



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

The LINK-Letter
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*A monthly report of news from
The Global Resource Center on The Link Between
Animal Abuse and Human Violence*

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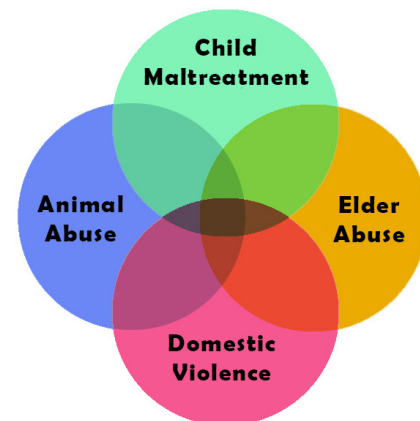
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Phil Arkow, Editor

The National Link Coalition

16 Grasshopper Drive

Etowah, NC 28729

<https://NationalLinkCoalition.org>

arkowpets@snip.net

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Which States Are the "LINK-iest"?

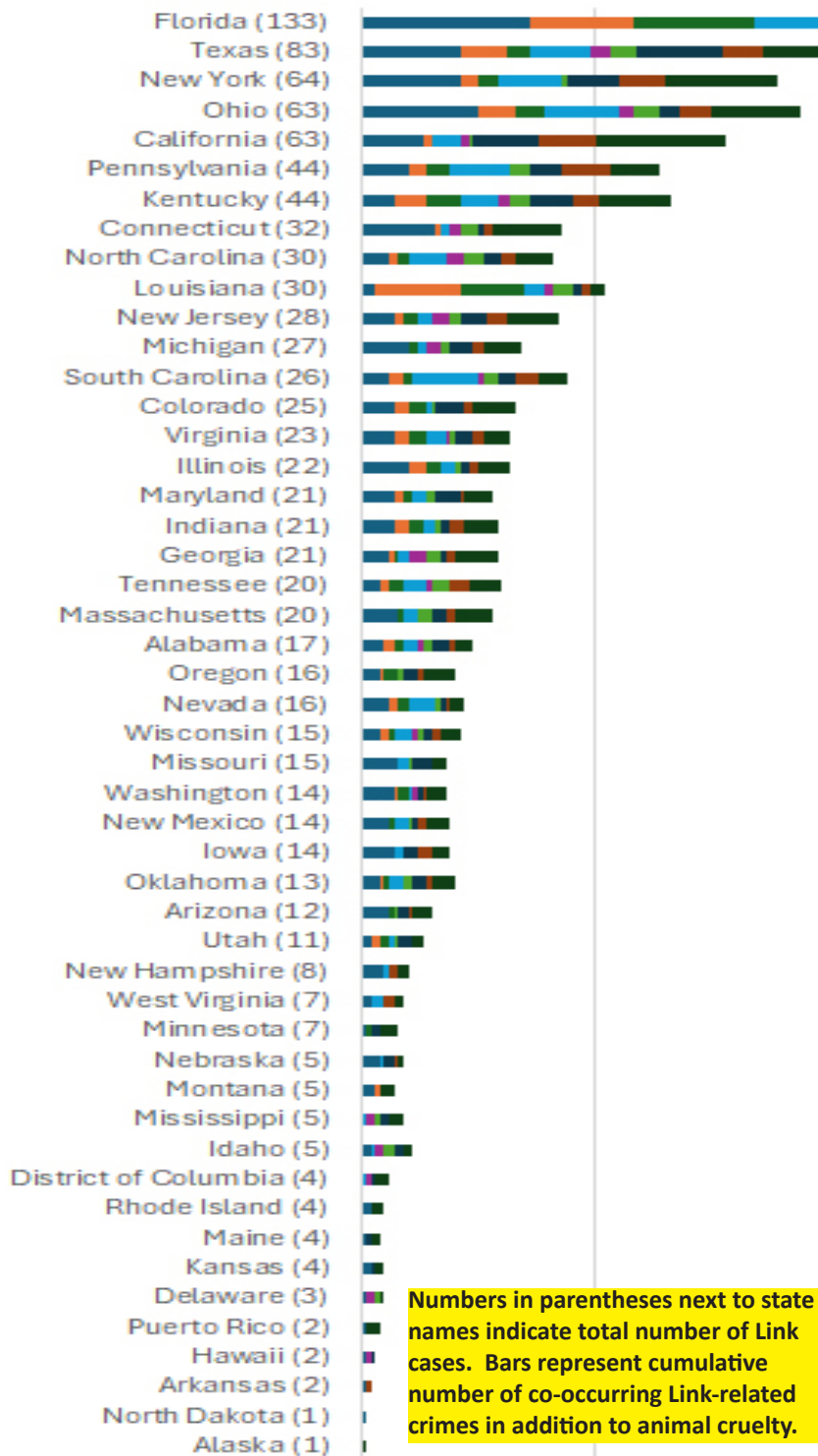
In addition to the news about significant legislation, research and programs addressing The Link, since 2012 we have also been compiling news articles from mainstream news media reporting on Link-related cases as described by local and national newspapers and TV stations. Currently, 1,158 such cases have appeared in our *LINK-Letters* and we began to wonder whether any particular states are over-represented in the number of incidents that drew media attention.

We organized our list of news articles by state and by various types of Link correlations. This was challenging as it is not unusual for a Link case to involve two or more human-related crimes in addition to the animal abuse. And while it was not possible for us to do a full statistical analysis (but we'd welcome any researcher who wants to jump in and tackle this!) the results are intriguing.

Admittedly, the articles may not be fully representative of the actual number of Link cases; not all police activities make it into local news media, and many of the articles only came to our attention thanks to our dedicated band of *LINK-Letter* readers who inform us of what's happening in their area. So it's not possible for us to determine whether the figures that follow indicate whether some states are more prone to Link-type crimes, or have systems that are more (or less) aggressive in investigating, enforcing and prosecuting animal cruelty cases, or whether that state's news media are more sensitive to the issue. Nevertheless, please continue to Page 2 and beyond to see what our non-scientific, informal survey found:

SPECIAL REPORT: Which States Lead in LINK Crimes?

LINK Crimes by State -- 2012-2026



Florida Leads in Link Cases

Our informal survey compiled details from 1,066 American Link-related news media accounts that came to our attention from April 2012 through July 2026 plus 92 cases reported in 18 foreign countries. In reviewing the summary finding below, several limitations must be noted:

- Not all cases involving animal cruelty and other crimes are reported in mainstream media.
- Not all of those that are reported come to our attention.
- The apparent over- or under-representation of cases in any particular state may be a result of many factors: better reporting, investigatory and enforcement systems; the presence or awareness of local news media; the degree to which any particular crime is sensational enough to warrant widespread media interest; and the presence of LINK-Letter readers who assist us in alerting us to these cases (thank you, dear contributors!)

Consequently, we can't accurately interpret these data (but we'd welcome anyone who can!) and we applaud those states whose law enforcement, prosecution, and news media agencies seem to be more aware of The Link. Here's what we found:

(Continued on Page 3)

■ DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ■ CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ■ ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE
 ■ CHILD ABUSE ■ ANIMAL FIGHTING ■ NARCOTICS
 ■ HOMICIDE ■ HOARDING/ELDER ABUSE ■ OTHER OFFENSES

SPECIAL REPORT: Which States Lead in LINK Crimes?

States With Most Link Crimes:

For the sheer number of reported Link-related crimes, no state comes close to Florida, with a whopping 133 incidents (12.47% of all 1,066 U.S. crimes). But Texas (83 cases), New York (64), Ohio and California (63 each), and Pennsylvania and Kentucky (44 each) aren't far behind. Given the large human populations in five of these states, perhaps these numbers are not surprising; why Kentucky reports so many incidents is a mystery.

Florida Leads the Way:

Not only did the Sunshine State log the most number of overall Link cases, it also ranked #1 in almost all categories: particularly in key Link crimes of domestic violence, child sexual abuse, animal sexual abuse, and child abuse, but also to a lesser degree in narcotics-related offenses, animal hoarding/elder abuse, and other offenses. One potential explanation for Florida's over-representation: the state's Sunshine Laws make information about criminal cases and arrests immediately available to the public, including news organizations. Because of this increased transparency, Florida tends to be over-represented in the news regarding all types of crime, particularly crimes which are highly sensationalized.

Domestic Violence/Animal Abuse Link:

When it comes to The Link between animal abuse and domestic violence, Florida, Texas, New York, Ohio and California are again the leaders. These four states alone comprised 95 cases, or 29.41% of the 323 cases involving both domestic violence and animal cruelty.

Child Sexual Abuse/Animal Sexual Abuse Link:

113 animal abuse cases also involved child sexual abuse, with the Gulf Coast states of Florida (22 cases), Louisiana (18) and Texas (10) leading the pack. Even more alarming was the extremely close correlation between animal sexual abuse or bestiality and child sexual abuse: 113 cases of animal sexual abuse were reported in 29 states, and 78 of these cases (69%) involved both child and animal victims. Again, this Linkage was most prominent in Florida, Louisiana and Texas for reasons that are unclear.

Child Abuse/Animal Abuse Link:

The origins of the child protection movement are in animal welfare, so it was not surprising to find that 183 cases of animal cruelty were Linked with non-sexual child abuse (17.17% of all cases). However, we were surprised to discover that among the 125 cases of animal hoarding, 51 incidents, or 40.8%, also involved child abuse. While conventional wisdom suggests that stereotypical animal hoarders are older women, a significant number of animal hoarding cases also put children at risk. This is a phenomenon that child and animal welfare agencies must be prepared to address, as well as the public health, veterinary, and social services agencies invariably called in to assist with animal hoarding incidents.

The combination of 296 sexual and non-sexual child abuse cases represent 27.77% of all U.S. Link cases over the covered period. Florida, Louisiana, Ohio, and Texas again have the highest rates -- at least from these admittedly informal figures.

Animal Fighting and Other Crimes:

Animal fighting remains a pernicious problem and a risk factor not only for the dogs and cocks involved but for human victims and public safety. We found 48 news media reports on animal fighting busts in which the perpetrators were charged with other crimes including child abuse, narcotics offenses, homicide, gambling, and weapons offenses, among others. The leading states for animal fighting news media reports were Georgia, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Texas.

Impact of Narcotics:

Narcotics offenses were co-occurring in 79 Link cases, or 7.4% of the U.S. total. These include the above-mentioned animal fighting cases as well as other cases where substance abuse was noted in prosecutors' charges and media accounts.

High Incidence of Homicides:

Among the many findings that surprised us were seeing that animal cruelty cases are frequently Linked with homicides: 158 incidents in 39 states involved murders (or attempted murders) of spouses, intimate partners, neighbors and other gang members, plus mass shootings. Aggression against animals seems to be most strongly carried over to human fatalities in California, Florida, Kentucky, New York, and Texas. It is perhaps not surprising that so many homicide-Link cases were reported, given that homicides generally command more media attention than non-fatal crimes.

(Continued on Page 4)

SPECIAL REPORT: Which States Lead in LINK Crimes?

Murder-Suicide and The Link:

The homicide files include 20 cases where in addition to a human fatality, a human attempted or committed suicide which also claimed the life of an animal. These cases are occasionally referred to as “peticides”.

Other Crimes Linked to Animal Abuse:

A catch-all category of other crimes co-occurring with animal abuse identified 345 cases (32.36% of the total) where offenses such as assault, burglary, terrorism, hate crimes, carjacking, rape, and kidnapping were involved. 37 cases in 24 states were Linked with arson.

Women as Perpetrators:

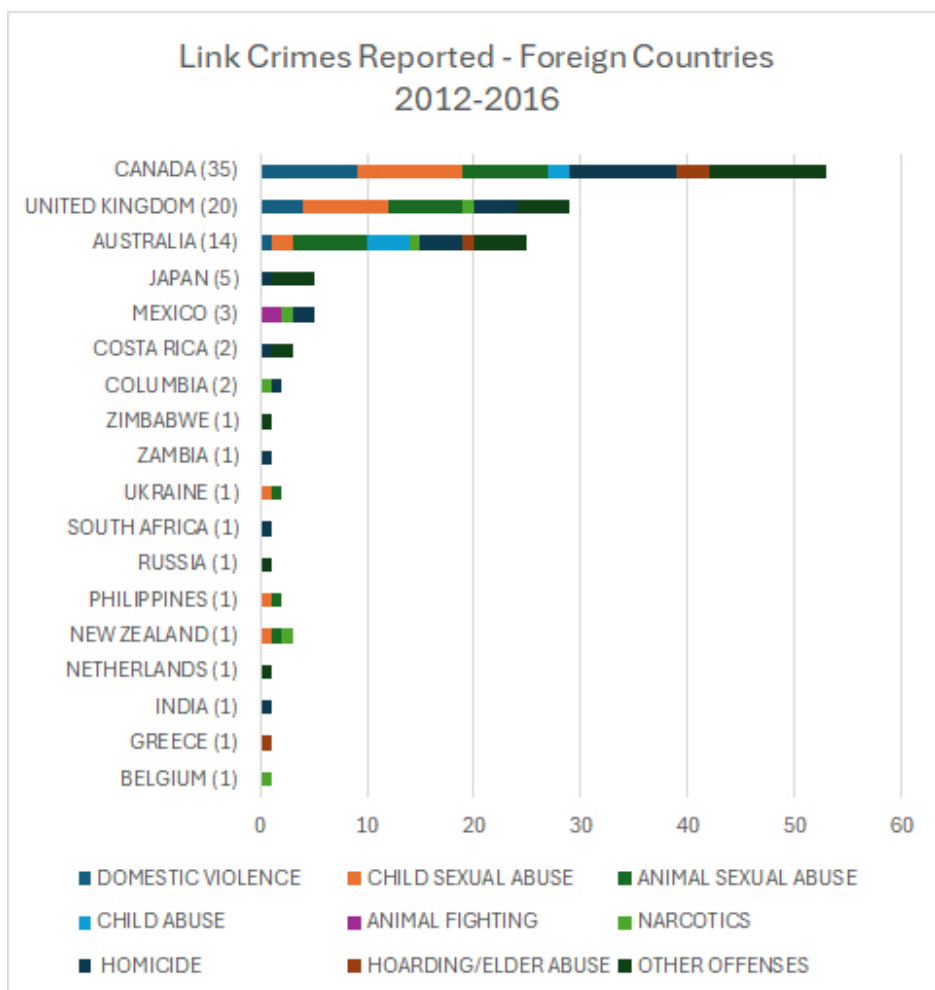
While the majority of physical attacks against animals are committed by men – and women are over-represented among animal hoarders – it was intriguing to see how many cases involved women in domestic violence (as perpetrators or in retaliation against their abusers), child abuse, and participating in animal and child sexual abuse.

180 cases (16.88% of the total) in 37 states featured women as sole or collaborating perpetrators. Florida was again significantly over-represented, accounting for 17.77% of woman-perpetrated Link cases – but California, Kentucky and Ohio also saw significant numbers.

States With Fewest Link Crimes Reported:

The least “LINK-y” states were South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming, which reported no incidents, followed by Alaska and North Dakota with one case each. This may be attributable to extremely low populations, rural environments, and a scarcity of local news media.

Link Media Coverage is a Global Phenomenon



Our “LINK-iest” survey also confirmed that co-occurring instances of animal cruelty and other crimes are not only a global phenomenon, but that these cases can receive widespread mainstream news media attention. While our access to foreign news media is limited, nevertheless over the 2012-2026 period we reported on 92 international news stories emanating from 18 nations from Australia to Zimbabwe.

Not surprisingly, Canada (35 cases) and the United Kingdom (20 cases) were featured most prominently, due to geographic proximity and a common language. Similar to the U.S. pattern, there were extremely close Links between child and animal sexual abuse, with 8 cases in Canada and 6 cases in the United Kingdom featuring sexual assaults against both children and animals. A similar pattern was observed in Australia.

One striking finding was a large number of Link-related homicides in Canada (10) and the United Kingdom (4) where firearms – a leading cause of homicides in the U.S. – are not as readily available. It was not initially possible to determine the instrument of death in these cases.

Reports of dogfighting were limited to Mexico.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Arizona Establishes Coercive-Control Animal Abuse as Criterion for Child Custody

Arizona has taken a major step forward in recognizing intimidating animal abuse as coercive control by requiring courts to include a history of domestic violence and coercive control in determining child custody and parenting time.

HB 2995, the “Alec and Lydia Act,” sponsored by Rep. Lisa Fink (R - Glendale), became law on June 22. While Arizona already included acts of animal cruelty within its definition of domestic violence the new law extends this recognition into mandatory considerations for courts to address when determining any legal decision-making and parenting time matter.

The newly amended statute § 25-403.03 declares that as a public policy of Arizona, “The court shall consider domestic violence, including child abuse, as contrary to a child’s best interests. In any legal decision-making and parenting time matter, the court shall assign the highest priority to the personal safety and physical, mental and emotional well-being of both the child and the domestic violence victim.”



Representative Lisa Fink

Domestic violence claims shall be established by a preponderance of the evidence. The court shall consider multiple considerations including “Other acts of domestic violence against any person that tend to prove the existence of coercive control.” It adds, “If the court determines that a parent has committed domestic violence, there is a mandatory rebuttable presumption that awarding decision-making or parenting time to that parent is contrary to the child’s best interests.”

The new statute defines “coercive control” as a pattern of violent, threatening, coercive or emotionally abusive conduct by one parent against the other, without consent or justification, including threatening to kill or injure a person, including oneself, or a household pet. “Domestic violence” is defined as coercive control when perpetrated by one parent against the other parent or against a minor child living in either parent’s household.

An existing Arizona statute already established intimidating animal abuse within the definition of domestic violence. Under Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 13-3601, “domestic violence” means any act that is a dangerous crime against children as defined in two paragraphs of the cruelty-to-animals section § 13-2910: Intentionally or knowingly subjecting any animal under the person’s custody or control to cruel neglect or abandonment that results in serious physical injury to the animal; or Intentionally or knowingly subjecting any animal to cruel mistreatment.

New Hampshire Defines Animal Cruelty within Pattern of Coercive Control

New Hampshire has joined the growing list of states that not only recognize domestic violence as a pattern of coercive control, but also that animal cruelty can be part of that pattern.

RSA 173-B:1 already included cruelty to animals within the definition of “abuse” for individuals seeking protection orders. The new law enables courts to also consider the presence of “coercive control” as constituting a credible present threat to the petitioner.

Under the new law, “coercive control” is defined as a pattern of conduct that includes, but is not limited to, a manifestation of the defendant’s intent to threaten, intimidate, harass, isolate, coerce, control, or compel compliance, which causes the petitioner to reasonably fear for

his or her physical safety.

The new amendment adds to the actions considered coercive control “any single act which is 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 child, relative, or animal belonging to the petitioner.”

HB 1522 was signed into law on July 2 by Gov. Kelly Ayotte and took effect immediately. The measure, was sponsored by Rep. Jay Markell (R – Atkinson), with six bipartisan co-sponsors.

Illinois Updates Divorce Pet Custody Disputes to Cover Unmarried Couples

When Illinois became the second of what are now eight states to enact laws allowing divorce courts to award custody of a separating couple's pets to what the court deems to be in the animals' best interests, its legislators probably couldn't foresee a loophole that became a legal conundrum several years later in Delaware with the curious case of "Tucker" the goldendoodle: how should the court respond when the separating couple aren't married?

Illinois took a significant step to close this gap in July when Gov. J. B. Pritzker signed into law **HB 4540, the Companion Animal Custody Equity Act**. The new law establishes a framework for companion animal custody disputes for instances not addressed under the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act. Its provisions become effective Jan. 1, 2027

The new law amends **735 ILCS 5/19-101** to now clarify that "parties" in possession disputes concerning companion animals include domestic partners, former partners, fiances, or roommates if shared responsibility for the animals' care can be demonstrated. It adds a new section, **735 ILCS 5/19-130**, allowing courts settling possession disputes to "consider the well-being of the companion animal regardless of the legal status of the parties."

The new law adds what may be the most comprehensive guidelines to assist judges among the states that have enacted similar laws. In these disputes, the new statute allows Illinois courts to evaluate relevant evidence including:

- History of daily caregiving responsibilities;
- Feeding, grooming, veterinary, and training involvement;
- Financial contributions related to the animal's care;
- Emotional bonds between the animal and each party;
- Stability and continuity of the animal's living environment;
- Safety considerations and past conduct affecting the animal;
- Credible witness testimony;
- Age and physical or behavioral vulnerability of the animal;
- Continuity of routine and care;
- Ownership documentation.

For companion animals 10 years of age or older, courts may now give additional consideration to these factors as well as the minimization of the animal's stress. Courts will also be allowed to order mediation between the parties to resolve possession disputes.

Illinois enacted the original law on Aug. 25, 2017 to become effective Jan. 1, 2018, following the 2016 success of the first such law in Alaska. It amended the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act ([See the September 2017 LINK -Letter](#)) to allow parties filing for divorce to file a joint petition for simplified dissolution if they have executed a written agreement allocating ownership and responsibility for their companion animals. It also allowed the parties to petition for sole or joint ownership, contingent upon the court's consideration of what would be in the animals' best interests.



Subsequent and similar laws were enacted in California (2018), New Hampshire (2019), New York and Maine (2021), the District of Columbia (2022), Delaware (2023), and Rhode Island (2024). But shortly after Delaware's law was enacted, courts were confounded by the case of "Tucker", a goldendoodle jointly owned by Karen Callahan and Joseph Nelson, an unmarried couple who had been fighting for custody since their breakup in 2022 ([See the June 2025 LINK-Letter](#)).

Under Delaware law, Tucker was considered "property" which would have to be "partitioned" since the couple were not married. Three separate courts had issued split decisions over where Tucker belonged. When the case wound up in Chancery Court, Vice Chancellor Bonnie W. David resolved the property partition provisions by ruling that one party would own Tucker and the other would receive a monetary award, and it would be up to the couple to determine the details.

In its preamble to the new Illinois law, the General Assembly affirmed that "companion animals often occupy a unique role within households that is not fully reflected in existing statutory frameworks governing possession disputes." The purpose of the new law, it added, was "to provide courts with guidance when resolving possession disputes involving companion animals while preserving existing property law principles."

CROSS-REPORTING... and THE LINK

Missouri, Delaware Enact Cross-Reporting Laws

Missouri finally enacted a comprehensive cross-reporting law that will mandate the reporting of animal abuse or neglect by professionals in human services and of child and elder abuse or neglect by humane investigators and animal control officers, beginning Jan. 1, 2028.



The bill had been a 5-year-long effort by the [Missouri Alliance for Animal Legislation](#). **HB 2292** requires:

- Adult and child protective services workers to complete a 1.5-hour **training** on The Link and how to identify and report animal abuse or neglect;
- Animal control officers and humane investigators to complete a 1.5-hour **training** on The Link and how to identify and report child and elder abuse or neglect;
- State agencies and the Missouri Animal Control Association (MACA), to **develop training materials**;
- **Mandated reporting** of suspected animal abuse or neglect to a MACA Hotline by: CPS/APS workers; mental health professionals; social workers; teachers and other school professionals; law enforcement, peace, juvenile, probation, and parole officers; home health aides; child foster care personnel and volunteers. They will be immune from civil and criminal liability for good-faith reporting. MACA will forward reports to law enforcement officers. False reports and failures to report will be subject to fines and penalties.
- **Mandated reporting** of suspected child and elder abuse or neglect by animal control officers and humane investigators.
- MACA to provide **annual hotline statistics** to the governor and general assembly. A **sunset provision** will determine its success after three years.

The measure was hailed by the Missouri Alliance for Animal Legislation which fought for cross-reporting for several years; 10 similar bills were introduced in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025.

“This legislation is critically needed for vulnerable animals and at-risk humans. It is well-documented that there is a strong link between violence against animals and crimes against humans,” said MAAL in a statement.

“This legislation will, no doubt, expedite the removal of our most vulnerable populations, including the animals, from harm’s way.”

Delaware has become the 24th state to require veterinarians to report any suspected animal cruelty with the enactment of **House Substitute Bill1 for HB 415**. Gov. Matt Meyer signed the measure into law on July 23 to become effective immediately.

The new law requires all veterinarians to file their reports with the state’s Office of Animal Welfare or another appropriate reporting authority, for further investigation. Veterinarians who make such reports in good faith are immune from civil and criminal liability and disciplinary sanctions as a result of making the report.

Veterinarians must complete a one-hour mandatory reporting training session every six years that includes recognizing the signs and symptoms of suspected cruelty to animals. Veterinarians will have to attest that they have completed mandatory training in any application for licensure or licensure renewal. The Board of Veterinary Medicine may impose disciplinary sanctions for violations of this Act.

In addressing practitioners’ concerns regarding confidentiality restrictions, all reports provided by a veterinarian under the new law will be confidential and may only be disclosed under court orders, if required by another law, or with the veterinarian’s consent. The Office of Animal Welfare and any other enforcement agencies must adopt confidential procedures to protect the identity of the veterinarian making a report.

The bill was sponsored by Rep. Krista Griffith (D - Wilmington) with eight House and Senate co-sponsors. It moved through the General Assembly quickly, having been introduced on May 12 ([See the July 2026 LINK-Letter](#)) and then amended with a substitute measure on June 11.



Rep. Krista Griffith

With this law, 44 states now require or allow veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty; 37 states offer varying degrees of immunity from civil or criminal liability and administrative sanctions for good-faith reporting. States still not addressing veterinary reporting are: Iowa, Montana, New Jersey, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

Forensic Veterinarian Cites Link, Criticizes Fragmented Systems

“As a veterinary forensic scientist, my work at the Ontario Veterinary College has highlighted how information about animal maltreatment can reveal patterns of violence that might otherwise go unnoticed.”



Shane Bateman

may each encounter different pieces of the same story,” and how “concerns for animal care and safekeeping frequently intersect with efforts to support survivors of intimate partner violence. The challenge is that our systems often respond to these concerns in isolation.”

The article, “The violence link: Animal maltreatment and family violence often happen together,” focused on Canadian research and legislation, such as Bill C-16 ([See the July 2026 LINK-Letter](#)) addressing how concern for a pet’s safety is a significant factor in decisions about when to leave an abusive relationship. He cited Ontario’s Standing Committee on Justice Policy report on intimate

partner violence ([See the January 2026 LINK-Letter](#)) that concluded that animal maltreatment can be linked to intimate partner violence, child maltreatment, coercive control and broader community safety concerns, bringing this overlooked issue into public discussion.

Bateman cited international research into the role animals can play in coercive control — patterns of behavior designed to dominate, isolate and create fear over time -- in which the target is often not only the animal itself

That was the advice offered by Shane Bateman in an extensive July 22 article in [The Conversation](#) about how “veterinarians, social workers, child protection professionals, police officers and victim service providers

but also the emotional bond between the animal and the victim. Children are also affected when they witness animal maltreatment co-occurring with other forms of violence, intimidation or neglect within the home. He referenced research that has linked childhood exposure to animal maltreatment with later behavioral and developmental concerns.

Describing the isolation that is preventing the Linking of multidisciplinary agencies, Bateman argued, “Animal-related information is not consistently incorporated into violence risk assessments, safety planning or information-sharing practices. As a result, opportunities for early intervention may be missed, and information that could help professionals better understand risk may never be shared across agencies.

“Recognizing the violence link does not mean treating every report of animal maltreatment as evidence of intimate partner violence. It means understanding that harm to animals can sometimes provide important context when other risk factors are present. When professionals collaborate and pay attention to this information, overall risk assessments are strengthened,” he added.

Correcting situations where fragmented systems fail pet families and implementing coordinated, pet-inclusive care, multidisciplinary discussions, cross-sector partnerships better support people and their pets.

“Animal maltreatment should concern us because animals suffer. But the evidence increasingly suggests it may also reveal risks facing children, partners and families,” Bateman concluded.

“When animals are harmed in the context of intimidation, coercion or family violence, the question is not only what happened to the animal, but what that harm may be telling us about the safety of the people around it.”



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.

ONE HEALTH/ONE WELFARE... and THE LINK

Model Would Extend One Health/One Welfare Into Systemic Framework

Following the two groundbreaking Link symposiums in Lisbon in 2022 and 2023 (See the [July/August 2022](#) and [July 2023 LINK-Letters](#)), a multidisciplinary group of Portuguese professionals working at the intersection of animal welfare, science, law and governance are proposing a new conceptual model that would extend the One Health/One Welfare models into a systemic interpretive framework. This advanced model would connect “animal-derived knowledge” with “collective knowledge production” and “adaptive governance” to explain systemically how observations originating in different professional and institutional domains can be interpreted as complementary evidence within the same socio-ecological system.

The American model of One Health Linking human and veterinary medicine established the interdependence of human, animal and environmental health. The European model of One Welfare extended this perspective to reciprocal relationships among human wellbeing, animal welfare and environmental sustainability with distinct inclusion of several Link issues. While both paradigms establish interconnectedness, they do not fully explain how heterogeneous observations should be organized into the shared understanding needed for public decisions.

The [One Welfare, Science and Society Platform](#) is proposing a stronger epistemic requirement than simply bringing disciplines or institutions into contact. “Cross-reporting, training and transdisciplinary collaboration remain essential, but coordination presupposes interpretation. One Welfare supplies a context in which a veterinary observation, a healthcare



The One Welfare umbrella includes Domestic Violence, Reduction of Animal/Human Abuse, Hoarding, and Cross-Agency Collaboration.

assessment, a social services record and a citizen’s account may be examined as complementary evidence.”

“Animal-sentinel research and the literature linking animal maltreatment with family violence already document that animals carry information about the systems they inhabit. The underdeveloped implication concerns governance: scientifically validated animal-derived indicators may contribute to the knowledge base informing public decisions when they are interpreted and integrated with civic, scientific, professional, and institutional evidence,” the proposal draft continues.

Because animals are embedded in households and human-animal relationships, they can serve as:

- **Biological sentinels of environmental and health hazards;**
- **Relational indicators of coercion, neglect, interpersonal violence or animal hoarding, and;**
- **Systemic indicators where deteriorating animal welfare may contribute to revealing configurations of vulnerability or failures across healthcare, social protection, veterinary practice, law enforcement and justice that no single source could identify independently.**

“One Welfare renders these indicators interpretable within a shared systemic context,” it states.

The model expands The Link between animal maltreatment and interpersonal violence, animal hoarding, and veterinary identification of non-accidental injury into wider safeguarding and public health systems responses where observations relevant to one case may be distributed across neighbors, the companion animal, veterinarians, healthcare providers, social services, and justice agencies. “Failures can arise not only because information is not transmitted, but because its significance is not recognized,” it says.

A veterinary record, a social-services file, a medical observation and a neighbor’s account may concern the same household, yet each is normally read within a separate professional framework. “Reporting channels are of limited value if a professional does not first recognize an observation as evidence relevant to another domain.”

This One Welfare model would enable participants to employ “Structured Deliberation” to allow relevant actors to consider those signals jointly, and “Collective Knowledge Production” to generate a systemic diagnosis and support adaptive responses such as cross-reporting protocols, integrated shelter provision for victims and their animals, shared risk-assessment procedures, and coordinated legal instruments.

“Animal-derived information is valuable not because it supplies an automatic diagnosis, but because it may reveal relationships that remain partially concealed when professional and institutional observations are interpreted separately,” it concludes.



Mexican Study Calls for One Health Response to “Noah’s Syndrome”

A new study from university and public health researchers in Mexico’s state of Yucatan is encouraging the development of multidisciplinary responses to “Noah’s Syndrome” in order to better safeguard the welfare of people, animals and the environment.

The authors, based at the Autonomous University of Yucatan and the state’s public health agency, describe the progressive hoarding of animals, accompanied by an inability to provide them with basic care, as “Noah’s Syndrome”, a behavioral disorder classified within the obsessive-compulsive disorder spectrum. These actions negatively affect both the animals and the person who hoarded them, as well as their environment, thereby propelling the addressing of animal hoarding into a One Health framework which considers the Links not only between people and animals but also the environment.

“This phenomenon predominantly affects older, middleclass women, who often begin the behavior as an uncontrolled attempt to rescue animals. Over time, this action develops into a pathological compulsion with serious health, social, and legal consequences,” they write.

They describe how animal hoarding often includes animals kept under unsanitary conditions, with a wide range of zoonotic disease implications and instances of malnutrition, aggression, and cannibalism, making their rescue and rehabilitation difficult. “This problem has significant implications for public health, animal welfare and environmental health, therefore, it requires a comprehensive approach and analysis, such as One Health.”

Given that treatment for the disorder is complex, due primarily to the inability of those affected by the syndrome to recognize the problem, they emphasize that interventions must involve mental health services, animal protection agencies, health authorities, and community support.

“Furthermore, it is crucial to implement public policies for early detection, prevention, and social education. Simply removing the animals



does not solve the problem and may lead to recurrence,” they conclude. “Effective management requires intersectoral protocols to safeguard the well-being of both people and animals, whether directly or indirectly involved, and environmental implications.”

-- Ordaz-Cervera, G., Bolio-González, M., Arjona-Torres, M., Torres-Castro, M.A., & Martínez-Ortiz, D. (2026). *Síndrome de Noé: Analizando la acumulación de animales desde el enfoque una salud* [Noah Syndrome: Analyzing animal hoarding from a One Health perspective.][In Spanish]. *UANL Facultad de Ciencias Biológicas*, 9(18), 111-117.



Study to Analyze Veterinary Forensic Cases in Brazil

The National Link Coalition is assisting a study of veterinary forensic reports to characterize the epidemiological profile of 1,500 dog and cat cruelty cases investigated by a Brazilian police department from 2021-2026. The study will analyze these cases through such variables as species, breed, sex, age group, type of forensic examination, and the classification of cruelty and neglect.

Randy Lockwood, National Link Coalition Board Chair, will serve as an international co-supervisor of the project undertaken by Murilo Miranda Nunes, a veterinarian and Criminal Intelligence Analyst with the Scientific Police of the State of Goiás in Brazil.

Nunes calls her study “the first stage of a broader research agenda focusing on the relationship between animal cruelty, interpersonal violence, the Link Theory, and the One Health framework.” Interest in veterinary forensic medicine is growing in Brazil, and the way companion animals are perceived and treated is changing, Nunes adds, “demonstrating the growing importance of the proper investigation of crimes against animals.”

The study will use methodology that parallels Lockwood’s earlier study of animal cruelty cases in New York City. The Brazil study “would be a significant contribution to our understanding of animal abuse and neglect,” said Lockwood, noting growing global interest in veterinary forensics. 23% of non-US citations of American research on veterinary pathology and The Link come from Brazil.



Randy Lockwood



Hoarded Cats Found to Suffer Significant Medical Issues

A retrospective, descriptive [study](#) of 613 cats voluntarily surrendered from 34 hoarding cases to ASPCA sheltering programs between 2021 and 2023 is reporting that the significant need in hoarded cat populations for dentistry and spay/neuter procedures and the significantly longer length-of-stay needed to rehabilitate hoarded cats suggests that organizations working with these populations must proactively strategize to optimize care delivery without negatively impacting their shelter's capacity for care of other animals. The study by ASPCA researchers described animal hoarding as a complex, often underrecognized public health problem affecting the health and welfare of humans and animals.

The researchers found that only 27.4% of cats had already been altered. Dental disease was the most common medical condition affecting 52.8% of the cats, while 20.3% had moderate to severe disease requiring dentistry pro-

cedures. Significant numbers of cats had other medical issues including otitis externa (33.3%), upper respiratory infections (23.8%), ocular disease (21.9%), dermatitis (19.9%), ectoparasites (17.6%), diarrhea (14.2%), dermatophytosis (10.1%), and matting/unkempt fur (4.1%). Most (63.1%) required antibiotics, and a third (36.4%) received psychopharmaceuticals. Behavioral euthanasia rates were significantly higher for hoarded cats than for cats from non-hoarding situations.

They encouraged animal shelters to use collaborative approaches and proactive strategies to improve human and animal welfare and to better manage shelter capacity and resources.

-- Lopez Goicochea, D., Slater, M., & Berliner, E.A. (2025). **A retrospective, descriptive study of medical conditions and outcomes of cats relinquished to an urban, limited admission shelter from hoarding environments.** *Journal of Shelter Medicine & Community Animal Health*, 4.

News from LINK COALITIONS

National Link Coalition Welcomes Back Michele Walk

The National Link Coalition is proud to announce that Michele Walk, Senior Program Manager of Family Violence and Domestic Relations Programs for the National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges, has rejoined our Professional Advisory Committee.

Walk originally served on what was then our Steering Committee from 2013 until 2016. She returns to our leadership group to replace Joey Orduna Hastings, CEO of the NCJFCJ, who had served on the Professional Advisory Committee from 2020 until she unexpectedly was forced to retire from the Council in 2026 to deal with pressing family health matters.

NCJFCJ is currently working on the publication of state-specific bench tools to assist judges handling domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, juvenile offending, divorce

and custody cases to recognize the potential impact of animal cruelty on their cases and the measures available through their state's laws to address The Link. Bench tools are currently available for court officials in Florida, Georgia, Nevada, Oregon, Virginia, and Wisconsin; others are in the works.

The National Link Coalition has had a long and productive relationship with the NCJFCJ over many years. In addition to Walk and Orduna Hastings, NCJFCJ staff members Pam Russell and Emilie Meyer, and Judges John J. Romero and Rosa Figarola, have served on our committees; we, in turn, are represented on the Council's Judicial Responses to Animal Cruelty Issues Work group.

NCJFCJ's [Link projects](#), which are funded by the Animal Legal Defense Fund, include:



Michele Walk

- a Technical Assistance bulletin, *Animal Cruelty Issues: What Juvenile and Family Court Judges Need to Know*;
- a Board Resolution Regarding Animal Cruelty and Its Link to Other Forms of Violence;
- a Public Service Announcement Template for Promoting Awareness of The Links between Animal Cruelty and Family Violence;
- a Judge-to-Judge Letter and Toolkit;
- webinars; and
- conference presentations.

Growing GLOBAL LINK AWARENESS

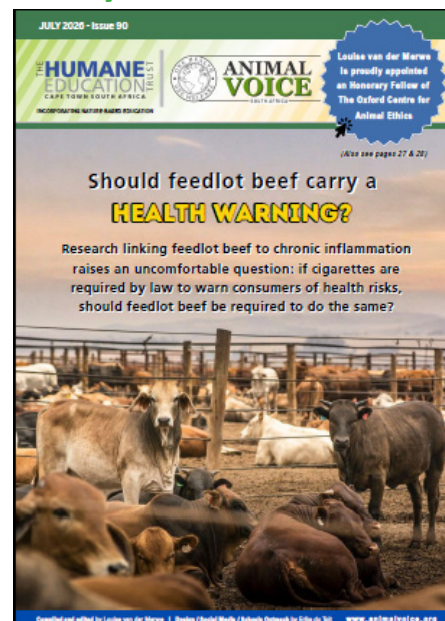
Link Message is Flourishing in South Africa – A Quarter-Century Later

When National Link Coalition Executive Director Phil Arkow first alerted South Africans to The Link in 2000, he conducted a national press tour on behalf of the [Humane Education Trust](#) and the MTN Centre for Crime Prevention Studies. In 2003 he was invited back to Cape Town as the keynote speaker at the first All-Africa Humane Education Summit. At that Summit, he told the audience – the first time multiple countries on the African continent had gotten together to consider the promise of humane education – that a pragmatic approach focusing on The Link is a more practical way to make progress. He said:

“While being kind to animals is certainly a nice thing to do, and is certainly the right thing to do, it is only when people in leadership positions recognize that animal abuse has adverse effects on humans that animal maltreatment will become culturally unacceptable and real, lasting changes will be made.”

A quarter-century later, the Humane Education Trust invited him to describe the progress that has been made in the intervening years. As part of the National Link Coalition’s “Link Deserts” campaign – where we focus on how the Link message is gaining footholds in foreign countries, particularly across the African continent and the rest of the Global South where awareness of The Link is still extremely limited – he wrote an article in the current issue of their [Animal Voice](#) magazine.

“Internationally, we are seeing this dramatic progress expand like ripples in a lake,” he wrote. “On a macro scale, the clarification within the UN’s Charter on the Rights of the Child has been a truly historic step. By including animal welfare within the Child Rights domain, the nations of the world are acknowledging at the highest international level that our children are emotionally harmed by witnessing violence in all its forms, including violence inflicted on animals.”



He concluded with words of encouragement for our South African colleagues who are taking a leadership role to raise awareness across the vast continent. “In short, the progress has been remarkable. The seeds we’ve been planting are growing. Where do we go from here? Simply put – onward and upward! The possibilities are endless – and we are limited only by our imagination and our enthusiasm.”



Join Us In Our Mission!

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

LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

Most state legislatures have already adjourned or are on summer break. As 2026 sessions head into the final stretch, we're still following 214 LINK-related measures -- 23 of which have been signed into law. 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. 8723, the Fighting Inhumane Gambling and High-risk Trafficking Act of 2026" or the "FIGHT Act of 2026", would prohibit gambling on animal fighting and sponsoring, exhibiting, or causing a minor under age 16 to attend an animal fight.

H.R. 8911 and **S. 4562, the Animal Violence Exposes Real Threat of Future Violence Act (AVERT 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

SUCCESS!! **HB 2995** was signed into law on **June 22**. It requires courts to include a history of domestic violence coercive control in determining child custody and parenting time. It adds to the definition of coercive control "threatening to kill or injure a household pet." 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 was declared inactive. It would have required 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. 155** Requires the Department of Children and Families to include in annual reports to the General Assembly statistics about the number of reports of animal harm, cruelty or neglect received by its own personnel or cross-reported from the Department of Agriculture's local animal control officers.

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.

DELAWARE

SUCCESS!! **House Substitute Bill for HB 415** requires veterinarians to report suspected abuse or neglect of animals to the Office of Animal Welfare or other appropriate authority, with confidentiality assured and with immunity from civil and criminal liability and disciplinary action for reporting in good faith. They will need to complete training on the subject every 6 years in order to retain their licenses. Disciplinary sanctions could be imposed for failures to report.

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 dog-fighting 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 died when the General

Assembly adjourned. It would have amended 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 died when the General

Assembly adjourned. It would have created 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 died when the General

Assembly adjourned. It would have required, 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 died when the General

Assembly adjourned. It would have expanded the definition of prohibited dissemination of bestiality and other obscene sexual materials to include computer-generated images.

HB 3367 and HB 4475 died when the General Assembly adjourned.

They would have allowed 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.

SUCCESS!! HB 4540, the "Companion Animal Custody Equity

Act," will enable courts to consider the well-being of a dog or cat during a possession dispute regardless of the marital status of the parties.

SB 1716 died when the General

Assembly adjourned. It would have expanded 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 died when the General As-

sembly adjourned. It would have made it a felony to injure or kill a service animal.

SB 2103 died when the General

Assembly adjourned. It would have expanded protections granted to petitioners' pets under Stalking No Contact Orders to also include 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

SUCCESS!!

HB 126 will allow victims of sexual abuse to be accompanied by a facility dog. The dog will need to be obscured from the jury at all times. It became effective Aug. 1.

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.

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.

HB 5409 would permit the Crime Victims Compensation Fund to reimburse victims needing immediate relocation up to \$2,500 in expenses for pet boarding or pet-related rental deposit fees.

SB 111 (Sub. S-1) would allow elders and disabled and vulnerable adults to petition for a personal protection order that would include restraining an individual from harming, killing, torturing, neglecting, or removing an animal.

MINNESOTA

HF 1816 and **SF 1163 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 “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

SUCCESS!! **HB 1839** and **HB 2921** will impose civil penalties on commercial entities that allow minors to access harmful sexual material, including bestiality, online.

SUCCESS!! **HB 2292** and **SB 899** will 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 will be required to report suspected animal abuse to a Missouri Animal Control Association hotline. All reporters will be exempt from civil and criminal liability for good-faith reporting. Reporters will 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 died when the Legislature adjourned.** They would have allowed 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 was held over for interim study. It would have required 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.

SUCCESS!! **HB 1522** expands the definition of domestic violence abuse (which already includes acts of animal cruelty) to add “coercive control”. Coercive control includes acts intended to threaten, intimidate, harass, isolate, coerce, control, or compel compliance of a petitioner to reasonably fear for their physical safety, including 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have added 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 died when the Legislature adjourned.** They would have allowed 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,” died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have prohibited 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 died when the Legislature adjourned.** They would have set increased prison terms for acts of animal cruelty when committed in the presence of a child.

A 730 and **S 1205 died when the Legislature adjourned.** They would have increased penalties for animal fighting and aggravated animal cruelty and require defendants convicted of aggravated animal cruelty to undergo a psychiatric evaluation.

A 740 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have allowed 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have created 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 have been enhanced if the act occurred in the presence of a child.

A 897 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have criminalized knowingly causing a minor to attend an animal fight.

A 1391 and **S 5544 died when the Legislature adjourned.** They would have required persons charged with enforcing anti-cruelty laws to file a report when they have reasonable cause to believe that abuse or maltreatment of a child has also occurred. The bill would further have provided 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have relocated 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 cited 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have established "care and treatment of service animals, therapy dogs and companion animals in residential programs for victims of domestic violence." These would have included allowing residents' service animals and therapy dogs full access to the shelters as long as they did not create an undue burden.

A 1630 died in committee when the Legislature adjourned. It would have amended 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 have been 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It had cited the prosecution of animal cruelty as a way to protect public safety in requiring all 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 died in committee when the Legislature adjourned. They would have established the Housing People and Animals Together grant program to expand access for co-sheltering victims of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness with companion animals.

A 1816, S 3158 and S 4633 died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have included animal fighting as a criminal act within the category of enterprise corruption crimes.

A 1945 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have enabled veterinarians to earn continuing education credits for providing free veterinary care for individuals residing in domestic violence shelters.

A 2387 and S 6812 died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have established a 24-hour toll-free animal abuse reporting hotline.

A 3158 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have required courts to require a mental health evaluation for offenders convicted of aggravated animal cruelty or animal fighting.

A 3206 and S 1159 died in committee when the Legislature adjourned. They would have created a new category of "domestic violence crimes" to include interfering, harassing, intimidating, or harming a family or household member's service animal.

A 3528 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have made 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," died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have required an investigation into possible domestic violence or abuse for persons who have been accused of animal abuse.

A 4899 and S 2280 went through several iterations but died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have required 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 have been "Did they ever threaten to kill you, your children, or your pets?"

A 5815 and S 4613 died in committee when the Legislature adjourned. They would have expended 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," went through several iterations but died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have required 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 died in committee. They would have expanded 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 died in committees when the Legislature adjourned. They would have made 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 passed both the Assembly and the Senate. They 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have required 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 died in committees. They would have expanded protection orders which allow courts to enjoin an individual from harming an animal to also grant the petitioner exclusive care, custody or control of the animal.

A 11182 and S 9427 died when the Legislature adjourned. They would have defined threats or harm to animals as coercive control.

S 470, "Kirby and Quigley's Law," died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have expanded aggravated animal cruelty to include harm to a companion animal during the commission of a felony.

S 1411 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have required animal cruelty offenders to undergo a psychiatric analysis and evaluation.

S 6880 died in committee when the Legislature adjourned. It would have authorized a lengthier prison sentence for committing aggravated animal cruelty during an incident of domestic violence.

S 8927 passed the Senate but died in the Assembly. It would have directed 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have required 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.

NORTH CAROLINA

SB 274 would replace the “crime against nature” with the term “bestiality”.

SB 573 would define standards for adequate space and shelter for animals and define “companion animal hoarders” as those having 10 or more animals, fails to abide by the standards, and has an inability to recognize or has a reckless disregard for the deleterious conditions in which the animals are living. It would require individuals convicted of companion animal hoarding to undergo psychological evaluation and treatment.

SB 591 would make cockfighting and animal-fighting paraphernalia illegal and prohibit allowing minors under age 18 from attending a cockfight or dogfight.

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. It also raises the crime of bestiality from a misdemeanor to a felony.

OKLAHOMA

HB 2058 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have expanded existing 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 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have added a new category of “coercive control”, which would have included committing or threatening to commit cruelty to an animal that intimidates a household member, to the Protection From Domestic Abuse Act.

SB 1982 died when the Legislature adjourned. It would have added a new crime of “unlawful pornography” which would have included 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 died when the General Assembly adjourned. They would have extended 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 died when the General Assembly adjourned. They would have added crimes against companion animals to the definition of domestic violence under the Domestic Violence Prevention Act.

S 2489 died when the General

Assembly adjourned. It would have included “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.

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 died when the General Assembly adjourned. It would have introduced “coercive control” into the animal cruelty context. Individuals who commit or threaten animal cruelty in order to influence a victim of domestic abuse would have faced additional penalties.

SUCCESS!! H.578 was signed into law on June 8. Engaging in sexual conduct with an animal in the presence of a minor or in which a minor is a participant is now a crime of aggravated animal cruelty.

H.875 died when the General

Assembly adjourned. It would have expanded 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 became 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 took 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

SUCCESS!! Bill C-16, the Protecting Victims Act, was given Royal Assent on June 18. The new law amends the Criminal Code to create a new offence that prohibits engaging in a pattern of coercive or controlling conduct toward animals known to 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.

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The news items contained in The LINK-Letter are intended to be disseminated as widely and as freely as possible information about the connections between animal abuse and interpersonal violence.

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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 CALENDAR

Aug. 18 -- Kansas City, Mo. (online): Zoe Agnew-Svoboda from Besty BnB will present "Pet-Inclusive Safety Planning for Survivors of Domestic Violence" in a [webinar](#) hosted by the International Association of Veterinary Social Workers.

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 bi-monthly meeting.

Aug. 19 – Canberra, Australia: Lucy's Project will launch the [National Roadmap for Change](#) to Prevent and End Family Violence Against People and Animals with panels of Link advocates and legislators.

Aug. 19 -- Kansas City, Mo. (online): Shoshana Mostoller from My Dog Is My Home will present a [webinar](#), "The Path to Pet-Inclusive Housing: How You Can Keep People & Pets Together".

Aug. 19 - 21 -- Deer Park, Texas (online): The Texas Animal Control Association's TCCI 101 [Texas Certified Cruelty Investigator course](#) will include the correlation between animal cruelty and human violence and bloodsports.

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. 6 — Tokyo, Japan (online): Keiko Yamazaki of the Animal Literacy Research Institute will conduct a [webinar](#) on "The Association Between Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Violence: Knowing the Negative Connections Between Human and Animal Welfare."

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

Sept. 24 — United Kingdom (online): The Links Group UK will conduct a [webinar](#) on "The Use and Abuse of Animals by Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse".

Sept. 24 -- Sydney, Australia: Lucy's Project will launch the [National Roadmap for Change](#) to Prevent and End Family Violence Against People and Animals with panels of Link advocates and legislators.

Sept. 30 — Louisville, Ky.: Phil Arkow will present "Learn What the Monster Likes – and Feed It! Bridging the Animal Control/Rights/Welfare Gap by Focusing on The Link between Animal Cruelty and Human Violence" at the [Kentucky Animal Care & Control Association](#) Annual Training Conference.

Sept. 30 -- Coleraine, United Kingdom: The Links Group UK and RDA Causeway Coast & Glens will present a [workshop](#), "The Link: Connecting Cruelty -- Coercive Control."

Sept. 30 -- Columbus, Ohio: Vicki Deisner and Aviva Vincent will be presenting on The Link at the [Public Children Services Association of Ohio's](#) Annual Conference.

Sept. 30 -Oct. 2 -- Detroit, Mich.: M. Jenny Edwards and Brian Holoyda will present on how animal crush offenders differ from others being treated for sexual offenses at the [Annual Conference](#) of the Association for the Treatment and Prevention of Sexual Abuse.

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.

LINK TRAINING CALENDAR

Oct. 4 — Asheville, N.C.: Phil Arkow will present “Another One Health Role for Veterinarians: Response to Animal Cruelty and Other Family Violence” at the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association’s [Compassionate Care Symposium](#).

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. 7 -- (online): Katherine Compitus will present “Animal Hoarding Disorder: Insights from Animal House and Clinical Best Practices” in a [webinar](#) for the American Psychological Association’s Human-Animal Interaction section.

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. 16-18 — Washington, D.C.: Randy Lockwood will be among the many speakers at the [Animal Law Conference](#), sponsored by the Animal Legal Defense Fund and the Lewis & Clark Law School.

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](#).

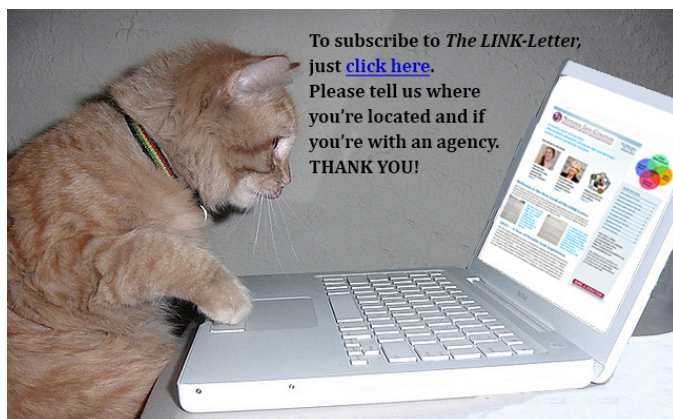
Oct. 22 — Colorado Springs, Colo. (online): Michelle Welch will present “The Investigation and Prosecution of Hoarding Cases” in a webinar for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

Oct. 31 -- San Antonio, Texas: The Center for Pet Family Well-Being’s 2026 [One Health Systems Summit](#) will feature presentations from leaders from public health, healthcare, veterinary medicine, housing, social services, education, animal welfare, policy, and other sectors to examine how the human-animal bond matters to systems, not just individuals, and how to repair the structural barriers that have resulted in fragmented systems that fail pet families and pet-inclusive care.

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

Nov. 4-6 — Vancouver, Wash.: The [Association of Prosecuting Attorneys](#) will hold its 15th National Animal Cruelty Prosecution Conference.

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. 10 -- S. Padre Island, Texas: Makayla Moore will present “Silent Victims, Shared Violence: A Trauma-Informed Approach to Animal and Human Abuse” at the [Texas Animal Control Association’s 52nd Annual 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.



LINK TRAINING CALENDAR

Dec. 2 — United Kingdom (online): The Links Group UK will conduct a [webinar](#) on “The Use and Abuse of Animals by Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse”.

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

Jan. 21, 2027 -- Colorado Springs, Colo. (online): Nina Stively of Loudoun County, Va. Animal services will present "How Many is Too Many? Animal Hoarding Cases A(doption) to Z(oonoses) in a webinar for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

Jan. 25-27, 2027 -- Atlanta, Ga.: The NACA ACO [Level II Training tour](#) program will include such topics as animal hoarding, animal fighting, and the ACO as first responder.

March 4, 2027 -- Colorado Springs, Colo. (online): Betsy Biffl will present "Cross-Reporting Laws and Why They Matter" in a webinar for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

March 8-10, 2027 -- Moore, Okla.: The NACA ACO [Level II Training tour](#) program will include such topics as animal hoarding, animal fighting, and the ACO as first responder.

March 14, 2027 — Portland, Ore.: Phil Arkow will present “Protecting Woman’s Best Friend: Assessing the Impact of ‘Animal-Inclusive Protection Orders’” at the Animal Legal Defense Fund’s 35th [Annual Animal Law Conference](#).



THE LINK... in the NEWS

Three Unrelated Ohio Cases Bring Link Attention to the Buckeye State

Ohio Ex-Con Out on Parole Charged with Striking Dog with Concrete Block

Jafar Isak, 27, of Columbus, Ohio, who had served six years in prison for aggravated robbery and kidnapping and who had been recently re-arrested for a parole violation, was charged with two counts of animal cruelty for allegedly striking a dog with a concrete block. [WCRC-TV](#) reported that Isak had threatened to shoot his ex-girlfriend. Franklin County Animal Care & Control and Columbus Humane agents were involved in the case.



Woman on Parole for Domestic Violence Accused of Snapping Kitten’s Neck

Court records and media accounts reported that Annika Carson, 23, of Cincinnati, who was on probation for a domestic violence conviction and also has a pending aggravated menacing case, was arrested and charged with throwing a kitten from a balcony before killing the injured animal by snapping its neck. [WKRC-TV](#) reported that Carson, who was being held on a \$100,000 bond, is receiving treatment for mental health disorders. A witness apparently captured the incident on video, which involved Carson allegedly throwing the kitten, its cage and other supplies from a balcony, shattering the rear window of a parked vehicle. She was charged with animal cruelty and criminal damaging.

Man with Domestic Violence History Charged with Killing Cat that Defecated on His Bed

Henry Estuar Lopez Hernandez, 25, of Fairfield, Ohio, was charged with felony animal cruelty after Sharonville police allege he killed a cat by striking it with a 10-pound weight. [WKRC-TV](#) said police records said Hernandez had killed the cat because it had defecated on his bed. Court records found that Hernandez had been arrested in 2024 on domestic violence charges; the status of those charges was unclear.



THE LINK... in the NEWS

Over 500 Animals Seized in Meth Drug Bust

Authorities in Oklahoma City were said to be pursuing animal cruelty charges after over 500 animals were seized during a methamphetamine bust. [The Oklahoman](#) reported that Oklahoma City police on June 25 arrested four people allegedly in possession of 20 pounds of meth. While searching the property they found 450 birds, 42 dogs, four cats, four reptiles, and a horse, all of which were turned over to the city's Animal Welfare Division. Subsequent investigation found many of the animals appeared to be in poor health.



Children, Animals Rescued from Deplorable Conditions

Kentucky State Police troopers responding to a complaint about possible neglect found two adults under the influence of methamphetamine, a 2-year-old living out of a playpen, a 4-year-old who also had meth in their system, the skeleton of a dog, and nine dogs, five cats and several chickens who had to be rescued in a county lacking an animal shelter.

[WKYT-TV](#) reported that Shane and Angel Dufresne, of Owingsville, were being charged with criminal abuse while the investigation continued. The children were removed from the home that authorities called deplorable; neighbors were said to be caring for the animals in the absence of any available animal shelters.

Investigation of Threats Against the White House Uncovers Abused Children and Animals

FBI agents in Philadelphia carrying out a court-authorized search of a residence for suspected threats against the White House made an unexpected discovery when they found two young children living in what officials called unsafe conditions with dozens of animals.

The children, aged 5 and 8 months, were said to be bruised, insect-bitten and living in a flea-infested house with piled-up trash, animal feces, firearms, and no running water, the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) reported.



A dog and nearly 40 cats were being rescued by the Pennsylvania SPCA which advised that additional animals had died and more may still be recovered. Police charged Thomas Bach, 43, and Megan Bach, 44, with charges that included endangering the welfare of a child, recklessly endangering another person, criminal conspiracy, possession of an instrument of crime, and possession of an offensive weapon. The children were examined at a hospital before being placed in the care of the Department of Human Services.

Latvian Bestiality Investigation Nabs 4

What appears to be the first news to come to our attention of a criminal investigation of bestiality in the Eastern European nation of Latvia is reporting that four people who allegedly systematically committed acts of cruelty against animals at an animal facility have been detained.

The [Baltic Times](#) reported that the Organized Crime and Serious Crime Investigation Department of the Latvian State Police, in cooperation with the Tax and Customs Police Board of the State Revenue Service, had been investigating since 2025.

Authorities determined that, at least since 2021, pornographic performances had been staged on an ongoing basis at an unnamed Latvian animal facility. The acts were filmed and photographed, but there is no indication that the material was sold.

Police confirmed that more than 10 horses, a dog, and a cat were seized at the scene, along with 4,000 euros in cash.

Two Latvians, one Russian, and a person with dual Danish and Swiss citizenship were named as suspects; they were not being held in custody but have been banned from handling animals and engaging in any activities involving animals. A fifth suspect who is a dual citizen of Denmark and Switzerland was reported to be currently imprisoned abroad for criminal offenses of a similar nature.



THE LINK... in the NEWS

Couple in Wire Theft Case Charged with Animal Sexual Abuse

A Louisiana couple who had already been arrested in connection with the theft of 3,400 pounds of valuable AT&T copper wire were charged again on a total of 13 counts involving animal sexual abuse. [WAFB-TV](#) reported that Livingston Parish Sheriff's deputies investigating the theft case allegedly observed animal sexual abuse images on the defendants' electronic devices, and called in the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force to assist in the investigation. Todd Pearce, Jr., 42, was charged with 10 counts of animal sexual abuse involving possession, distribution and participation; Ashley Landry, 41, is facing three counts of possession and engaging in animal sexual abuse.



Child/Animal Sexual Abuse Gets North Carolina Man 18 Years in Prison

A North Carolina man who was convicted on two counts of distributing child sexual abuse material and producing an "animal crush" video was sentenced to 216 months in prison followed by 10 years of supervised release. The [U.S. Attorney's Office](#) for the Middle District of North Carolina announced that Andrew Eric Childs, 41, of Apex was also ordered to pay \$24,800 in restitution to the victims. Childs had been working for a city EMS at the time of his arrest; the charges included his production of a video depicting his sexual abuse of a dog. The case was investigated by the FBI Charlotte Field Office, Raleigh Resident Agency and the Durham Police Department with assistance from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Son of "Long Island Lolita" Charged in Death of Cat

A Fort Lauderdale, Fla. couple -- including a man who has been in and out of jail since he was 18 on a variety of charges including robbery and drugs -- were charged with aggravated cruelty to animals after their cat was found dead, possibly from having been put in a microwave. [WPLG-TV](#) reported that Brett Anthony Bellera, 25, and his girlfriend Jennifer Armenti, 36, were charged by the Broward County Sheriff's Office. Bellera, who was charged while he was already in custody on other unrelated charges, is the son of tabloid sensation Amy Fisher, known as the infamous "Long Island Lolita" who shot the wife of her married lover Joey Buttafuoco in the face in 1992 when she was just 17. The wife survived the shooting but was left with permanent facial paralysis; Buttafuoco served four months in prison for statutory rape. Fisher served seven years in prison.

Alleged Cat Torturer Captured After Interstate Manhunt

William Ohlson, 33, of Reno, Nev., who had been charged in San Francisco with allegedly torturing a kitten to death was arrested at gunpoint in Nevada where he was also charged with resisting an officer and failing to obey a court order. The [Reno Gazette-Journal](#) reported that Ohlson had pled guilty in 2020 to attempting to kill or torture a kitten at a Walmart and received a suspended sentence in exchange for attending a drug court.

Ohlson had been arrested after San Francisco police received a tip from San Francisco Animal Care & Control about a man reportedly torturing a small kitten in an bank ATM vestibule. Police tracking illegal drug markets found him in a flophouse hotel where he fled from

one rooftop to another where officers were finally able to bring him down with the help of a fire truck, still carrying the kitten.

Ironically, he fled to Nevada after he was released after his San Francisco arrest due to a California Supreme Court ruling limiting pretrial detention largely to cases involving violence directed at people.

Missouri Man Charged with Animal, Child and Domestic Abuse

When police in Cape Girardeau County, Mo., responded to a domestic violence incident, they charged Daniel Williams, 35, of Marble Hill, with domestic assault, two counts of abuse or neglect of a child and a misdemeanor charge of animal abuse. [KFVS-TV](#) reported that court documents said Williams allegedly violently killed the family cat in front of a child. He was being held without bond in the county jail.

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.

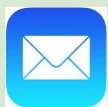
As the global resource center on The Link between animal cruelty and human violence we train multidisciplinary professionals, showcase programs, and publicize legislation and research to foster collaborations that create safer communities by recognizing that *when animals are abused, people are at risk, and when people are abused, animals are at risk.*

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

Mark Kumpf, CAWA

Principal Director, Animal Control & Care Academy
Dayton, Ohio

Paul Needham, MBA

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

Professional Advisory Committee

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

Diane Balkin, J.D.

Retired Chief Deputy District Attorney,
Denver, Colo.

Nancy Blaney,

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

Claire Coughlin,

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

Steve Dale, Nationally Syndicated Radio
Host and Author, Chicago, Ill.

The Hon. Rosa C. Figarola,

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

Maya Gupta, Ph.D., (Alternate)

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

Kendall Houlihan, DVM,

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

Emily Patterson-Kane, Ph.D.,

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

Allie Phillips, J.D.,

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

The Hon. Gale Rasin, J.D.,

Senior Judge, Mental Health Court,
Maryland

The Hon. John J. Romero, Jr.,

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

Sue Skinner, MD,

Child Abuse Pediatrician, CARES Northwest
Portland, Ore.

Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM,

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

John Thompson,

Exec. V.P., Small & Rural Law Enforcement
Executives Association; Exec. Dir. Deep
Roots Homeless Shelter, Earleville, Md.

Michele Walk,

Senior Program Manager,
National Council of Juvenile & Family
Court Judges, Reno, Nev.

Kathleen Wood, J.D.,

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