 signed into law two bills that will protect domestic violence survivors and their pets from the continued threat of abusers who possess firearms, which have been shown to be an extreme risk factor in domestic violence cases.



Gov. Spanberger



Senator Deeds

SB 495, sponsored by Sen. R. Creigh Deeds, (D – Charlottesville), also allows 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. It also takes effect July 1.

Extreme Risk Protection Orders are allowed in at least 19 states; histories of animal cruelty are specifically identified as potential grounds in Connecticut, Colorado, Maine, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Virginia (See the [February 2026 LINK-Letter](#)).

Washington State in 2023 prohibited animal abusers and domestic violence offenders from owning a firearm for five years. The measure's preamble stated that "The legislature finds that gun vio-

lence is a multifaceted public health problem that includes suicide, homicide, intimate partner violence, community violence, mass violence, nonfatal gunshot injuries and threats, with community violence and mass violence often committed by those with a history of domestic violence." The preamble continued, "The strongest predictor of future violence is prior violent behavior, including perpetration of domestic violent misdemeanors," and calls cruelty to animals a "particularly strong risk factor" (See the [June 2023 LINK-Letter](#)).

Later in 2023, Canada's Parliament amended the national Firearms Act to prevent individuals who are subject to a protection order or who have been convicted of domestic violence from obtaining a firearms license. Canada's Constitution includes threats or harm to another person's animals within the definitions of acts of family violence (See the [January 2024 LINK-Letter](#)).



HB 901, sponsored by Del. "Rip" Sullivan, Jr. (D – Fairfax Co.), will allow courts to issue an Emergency Substantial

Risk Order against an individual believed to pose a substantial risk of personal injury to himself or to others. The order could include a ban on possessing firearms. Evidence that 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." It takes effect July 1.

CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK

Kentucky Courts to Consider Animal Abuse in Child Custody Rulings

As Kentucky's legislature adjourned, the General Assembly passed a unique law that includes a history of animal abuse among the grounds that courts may consider when making decisions regarding child custody.



Rep. Jason Nemes

HB 418, introduced by House Majority Whip Rep. Jason Nemes, was later attached as an amendment to **SB 122** that was signed into law.

The new law 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 in KRS 403.720 includes acts against animals intended as coercion, control, punishment, intimidation, or revenge against a household member.

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

Concern for Animal Welfare Increases Need for Veterinary Pathology

The first published article of its kind from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is emphasizing that forensic veterinary pathology is becoming increasingly important in recognizing and investigating animal abuse cases due to “the government’s recognition that animal suffering is a matter of public concern” and that The Link is a key component of that interest.



Karelma Frontera-Acevedo responsibility and humane treatment; it can also be related to other interpersonal crimes of violence,” write the authors, based at the only two veterinary diagnostic laboratories capable of performing necropsies, at the University of the West Indies School of Veterinary Medicine and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

“Animal abuse reflects a culture of violence and abuse, and is carried out by people who do not expect authorities to intervene and those who have the intention of intimidating the owners or companions of the animals being abused.”

“Animal abuse can reflect both societal concerns and individual well-being, and should be investigated and prosecuted because the welfare of animals is an important component of public

The article reviews 113 cases of suspected animal abuse were submitted in 2008–2025; 77% of the cases involved dogs. Only 24 (20%) of the cases had a confirmed cause of death or method of injury, with the most common cause being trauma. All unconfirmed cases involved suspected poisoning.

The authors hope to inspire further discussion on how to improve diagnostic practices and the prosecution of individuals who violate animal welfare laws. They also describe Trinidad and Tobago’s anti-cruelty law dating to 1921, which was updated and expanded with added enhanced criminal penalties in 2020 “to demonstrate the government’s recognition that animal suffering is a matter of public concern.”

-- Frontera-Acevedo, K., Boodram, A., Luke, X., Phillip, E., Suepaul, R., & Gyan, L. (2026). A retrospective study of suspected animal abuse cases in Trinidad and Tobago, 2008–2025. *Animals*, 16, 1088.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/ani16071088>



“Animal abuse reflects a culture of violence and abuse and is carried out by people who do not expect authorities to intervene and those who have the intention of intimidating the owners or companions of the animals being abused.”

AVMA Webinar Helps DVMs Respond to Suspected Animal Cruelty

The American Veterinary Medical Association has made available a [webinar](#), “Animal Cruelty: How to Respond to a Suspected Case,” designed to help practitioners better understand their role in responding.

“Veterinary professionals evaluate animals and their circumstances daily, which gives us a lot of experience in assessing what’s ‘normal,’” the AVMA says in announcing the webinar. “When something seems off, it may signal the need for closer evaluation — including the possibility of neglect or abuse.

“This webinar highlights red flags that may raise suspicion of animal cruelty and explores what to do if you suspect that cruelty or mistreatment is occurring.



Jodi Lovejoy, left, & Rachel Touroo

You’ll also discover the role that veterinary professionals play in the legal process of cruelty investigations.”

The webinar is designed to help veterinarians recognize clinical signs and circumstances that could indicate animal maltreatment, and learn how to develop and apply standard operating guidelines for responding to suspected cruelty cases.

The webinar is presented by veterinarians Jodi Lovejoy, animal welfare specialist for the Indiana State Board of Animal Health, and Rachel Touroo, senior director of veterinary forensics for the ASPCA.

Kentucky Mandate to Report Suspected Animal Abuse Fails to Pass

Kentucky's unique history regarding the role of veterinarians in responding to suspected animal cruelty, abuse and neglect failed to take a new direction when a bill in the General Assembly failed to make it out of committee. **HB 637**, sponsored by Rep. Rachel Roarx (D—Louisville), would have required veterinarians to report suspected cases.



Rep. Rachel Roarx

The bill would have amended KRS 321.188, which currently allows veterinarians to report suspected cases of cruelty to animals, torture of a dog or cat, and sexual crimes against an animal, to require such reports. Cases involving on-farm livestock and poultry would be reported to the State Veterinarian, while abuse of all other animals would be reported to law enforcement. The new law would also have added a requirement to report assaults on a service animal.

Kentucky's experience with veterinary reporting has been evolving. For many years, most states avoided the thorny issue of veterinarians possibly reporting their clients to law enforcement agencies. Beginning about 2000, states began questioning this practice with a Link-based recognition that the veterinarian should be as proactive in responding to animal abuse as physicians are in responding to suspected child abuse. Today, 23 states mandate, and 20 others permit, veterinarians to report, with immunity from civil or criminal liability and administrative sanctions in 36 of those states if reports are made in good faith.

Meanwhile, as a result of a loophole in a 2009 law Kentucky was the only state that specifically prohibited veterinarians from reporting suspected abuse. This situation prompted the American Veterinary Association to revise its 2012 Position Statement on Animal Abuse and Neglect that had declared it the responsibility of the veterinarian to promptly report such cases to appropriate authorities, whether or not reporting is mandated by law, to protect the health and welfare of animals and people. In response to Kentucky's prohibition, AVMA's 2019 Position Statement instead called only for states to grant immunity from liability to practitioners who report and to exempt patient/client records from confidentiality restrictions in these reports (See the [July 2019 LINK-Letter](#)).

The Kentucky dilemma became moot in 2020 when the Bluegrass State enacted **SB 21** which permitted practitioners to make reports (and which helped boost the state's rating in the Animal Legal Defense Fund's annual rankings (See the [August 2020 LINK-Letter](#)).

More recently, AVMA in 2023 published a **Framework for Identification and Response to Suspected or Known Animal Maltreatment** which now specifies that because the interconnectedness of human and animal health, safety and welfare cannot be overstated, veterinarians have an "imperative to identify and respond" to suspected or known cases of animal abuse (See the [November 2023 LINK-Letter](#)).

In 2024 AVMA published new [Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics](#) which declare that "a veterinarian has an ethical responsibility to report suspected animal cruelty and/or abuse" and that revealing client records is permissible when "required to do so by law or it becomes necessary to protect the health and welfare of other individuals or animals."

The Kentucky mandated reporting provision was tacked on at the end of a more extensive proposal that would have also established a statewide registry of animal abuse offenders.



For Additional Information

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

How to Create a Policy for Reporting Suspected Cruelty



Forensic Veterinarian Kris Otteman and her team at [Victim to Verdict](#) published a [blog](#) in April encouraging veterinarians, who are often the first to spot signs of animal abuse or neglect, to have clear policies in place. We're reprinting this sound advice in hopes of alerting more practitioners to the critical nature of having such policies established before a case comes through your door.

Veterinary professionals are often the first people to see signs of animal cruelty or neglect. Because of this unique role, veterinary clinics benefit from having a clear, written policy and procedure for recognizing and reporting suspected abuse. A well-designed policy protects animals, supports staff, and ensures the clinic responds consistently and professionally when concerns arise.

The first step is establishing a clinic policy that states the practice's commitment to animal welfare and compliance with applicable laws. This policy should outline the clinic's responsibility to document and report suspected cruelty while maintaining professional and legal standards. It should also reference relevant state laws regarding mandatory or permissive reporting by veterinarians.

Next, clinics should develop standard procedures for recognizing and documenting suspected abuse. Staff should be trained to identify common indicators such as repeated unexplained injuries, patterns of neglect, poor body condition, untreated medical problems, or inconsistent histories from owners. The procedure should emphasize careful, objective documentation in the medical record, including written descriptions, photographs, body condition scores, and diagnostic findings.

A key component of the procedure is defining an internal reporting pathway. Staff members should know exactly who to notify within the clinic—typically the medical director, practice owner, or a designated cruelty liaison. This ensures that concerns are reviewed

by an experienced veterinarian before external reports are made.

Clinics should also establish clear guidance on evidence handling and record preservation. Medical records, photographs, radiographs, and laboratory results may later become important legal evidence. Maintaining accurate records and preserving the chain of custody for any physical evidence helps ensure the information can be used effectively if a case proceeds to investigation or court.

The policy should include guidelines for contacting authorities. This may involve local animal control, humane law enforcement, or police, depending on the jurisdiction. Staff should know when to report, what information to provide, and how to document that a report was made.

Finally, clinics should incorporate staff training and regular review of the policy. Continuing education on recognizing cruelty, forensic documentation, and legal considerations helps staff feel confident handling these situations. Periodic policy review ensures procedures remain consistent with current laws and best practices.

By creating a clear and supportive reporting policy, veterinary clinics strengthen their role in protecting animal welfare while providing staff with the guidance they need to respond appropriately to suspected cruelty cases.

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

How Should the Veterinarian Respond to Possible Domestic Violence?

As challenging as it has been for veterinarians and their staffs to respond to suspected animal abuse, an even more problematic dilemma has emerged in recent years regarding how to react when a client — and her animals — may be experiencing the abuse of domestic violence.

Practitioners who lack training in the topic, who fear legal and financial repercussions, or who don't want to get involved in personal matters have been wary of engaging in this One Health/One Welfare issue. Even more challenging is the reality that with a majority of veterinary staff, as well as clients, being women, there is a likelihood that a case of domestic violence may not only walk in the door but also be behind the receptionist's desk.

The National Link Coalition is addressing this issue with an initiative we call "DV & the DVM." We have just added a new resource on our website with a handy flyer explaining the Myths and Realities of Veterinary Response to Potential Domestic Violence. [Click here](#) to see the full resource; on this page we present a few highlights from that flyer.

| MYTH | REALITY |
|--|---|
| "I haven't been trained." | Training guides are readily available locally and nationally. |
| "I don't know if it's DV." | You don't have to know. Just be a friendly resource for her and her animals. |
| "I'm not sure how to respond." | Ask the client to let you keep the animal overnight so you can get more information or a second opinion. |
| "I don't know where to refer her to." | Contact the nearest DV shelter or the National Hotline at 800-799-7233. |
| "I might get sued." | You're not offering legal advice — just providing information to help her make an informed decision. |
| "I might lose the client." | But if the abuse continues, you'll certainly lose her and her pets — and they may lose their lives. |
| "I might make things worse." | Perhaps. But not helping her will definitely make things worse for her and all her animals. |
| "Nothing will be done anyway." | Possibly. But it's her decision. And it is much harder for her to make a break when the animals are also being threatened. |
| "My records are confidential." | Confidentiality can be waived if there's a legitimate threat to health and safety. She can sign a waiver allowing release of information. |
| "I'm scared of the abuser." | Human healthcare facilities have alert systems to warn of danger and contact police. |
| "I don't have time." | Early intervention saves time — and lives — later. |
| "It's not my job to interfere in people's lives." | But it is your job to protect the animals and people who may be at risk. |
| "I don't know how to deal with clients like this." | Maybe you want to bring a Veterinary Social Worker on board? |
| "What if my staff wants to respond?" | Have a protocol in place before an incident occurs. |
| "I'll never see a case like this." | You might. And both animals and people are victimized. |
| "I'll get a bad rap on social media." | You'll get a better reputation on social media from clients who praise you for taking a positive stand against domestic violence. |
| "I feel like I'm all alone on this." | AVMA and AAHA have policies and guidances that can help you. |
| "I'm afraid." | Understandable. But it's the right thing to do. |

LAW ENFORCEMENT... and THE LINK

Congressman Cites Link in Urging Stronger Federal Anti-Cruelty Laws

Highlighting the broader public safety implications of animal cruelty, and noting that it is often linked to other forms of violence including domestic abuse and child abuse, a U.S. Congressman from New Jersey is spearheading two bipartisan federal bills and a campaign to make animal cruelty, abandonment and endangerment more of a federal priority.

Rep. Josh Gottheimer, a Democrat whose 5th District represents much of North Jersey, made the [announcement](#) to kick off April as Animal Cruelty Prevention Month. In emphasizing that protecting animals is about protecting communities as a whole, Gottheimer announced three initiatives:



The **Protect Our Pets Act, H.R. 8480**, co-sponsored by Republican Rep. Mike Lawler of New York, would make it a federal crime to abandon or endanger animals on federal property or across state lines. It would

Rep. Mike Lawler establish penalties of up to 15 years in prison and increase penalties for the most horrific acts of animal abuse such as crushing, burning, drowning, suffocating, impaling, or sexually exploiting animals.



Rep. Nicole Malliotakis

Gottheimer is also the lead sponsor of **H.R. 3683, the FBI Animal Cruelty Taskforce Act of 2025**, which would establish a dedicated task force within the FBI to investigate and build cases against animal abusers including dog- and cock-fighters and crush videos, and develop training resources to help local law enforcement identify



Gottheimer and his dog “Rosie” announce the “Protect Our Pets Act”

and combat animal abuse in their communities. That measure is co-sponsored by Republican Rep. Nicole Malliotakis of New York.

Following the dismissal of Attorney General Pam Bondi, Gottheimer is sending a letter to the U.S. Department of Justice and the new Attorney General making it clear that combating animal cruelty, abandonment, and endangerment needs to be a priority. Once confirmed, the new Attorney General should implement the FBI Animal Cruelty Taskforce and ensure that the Department has a team of prosecutors and agents who can take down animal abusers

“Our pets aren’t just animals. They’re family,” said Gottheimer.

“When someone is sick enough to abuse or abandon a helpless animal, it’s not just about that animal — that’s a flashing warning sign that something deeper is going on.”

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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. Permission is hereby granted to re-post these articles in newsletters, websites, magazines, and electronic publications provided that appropriate credit is given to the National Link Coalition and with hyperlinks to www.nationallinkcoalition.org.

Policy Brief Strongly Calls for Link Recognition to Systemically Reform Animal Protection in India

An underlying premise of The Link is that legislators, government officials, thought leaders, and law enforcement will respond more favorably to calls to improve animal welfare systems by focusing on how animal cruelty also hurts people. This concept is taking a major step forward in India with the publication of a new policy brief that strenuously argues that **“Animal cruelty must be viewed not as a sentimental or marginal concern but as a substantive public safety issue – one that intersects with domestic violence, child endangerment, mental health crises, and neighborhood disorder.”**

The study, conducted by the [Takshashila Institution](#) – an independent, nonpartisan center for research and education in public policy based in Bangalore – utilized crime data from 318 districts and interviews with 16 multidisciplinary professionals including subject matter experts from the National Link Coalition. The findings concluded that **“Animal cruelty in India is systematically Linked to broader patterns of violence and disorder, yet remains institutionally invisible and weakly enforced.”**

“The signal remains unmistakable: animal cruelty is an early point of contact where prevention is still possible.”
— **Takshashila Institution**

The policy brief encourages key stakeholders to recognize that animal cruelty is part of a broader spectrum of deviance and social disorganization rather than an isolated behavioral aberration.

The authors propose a preventive policing framework centered on data-system integration, veterinary cross-reporting, police training, inter-

agency coordination, and legal reform. They argue that **“Recognizing animal cruelty as a public safety concern is essential to strengthening India’s response to violence in all its forms.”**

Citing extensive Link studies from the U.S., U.K. and Australia, the authors bemoan that despite the evidence, **“Animal cruelty in India continues to be treated as a minor welfare or nuisance concern rather than a serious criminological and public safety issue.”**

Despite a national Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act passed in 1960, and an “alarming increase” in cruelty



**TAKSHASHILA
INSTITUTION**

complaints in recent years including organized crime, animal sexual abuse and the illegal use of firearms, most offenses are dismissed, trivialized or informally settled with negligible penalties, resulting in **“enforcement apathy and under-reporting”**.

India has yet to institutionalize Link recognition, they write, and no national protocols Link such animal cruelty data as exist with domestic violence, child abuse or other serious offenses. **“In the absence of structured data, cross-reporting mechanisms, or dedicated training, potential violent offenders may remain unidentified until after human victimization has occurred,”** they argue.

“The analysis indicates a consistent positive relationship between animal-cruelty incidence and co-occurring crime,” they conclude, calling animal cruelty in India **“not an isolated animal welfare issue but a significant public safety indicator.”**

The study delves into four core questions:

- Whether and how animal cruelty correlates with wider patterns of social deviance and crime;
- How variations in enforcement, legal frameworks and socio-demographic factors shape the incidence and reporting of animal cruelty;
- Which psychological, institutional and socio-cultural mechanisms Link violence against animals and humans; and
- How policy, data systems and inter-agency coordination can be redesigned to recognize and operationalize the concomitance of animal and human violence within Indian law enforcement.

(Continued on Page 11)

LAW ENFORCEMENT... and THE LINK

Link Called Key to Reforming Animal Protection in India

(Continued from Page 10)

The authors cannot emphasize enough how much **“Animal cruelty may function as a meaningful indicator of wider behavioral risk.”** Their recommendations are applicable in all countries where a Link approach may be more effective in preventing animal abuse and other forms of family and community violence. They conclude:

“Cruelty against animals is not a peripheral irregularity but a structurally embedded indicator of deeper violence within society.”

“Acts of harm toward animals frequently coexist with broader patterns of social deviance, reflecting shared psychological traits, environmental triggers and institutional failures.”

“Strengthening penalties, integrating data systems, enabling cross-reporting, and building police and veterinary capacity are not reforms of compassion alone; they are reforms of foresight, pragmatism and national security.”

“The signal remains unmistakable: animal cruelty is an early point of contact where prevention is still possible.”

- Siddiqui, A.A., & Velayudhan, S.G. (2025). *Animal Cruelty as a Marker of Social Deviance: An Empirical Analysis and Policy Framework for Indian Law Enforcement*. Bangalore, India: Takshashila Institution.



ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE...and THE LINK

Utah Law Criminalizes Obscene Animal Abuse Material and Crushing

Utah expanded its protections against animal sexual abuse when Gov. Spencer Cox signed **SB 72** into law which amended several state statutes to define and create new standalone criminal offenses of “obscene animal abuse material” and “animal crushing”. The new provisions took effect on May 6.

The new law uses the more modern term of “animal sexual abuse” and creates new crimes of “animal crushing” and “obscene animal abuse material” that depict animal crushing or “sexual conduct with an animal” to expand the definition of bestiality. Obscene animal abuse material deemed harmful to minors is also identified.



Gov. Spencer Cox

The new law makes it illegal to distribute obscene animal abuse material. It is a felony if the distributor is 18 years of age or older and a misdemeanor if a minor.

“Bestiality” was made illegal in Utah in 1993 as part of a nationwide wave of laws enacted as a result of growing evidence that sex with animals is closely linked with child sexual abuse and child pornography. Under that statute, U.C.A. § 76-13-213, “sexual activity” is defined as physical sexual contact with an animal with the intent to sexually gratify the actor. It is a Class B misdemeanor.



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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.

ANIMAL SHELTERS... and THE LINK

Animal Shelter Guide Urges Interagency Collaborations

A new “best practices” guidebook for nonprofit and governmental animal shelters is including a limited amount of information on The Link between animal abuse and human violence as part of its guidance to partner with other community agencies to provide sustainable resolution for issues long believed to be unsolvable.



Sara Pizano, a veterinarian with extensive experience in animal shelters and consulting services, has published [*The Go-To Guide for Animal Services*](#) through her consulting firm, Team Shelter USA. The data-driven roadmap for modern animal welfare systems is designed to assist animal services programs that are often asked to solve complex social, public

health, and safety challenges with limited budgets, aging infrastructure, outdated ordinances, and intense public scrutiny.

The Guide, available as a free download, includes several references to The Link as part of a One Health approach that animal shelters should embrace. “There are many more victims of animal cruelty and neglect that do not enter shelters or get help than do,” it notes. “This makes it crucial that Field Services teams and law enforcement focus on true perpetrators of cruelty and neglect instead of mass punitive actions that could be handled through community or proactive programming assistance. Furthermore, 70% of those people guilty of domestic violence also abuse animals, which highlights the importance of the One Health approach.”

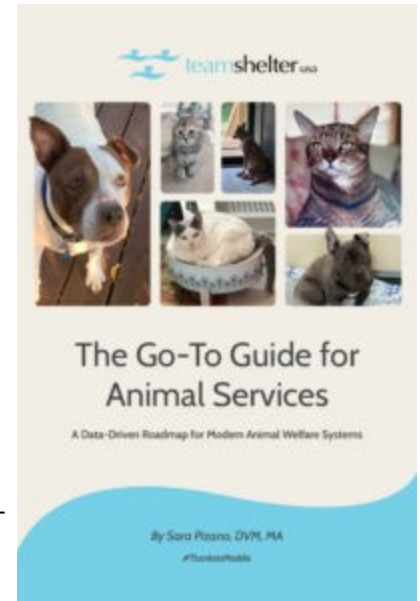
The Guide describes the need for interagency collaboration in animal hoarding cases, which can be linked to child welfare, elder welfare, housing instability, and community health concerns. “Most animal welfare organizations do not budget sufficiently or have a well-thought-out plan for large scale hoarding and cruelty cases. Whenever safe and possible, care in place until an alternative placement can be arranged is best while

working on immediate disposition. Networking with other local shelters, area rescue groups, national organizations, and foster volunteers, as well as recruiting the community to help, are essential strategies,” it advises.

Strong partnerships are also recommended. The Guide recommends establishing relationships with the Municipal Attorney’s Office, Public Health, Social Services, Child Welfare, and Law Enforcement as being crucial. “Many animal-related cases intersect with domestic violence, hoarding, mental health, housing instability, and access to care. A One Health/One Welfare approach improves outcomes for both people and animals.”

The Guide encourages agencies to make their field services units “community-minded” and to not react instinctively to outdated assumptions. For example, pet neglect may not be due to malicious intent; it could be an issue of limited access to veterinary care, financial constraints, and life circumstances. “The importance of partnership and collaboration instead of the historical adversarial relationships between municipal Field Services and nonprofit animal welfare organizations cannot be overstated, as more pets who are victims of non-malicious neglect can be helped through collaboration.”

Pizano prefers a response model that prioritizes problem-solving and resource connection before enforcement. She suggests the use of a Pet Resource Team, sometimes referred to as Animal Peace Officers, who serve as the first point of contact for animal-related concerns. Their resources may include direct assistance, referrals to partner organizations, or guidance on resolving common animal-related issues.



SOCIAL WORK... and THE LINK

Social Work with the Disabled Can Include Issues Affecting their Animals

The Link-based concept that social workers should consider clients' animal companions has worked its way into a Turkish scoping review of literature that examines disability-related social problems and the responses produced by social work to these problems at micro, mezzo and macro intervention levels.



Serdarhan Duru, at the Ankara University Department of Social Work, repeatedly cites the National Link Coalition's [2020 study](#) of how to incorporate human-animal relationships in social work beyond the veterinary environment.

Duru calls this an example of how effective social work in the field of disability must be conceptualized not merely in terms of supportive interventions directed at the individual, but in conjunction with community-based programs, inter-institutional collaboration, rights-based advocacy, and transformative goals aimed at challenging "ableism."

Social workers should engage in advocacy to promote laws and policies that specifically protect individuals with disabilities from violence and abuse, Duru writes. Violence, abuse and neglect can include animals and social workers' asking about animal abuse can reveal other forms of family violence when working with older and disabled clients.

Interventions diversify across micro, mezzo, and macro levels, and a more coherent intervention framework emerges when components—such as individual empowerment, family support, community-based programs, and advocacy—are addressed collectively, Duru concludes.

- Duru, S. (2026). Engellilerin sosyal sorunları: Sosyal hizmet müdahale düzeyleri bağlamında bir değerlendirme. [Social problems of persons with disabilities: An evaluation]. *Sosyal Sağlık Dergisi [Journal of Social Health]*, 63–84. <https://doi.org/10.69514/sosyalsaglik.1894374>. [In Turkish]



THE LINK in THE LITERATURE

Call for Papers to Explore Companion Animals and Public Health

The *Journal of Public Health Research* has issued a Call for Papers for a Special Collection that will focus on "Companion Animals and Public Health: Reciprocal Relationships Beyond Anthropocentrism." The deadline is Sept. 30. Details are available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/topic/collections-phj/002292/phj>

The Call for Papers explains that domestic animals - especially those who share our everyday lives - play increasingly important roles in shaping human health and well-being. Pets are understood not only as companions but as integral members of multispecies households. Relationships with companion animals influence public health through their impacts on human health, social connection, physical activity, ecosystems, and family and other dynamics.

At the same time, their welfare, agency, and health outcomes are profoundly shaped by human caregiving practices, household environments, and broader community infrastructures. This encompasses both public

health's longstanding focus on zoonotic risk and the less familiar but equally important construct of zoeyia.

The Special Collection seeks to advance trans-disciplinary research on the interdependent and reciprocal relationships between humans and the companion animals with whom they share their lives. Scholarship that critically examines how multispecies relationships influence health of human and non-human animals across social, cultural, environmental, institutional, and structural contexts is welcome. Central to this Special Collection is a commitment to moving beyond anthropocentric assumptions by recognizing companion animals as sentient beings whose perspectives, needs, and well-being matter - both inherently and within the context of public health.



THE LINK in THE LITERATURE

Academic Human-Animal Study Center Approved

The latest human-animal academic study center has just been approved at the University of Saskatchewan, where the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada has awarded \$2.5 million over a five-year period to support the initiative.

[Colleen Dell](#), a sociology professor and Research Chair in One Health & Wellness, will be the Research Chair to head the new **Centre on Human-Animal Connections & Collaboration**, supported by a network of over 100 researchers and partners. The Centre's focus aligns with one of SSHRC's 16 global challenges — The Emerging Asocial Society — addressing human isolation, loneliness, and marginalization.



Colleen Dell

The Centre's goal is to create a cross-cultural, transdisciplinary collaborative network to comprehensively study and share how human-animal connections shape, influence and impact cross-species experiences at individual, family, communal, and societal levels. Employing a Social Science One Health approach, the project departs from a strictly human-centered perspective to explore the significant potential to enhance the well-being of both human and non-human animals through interspecies connection.

Several noted Link authorities are among the Centre's co-investigators, collaborators and partners. The "dark side" of human-animal connections — The Link between animal and human abuse — may be a part of the Centre's study and programming.

Centre research is expected to:

- Facilitate meaningful connections between academia, service sectors, the general public, and government;
- Include animals' perspectives in processes of knowledge creation and governance;
- Create opportunities for transdisciplinary social-scientific research;
- Implement knowledge mobilization;
- Build, support, and mentor careers;
- Co-develop a governance model.

Research will focus on social capital, well-being, social systems, wholism, and ethics. The research will have implications for Canadian systems of care by gaining better understanding of how human-animal connections can augment and reduce pressure on existing and over-stretched human support services.



Juvenile Offenders' Violent Victimization Linked with Animal Abuse

Those who wish to reduce the prevalence of animal abuse among serious juvenile offenders should take steps to prevent those youths from having been victims of violence themselves.

That's the conclusion of a new study that acknowledges that while exposure to violence is an established risk factor for animal abuse, little research explores the potential mechanisms through which this relationship occurs. Using data from 1,354 participants who took part in the Pathways to

Desistance study, the results of the analyses suggested that violent victimization was positively associated with increased odds of animal abuse, with depression and anger mediating over a quarter of this relationship.

Chad N. Loes, Professor of Criminal Justice and Chair of the Department of History, Politics, and Justice at Mount Mercy University in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, concluded that the findings suggest that those wishing to reduce the prevalence of animal abuse should endeavor to prevent potential

instances of violent victimization among adolescents. Furthermore, it is critical for youth who have been victimized to have opportunities to address any potential depression or anger symptoms that might occur because of their victimization, he added.

-- Loes, C. N. (2026). **Violent victimization and animal abuse among serious juvenile offenders.**

Society & Animals. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-bja10295>

Japanese Article Uses Link Perspective in Responding to Animal Abuse

Our colleagues at Japan's Animal Literacy Research Institute have published an [article on their website](#) emphasizing that imposing fines and prison sentences to rescue animals that have been harmed may not always be the best resolution. Rather, because the perpetrators of animal cruelty have a wide range of backgrounds leading to the abuse it is necessary to resolve the factors affecting the perpetrator and to also consider the potential risk of the animal abuse being Linked to interpersonal violence.

Sakiko Yamazaki, ALRI's founder, argues that it is essential to re-



spond to perpetrators of animal cruelty with a wide range of options. These might include educational

interventions to help people better understand how to praise and discipline an animal, or instituting therapeutic and counseling interventions to address mental disorders.

In *Free Article 39: Applying LINK's Knowledge to Practice (2) - Leveraging LINK's Perspective in Responding to Perpetrators of Animal Abuse*, she describes broader legislative and social programs in other countries that work to protect pets and people. These include adding companion animals to domestic violence protection orders that

“function as a response to protect pets from the brunt of perpetrators' violence”, and animal abuser registries to reduce rates of recidivism.

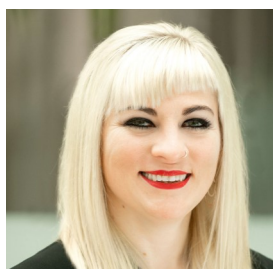
“It is important to seek punitive measures as a deterrent from the perspective of society as a whole showing a strong stance against violence against animals. But when seeking a fundamental solution to animal cruelty, it is necessary to take a broader perspective, look at the background factors that led to the occurrence of the case, and respond appropriately to the situation,” she writes.

“Also, from LINK's point of view, animal cruelty is not complete with the perpetrator and the victim. There is a high risk that animal cruelty is linked to interpersonal violence, and there is a risk that the cycle of violence will spread to others from the animal abuse. From the perspective of LINK, a more comprehensive response to animal cruelty is required to protect both people and animals,” she concludes.



Hundreds Attend RedRover-ALDF Webinar

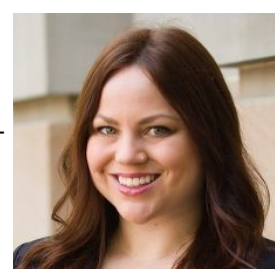
Over 500 registrants and over 200 live attendees, primarily from the field of domestic violence response, participated in a recent RedRover webinar presented by the Animal Legal Defense Fund that summarized research findings on the Link and provided case examples of the intersections between animal cruelty, domestic violence, elder abuse, and child abuse.



Emily Lewis

certain types of laws acknowledging or responding to the Link, such as laws permitting animals to be included in domestic violence protection orders, and laws permitting cross-reporting.

Managing Attorney Emily Lewis and Senior staff Attorney Kathleen Wood provided an overview of animal cruelty laws generally, describing what types of acts and omissions are typically criminalized throughout the U.S. They also went into detail regarding which states had



Kathleen Wood

The theme of the webinar, “Protecting All Victims: How the Law Addresses Animal Abuse, Family Safety, and Professional Reporting”, was to examine how the law can better encourage professionals across a wide range of disciplines to help enforce animal cruelty laws by reporting suspected abuse and neglect, thereby protecting both human and animal victims.

Delaware PSA Promotes Link Awareness, Interagency Collaborations

Link advocates in Delaware have produced a 2-1/2 minute [Public Service Announcement](#) describing both the joys and benefits of pet ownership, and the unfortunate reality that pets are abused as part of the continuum of family violence.

The video involved collaborating with The CAUSE, a youth production crew, whose members appear in the production describing both the positive and negative aspects of pet ownership. The video also features several key state officials who present statistics about The Link between animal abuse, child abuse and domestic violence and how family courts are now asking questions about human-animal interactions.

Chris Motoyoshi, Executive Director of Delaware's state Office of Animal Welfare, says, "Our animal welfare officers know that for abusers a pet provides an easy target for abuse. They can be another source of trauma for children witnessing the abuse of a beloved pet."



Michael Newell

The Hon. Michael Newell, Chief Judge of Delaware's Family Court and Chair of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, says, "The data has led our courts to adopt new practices, including asking questions about pets in the home to identify their importance to the children or the survivor, whether the pets have been abused, and the potential for the pets to be used to control survivors."

Kelly Ensslin, Chief Advocate and Chief of Legal Services for the Office of the Child Advocate, adds, "67% of children exposed to animal cruelty



Kelly Ensslin also experienced child abuse. 67% of children in a domestic violence shelter reported seeing or hearing their pets being abused."

Mike Kaviani, COO for the Brandywine Valley SPCA, advises that "We know that pets are family. Victims being able to care for their pets is critically important for their ability to heal."



Mike Kaviani

The Hon. Jennifer Ranji, Family Court Judge and Chair of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council's Animal Abuse & Domestic Violence Link Committee, encourages interagency collaboration with the advice, "In Delaware, we are all working together to protect pets and humans from abuse by a loved one."

The video concludes with a list of phone numbers to call to report animal, child and domestic abuse.



Join Us In Our Mission!

Please help us educate and advocate to promote greater legislative, public and professional understanding of, and response to, The Link between animal abuse and other family and community violence! It is through the generosity of our donors that we are able to continue our trainings, publications, compilation of resources and research, and reporting on Link legislation. Your gift helps us prevent animal cruelty, domestic violence, child abuse and elder abuse and create a safer world. [Please click here](#) to make a secure and tax-deductible contribution.

LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

A dozen state legislatures have adjourned; others are busily working on proposed legislation in their 2026 sessions. We're following 201 measures addressing animal abuse's LINKs with human violence:

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. 4166, the Strengthening Protections for Domestic Violence and Stalking Survivors Act of 2025, would add to U.S. Code Title 18, Section 921(a) a new misdemeanor crime of stalking. This would include a course of harassment, intimidation or surveillance that places a person in reasonable fear of, or harm to, the health and safety of, a pet, service animal, or emotional support animal.

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.

H.R. 8480, the Protect Our Pets Act, would increase penalties for the most horrific acts of animal abuse including crushing or sexually exploiting animals.

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.

H.B. 5438 would allow applicants and respondents at hearings to issue protection orders, which can include provisions to safeguard the victim’s animals, to present or refute evidence demonstrating a pattern of harassment.

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.

SUCCESS!! **HB 1159** replaces the term “child pornography” with “child sexual abuse material”. It revises the punishments for sexual activities involving animals to a second-or third-degree felony, and requires offenders to be banned from owning, residing with or working with any animals for five years.

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 died when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have extended 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have modified 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have created new crimes of possession of a firearm by convicted domestic violence abusers and subjects of domestic violence protection orders.

HB 246 ("Kyan's Law") died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have required animal control officers to receive training on recognizing child abuse, with immunity for acting in good faith. Local government units would have been able to opt out of the training.

SUCCESS!! **HB 418** was attached as an amendment to **SB 122 and signed into law.** 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 in KRS 403.720 includes acts against animals intended as coercion, control, punishment, intimidation, or revenge against a household member.

HB 637 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have required veterinarians to report if an animal for which they have a veterinarian-client-patient relationship has been abused." Existing law only permits veterinarians to file such reports.

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.

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

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".

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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have expanded the definition of child pornography, which includes exposing children to online acts of bestiality, to include computer- or AI-generated visual imagery.

SUCCESS!! **LB 753** allows 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, died then the Legislature adjourned. It would have

allowed 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 have required 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.

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 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.

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.

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 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.

A 10826 and 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.

A 10857 and 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 470, “Kirby and Quigley’s Law,” expands aggravated animal cruelty to include harm to a companion animal during the commission of a felony.

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

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

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

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

RHODE ISLAND

H 7133-A and **S 3217** 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

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”.

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.

TENNESSEE

HB 1444 and **SB 1475** would add aggravated animal cruelty to animals as an offense for which a juvenile may be classified as a serious youthful offender.

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.

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Light Blue = Link & Other Crimes

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.

SUCCESS!! HB 901 was signed into law on April 13. It will 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 could 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.” It becomes effective July 1.

SUCCESS!! SB 495 was signed into law on April 13. It allows 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. It takes effect July 1

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 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

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 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.

May 18-21 — Dallas, Texas: Claire Coughlin and Nancy Blaney will present "Getting Everyone to Safety: Animal Abuse & Interpersonal Violence", and Allie Phillips will present "The Link between Animal Abuse & Family Violence: Investigation & Prosecution Strategies to Keep Families Safe" at the [2026 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 individuals living with disabilities and their assistance animals.

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 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 combine to turn an idea into meaningful impact.

June 10 — (online): Jennifer Woolf will present "Veterinary Forensics 3 — Another 'Postmortem' on Animal Cruelty Cases 2026" in a [webinar](#) for CalAnimals.

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 10 — Anaheim, Calif.: Jennifer Woolf will present "Animal Cruelty, Maltreatment and Neglect", and Rachel Touroo will present "Understanding Companion Animal Neglect: Insights from ASPCA Programs in New York City" at the [AVMA Convention](#).

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](#).

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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](#).

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.

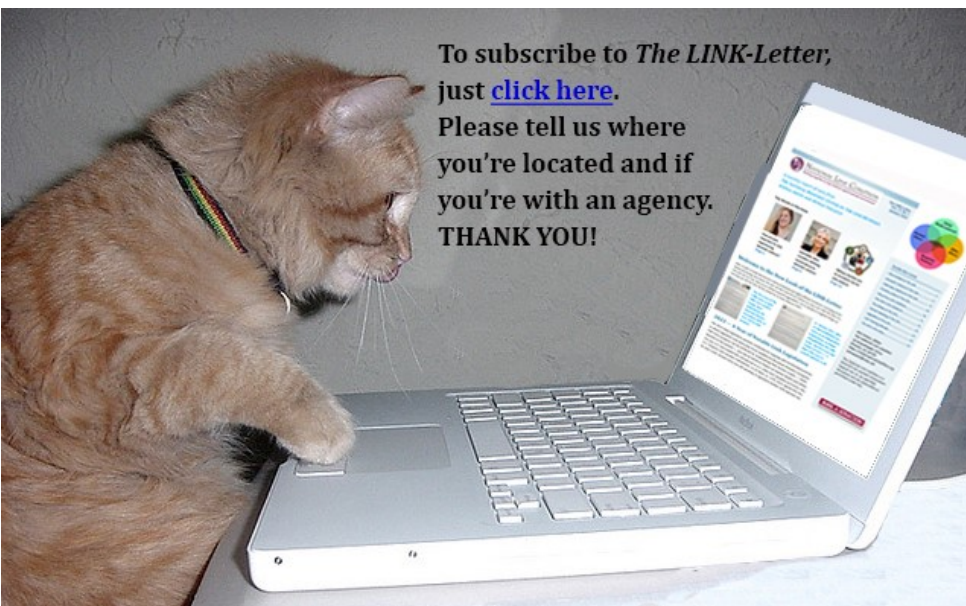
Oct. 21-23 — Richmond, B.C., Canada: Courtney Dowdall will present the results of a pilot study on using canine behavioral consultants to help domestic violence survivors’ traumatized dogs settle into transitional housing at the British Columbia Society of Transition Houses’ [Annual Training Forum](#).

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.



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

NYC Man Charged with Stretching Ex-Girlfriend's Cat to Death

After Jalen Gonzalez, 23, of the Queens borough of New York City, allegedly got drunk and refused to leave his ex-girlfriend's apartment, and the woman left to call a relative for help, Gonzalez reportedly stretched the woman's cat to death in a case authorities called one of the "most gratuitously violent" pet



D.A. Melinda Katz

deaths they had encountered. The cat experienced 24 fractured ribs among other injuries. The Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz [announced](#) that her office has charged him with aggravated animal cruelty, criminal mischief, attempted assault, and harassment, for which he faces up to two years in jail. The case is being prosecuted by the office's Domestic Violence Bureau with assistance from the Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit.

Investigation into Lewd Conduct with Teen Finds 100 Animal Porn Images

Hillsborough County, Fla. Sheriff's deputies investigating a man engaged in suspicious activity with a 15-year-old girl in a park made a shocking discovery when a forensic search of his devices allegedly found over 900 files of child and animal sexual abuse. [WPEC-TV](#) reported that detectives said that Justin Beyea, 46, of Plant City had been communicating with and meeting the girl for months and exchanging explicit messages and images with her. He was charged with 209 felony counts including 100 counts of filming, distributing or possessing images or videos of sexual activity with an animal.



Louisiana Man Facing 23 Counts of Child and Animal Pornography

Ascension Parish, La. Sheriff's deputies investigating child sexual abuse arrested Cody Mardere, 42. [WAFB-TV](#) said a search of his electronic devices allegedly found six files involving a child under 13 and one depicting sexual abuse of an animal. He was charged with 22 counts of child sexual abuse and one count of animal sexual abuse.

Child Sex Abuse Suspect Charged with "Buggery"



A South Carolina man out on bail stemming from five charges of child sexual abuse was charged under that state's archaic law prohibiting "buggery" when he allegedly posted a video of himself having sex with an animal. [WHNS-TV](#) reported that Spartanburg County Sheriff's deputies received a tip and arrested Jacob Cannan Blalock. During the search authorities seized electronic devices and two dogs were taken into custody by Spartanburg County Environmental Enforcement officers. Buggery, an archaic term for animal sexual assault, has been a crime in South Carolina since at least 1869 and is in the same criminal statute prohibiting homosexuality. It is a felony crime in South Carolina. A bill in the Legislature, [H 5505](#), would add a new offense of sexual abuse of

Woman Charged with 26 Counts of Child and Animal Pornography

In what appears to be one of the relatively unusual instances of a woman being accused of child and animal pornography, Val-len Ada Marie Hrab, 24, of Milton, Fla., was charged with 26 felony counts of sexual contact with an animal and possession of animal sex and child pornography videos. [WALA-TV](#) reported that a cyber tip to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children triggered an investigation by the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office, where deputies seized her laptop and a cellphone. Court records say she admitted to recording herself engaging in sexual acts with her dog and had sent those videos to others. After posting bond she was ordered to have no contact with minors or internet access as conditions of her release.



THE LINK... in the NEWS

Man Charged with Stomping Girlfriend's Pet Rabbit

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office filed multiple animal cruelty and domestic violence charges against Nikolas Hart, 25, of North Hollywood, for allegedly killing his girlfriend's pet rabbit. The [office said](#) that Hart, who was accused of assaulting his girlfriend on prior occasions, killed "a defenseless animal in a violent outburst. That kind of criminal behavior will land you in prison."

Hart was alleged to have stomped on "Momo" in a fit of rage, then placed the rabbit in a trash bag and threw him to the ground from their second-story apartment. The rabbit died from blunt force trauma to the chest, abdomen and face.

Hart was charged with one felony count of animal cruelty; one misdemeanor count each of injury to a spouse or cohabitant and attempting to prevent or dissuade a victim/witness; and three misdemeanor counts of disobeying a court order to not contact the victim. The Court issued a protective order prohibiting the defendant from owning, possessing or having any animals in his care or custody. If convicted he faces up to eight years in state prison.



Man Charged with Animal, Child and Domestic Abuse

Sheriff's deputies in Onslow County, N. Car. charged Cowboy Vazquez, 22, with three counts of felony animal cruelty and misdemeanor domestic violence and child abuse charges following an incident with a woman and her newborn infant. [WCTI-TV](#) reported that arrest records allege Vazquez violently abused two German shepherds and a Doberman pinscher, then used physical force in a domestic incident involving the woman. The warrants allege he threw and broke glass containers while she was holding the newborn, leading to the child abuse charges.



Cops Seek Domestic Violence Suspect in Case that Killed 9-Month-Old Puppy

Ohio police authorities were reported to be searching for a Guatemalan immigrant who allegedly assaulted his ex-girlfriend and another person who came to her defense and killed her 9-month-old puppy. [WLWT-TV](#) reported that police in West Chester, Ohio were asking the public's help in locating Mario Isais Ajanel de la Cruz, from Covington, Ky., on the domestic violence and animal cruelty charges. Police say he took the victim's 2-pound puppy from her hands and threw it against a wall.



Couple Charged with Child Abuse and Intimidating Animal Cruelty

After police in Lawrenceburg, Ky. responded to domestic incident and observed a dog with matted fur contained in a cage and standing in its own feces and urine, and two children and the mother reported alleged incidents of animal cruelty to intimidate the children that had not been previously reported, the couple were charged with child abuse and animal torture. Police records said that Justin Hall and Brianna Hall were arrested on suspicion of severely neglecting and abusing their children.



Police said that during interviews the children said the father had routinely beat dogs over the head with metal poles and sticks in their presence, so hard that when he missed he cracked tiles on the floor and in the shower. They said he shot a dog while the children and mother were home; when the oldest child refused to dispose of the dog, he supposedly buried in in the back yard, placed a stake in the ground over the grave, tied a second dog to the stake, and told the child "I hope she can smell her sister's brain rot."

The mother said she could not recall the incident as she was in a hospital recovering from alcohol detox. Children told police the father got so intoxicated at times that he urinated in the kitchen trash can. The mother had never reported any incidents to police.

The dog was seized by Anderson County Animal Control and the children were turned over to Community Based Services.

THE LINK... in the NEWS

Son Convicted of Setting Father and Dog On Fire with Tiki Torch Oil

Joseph Ashley Garcia, 44, of Lompoc, Calif., was convicted of murder, torture and cruelty to animals for pouring tiki torch oil on his father's head and setting him on fire while the 68-year-old was holding his dog on his lap. The [Santa Barbara Independent](#) reported that Garcia told his father, Joseph Michael Garcia, "You brought this on yourself," and later told the court he was only trying to set his father's hair on fire. Prosecutors said the son had accused his father of having an affair with his wife, and that methamphetamine and marijuana were said to be a contributing factor. The court rejected the son's plea of insanity. The dog, a terrier named "Charlie," was seriously burned but survived and was later put up for adoption. Garcia is facing a possible sentence of life without parole.



Pastor and Wife Arrested on Child Abuse Charges Amid Animal Abuse Allegations

A South Carolina pastor and his wife were arrested while visiting the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville and extradited back to Greenville, S.C. amid charges that he forced their adopted children to eat out of dumpsters, killed their pets while they watched, and sexually abused them while the wife did nothing. [WLOS-TV](#) reported that police began investigating Myron Chorbajian, 73, and his wife Kathleen, 71, after one of their children came forward to report "extensive abuse" that had been going on since the 1980s.

The warrant said Myron's charges included allegedly paddling a naked victim 50 times, beating a child with a belt into unconsciousness, running over a kitten and then shooting it in the head in front of the girl, and shooting a pet dog in the kitchen and forcing the child to bury its body.

Myron was charged with 22 counts of child abuse, child sexual abuse and incest; Kathleen was charged with 16 counts of placing a child at risk and felony accessory after the fact.

Alleged Arson Incident Kills Girlfriend's 10 Cats

Ten cats died of burn and smoke injuries when the boyfriend of the woman who owned them allegedly set fire to the shed in which they were housed. [KY3-TV](#) reported that Aiden Kinnee, of Springfield, Mo., was in custody after being charged with arson. Investigators said messages on the woman's phone included one showing Kinnee leaving the site shortly after the fire started, and another saying "Prison sounds better than this. I'd hurry back if I were you. Already started." Several days later another message allegedly said, "They didn't deserve that. But I did what I did." Court documents said Kinnee told authorities he was under the influence of meth at the time when a friend suggested he burn down the shed where the woman and her cats were staying.



Man Out on Bond for Dogfighting and Narcotics Charged with Child Sex Crimes

One of three defendants arrested last August on dogfighting and narcotics charges was re-arrested for child sex crimes while out on bond. Malik Anderson, 29, of Savannah, Ga., had been charged with eight counts of animal cruelty, dogfighting, and narcotics offenses when Chatham County Sheriff's deputies raided two residences, the Savannah [Morning News](#) reported. Deputies reportedly found cocaine, crack cocaine, firearms, 20 pounds of marijuana, 150 fentanyl pills, and \$135,000 cash in the August raid. They rescued 13 dogs, eight of whom had to be euthanized. In December Anderson was accused of aggravated child molestation and trafficking a person for sexual servitude.



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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