



A monthly report of news from

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



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Centers help pets
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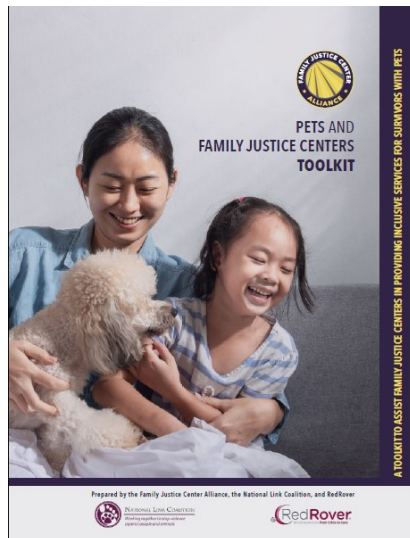
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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

**New Toolkit Will Help Family Justice Centers
to Become Pet-Inclusive**

The National Link Coalition has partnered with the [Family Justice Center Alliance](#) and [RedRover](#) to produce a groundbreaking [Toolkit](#) for the nation's 74 Family Justice Centers to help them better understand the impact of coercive animal abuse on domestic violence survivors and their children, and to adapt their programs to become pet-inclusive as over 300 domestic violence shelters have already done. Working together for the past two years, the three organizations have produced a 34-page guidebook that will help Family Justice Centers incorporate families' pets in their intakes and assessments, safety planning, and collaborations with community partners.



Read more about this major advancement in protecting the animal victims of domestic violence on the pages that follow...

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New Toolkit Will Help Family Justice Centers to Become Pet-Inclusive

As the movement spreads to enable domestic violence shelters to accept pets so the entire family can heal together, the latest expansion of this effort is to provide the same resources to Family Justice Centers which offer centralized services for domestic violence survivors. After two years of research and planning, a Toolkit is now available to help these centers.

The [Pets and Family Justice Centers Toolkit](#) has just been published by the [Family Justice Center Alliance](#) in partnership with [RedRover](#) and the National Link Coalition. As Family Justice Centers (FJC) expand their resources, they can now better understand how best to serve survivors with pets to eliminate what has been a common barrier to entry for services.

The Toolkit is a 34-page recommended protocol to systematize assistance for survivors with pets in three primary areas:

- Incorporating clients' pets in the initial intake process and assessing for risks to the pets;
- Helping clients strategize a pet-inclusive safety plan;
- Knowing how to identify and reach out to local resources that can help care for the pets.

The Toolkit includes:

- Background on the animal abuse/domestic violence Link;
- A sample intake assessment questionnaire;
- Strategies for clients before and after leaving the abusive partner;

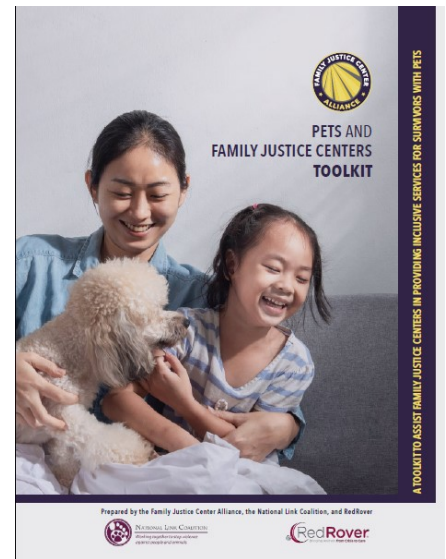
- How to address children's concerns; and
- Guidance on how to make the FJC pet-inclusive.

Appendices offer details on state laws that define intimidating animal abuse as acts of domestic violence and that allow pets to be included in protection orders.

The Toolkit examines the evolution of co-sheltering programs and highlights the risks and prevalence of animal abuse in abusive households. "By acknowledging the central role pets play in survivors' decision-making, FJCs can more effectively protect every vulnerable member of the family and strengthen their overall capacity to deliver compassionate, holistic services," it notes.

"Because abuse frequently extends beyond the individual to include pets and animals, questions about pets should be intentionally integrated into survivor-centered assessments," it advises. Recognizing the dynamic of how threats or harm to pets can trap survivors in dangerous situations and deepen trauma for both adults and children is an essential step toward building holistic, survivor-centered services that enable the FJC to better understand the full scope of a survivor's experience and respond with interventions that prioritize safety for every member of the family - human and animal alike.

Routinely and systematically asking the recommended pet-related intake questions not only identifies risks but also validates survivors' concerns, builds trust, and opens the door to meaningful and client-tailored safety planning. "By em-



bedding pet-inclusive assessments into daily practice, FJCs can strengthen their capacity to protect survivors, support their children, and safeguard their animals," it adds.

Chapter 3 helps FJCs to help their clients before they flee by introducing them to potential partnerships with local animal shelters, humane societies, veterinary networks, and other resources. It offers guidance for including pets in safety plans. In jurisdictions where cross-reporting laws exist, coordinated referrals between animal control and domestic violence services can further strengthen the safety net for both survivors and their pets.

Chapter 4 explores pet-friendly housing and foster care options for survivors with pets. It includes legal considerations about pet custody and practical tools to ensure that the animals are not overlooked so that the entire family can "move towards hope and healing together."

(Continued on Page 3)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

New Toolkit Will Help Family Justice Centers to Become Pet-Inclusive

Continued from Page 2)

Chapter 5 explores the impact of all this on children who may be deeply entwined emotionally with the pets and whose healing, safety, stability, and well-being can be

“Because abuse frequently extends beyond the individual to include pets and animals, questions about pets should be intentionally integrated into survivor-centered assessments.”

profoundly shaped by the presence of both domestic violence and animal abuse in the home. It explores the trauma children experience

when witnessing pet abuse, the ways pets can serve as protective factors, the heightened safety risks children face when trying to shield their animals from harm, and guidance for advocates regarding assessment, safety planning, and collaboration with partners to ensure children and pets are supported as interconnected members of the family.

Chapter 6 details some of the more unusual circumstances and logistical, legal and emotional challenges FJCs may face:

- Unusual pets;
- Service and emotional support animals;
- Military-connected clients;
- Survivors experiencing homelessness.

The Toolkit offers resources, protocols and strategies to help FJCs navigate these atypical complexities.

Chapter 7 focuses on the strategic and operational aspects of becoming a pet-inclusive Family Justice Center by embedding pet support into legal services, housing assistance, counseling, outreach, and community engagement and collaborations.

“In embracing this model, FJCs move from providing individual interventions toward creating an organizational culture that fully acknowledges the importance of pets, ensuring that every survivor and family member receives comprehensive, compassionate care,” it concludes.

“There is no one-size-fits-all model for all Family Justice Centers. But our wish is that the facts and ideas presented here will inspire you to take the steps necessary to address the needs of all the victims of family violence—including animals.”

The nation’s 74 affiliated Family Justice Centers play a critical role in supporting survivors of family violence, sexual abuse, and human trafficking. These centers provide a coordinated, trauma-informed approach to safety, healing, and justice. They offer such services as legal advice, housing support, counseling, mental health support, safety planning, outreach and community engagement.

Why Should Family Justice Center Advocates Ask Clients About their Pets?

Asking Family Justice Center clients about any concerns they may have about their animals’ safety serves several key purposes:

- Pets can be vital members of clients’ emotional support systems.
- Clients in crisis or under extreme stress may be unwilling or unable to clearly articulate their situation. They may feel safer talking about their pets’ welfare than about their own traumas.
- Asking about pets starts a comforting dialogue that builds immediate rapport and trust.
- This dialogue can then lead more easily into a discussion of their own concerns and help identify the client’s risk factors and sources of resilience.
- Because animals slip under the radar of human defense mechanisms, asking questions about their pets and their welfare may help open a window into the person’s or family’s underlying issues.
- This dialogue not only helps you solve clients’ immediate and long-term concerns but also allows for earlier intervention that protects not only the clients but also all vulnerable members of her family.

Join us for a free webinar to explain the Toolkit and how it can help you help survivors with pets — Tuesday, June 16, 1:00 pm EDT.

[Click here to register.](#)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Brazil Joins Countries Allowing Courts to Decide Divorcees' Custody of Pets

The movement born in multiple U.S. states to allow courts to determine custody of companion animals in their best interests during divisive divorce settlements — many of which are the result of domestic violence — has spread to Brazil.

The BBC reported that Brazil's Congress enacted legislation allowing courts to grant shared custody of companion animals when separating couples cannot agree on arrangements. Judges will be able to divide custody and assign maintenance costs, provided the animal lived primarily with the couple and there is no history of domestic violence or other criminal risk. It is not clear whether a history of animal abuse, or threatening animals to intimidate spouses and partners, is specifically included.

Lawmakers cited rising disputes over pet ownership in family courts and changing social norms. They viewed the law change as a reflection of the importance people place on their pets. Currently, the country of 213 million people has about 160 million pets, according to the Instituto Pet Brasil.



A statement accompanying the law added that couples with fewer children tend to have closer relationships with their animals, "often considered true family members".

The law in Brazil follows a similar law recently enacted in Mexico (See the [February 2026 LINK-Letter](#)), where nearly 70% of households are believed to have pets. Similar laws are believed to exist in France, Spain and Portugal. In the U.S., Alaska, California, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and the District of Columbia have enacted similar laws since 2016.



Study Seeks Survivors Who Needed Veterinary Care for Pets



Rochelle Stevenson & Crystal Giesbrecht

A novel study in Canada is seeking participants who have sought veterinary care for animals who have been injured by their romantic partners.

The study, which will be conducted via confidential interviews virtually or by phone, is part of a larger study led by Rochelle Stevenson at Thompson Rivers University in British Columbia and Crystal Giesbrecht, Director of Research at the Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan (PATHS). Other researchers participating are at the University of Windsor, University of Guelph, and PATHS.

To participate, email Stevenson at rstevenson@tru.ca.



Pennsylvania Proposes Reimbursing Costs of Relocating Survivors' Pets

A unique resource to help survivors leave their abusers has been proposed in Pennsylvania where **HB 2476** would allow out-of-pocket expenses related to domestic violence survivors' having to relocate or temporarily board their household pets to be reimbursed under the Crime Victim Compensation Program.

"Not having a safe place for your pet to go is a major barrier to victims leaving a potentially life-threatening situation," said the bill's sponsor, Rep. Ismail Smith-Wade-EI (D— Lancaster Co.). The program currently



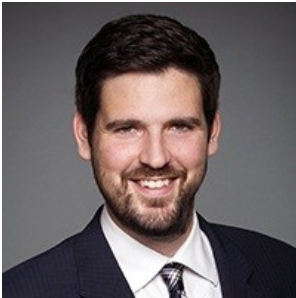
Rep. Smith-Wade-EI

covers relocation expenses necessary to protect the health and safety of the victim and other individuals residing in their household.

"As family members, pets should be covered, too," he emphasized.

Canadian Response to Gender-Based Violence Includes The Link as Coercive Control

In a response to a pioneering national study in Canada on coercive control in the criminal and family justice systems, the Minister of Justice has acknowledged that coercive control is a dangerous pattern of abuse that often precedes physical violence and that can include harm and threats to animals.



The March 26 response by The Hon. Sean Fraser also highlights that coercive control does not stop with human victims: abuse, threats, and/or neglect of companion animals are frequently used to intimidate, punish, and silence women and their children particularly in cases

The Hon. Sean Fraser of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence.

The Standing Committee on the Status of Women's report *Coercive Control in Canada*, published in late 2025 (See the [January 2026 LINK-Letter](#)) included 16 recommendations that call for action to address more consistently that "coercive control", or "coercive and controlling behavior" describes a pattern of behavior that takes place over time in the context of intimate partner and familial relationships that serves to "entrap" victims, eliminating their sense of freedom in the relationship. Addressing IPV and coercive control in intimate partner and familial relationships requires a multi-faceted and comprehensive response including dedicated funding to preventing this conduct and assisting victims and survivors, the report emphasized.

The report identified several areas where animals as part of the pattern of coercive control area are already being addressed:

- Canada's Divorce Act recognizes that coercive and controlling violence is an extremely dangerous type of family violence and exposure to coercive control in the home is a very harmful form of child abuse, often escalating after separation. It can include emotional, financial and psychological abuse. It can also include threats to kill or harm an animal or the killing or harming of an animal, and

such conduct is explicitly included in the definition of family violence.

- Under the Criminal Code, courts may consider threats or harm to animals as part of the factual context in related offences such as criminal harassment or intimidation, particularly where such conduct is used to instill fear or exert control over a victim.
- **Bill C-16**, the Protecting Victims Act, currently in Parliament, includes using, attempting, or threatening violence against an animal that is in the care of the intimate partner, as well as controlling or attempting to control the way the intimate partner cares for such an animal as a form of coercive or controlling conduct. Bill C-16 would reinforce the recognition of animal mistreatment as a tool of coercive control by expanding criminal harassment provisions to capture threats or harm to animals in a victim's care and by criminalizing the distribution of animal sexual abuse material, better reflecting the lived realities of abuse and enabling earlier, more effective intervention.
- The Government of Canada, through WAGE, also supports women's shelters in enhancing their capacity to meet the diverse needs of those experiencing violence, including making it possible for women to bring their companion animals with them when seeking safety.
- The RCMP also provides training to its members and other law enforcement personnel, service providers, and frontline employees on other topics such as strangulation and traumatic brain injury in IPV, the violence link between animal abuse and IPV,

"The Government of Canada shares the Committee's recognition of the importance of strengthening federal efforts to address coercive control in Canada. The Government agrees with the Committee about the importance of addressing coercive control and supporting victims and survivors of GBV, including IPV and coercive control in intimate partner and familial relationships," the report concluded. "This report is an important addition to the body of knowledge guiding our ongoing efforts to address coercive control in Canada."



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Connecticut Takes Steps for Statewide Program for Survivors' Pets

The State of Connecticut has taken a unique step in considering the feasibility of a statewide program to assist domestic violence survivors with pets with the passage of **S.B. 318**, signed into law as **Public Act No. 26-112** on May 20.

Beginning Oct. 1, the Commissioner of Agriculture, in consultation with the Office of Victim Services, will begin a study of the impact of the need for placement of companion animals on victims of domestic violence. The study will include, but not be limited to:

- (1) Existing resources available for victims of domestic violence to find temporary or permanent placements for a companion animal;
- (2) Identification of persons who may serve as a contact person for victims of domestic violence who need to place their companion animal in the care of another person due to such circumstance; and
- (3) The feasibility of establishing a phone number or other electronic communication line accessible 24 hours a day for victims of domestic violence who need to place their companion animal in the care of another person due to such circumstance.

The commissioner will submit the findings and recommendations no later than Jan. 1, 2027 to the Environment Committee, which submitted the bill.



The provisions are particularly significant because there is currently only one domestic violence shelter in Connecticut --- Safe Futures in New London -- that is believed to accept survivors' pets. The New England states were among the last to begin the process of transitioning shelters to also accept pets. Among the more than 300 shelters in 49 states now considered pet-inclusive, Connecticut, Hawaii, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, and South Dakota still have only one shelter. Delaware is the only state remaining with no pet-friendly shelters.

Pet Protection Laws Help Define Animals as "More than Property"

A new article by Amy Fitzgerald, who has been actively promoting a new legal construct of animals as being "more than property," (See the [December 2024 LINK-Letter](#)) identifies a different approach grounded in law based on how 42 U.S. states have amended laws to enable inclusion of companion animals to address the pressing social problem of domestic violence survivors delaying leaving abusers because they are unable to take their animals with them.

Fitzgerald, criminology and sociology professor at the University of Windsor in Canada, examines how these statutes are beginning to be cited in legal cases as evidence that animals warrant being given greater consideration than would be the case of simple property. Judges are now citing these animal-inclusive protection orders as evidence that pets are considered family members in legal cases beyond domestic violence, including pet custody disputes in divorce settlements, animal cruelty cases, emergency rescues, and emotional distress claims.

Without directly granting animals legal "personhood," Fitzgerald posits that these protection orders are eroding the idea that animals are just things. Instead, courts are recognizing the social bonds, vulnerability, and shared victimization of people and their animals.



Amy Fitzgerald

Fitzgerald concludes that these statutes are significant because they not only serve to protect animals and the people who love them, they also undercut the property status of animals which has much broader implications.

—Fitzgerald, A.J. (2026). *Animal-inclusive protection order statutes in case law: social problems and the erosion of the property status of animals.* *Social Problems*, spag012. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spag012>.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Florida Expands Law to Include Threats to Pets in Protective Orders

The State of Florida has expanded its law protecting the pets of domestic violence victims by revising the criteria that a court may consider in determining whether a petitioner for a domestic violence protective injunction has reasonable cause to believe that she or he is in imminent danger to include whether the respondent has threatened to injure or kill a family pet, service animal, or emotional support animal.

HB 277, sponsored by Reps. Debra Tendrich (D – Palm Beach) and Danny Nix, Jr. (R – Charlotte/Sarasota) was signed into law on May 22. F. S. A. § 741.30 already allowed petitioners to file injunctions for protection against domestic violence when the respondent has “intentionally injured or killed a family pet”; the new provision, which takes effect July 1, expands that to include threats to injure or kill animals.

The threat-to-pets provision was part of a larger package of statutory revisions. The new law also: enhances penalties for repeated violations of domestic violence injunctions; adds the existence of a military protective order to the criteria courts may consider in issuing an injunction; requires injunctions against sexual violence and dating violence to be entered into a statewide database; and increases the dollar amounts for relocation assistance claims for victims of domestic violence.

The final version of the bill differed somewhat from its original iteration. In the original version, the definition of “domestic violence” would have been expanded to include criminal acts of cruelty to animals. That provision was omitted in the enacted version, leaving



Reps. Debra Tendrich (left) and Danny Nix, Jr.

Florida excluded from the 20 states that define acts of coercive-control harm to a household animal within the definition of domestic violence.

The original version would have also expanded the language in petitions for injunctions against domestic violence to include whether the respondent “used the family pet as a means of coercive control.” Acts of aggravated animal cruelty by the respondent would have also been included among the sentencing multipliers courts could use.

Since 2020, Florida courts have been allowed to award exclusive care, control and possession of non-agricultural animals when issuing protective injunctions and to order the respondent to temporarily have no contact with the animal or otherwise harming or disposing of it.

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.

CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK

Interdisciplinary Collaboration Needed to Address Childhood Animal Cruelty

Collaborative safety planning with mental health professionals, community outreach with animal welfare professions, and increased cross-disciplinary communication are necessary in order for child abuse caseworkers to better identify and apply best practices to address the red flag of childhood cruelty to animals.

That is the conclusion from a study by researchers at Thomas Jefferson University that identified a need for greater understanding of behavioral red flags associated with animal abuse. The study also drew attention to concerns over professional compassion fatigue and noted that these findings can inform future research and evidence-based practice.

Katharine Wenocur, Kirby Wycoff, Sarah Jayne Oltz, and Ryan Gilchrist of Thomas Jefferson University conducted a series of focus groups involving 24 mental health professionals, child protective service workers, animal control officers, veterinarians, legal professionals, and prosecutors.

They based their study on the premise that intentional harm of animals in childhood has long



Katharine Wenocur, left, & Kirby Wycoff

been considered an indicator of psychological distress that is correlated with perpetration of and victimization by violence. However, few studies address common practices within and between other professional disciplines that come into contact with children who abuse animals. The study sought to identify best practices and gaps in intervention from a multi-disciplinary professional perspective.

They are presenting their findings, “Responding to Animal Abuse in Childhood: Professional Perspectives Across Disciplines”, at the International Society for Anthrozoology’s conference in Paris, France, on July 2.

This research was supported by an Animal Cruelty Research Grant from the ASPCA. For more information about 2026 ASPCA grants, please see the article on Page 16.

New Florida Law Protects Children and Animals

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on May 12 signed **HB 559** into law, making it a felony for an adult to commit aggravated animal cruelty, animal fighting, or sexual activities involving animals in the presence of a minor, or cause a minor to commit such crimes. It takes effect on Oct. 1.

The new law also requires a court to order a minor who commits specified acts of animal cruelty to undergo a psychological evaluation, counseling and treatment, with the minor’s parent or guardian or the state paying these costs. It also increases the level on the offense severity ranking chart for fighting or baiting animals.

The bill was a bipartisan effort co-sponsored by Rep. Linda Chaney (R – St. Petersburg) and Rep. Johanna López (D – Orlando). “I filed this bill because committing animal crimes in front of minors is a serious issue that often co-occurs with other forms of family violence and can have

severe, long-term traumatic effects on the children involved,” said Chaney. “Children who witness domestic violence at home are significantly more likely to abuse animals themselves. HB 559 aims to prevent that.”



Rep. Linda Chaney



Rep. Johanna López

CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK

Study Reports Strong Links between Online Child Sexual Abuse Material and Animal Cruelty

An [international study](#) of over 24,500 participants examining the online behaviors, pathways, and digital environments of individuals who have searched for or viewed child sexual abuse material (CSAM) is reporting that CSAM consumption frequently co-occurs with exposure to other illegal or harmful material including animal cruelty.

49% of respondents reported encountering or searching for content beyond CSAM, most commonly animal cruelty, self-harm and suicide material, depictions of death or murder, and graphic violence. The researchers concluded that this reinforces growing evidence that violent and exploitative online content exists within a broader ecosystem of harm rather than in isolation.

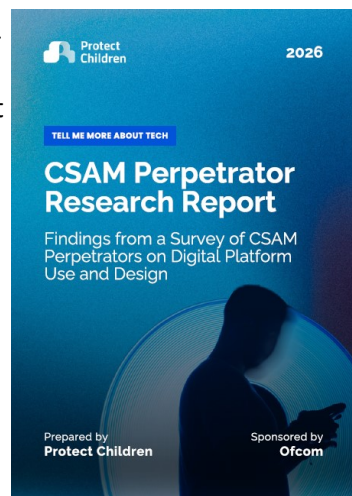
In terms of the severity of CSAM that respondents viewed, 29% viewed violent sexual activity involving children, and 24% viewed sexual content involving children and animals.

The researchers detail how many respondents came searching for CSAM came across other forms of illegal

or harmful material deliberately, accidentally, or through an algorithm that directed them there. A significant proportion of respondents reported first encountering pornography and CSAM in childhood, with rates increasing sharply by early adolescence.

The report reinforces the interconnected nature of online abuse and exploitation. The authors emphasize that efforts to address CSAM must be situated within broader strategies that also confront the dangers in algorithmic amplification, violent content including animal cruelty, and the growing risks facing children and youth in digital spaces.

--Protect Children (2026). *CSAM Perpetrator Research Report: Findings from a Survey of CSAM Perpetrators on Digital Platform Use and Design.*



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Your gift helps us protect vulnerable people and animals from violence, abuse and neglect.

Thank you for caring!

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.

CHILD MALTREATMENT... and THE LINK

Why Did Georgia Governor Veto Child Abuse Cross-Reporting Bill?

In an unexpected setback for Link-based cross-reporting, Georgia Gov. Brian P. Kemp vetoed a bill that would have added many animal care and control professionals to those mandated to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

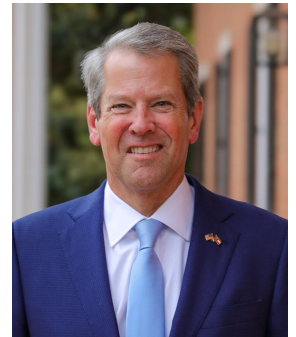
HB 1409 had passed the House 155-12 and the Senate 52-0 but was vetoed by the Governor on May 12. The bill would have added animal service workers, animal control officers, humane society employees, animal cruelty investigators, and animal shelter personnel, as well as firefighters, to the list of professions mandated to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Division of Family and Children Services.

In explaining his reasons for vetoing the measure, Kemp wrote:

“House Bill 1409 would, among other things, require the Department of Family and Children Services (“DFCS”) to implement an online platform for receiving reports of child abuse from mandatory reporters. Undoubtedly, DFCS must improve on the present system and address the litany of complaints from mandatory reporters and other interested parties. House Bill 1409, however, would preclude DFCS from competitively procuring solutions because the operational requirements are so narrowly specified. While the General Assembly should, by statute, impose requirements on state agencies under a proper construction of the separation of powers, the implementation of those requirements is properly the domain of the executive branch. For the foregoing reasons, I **VETO HOUSE BILL 1409.**”

It is not clear that that was the true reason for the veto. An unrelated amendment was added by the Senate to the original bill that would have required any settlement of claims of sexual harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or unlawful employment practice against a member of the General Assembly to be subject to public disclosure.

Georgia’s list of mandated reporters of child abuse or neglect consists of the usual groups of professionals, including human healthcare, educators, psychologists, counselors, social workers, marriage and family therapists, law enforcement, pregnancy resource centers, persons who process or produce visual or printed matter, and child welfare, services and counseling personnel. Georgia has no mandatory reporting of animal abuse, although veterinarians and technicians are permitted to make such reports, with immunity from civil and criminal liability for reports made in good faith.



Gov. Brian P. Kemp

ELDER ABUSE... and THE LINK

Maryland Law May Protect Animals of Vulnerable Adults

Maryland enacted **HB 282** on May 26, setting the stage for a possible interpretation of coercive-control animal cruelty to be applied elder abuse as is more frequently used in instances of domestic violence.

The new law expands the definition of “abuse” of a vulnerable adult to include psychological harm or sexual abuse perpetrated by an individual in a relationship of trust. It defines “psychological harm” as 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.”

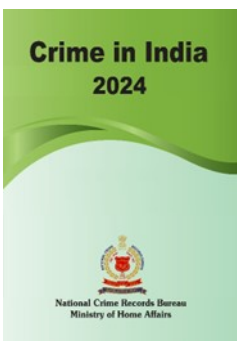
While threats to, or harm of, a vulnerable adult’s pet, service animal or emotional support animal are not specifically identified as psychological harm, it is conceivable that a future court ruling could apply this standard. Substantial case law and statutes in other states define threats or harm to animals as coercive control in domestic violence scenarios.



LAW ENFORCEMENT... and THE LINK

India Begins Counting National Animal Cruelty Statistics

In a process that may be a precursor similar to the FBI's program to document animal cruelty cases to gain national statistics on incidence, and to be able to correlate these crimes with crimes against humans, India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has now initiated the inclusion of crimes against animals in its annual statistics.



The 72nd edition of the NCRB's *Crime in India* publication, published with 2024 statistics, appears to be the first edition to include the category of violations of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act among its comprehensive analysis of crime statistics in the massive South Asian country of 1.4 billion people. The data serve as a

principal reference document for lawmakers, law enforcement agencies and academicians to inform decision-making, policy formulation and strategy development to combat crime and enhance public safety.

According to the report, in 2024 there were 9,039 cases of crimes against animals in 28 states, 19 cities, and 8 union territories. These incidents represented a 0.4% share of all "special acts and local law crimes".

While it is not clear whether the Indian system will allow animal cruelty cases to be cross-referenced with crimes against individuals, as the FBI's National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) does, this appears to mark a pioneering first step in recognizing that animal cruelty violations are, in fact, crimes and need to be treated as such by law enforcement. Demonstrating how these crimes also impact human victims has a consistent effect worldwide of getting lawmakers and law enforcement officials to take animal cruelty cases more seriously.

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Ayaan Ali Siddiqui, second from left, comments during a presentation of enforcement of anti-cruelty laws at the Law Enforcement & Policing Fellowship Academic Conference in India.

"It is encouraging to see increasing institutional recognition of the relationship between animal cruelty, public safety, and broader patterns of violence, especially as these discussions are gradually entering policing, criminological, and policy spaces through academic dialogue, field-based research, and law-enforcement-oriented discourse," Ayaan Ali Siddiqui of the [Takshashila Institution](#) – an independent, nonpartisan center for research and education in public policy based in Bangalore (See the [May 2026 LINK-Letter](#)), reports.

Siddiqui was a panelist at the first Law Enforcement & Policing Fellowship (LEPF) [Academic Conference](#) in November 2025 in Bengaluru. The three-day conference, hosted by the Takshashila Institution and the Indian Police Foundation, brought together LEPF Fellows, senior police practitioners, academics, and subject-matter experts for an intensive exchange of research and ideas aimed at strengthening India's law enforcement ecosystem. Presentations addressed research insights to practical policing reforms including multidisciplinary approaches to preventing animal cruelty.

The [Tribune of India](#) newspaper reported that while the 9,039 cases represent "just a drop in the ocean" because many cases are not reported, "The collection of these statistics is nevertheless important as criminals who hurt animals are a threat to everyone."



LAW ENFORCEMENT...and THE LINK

Link Featured in Ohio Peace Officers Training

A Link course in the Ohio Police Officers Training Academy will be a free, CPT-approved all-day workshop on June 22, at Owens Community College's Center for Emergency Preparedness in Walbridge. Nine presenters will discuss Ohio's new dangerous dog and cross-reporting laws. [Click here](#) to register.

Vicki Deisner, Executive Director of the hosting Ohio Animal Advocates, said the workshop is being supported by the Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust. It will feature:



Vicki Deisner

- 1) A legal overview of how **HB 247 ("Avery's law")** changed the previous dangerous dog law; the background of the problems in the field that led to this legislation; how the legislation has addressed these problems; and how implementation is working, and
- 2) The critical issue and opportunities to establish and enhance cross-training and cross-reporting processes at the state and local level. It will explore "the dark side" of the human-animal bond and its implications for human and animal services, family welfare agencies, prosecutors, law enforcement, and human and veterinary medicine. It will describe strategies, public policy, research, and programs to prevent family violence and to respond to its human and animal victims.

The Link portion of the workshop will cover: Ohio's cross-reporting law; the inclusion of pets in Ohio protective orders; safe havens for pets of survivors; applicable statutes and statistics; Ohio's felony strangulation law; case studies; utilizing threat assessments for better case resolution and officer safety; and how animal abuse is linked with child maltreatment, domestic violence, elder abuse, and community violence.

Presenters will include:

Todd Curtis, Special Investigator, Wood County Prosecutors

Vicki Deisner, Esq., Executive Director, Ohio Animal Advocates

Kayla Evanoff, Shelter Manager/ Advocate, The Cocoon – Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency

Steven Heaven, Executive Director, Toledo Humane

Carole O Heyward, Esq., Senior Clinical Professor of Law and Faculty Director, Cleveland State University Animal Law Clinic

Kailey Leary, Esq., Supervising Attorney and Clinic Director, Cleveland State University Animal Law Clinic

Scott Mills, Chief Dog Warden/ Humane Agent, Marion County Sheriff's Office

Dr. Alana Van Gundy, Esq., Professor in Criminal Justice and Legal Advocate

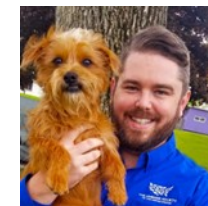
Larry Williams, Chief Dog Warden, Licking County Dog Warden's Office

Child, Domestic and Animal Advocates Partner to Pass Iowa Felony Law

Iowa domestic violence and child advocates who reminded everyone that animal abuse is often a warning sign of violence inside the home joined a broad, determined coalition of animal welfare organizations, law enforcement officers, state associations, and members of the veterinary community to secure a last-minute, bipartisan passage of **HF 2348**.



Leighann Lassiter The bill, while not specifically a Link issue, is significant is that it makes Iowa the final state in the U.S. to have a law that makes intentional animal torture a felony on the first offense. The law includes elevated penalties if the individual involved has already been convicted for animal abuse, neglect or torture, injury to or interference with a police service dog, bestiality or involvement in animal fighting.



Preston Moore Passage of the law, which took nearly 10 years of intense lobbying efforts, means that Iowa is no longer the only state where extreme animal cruelty was not an automatic felony on the first offense, said Leighann Lassiter and Preston Moore, program director for the animal cruelty campaigns and Iowa state director, respectively, for [Humane World for Animals](#).

LAW ENFORCEMENT...and THE LINK

National Sheriffs Association Magazine Explains Pet Protection Orders

The ability to include pets in domestic violence protection orders is a relatively new concept for many law enforcement officers, so the National Sheriffs Association was gracious enough to offer the National Link Coalition an opportunity to explain this concept to their members. The result was a three-page article by Phil Arkow in the most recent issue of [Sheriff & Deputy magazine](#) that will help law enforcement officers responding to domestic violence incidents inform the victims that options are available to also protect their animals.

The article describes how animals become “soft targets” for abusers’ outbursts of rage and collateral damage in the emotional abuse directed at human victims. The threat or harm to animals “can become either the last straw that prompts her to leave or an impenetrable barrier forcing her to stay, with the family held hostage in fear for



their animals’ welfare,” Arkow wrote.

The article described the variations in the pet protection order statutes now in effect in 42 states with a list of each state’s relevant statutes. While the details of the orders will be for judges to sort out, “Sheriffs, deputies and court officials should concentrate on knowing that these laws exist, make victims aware of them, and help them secure orders that protect victims, their children, and their animals,” he concluded.

— Arkow, P. (2026). *Pet protection orders: A new tool to help victims of domestic violence.* *Sheriff & Deputy*, 78(3), 16-18.

ANIMAL SHELTERS... and THE LINK

Study Examines Mental Health Risks to Shelter & Investigation Workers

Building on earlier research in Ontario that described the additional physical risks and emotional stressors experienced by female animal cruelty investigators ([See the April 2018 LINK-Letter](#)), a new study in British Columbia is reporting that animal protection officers and animal shelter workers who are routinely exposed to animal cruelty are at risk for poor mental health.

Meghan Lok and Alexandra Protopopova from the University of British Columbia note that while previous research has examined the coping strategies to deal with the emotional impact of animal euthanasia on these professionals, it remains unclear whether dealing with animal cruelty warrants similar types or levels of support.

Interviews with 13 personnel identified stressors including concerns for coworker well-being and exposure to physical danger, challenges related to caring for difficult animals and prolonged court processes. Both groups identified witnessing animal cruelty and experiencing verbal abuse as significant stressors.

Although participants from both roles expressed a desire for greater

mental health support, animal protection officers emphasized internal organizational changes, while animal shelter workers highlighted the need for external, systemic improvements. Such changes, they argue, would support worker well-being, ultimately improving animal welfare, reducing employee turnover, and benefiting the broader community.

They are presenting their findings, “The impact of animal cruelty cases on animal protection officers’ and animal shelter workers’ mental well-being”, at the International Society for Anthrozoology’s conference in Paris, France, on July 2.



Why Don't Veterinarians Always Report Animal Abuse?

The Veterinarian's Oath "requires us ethically and morally to protect animals, be a trusted advisor and be an advocate for animals. So there is a responsibility ... that if there is suspicion of animal abuse, whether it's direct or indirect, to report it."

That's the advice of Amanda Landis-Hanna, a veterinarian and [RedRover](#) board member. But she, and the National Link Coalition's Phil Arkow, in an article for [DomesticShelters.org](#) outlined a list of reasons why practitioners have been reluctant to report – and the reasons why they should overcome their fears.

Reporting abuse can be crucial for getting help for both vulnerable animals and people. "When we see animals come in with suspected abuse, it's important for veterinarians to report it," Landis-Hanna said. "It may be the most visible sign of issues within the household." Arkow added that because the majority of veterinary staff and clientele are women, "There's a high likelihood that there's domestic violence swirling around any vet office."

The two described how emotional abuse can overlap between domestic violence and animal abuse and the parallels between pediatricians and veterinarians regarding reporting suspected abuse affecting their patients.

They listed some of the reasons veterinarians have been reluctant to report – and solutions to those concerns:

Animal abuse isn't always considered important by governments who prioritize agribusiness interests. But 43 states now mandate or permit practitioners to report their suspicions, which removes one roadblock.

Veterinarians aren't sure if what they're seeing is abuse. But they do not have to know that it is abuse – merely report suspicions and let the investigation and legal teams make that determination.

Veterinarians don't know how to report, because there is no standardized or centralized investigatory system. But the National Link Coalition's [National Directory](#) of 6,500 Abuse Investigation Agencies will lead them to the appropriate agency.

Veterinarians are worried about damage or retaliation and fear making things worse for the family or risking their staff's safety. These are possibilities, but not reporting will definitely make things worse.



Amanda Landis-Hanna

Veterinarians are running a business and even after many years in practice are still paying off student loan debt. Fear of losing clients, negative social media reviews and legal action is a significant deterrent. But they may get a more favorable reputation among clients who see them taking a stand against animal cruelty.

Landis-Hanna advised domestic violence survivors to reach out to their practitioners and to also let them know if their pets are included within a protection-from-abuse order. "Veterinarians are reliable and trustworthy. If you are fearful, at risk or being abused, whether your animal is being abused or not, please speak to the veterinary team," she said. "Veterinary teams will always do their very best to protect not only the animals, but the humans as well."

Animals Should Be Included in “Dangerousness” Assessments

Dangerousness to self or others” as an essential prerequisite for hospitalizing persons against their will, and “grave disability” — an inability to provide for basic life necessities with mental illness as a major contributing factor — are well established in psychological assessments and criminal law. Could these be used in risk assessments for animals, particularly in hoarding situations?

That’s the premise of an article by Gary Patronek and Martha Smith-Blackmore. They argue that because the current criminal justice approach is limited because it relies on cruelty statutes that are largely reactive, “dangerousness” and “grave disability” should be expanded to protect animals when danger is readily foreseeable and before it materializes into substantial harm.

They explore these concepts’ relevance to animal hoarding (not because the person is dangerous, but because conditions make the situation dangerous for animals) and domestic violence (where the person may well be inherently dangerous). They focus on animal hoarding because “for the dozens to hundreds of animals typically involved, future suffering is as foreseeable as it is inevitable. Even in the early stages, the animal care deficits substantially overlap the deficits in self-care described under the concept of grave disability.”

Grave disability is already familiar to courts, mental health professionals, and adult protective services. “However, due in part to long-standing professional silos,

this overlap is not widely recognized as extending to animal care,” they write.

They recognize that assessing dangerousness is a complicated area of law because of: intersections with concerns about constitutional rights; determining where it begins (or emerges) on a scale ranging from optimal welfare to prosecutable cruelty; and the role of mental illness and psychological evaluation.

They identify five areas of animal law in which the concept of dangerousness is already embedded:

- Forfeiture of animals, and prohibitions against acquiring future animals, after a conviction for animal cruelty;
- Including pets in domestic violence protection orders;
- Considering animals’ best interests in divorce custody;
- Removing liability in Good Samaritan statutes that allow citizens to remove animals from hot cars; and
- Justifying removing endangered animals under exigent emergencies without the usual need for a warrant.

They argue that focusing on dangerousness is an opportunity to inspire the animal protection community to look at these situations from a different perspective — that of the person’s duty of care rather than degree of the animal’s suffering experienced. “This shift mirrors principles found in child protection, where the goal is not only about preventing harm but also ensuring the child’s right to thrive,” they add.



Martha Smith-Blackmore & Gary Patronek

They recommend that a civil approach focused on forfeiture (and when appropriate, mental health intervention) rather than prosecution could help bridge the gap between the care animals deserve and the deficiencies that criminal law will currently tolerate. They encourage multidisciplinary collaborations among animal law attorneys, forensic mental health professionals, veterinarians and other animal welfare experts to clarify how, and at what stage of risk, determinations of dangerousness could be performed in order to circumvent “eminently foreseeable catastrophes”.

They conclude, “Despite having a relatively low and inconsistent profile in the daily lexicon of animal protection work, preventing dangerousness is actually foundational in the premise of the entire movement (i.e., preventing cruelty to animals).”

—Patronek, G.J., & Smith-Blackmore, M. (2026). Recognizing non-human animals as a vulnerable class in assessments of “dangerousness to others”: Application in animal hoarding. *Behavioral Sciences & The Law*, 00:1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.70065>

THE LINK in THE LITERATURE

ASPCA Announces \$750,000 in Research Grant Opportunities

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals 2026 Research Grant RFP is open until July 10 for research in any discipline that addresses a broad scope of topics in six areas of animal welfare.

Key topics to be considered, and the maximum grant that can be awarded, are:

- Access to veterinary care (\$50,000)
- Applied Behavior Research (\$35,000)
- Animal cruelty (\$50,000)
- Psychological trauma as a consequence of cruelty (\$35,000)
- Farm animal welfare (\$75,000)
- Animal shelters (\$50,000)

The Animal Cruelty grants are seeking proposals that address cruelty toward equines, cats, or dogs from any angle or relevant discipline (e.g., public policy, law, criminal justice, criminology, veterinary forensics, community engagement, prevention/intervention, human behavior change). Of particular interest is research that:

a) increases understanding of the perspectives of key stakeholder groups (e.g., law enforcement/animal control, veterinary professionals, animal shelters/rescues); or

b) investigates the effectiveness of cruelty prevention/response efforts at the community or system level.

Also of interest is research that heightens awareness of animal cruelty and builds knowledge that informs and engages key community stakeholders and allied professionals in preventing and responding to this animal welfare issue.



The solicitation is also open to researchers studying topics with relevance to animal welfare (e.g., criminal justice, public health, psychology, economics) who wish to use the funding to add information about pet health, animal maltreatment, etc. to an existing study. More information is available at:

<https://www.aspcapro.org/researchgrants>

New Academic Journal to Address Pets and One Health Issues

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville's [Center for Pet Family Well-Being](#) is launching a new peer-reviewed, open-access academic journal that will recognize pets as essential members of the family and explore how veterinary care, human healthcare, public health, and social services can work together to support coordinated, pet-inclusive systems of care.

The *Journal of One Health Systems* is inviting reviewers with

expertise in veterinary social work and related disciplines to help shape high-quality, practice-relevant scholarship. The journal is also welcoming submis-



sions for its inaugural and subsequent issues that address reducing systemic barriers to care, strengthening coordinated human and pet health systems, and promoting One Health solutions. Articles will cover four interdisciplinary themes:

Health and Well-Being

Aligns and strengthens veterinary, human, and social care systems to promote the comprehensive health and well-being of pet families, recognizing the interconnected needs of people and their pets.

Economic & Community Support

Mobilizes funders, nonprofits, employers, and financial systems to reduce cost-related barriers and invest in the infrastructure that supports pet family health and

community-based solutions that improve access to care and long-term stability.

Housing, Transportation, and Infrastructure

Addresses barriers that limit access to care and stability for pet families.

Education, Policy, and Research

Advances sustainable change and One Health integration across disciplines through training, applied research, and policy that center pet families within care systems.

Additional details are at <https://voljournals.utk.edu/johs>.

Childhood Animal Cruelty and IPV Linked with Later Suicide Risk

An expansion of another recent study that Linked childhood exposure to animal cruelty with mental health issues (*See the [March 2026 LINK-Letter](#)*) is reporting that childhood exposure to animal cruelty — when combined with interpersonal violence -- significantly increases the risk of suicidality in adulthood.

Analyzing data from 1,072 adults who identified a variety of childhood adversities, Shelby McDonald, Camie Tomlinson and colleagues report that adults who grew up



Shelby McDonald, left, & Camie Tomlinson in homes where both people and animals were harmed had markedly worse outcomes and more intense suicidal thoughts and were twice as likely to have attempted suicide at some point in their lives that those exposed to other childhood adversities.

31% of adults exposed to both interpersonal violence and animal cruelty reported a lifetime suicide attempt,

compared with 10% in the low adversity group. This group also reported much higher intensity of suicidal ideation, even after accounting for current depression, anxiety, stress, and social support.

Individuals exposed to interpersonal violence without animal abuse did not show elevated suicide risk, underscoring the unique impact of animal-directed violence, they write.

The researchers conclude that animal cruelty is not a minor or isolated concern, but can be a meaningful indicator of severe, coercive, and traumatic family violence. They recommend that exposure to harm or threats against pets be routinely included in trauma histories and suicide risk assessments, and call for improved collaboration between domestic violence services, mental health providers, and animal welfare professionals.

-- McDonald, S.E., Tomlinson, C., Freedenthal, S., & Bright, C.L., et. al. (2026) *Childhood exposure to interpersonal and animal-directed violence: adversity profiles and adult suicidality. [Frontiers in Psychiatry 17:1771930](#). DOI: [10.3389/fpsyt.2026.1771930](#)*

Participants Sought for Study on Attitudes toward Animals

A Shelter Medicine and Community Engagement researcher at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine is recruiting participants in animal-related fields for a short (10-15 minute) survey on attitudes towards animals, empathy, and knowledge of animal welfare as part of a research study. The study will assess if these scales can be used with professional populations.

Postdoctoral researcher Bethany Moyer tells *The LINK-Letter* that the study has created new scales to assess people's views on animal welfare and empathy.

Previous surveys have measured attitudes towards animals using questions about animal rights or ethical uses of animals; the current study tries to reduce focus on these topics and will compare results with previous surveys.

Participants should be over the age of 18 and residents of the U.S. [Click here](#) to learn more or to take part.



HELP US KEEP THE LINK FREE!

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

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

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

Growing GLOBAL LINK AWARENESS

National Link Coalition Joins IAHAIO

The National Link Coalition has joined the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO) as an Affiliate Member. IAHAIO is the global association of more than 109 multi-disciplinary organizations, academic study centers and professional associations in 37 countries that engage in practice, research and/or education in animal assisted interventions and service animal training. These activities serve to promote the positive and therapeutic benefits of the human-animal bond and respectful approaches to engaging with animals.

The National Link Coalition's connections with IAHAIO run deep, dating back to several members of our leadership team participating in and presenting at IAHAIO's triennial global conferences dating back to the 1980s.

Several of IAHAIO's programs dovetail closely with the National Link Coalition. In 2018, IAHAIO published its **Position Statement on Domestic, Child and Elder Abuse and Related Animal Abuse** (See the [July 2018 LINK-Letter](#)). It called for greater public education, professional training, academic research, interdisciplinary partnerships, and continued development of practical initiatives to reduce the legal, ethical, safety, training, and economic barriers that often deter professionals from detecting, reporting and reducing human and animal abuse.

The Position Statement was updated in 2025 (See the [June 2025 LINK-Letter](#)) utilizing significant National Link Coalition input. The revised statement emphasizes not only how "responsible care of animals is a source of well-being and enrichment for people and animals alike," but also that "the irresponsible care of animals can have deleterious effects on human as well as non-human animals."

Another connection is the common goal of both IAHAIO and the National Link Coalition to support emerging needs of knowledge and programs in countries across the globe that are developing or underdeveloped. One of IAHAIO's strategic aims is to further the development of human-animal interactions and animal-assisted interventions in these regions; the National Link Coalition's "Link Desert" campaign is incubating research and programs in far-flung countries where only a handful of individuals are pioneering efforts to disseminate the Link concept in virgin territory. IAHAIO further offers grants prioritized to underdeveloped countries: the William F. McCulloch award to encourage practitioners to develop a new program, and the Johannes Odenaal award to support new research.

Another similar synergy exists in the two organizations' common goal of encouraging closer collaboration and working relationships between researchers and practitioners, using each sector's work to better inform the other's.



IAHAIO also publishes an online, peer-reviewed Journal, **People and Animals: The International Journal of Research and Practice**.

In addition to its many webinars on animal-assisted therapy and activities, IAHAIO has hosted several webinars addressing Link issues, including "Dogs in Judicial Settings" and "The 'Dark Side' of the Human-Animal Bond: Animal Abuse, Human Violence, and its Significance for Human-Animal Interactions".

Current IAHAIO members are based in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, U.A.E., U.K., and the U.S.A.



LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

Short-session legislative years move quickly, and most state legislatures have already adjourned or are preparing to do so. As these sessions head into the final stretch, we're still following 207 LINK-related measures. Please join us in following their progress and alert us to any additional bills we may have missed!

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

Note: Listing 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 and S. 2196, 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.

H.R. 8911 and S. 4562, the Animal Violence Exposes Real Threat of Future Violence Act of 2026 would require the Department of Justice to conduct a study into the Link between cruelty towards animals and cruelty towards humans and report its findings and recommendations to Congress within three years. The bills would earmark \$2 million in funding for mental health service providers, police, and animal welfare organizations to prevent animal cruelty and rehabilitate offenders.

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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have imposed additional penalties for individuals who commit acts of animal abuse or neglect in the presence of a minor.

SB 1587 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have allowed 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 have created a rebuttable presumption that service animals should remain with the party for whom they provide a service. "Companion animals" would have been 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 died when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have given 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 have also included whether either party has committed abuse, cruelty, neglect, or violence toward an animal or human. It would also have permitted a court to award temporary custody and care of a pet animal when issuing an emergency protection order.

CONNECTICUT

H.B. 5264 died when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have expanded "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 died when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have allowed 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.

SUCCESS!! S.B. 318 requires the Commissioner of Agriculture, in consultation with the Office of Victim Services, to study the impact of the need for placement services for the animals belonging to domestic violence victims.

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.

SUCCESS!! HB 559 makes it a felony for an adult to commit aggravated animal cruelty, animal fighting, or sexual activities involving animals in the presence of a minor, or causes 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.

SUCCESS!! HB 277 and SB 682 add a respondent's threats to injure or kill a family pet, service animal or emotional support animal to the criteria courts can use when determining whether petitioners seeking an injunctive protection order are in imminent danger of domestic violence.

GEORGIA

HB 1409 passed both houses but was vetoed by the Governor. The bill would have added 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have increased 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** died when the **Legislature adjourned**. They would have granted veterinarians immunity from administrative, criminal or civil liability for making good-faith reports of alleged animal misconduct. Veterinarians who knowingly make false reports would have been subject to disciplinary action and civil liability and guilty of a misdemeanor.

HF 670 died when the **Legislature adjourned**. It would have given juvenile courts jurisdiction in proceedings concerning a child under 17 years of age if the alleged offense were animal torture.

SF 2159 died when the **Legislature adjourned**. It would have included 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.

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

SUCCESS!! **HB 282** and **SB 182** 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.” However, it is not specified whether threats to, or harm of, a vulnerable adult’s animal could be specifically categorized as psychological harm — as is often the case in domestic violence laws

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.

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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.

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MINNESOTA

HF 1816 and **SF 1163** died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have created 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** died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have expanded the definition of a "crime of violence" to include conviction for felony animal cruelty.

HF 3946 and **SF 4301** died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have amended 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 when 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.

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.

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

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.

A 11182 and S 9427 would define threats or harm to animals as coercive control.

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.

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 10308 would require anyone with a farm operation that houses horses or cows to complete an animal cruelty prevention workshop that would include laws regarding cross-reporting of animal abuse to proper authorities.

OHIO

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

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

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

OKLAHOMA

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

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

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

PENNSYLVANIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

HB 2476, the Protecting Pets in Domestic Violence Situations Act, would allow out-of-pocket expenses related to domestic violence survivors’ having to relocate or temporarily board their household pets to be compensable under the state’s Crime Victim Compensation Program.

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, died when the Legislature adjourned.** It would have closed 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have created 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.

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TENNESSEE

HB 1444 and **SB 1475 died when the General Assembly adjourned.**

They would have added 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.

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 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 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

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 12 — Warrensville Heights, Ohio: Jessica Bibbo and Vicki Deisner will present "The Link between Elder Abuse and Pet Abuse" at the [Consortium Against Animal Abuse](#) (C3A) Conference, sponsored by the Greater Cleveland Elder Abuse Domestic Violence Roundtable.

June 16 — San Diego, Calif. (online): Phil Arkow, Katie Campbell, Chelsea England, and Meghan Foley will participate on a panel in a [webinar](#) for the Alliance of Family Justice Centers explaining the new Pets and Family Justice Centers Toolkit. ([See Page 1](#))

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

June 22 — Walbridge, Ohio: Nine presenters representing animal advocates, law enforcement, prosecutors, animal law, and domestic violence and sexual assault will be featured at the [Ohio Police Officers Training Academy](#), "Avery's Law and the Link between Animal and Human Violence: Fundamentals for Law Enforcement."

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 2 — Paris, France: The 35th [International Society for Anthrozoology conference](#) will feature three Link-related presentations: Meghan Lok and Alexandra Protopopova from the University of British Columbia will present "The Impact of Animal Cruelty Cases on Animal Protection Officers' and Animal Shelter Workers' Mental Well-being"; Katharine Wenocur, Kirby Wycoff, Sarah Jayne Oltz, and Ryan Gilchrist of Thomas Jefferson University will present "Responding to Animal Abuse in Childhood: Professional Perspectives Across Disciplines"; and Camie Tomlinson from the University of Louisville will present "When Violence Extends to Animals: Childhood Exposure to Harm Toward Pets, Mental Health, and Suicide Risk".

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](#).

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.

July 29 — (online): Don't Forget the Pets will hold a [webinar](#), "Pet Behavior 201: Setting Pets Up for Success," to help families experiencing domestic violence learn strategies to manage pets' behavior.

Aug. 3-6 — Oxford, U.K.: Presentations at the 11th Annual [Oxford Animal Ethics Summer School](#) will include: James Erselius of the Animal Legal Defense Fund on "Animal Harm as Public Injury"; Christina Warner on "Ruby's Law: Advancing Ethical Strategies for Animal Protection in Domestic Abuse Cases"; Emily B. Knickerbocker on "Safe Haven for All: A Policy Proposal for Pet-Inclusive Domestic Violence Shelters in New York City"; and Julia Dyrdycka-Borowa on "Redefining Violence as a Strategy for Animal Protection".

Aug. 5 — Tulsa, Okla.: Don't Forget the Pets will hold a free [training workshop](#) on how to create and sustain pet housing programs for survivors of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness .

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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: The International Association of Veterinary Social Work’s [9th Summit](#) will feature: Phil Arkow presenting “Protecting ‘Woman’s Best Friend’: Assessing the Impact of Animal-Inclusive Protection Orders”; Shoshana Mostoller and Erin Doyle presenting “Keeping Families Together: Advancing Pet-Inclusive Shelter Policy in New England”; Kristina Hill presenting “Preventing Animal Hoarding through Cross-Sector, Less Punitive Systems: A One Health Approach”; and Aviva Vincent presenting “Whole Families, While Lives: Integrating Veterinary Social Work into Child Welfare Practice.”

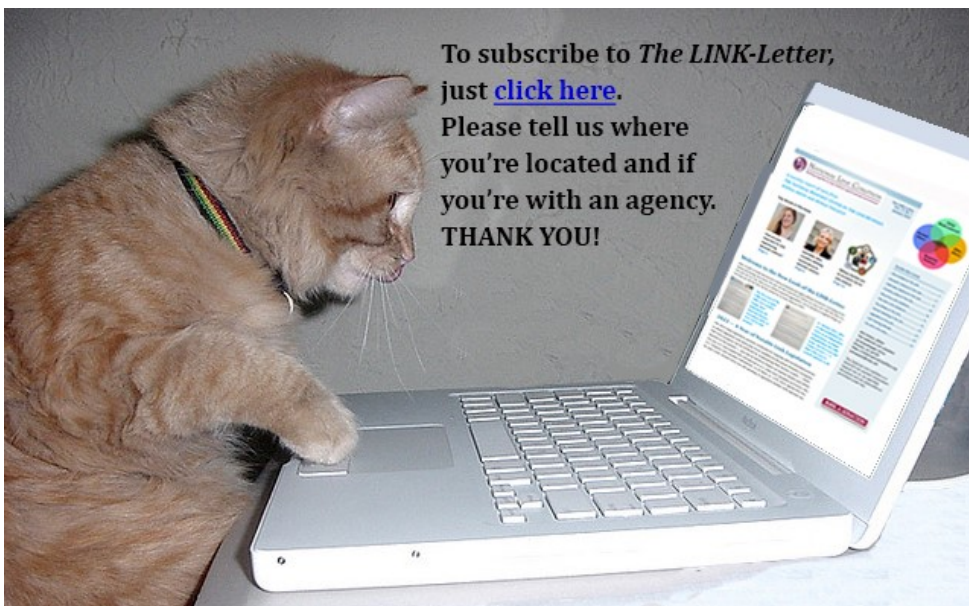
Oct. 21— Pennsylvania (online): The [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular bi-monthly meeting.

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...)

Two Unrelated Cases in Dayton, Ohio

Domestic Violence Offender Gets 2 Years for Setting Kitten on Fire

A Dayton, Ohio man who previously had been arrested and incarcerated for domestic violence and aggravated menacing among other charges ([See the September 2024 LINK-Letter](#)) was sentenced to two years in prison for setting a kitten on fire. [WKEF-TV](#) reported that Eric Williams, 25, will get credit for the 303 days he has already served in the Montgomery County Jail following the July 2024 incident. Williams pleaded guilty on April 27 to charges of animal cruelty and possession of criminal tools. The kitten, named “Joffrey”, suffered severe burns and required surgery and round-the-clock care. Prosecuting Attorney Matt Heck, said, “While it's not a lengthy prison sentence, at least he is being held responsible for what he did.”

Couple Charged with Child Abuse as 7 Children and 32 Dogs and Chickens Removed from Home

Seven children ranging from 7 to 15 years old, 14 dogs and 18 chickens were taken from a Dayton, Ohio home after the 15-year-old girl's most recent video captured her mother's boyfriend, Stephanas Golden, 40, allegedly beating children. [WDTN-TV](#) reported that the girl's father contacted police who arrested Golden and the children's mother, Heather Pippin, 36, on charges of child endangerment and resisting arrest. A community advocate said the girl had been documenting the abuse for over a year and that complaints had been going to the police department and Montgomery County Children's Services since 2022. The couple were also charged with having unlicensed dogs.

Illinois Man Charged with Animal and Child Pornography

Police in Grayville, Ill. executing a search warrant for possession and recording of suspected child pornography reportedly also discovered images of sexual activity with animals. Brian Allender was taken into custody and is facing six counts of child and animal pornography, according to [WFIE-TV](#).

Evidence recovered from the suspect's cellphone allegedly included numerous illicit images involving minors, sexual activity with animals as well as video recordings believed to have been made inside a public restroom at a gas station/convenience store.

Animal Cruelty Suspect Charged with Intimidating Family Member

A man who had been charged with five counts of animal cruelty for allegedly throwing five newborn kittens in a trash can was arrested a month later for allegedly threatening to kill his family. The Putnam County, Fla. Sheriff's Office said that Tyler Charles Holtz, 36, was re-arrested three days after bailing out on the animal cruelty charges. The [Palatka Daily News](#) reported that there was a video of Holtz putting the cats in a trash can and that Holtz had sent text messages to a family member that called the victim a “dead man walking” and described scenarios where he could be shot. He was being held in the Putnam County Jail without bond.



THE LINK... in the NEWS

Suspect in Child Sex Abuse Case Charged with Slashing Dogs with Machete and Shooting Police Officers

Rodney Vanderpool, 55, of Syracuse, N.Y., who had recently been released from jail following sex abuse charges, was charged with multiple counts of attempted murder after he allegedly stabbed two dogs and a neighbor with a machete and then opened fire on city, county and federal law enforcement officers in a six-hour standoff that left two officers shot and a third injured.

The [Syracuse Post-Standard](#) reported that nearby residents were evacuated for their safety before Vanderpool eventually left his apartment and was taken into custody without further incident.

Vanderpool was out of jail on pretrial release for the pending sex abuse charges stemming from an alleged assault of a 6-year-old girl in 2013 when he reportedly fired a shotgun at officers responding to a complaint about the incident with the machete. He was charged with three counts of first-degree attempted murder, second-degree attempted assault, menacing, criminal possession of a weapon, and aggravated cruelty to animals. The two wounded officers and the third injured officer were all released from a hospital in stable condition. Officers located the injured dogs and arranged emergency veterinary care.

Hoarder Pleads Guilty in Case Involving Abuse of Corpse and Child Sexual Abuse Material

The Kentucky hoarder who had been charged with possessing child sexual abuse material and animal cruelty in a case in which investigators found the skeletal remains of his father who had been missing for 10 years ([See the February 2026 LINK-Letter](#)) has pled guilty to 34 counts involving the animals and his late father.



David Howery, 67, of McCracken County, Ky., pled guilty to 32 counts of animal cruelty or torture, abuse of a corpse and failure to notify of a death. [WPSD-TV](#) reported that the child sexual abuse case was dropped because prosecutors could not determine the age of the subject found on Howery's phone.

An animal welfare investigation in 2025 found 32 dogs in deplorable conditions in his residence outside Paducah. Further investigation uncovered the remains of his father in a shallow grave surrounded by animal carcasses and the sexual abuse material on his phone. Howery had previously been arrested for animal cruelty in 2021 when over 100 neglected animals were found on his property. Sentencing was set for July 15.

Cruelty Incident Leads to Link Response



An incident where a man allegedly kicked a cat to death drew an immediate LINK-based response from the local animal shelter, warning the public that animal abuse can lead to human-to-human violence.

Harold Larson of Rochester, N.Y., was charged with aggravated cruelty to animals by humane investigators from Lollypop Farm, the humane society serving greater Rochester since 1873. [WHAM-TV](#) reported that Larson apparently admitted to kicking the cat while wearing work boots after it scratched his hand.

Reno DiDomenico, vice president of Lollypop Farm's Humane Law Enforcement, issued a statement. "This is a disturbing case that underscores how quickly an act of violence can turn fatal," he said. "No animal should suffer because of frustration or retaliation. This case underscores the link between animal abuse and human-to-human violence. Our role is to ensure these actions are taken seriously and that those responsible for abusing animals or humans are held accountable under the law. We also want the public to understand that speaking up with factual, first-hand reports can make all the difference in bringing these perpetrators to justice."

THE LINK... in the NEWS

Two Unrelated Link Cases Put Louisville in the News

Man Accused of Setting Woman's Dog on Fire

After a Louisville, Ky. woman called police saying her husband had set her dogs on fire, Bobby Atkinson, 37, was charged with animal torture and cruelty, menacing and terroristic threatening. [WLKY-TV](#) reported that following an earlier argument, Atkinson allegedly returned with a handgun, went to the basement to get ammo, and intimidated her while holding the gun saying, "If we didn't have a daughter together I'd shoot you and stand over you." After the woman got an emergency protective order and heard that Atkinson had reportedly fathered a child with another woman, she returned home to find the fire alarm going off and found one of her two dogs on fire downstairs. Both dogs were treated at Metro Animal Services.



Murder Suspect Who Tortured Animals Killed by SWAT Team

A murder suspect whom Louisville, Ky. police said wanted to hunt homeless people, tortured animals, idolized mass shooters and serial killers was shot and killed by a SWAT team after he held police at bay in a shootout standoff for a half hour and finally came out of his house saying, "I am not here to kill SWAT officers. I am here to be shot by them."

[WDRB-TV](#) reported that Michael Hristov had been wanted on charges of murder, assault and abuse of a corpse for a 2025 homicide in which a homeless man was killed, had symbols carved into his body and had body parts cut off.

100 Arrested in Connecticut Cockfighting/Gambling Bust

A multi-agency investigation of a suspected cockfighting and gambling ring led to a search warrant and the arrests of over 100 individuals, including two homeowners who were charged with cruelty to animals, professional gambling, operating a gambling premise, and risk of injury to a minor. The [Connecticut State Police](#) reported that Elvin Miranda, 59, and Lisa Miranda, 66, of Tolland, Conn., were released after posting \$250,000 bond each and are scheduled to appear at state Superior Court on June 18. Investigators seized approximately \$90,000 in U.S. currency. The Department of Agriculture found 273 birds on the property, all of which had to be euthanized due to their deteriorated conditions.



Floridian Facing 100 Years for Online Child & Animal Sexual Abuse Porn

After the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children sent Florida law enforcement officials a cybertip that a person posing as an underage girl was viewing and sending sex images via Snapchat, police in Key West arrested Jacob Rookey, 21, of Cudjoe Key, on 18 charges of buying and selling child sexual abuse and animal sexual abuse materials and soliciting minors. [News media](#) reported that Rookey had been working at the Key West Police Department as a 911 telecommunicator. "Trading in material that involves the sexual exploitation of children and animals is what keeps the sick market for this material alive," said Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier. Rookey faces up to 100 years in prison if convicted.



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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