



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*

Leading articles in this issue:



Manual helps shelters plan
offsite housing for pets
(Page 1)



New Zealand proposal
would protect pets and peo-
ple from domestic violence
(Page 4)



WSAVA raising awareness of
veterinarians about
domestic violence
(Page 9)



Inside this issue

Domestic Violence & The LINK	1
Social Work & The LINK	2
The LINK in the Literature	5
State Government & The LINK	6
One Health/One Welfare & The LINK	8
Veterinary Medicine & The LINK	9
Community LINK Collaborations	12
Growing Global LINK Awareness	12
Children & The LINK	13
Legislation & The LINK	15
LINK Training Calendar	24
The LINK in the News	26

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OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Manual Helps Shelters Plan Offsite Housing for Pets

While more than 400 domestic violence shelters have already established on-site facilities to house the animal survivors of domestic violence, an even greater number must still rely on local animal shelters, veterinarians, boarding facilities, and private foster homes to provide short- or long-term care to house these animals offsite. Allie Phillips, whose pioneering SAF-T® (Sheltering Animals & Families Together) program literally “wrote the book” in 2008 regarding on-site housing, has now written the next [definitive manual](#) to guide agencies offering off-site foster care.



“After talking with numerous DV shelters about their questions with offsite housing, and not finding the type of guidelines they have been asking for, I decided to write this,” Phillips tells *The LINK-Letter*. “There are too many shelters that are ending their sheltering services due to funding issues so offsite housing is likely going to expand.”

(Continued on Page 2)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

Manual Helps Shelters Plan Offsite Housing for Pets

(Continued from Page 1)

The Manual emphasizes the need to include companion animals when planning and offering assistance to domestic violence survivors. “For those working in the field of domestic violence prevention, animals are a part of the job in helping survivors with pets get to safety,” it states.

“Violence is violence. If people or animals are being harmed in a home, no one is safe.”



Allie Phillips

While noting that sheltering people and pets together is the best and safest option, there are times when offsite housing is necessary, in situations such as:

- The agency lacks sheltering services;
- Survivors are housed in hotels or rental properties that do not allow pets;
- The shelter cannot house particular animals or species.

However, there are numerous weaknesses of offsite housing, including:

- It creates a barrier for survivors who don't want to be separated from their pets;
- It doesn't preserve the healing and resiliency potential of the human-animal bond;
- Animals may experience additional health and stress problems;
- Additional liability for the caregiver if the animal becomes lost, injured or sick, or harms a person or property;
- Background checks, safety and security measures and confidentiality agreements are necessary;
- Additional workloads for caregiving staffs;
- Potential conflicts with caregivers who do not want to return the animals.

The Manual identifies nine common issues that must be addressed before agreeing to house these animals, and lists specific benefits and drawbacks for dedicated facilities, boarding facilities, animal shelters, veterinary clinics, and foster homes. It also provides a handy checklist of steps to consider and an addendum of sample agreements and contracts.

SOCIAL WORK... and THE LINK

Podcast Explores The Link for British Social Workers

Veterinary Social Work is still a relatively new concept in the U.S., and it's an even rarer practice in the U.K. where Rebecca Stephens is believed to be the only Veterinary Social Worker in that country.

Stephens is helping to spread the word about this valued and recognized specialty in

an [Apple podcast](#) that focuses on The Link and its implications for the entire social work profession.



The hour-long episode of Let's Talk Social Work delves into the model in detail, exploring how it should work in daily practice, the interplay between social workers and veterinarians, the expectations on both professions, and the challenges it involves. The conversation also considers how all social work professionals can embed greater consideration of pets in their assessments and when building relationships with people.

Host Jonny Adamson is joined by Stephens and dual qualified social worker and veterinary surgeon, Yasmin Amer. They discuss The Link between abuse of animals and people, animals as a strategy of coercive control, pet poverty and loss, and whether Veterinary Social Work can become a thriving specialty in the U.K. similar to other countries.

[Click here](#) to access the podcast.



“Sneaky” Sheltering by “Moral Entrepreneurs” Sometimes Co-Houses Pets

While it is now widely recognized that fear for the welfare of their pets deters many survivors from leaving their abusers, co-sheltering of pets with their families is often hampered by such barriers as a lack of funds, space, or labor, and concerns related to the health and well-being of residents and staff. Meanwhile, recent research from Ontario, Canada, has reported that laws which allow survivors to include pets in protection orders may inadvertently result in survivors in those jurisdictions having less access to co-sheltering (See the [July 2026 LINK-Letter](#)) and that shelter staff may resist also accepting victims pets (See the [August 2025 LINK-Letter](#)).

A new study of shelter workers is revealing what Sarah May Lindsay and Abe Oudshoorn are calling “sneaky sheltering” – covert and overt co-sheltering. Despite the traditional human-centric model of shelters presenting a significant barrier for women who are unwilling to abandon their pets to flee abuse, “our findings demonstrate how a sample of Ontario shelter workers act as moral entrepreneurs, challenging and expanding the norms of their profession to accommodate multispecies families,” they write.

By identifying the exclusion of companion animals as a critical gap in service, these women, through both overt advocacy and covert actions, actively work to transform their facilities to include clients’ animals. “In doing so, they are not only upholding the original, woman-centered mission of IPV shelters but are also pioneering a new, more inclusive model of care that recognizes the profound bonds between humans and their nonhuman family members,” they add.



Sarah May Lindsay (left) & Abe Oudshoorn

The differing legal statuses of companion, service and emotional support animals confound shelters’ ability to treat these animals on equal status. Despite the majority of shelters remaining human-only, the researchers identified “moral entrepreneurs” who conduct strategies ranging from secretive care of companion species to fully integrated shared-living scenarios. The study emphasizes that women are helping other women in shelters generally, and specifically, with pet co-sheltering.

The study also identifies an issue commonly described: survivors falsely claiming their pets are “emotional support animals” in an effort to obtain services for them, despite lacking medical documentation indicating a need for them.

The authors present several recommendations to address the lack of uniform co-sheltering in shelters to remove “gendered inequities as interwoven points of oppression that are life-threatening and life-altering, but not insurmountable.” These include:

- Establishing a collaborative co-sheltering collaborative advisory board whereby shelters that already accept pets can offer guidance to those that have not yet crossed this threshold;

- Creating co-care plans with pet foster and rescue organizations, developing protocols for how to assist, protect, care for, and rehome or reunite animals when survivors seek emergency shelter and relocation;
- Replacing “companion animal” and “emotional support animal” with the term “non-human family member”;
- Modifying the Canadian definition of homelessness to identify and include multispecies families;
- Establishing multispecies-specific sanctuaries for co-sheltering and a safe place of respite and recovery.

Lindsay, S. M., & Oudshoorn, A. (2026). Sneaky sheltering: Covert and overt co-sheltering of companion and emotional support animals in Ontario, Canada’s IPV shelters. *Human-Animal Interactions*, 0021. <https://doi.org/10.1079/hai.2026.0021>



Join Us In Our Mission!

Please help us educate and advocate to promote greater legislative, professional and public 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.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

New Zealand Proposal Would Dramatically Protect Pets and People from Domestic Violence

The ACT political party in New Zealand has announced a new policy aiming to amend that country's Crimes Act to stop abusers from "weaponizing" pets to coerce and control victims of family violence.

[Radio New Zealand](#) reported that the proposal would bolster protections for pets and their owners by making it an offense to use animals as a means to control or coerce victims and beefing up protection orders so offenders could not withhold, sell or give away the animal.



MP Karen Chhour

Citing Link data and laws from the U.S., the party's Family and Sexual Violence spokesperson Karen Chhour said victims should never have to choose between their own safety and the safety of the pet they love. "Family violence isn't just about physical abuse. Perpetrators use threats against beloved pets as another way to intimidate and trap their victims," she said. "Nobody should have to stay in a violent home because they're worried about what will happen to their pet."

The ACT proposal would:

- Amend the Crimes Act to make it an offense to use the abuse of a companion animal as a means of coercion or control in a family violence relationship, punishable by up to seven years in prison;
- Strengthen protection orders to make sure offenders cannot withhold, sell, give away, or otherwise dispose of a protected person's companion animal to help keep pets with the protected person;
- Ensure companion animals are not left with a dangerous abuser when a protection order is issued;
- Require police to record pets on family harm reports;
- And give police explicit statutory authority and clear operational guidance to remove a companion animal to a place of safety, like a Pet Refuge or the SPCA, where they believe the animal is at risk of harm or is being used as a tool of coercion.

"Right now, if police attend a family violence callout, a victim may escape while the family pet is left behind with the alleged abuser," Chhour said. "That gives offenders another way to threaten and manipulate the people they're abusing."

[Pet Refuge](#), which provides temporary shelter to pets affected by family violence around New Zealand, has welcomed the policy.

"Protecting pets helps protect people, too."
-- Dame Julie Chapman

"Abusers know the bond people have with their pets and deliberately use that bond to threaten, control and manipulate the people they are abusing. Anything that better recognizes this reality and strengthens protections for both victim-survivors and their pets is a positive step forward," said Pet Refuge founder Dame Julie Chapman.

"When people know their pet will be protected, it becomes one less reason to remain in a dangerous situation. These proposals recognize something we have known for many years -- protecting pets helps protect people too."

Pet Refuge, which has rescued over 1,000 pets and whose shelter is at 98% capacity, is planning to build a second shelter to respond to the increased demand.

Chapman added that coercive-control animal abuse is particularly harmful to children who witness their pet being abused. "I don't think you ever get over that."

ACT Party leader David Seymour said while animal abuse is illegal, there is no specific crime in New Zealand against trying to exert control over someone by threatening an animal. "The kinds of people who are prepared to torture a kitten, sadly, are exactly the sorts of people who will hurt humans as well," Seymour said. "Too often you'll find abusers who send text messages threatening to do something to an animal. This would be a crime liable for up to seven years in sentencing."



MP David Seymour

Citing the 42 American states that currently include pets in protection orders, he called the time for improvements in current law overdue. "This is partly about pets, but it's ultimately a more effective way of protecting humans."



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

ABA Webinars to Address Veterinary Records and Sheltering Survivors' Horses

The American Bar Association's Animal Subcommittee is conducting two webinars this month that address unique issues impacting attorneys, veterinarians, advocates, and other professionals working with domestic violence survivors.

As domestic violence shelters and foster programs increasingly accommodate animals alongside survivors, protecting the physical location of both human and animal victims remains a critical safety priority. However, routine veterinary care may create an overlooked vulnerability: state veterinary practice acts typically require veterinarians to record an animal owner's full name and address in the veterinary record, problematically creating a paper trail that may jeopardize human and animal safety in a domestic violence situation.

Closing the Gap: Safeguarding Veterinary Records to Protect Domestic Violence Survivors

on Oct. 21 will address these issues. Panelists Katie Barnett, Bonnie Lutz, Wes Reynolds, and Robert Simpson will discuss legal, administrative, and practical strategies that attorneys, advocates, and veterinary professionals can use to safeguard survivors. Veterinary continuing education credit may be available.

A challenge in co-sheltering survivors with pets is how to accommodate horses. Unique issues arise, including the services and emergency and transitional sheltering options available, and even whether a horse's legal classification as "companion" or "pet" rather than as "livestock," can affect options available to survivors trying to keep their horse safe from an abuser.



Aviva Vincent, Maricarmen Garza, Cynthia Glensgard, and Alana van Gundy will explore Expanding the Scope of Protection: Strategies to Shield Domestic Violence Survivors and their Horses on Oct. 28. The webinar will provide an overview of key legal issues in this emerging area, and provide safety planning, best practices, recommendations, and resources to support survivors with horses. Family law lawyers, legal service attorneys, veterinarians, domestic violence advocates, animal advocates, social workers, and other aligned professionals are invited to register.

THE LINK... in the LITERATURE

"Link Theory" Aims to Improve Public Policy in Brazil

A new article cites what Brazil calls "Link Theory" (See the [January 2026](#) and [July 2025 LINK-Letters](#)) in investigating the intrinsic connection between interpersonal violence and animal cruelty, using the Link Theory as a theoretical framework. Link Theory posits that violence against animals is not an isolated phenomenon, but frequently coexists with, precedes, or accompanies other forms of violence, including child abuse, domestic violence, and violence against the elderly.

The study analyzes the relevance of this connection for the formulation and implementation of more effective public policies for the protection of domestic animals in Brazil. The authors explore the literature on this theory and analyze psychological and social mechanisms underlying The Link, such as the pursuit of power and control and the shared vulnerability between human and animal victims. They offer strategies for integrating the prevention of animal cruelty into initiatives to combat interpersonal violence and vice versa in order to provide theoretical and practical support for improving the protection of domestic animals in Brazil.

"By recognizing theory as a crucial element in understanding violence, this article seeks to contribute to the formulation of more comprehensive and effective public and criminal policies that consider the shared vulnerability between humans and animals and promote a culture of respect and well-being for both," they conclude, in calling for greater collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, professionals in the fields of human and animal health, and public safety, in building a safer and fairer future for all.

-- de Almeida, C.K.R., & Rammê, R. (2026). *Links in violence: The connection between interpersonal violence and animal cruelty and its relevance in the formulation of public policies for domestic animals in Brazil.* [Elos da violência: a conexão entre violência interpessoal e a crueldade animal e sua relevância na formulação de políticas públicas para animais domésticos no Brasil.]

[In Portuguese]. *Revista Direitos Emergentes na Sociedade Global (REDESG)*, 9, 1-28.
<https://doi.org/10.5902/2316305494930>



STATE GOVERNMENT... and THE LINK

Link Cited in Call for New Mexico State Animal Protection Department

The Link is cited as a cornerstone of a groundbreaking needs assessment and proposal that would create a statewide Department of Animal Protection in New Mexico to oversee the uncoordinated patchwork of ordinances and programs that result in “severe overlapping service deficits” across four pillars of animal services: animal sheltering, animal control, equine rescue, and emergency management. Special attention is given to animal services gaps on New Mexico’s 23 federally recognized Native American tribal lands.

A key recommendation is to establish state-level oversight. “Multiple agencies oversee animal issues, but the State lacks comprehensive authority and coordination. A New Mexico State Animal Protection Department would address gaps in animal welfare regulation and enforcement; serve as a central hub for oversight, policy, and enforcement; and strengthen cross-agency coordination and emergency response.”

“Fragmentation makes it difficult to set statewide priorities, collect consistent data, coordinate services, or identify gaps in funding and accountability.”

-- NM Assessment

coordinating local animal care and control programs and animal cruelty investigations; the New Mexico proposal is believed to be the first to have included The Link between animal abuse and human violence as a premise for creating a department and interfacing with human services.

Currently, only Colorado, Georgia and Delaware are believed to have statewide departments

Animal Services in New Mexico: A Needs Assessment for the North Central Region was prepared by Animal Protection New Mexico for the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District through a state grant. The 156-page report, targeted to state policymakers and government officials as well as key stakeholders, is based upon over 100 interviews with multidisciplinary stakeholders, tribal engagement, site visits, and state and national data sources including the National Link Coalition.

“New Mexico lacks a centralized state authority with broad responsibility for animal welfare. Currently, animal issues are divided among agencies with limited, often siloed mandates; these include entities focused on commercially raised livestock, veterinary licensing, wildlife, agriculture, emergency response, and local enforcement. This fragmentation makes it difficult to set statewide priorities, collect consistent data, coordinate services, or identify gaps in funding and accountability.

“New Mexico should establish a formal state level voice for animal protection, beginning with companion animal and equine issues and expanding as appropriate. A dedicated office or department could coordinate policy, provide technical assistance, support shelter and rescue standards, strengthen disaster planning, administer grants, and serve as a central point of contact. Centralized leadership would support, not replace, local responsibility.”



FOCUS ON THE LINK

A separate section includes The Link. “For years, animal mistreatment was viewed as a separate or private concern, but extensive research now shows a strong connection — known as The Link — between animal abuse and interpersonal violence and other crimes against humans,” it states. “Because animals are vulnerable, unable to report harm, and usually treated legally as property, abuse toward them can be overlooked, especially in households where domestic violence, child maltreatment, or elder abuse is occurring.”

The Link is specifically cited in the proposal due to its interdisciplinary nature impacting animal care and control, domestic violence advocacy, child and adult protective services, veterinary and medical professions, behavioral health, law enforcement, prosecution, courts, social work, research, and government.

(Continued on Page 7)

STATE GOVERNMENT... and THE LINK

Link Cited in Call for New Mexico State Animal Protection Department

(Continued from Page 6)

“Recognizing animal cruelty as both a warning sign and a co-occurring form of violence strengthens early intervention and prevention efforts.”

It emphasizes that The Link is also important “beyond high-profile cases” and “is equally relevant in everyday cases of domestic violence, family instability, chronic neglect, and other ongoing harm. Animal abuse can function as a tool of coercive control, a sign of household vulnerability, or a signal that other victims may be at risk,” another area whereby statewide coordination can be significant.

“Understanding The Link is therefore a practical approach to prevention and early intervention, not solely an academic or high profile concern.”

CORRECTING SYSTEMIC GAPS

Establishing a state Department of Animal Protection would correct the Link-related challenges of inadequate data and reporting in the absence of a centralized system. “Establishing clear referral protocols for reporting, case numbering, and investigative collaboration improves data accuracy, resource allocation, and accountability for repeat offenders,” it notes.

Such a department would also address the need for better education and cross-reporting. “Improving outcomes requires shared workflows and consistent communication across agencies. Education helps professionals and the public recognize The Link, while cross-reporting systems ensure that when one agency identifies potential harm, others with the authority to act are alerted. Coordinated responses protect vulnerable people and animals, and

reduce the likelihood of repeated or escalating violence.”

The report includes a section on domestic violence and companion animals and describes co-sheltering programs in New Mexico. It emphasizes:

- Why state governments need to invest in animal welfare;
- How animal welfare aligns with current policy priorities;
- Why animal welfare is a common ground for agreement among New Mexicans with differing political views; and
- How The Link anchors animal welfare as a public health and safety function of governments that policymakers in both political parties can agree with.

Creating a dedicated and “long-overdue” New Mexico Department of Animal Protection within state government would:

- Consolidate existing programs and funds serving animals under one roof;
- Establish authority over un-addressed issues that do not fit within any other existing agency; and
- Provide a central hub for ongoing assessment, policy development, coordination, and support to address animal-related infrastructure and services across the state.

“The welfare of animals and that of society overall are deeply connected,” summarized Anne Collier, Animal Protection New Mexico Board President.

Best Practices in Animal Services Include Cross-Agency Collaborations

The report offers extensive lists of state- and local-level recommendations. It also presents “overall best practices in animal services” that include:

- Giving animal welfare and veterinary professionals a “seat at the table” and a meaningful role in state and local policy, budgeting, emergency planning, housing discussions, public safety initiatives, and health-related decisions that affect animals and caregivers.
- Using “systems thinking” rather than isolated, reactive responses to understand how each part of the animal services network influences the other and supports prevention, coordinated problem solving and smarter use of limited resources.
- Unifying human and animal services that Link pet support with social services, public health and other collaborative programs.
- Engaging the community to treat the public as a partner and not merely a source of complaints.
- Collecting data to identify needs, evaluate performance and make informed decisions.
- Collaborating strategically with rescue groups, veterinarians, social service providers, law enforcement, public health agencies, emergency managers, schools, housing organizations, faith groups, and neighborhood leaders to improve public services.
- Investing in animal services, professional workforce development, and emergency planning that includes animals.

ONE HEALTH/ONE WELFARE... and THE LINK

Asking About Pets Can Improve Well-Being for People and Animals

An issue that has long complicated providing emergency and routine health care for aging seniors -- or for any age group, for that matter -- is that people may delay or forgo getting necessary treatment or going into hospitals or long-term care because there is no one to care for their pets. A new article in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* encourages health care systems to embrace a more complete concept of family-centered care — one that recognizes that, for millions of people, “family” includes pets.

“When people become seriously ill, their animals do not suddenly become less important. In many cases, the bond becomes even more consequential,” said co-author Rustin Moore, Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at The Ohio State University. “However, illness and hospitalization can abruptly disrupt access to that relationship, creating two interconnected concerns: the welfare of the animal and the well-being of the person.”

The failure of human healthcare systems to discuss what can be critical human-animal relationships in clinical care situations leads to “missed opportunities to improve patients’ health or misinterpretation of decisions that are constrained by competing obligations to patients’ pets,” added co-author Reshma Jagsi, chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology at Emory University. The researchers highlight that this disconnect occurs because relevant questions about pet responsibilities are rarely asked in health care settings.

“If we truly aspire to provide compassionate, patient- and family-centered health care, we should recognize the family as the patient defines it. And for millions of people, that family member has four legs, a name and is someone waiting for them at home.”

*-- Rustin Moore
& Reshma Jagsi*

of responsibilities that may shape how a patient makes decisions.

“We started talking about how caring for animals is such an important part of the core identity of many human patients and yet is often overlooked by physicians,” Jagsi added.

Moore and Jagsi wrote that asking about patients’ pets can strengthen the clinician-patient relationship, leading to improved communication, greater patient openness and disclosure

Proactive screening and coordinated support for pet care while patients are hospitalized align with addressing social determinants of care, which



Rustin Moore, left, & Reshma Jagsi

could lead to a practical, patient-centered approach to improving adherence and continuity of care. A single question could trigger a referral to case management or social work to help remove barriers to care, they added.

However, outreach to such support systems is fragmented, they noted. Collaborations between health systems and local animal shelters, rescue organizations, veterinarians, social service agencies, foster networks and other nonprofit organizations that could help coordinate temporary animal care for ill humans and their pet companions in need are limited. The result is fewer improved outcomes for both humans and animals.

At its core, we are advocating for a broader vision of total family care,” Moore told Emory University’s [Phys.Org](#) newsletter on Sept. 5. “If a patient considers an animal part of their family—and that relationship materially affects their well-being and health care decisions—then our systems should at least recognize the relationship, ask about it and have pathways to help when that bond is disrupted by illness.

“If we truly aspire to provide compassionate, patient- and family-centered health care, we should recognize the family as the patient defines it. And for millions of people, that family member has four legs, a name and is someone waiting for them at home,” he added.

“For those of us who are physicians, it’s a foregone opportunity not only to facilitate care but to build bonds with our patients —i t’s such a simple thing to include information about pets in the medical record,” Jagsi said. “Pet ownership is an important element of the social history for so many people.”

-- Moore, R.M., & Jagsi, R. (2026, Aug. 29). Human-animal bonds as social determinants of health care access. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 395(9). DOI: 10.1056/NEJMp2605774

WSAVA Raising Veterinarians' Awareness about Domestic Violence

The World Small Animal Veterinary Association has become a global leader in addressing what we at the National Link Coalition call “DV & the DVM”: raising awareness that the provisions of One Health, One Welfare, codes of practice, organizational policies, and veterinary oaths may include veterinary recognition of and response to domestic violence as well as animal cruelty.

Michael Lappin, a professor of clinical sciences at the Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, is an Advisor to WSAVA's One Health Committee. He tells *The LINK-Letter* that domestic violence has been a committee One Health theme for three years as part of a goal to bridge gaps and get the significance of the human-animal bond more widely appreciated within the One Health framework.



Michael Lappin

The [committee's website](#) includes 10 resources that emanated from a 2023 Domestic Violence Workshop:

- The Links Group UK's Guidance for the Veterinary Team, “Suspected Abuse of Animals and People”, “Terms of Reference & Service Standards for pet fostering groups,” and “Pet Fostering for Victim Survivors of Domestic Abuse: A UK Perspective”.
- The Los Angeles SPCA's Animal Safety Net Information Manual and Emergency Pet Housing Program.
- “Safety Planning for Pets in Domestic Violence”, with resources from the Animal Welfare Institute and the National Domestic Violence Hotline.
- Melinda Merck's “Domestic Violence Exam Checklist for Dogs and Cats” and PowerPoint on “Animal Cruelty and Domestic Violence: The Link and Management in the Veterinary Practice”.
- A 2023 WSAVA PowerPoint presentation by Portuguese psychologist Mauro Paulino on “Forensic Psychology of Domestic Violence and Animal Cruelty”.

The WSAVA's committee's work augments other recent developments vis-à-vis veterinary response to domestic violence. AVMA recently updated its Policy on Animal Abuse and Neglect to recognize that a veterinarian's ethical responsibility to identify and respond to suspected or known animal maltreatment is based, in part, on “substantial evidence” demonstrating “a strong correlation between animal abuse and interpersonal violence, including child abuse, elder abuse, and domestic violence.”

(See the [September 2026 LINK-Letter](#))

AAHA's Animal Abuse Reporting Position Statement supports reporting suspicious animal abuse to authorities and laws mandating reporting with immunity from legal liability when reporting in good faith, based on studies showing a Link between animal abuse and other forms of violence, including child, spousal, and elder abuse.

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association's Position Statement on Responsibility of Veterinary Professionals in Addressing Animal Abuse and Neglect says all veterinary professionals have an ethical duty to address suspected animal abuse or neglect in addition to whatever legal obligation may affect them. “Veterinary professionals play an important role in identifying animal abuse which might give rise to concerns about the welfare of members of a household,” the 2024 statement reads.

The United Kingdom's 2023 Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons allows revealing confidential information to authorities when animal welfare concerns or the wider public interest are at risk, including when child or domestic abuse is suspected. “Given the links between animal, child and domestic abuse, a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse reporting suspected or actual animal abuse should consider whether a child or adult within that home might also be at risk. Suspicions of abuse may also be triggered by a separate issue arising out of the relationship with the client,” it reads, offering additional details on how and when to report.

The Veterinary Council of New Zealand's 2020 Code of Professional Conduct says they must act immediately, including possible reporting to authorities, to remedy situations when they have cause to suspect unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress in an animal or possible breaches of animal welfare laws. This policy is needed because “VCNZ accepts research linking the association between deliberate physical maltreatment of animals and violence against humans. Veterinarians, when confronted with situations of animal abuse, should consider whether people within that home might be at risk.”

The Australian Veterinary Association's 2013 policy, while not supporting mandated reporting of suspected animal abuse, says veterinarians have an ethical responsibility and should report “not only for the animal's welfare but because of the well-researched connection between animal and child abuse and domestic violence and sociopathic tendencies.”



VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

What Affects Veterinarians' Willingness to Intervene when Abuse is Suspected?

Veterinarians are uniquely positioned to identify and document physical findings in cases of animal abuse that would likely go unreported as part of their routine clinical encounters," begins a recent study that explores factors associated with their willingness or reluctance to intervene when abuse is suspected.

The authors conclude that perceived seriousness of the case and increased confidence in their ability to respond are two of the strongest predictors of intentions to intervene. They found that knowledge alone may be insufficient to predict veterinarians' intentions to intervene in cases of suspected animal abuse, but that training opportunities focused on practical skills and confidence-building, procedural knowledge and applied experience lead to increased confidence which, in turn,

may increase intentions to respond to suspected animal maltreatment.

Kaiulani Long and Chelsea Spencer at Kansas State University, Ronald Orchard and Cassidy Moreau at Oregon State university, and Kris Otteman from Victim2Verdict surveyed 145 students, faculty and staff. They aimed to clarify the mechanisms through which knowledge and experience translate into action, thereby addressing a critical gap in the literature on veterinary responses to animal abuse.

They found that perceived seriousness of animal abuse, procedural knowledge of what to do in cases of animal abuse, and the number of applied and educational experiences related to animal abuse were significantly related to confidence in and intention to intervene in cases of animal maltreatment.



"Although knowledge and experience are important predictors of intervention behavior, prior research suggests that multiple organizational, interpersonal, and legal factors may influence veterinary professionals' willingness to intervene," they write (*See Sidebar*). Significant steps to overcome these barriers include:

- Identifying animal abuse perpetration as associated with other acts of violence and coercive control, such as intimate partner violence, child abuse, and general antisocial tendencies;
- AVMA policies that encourage veterinary professionals to recognize, document, and appropriately respond to suspected abuse and neglect and that reinforce the important role veterinary professionals play in identifying and addressing animal maltreatment (*See the September 2026 LINK-Letter*).

(Continued on Page 11)

What Barriers Impede Veterinarians' Intent to Intervene?

The study identified numerous barriers that contribute to veterinary professionals' hesitation to intervene. These include:

- Uncertainty regarding workplace policies and reporting procedures;
- Concerns about confidentiality, time and economic constraints;
- Fear of damaging veterinarian-client relationships;
- Concerns that reporting may not result in meaningful action;
- Uncertainty about which agencies should receive reports.
- Degree of institutional support;
- Variations in the inclusion of veterinary forensic science courses at U.S. veterinary schools;
- The nature of a non-homogeneous workforce. Individuals working in academic veterinary medicine, private practice, shelter medicine, corporate practice, and large- and small-animal settings may differ substantially in their exposure to suspected animal cruelty, workplace expectations, reporting responsibilities, and available institutional supports;
- Gaps in training;
- Inconsistencies in identifying abuse;
- Ambiguity surrounding accidental versus intentional harm;
- Inconsistencies in state reporting laws;
- Concerns regarding client retaliation and lack of legal protection;
- Older practitioners whose formal education was less likely to include veterinary forensics, animal cruelty reporting, and the Links between animal abuse and interpersonal violence than more recent graduates;
- Veterinary professionals in different career stages who may face distinct workplace responsibilities and professional pressures that influence their engagement with emerging research and intervention practices.

VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

What Affects Veterinarians' Willingness to Intervene when Abuse is Suspected?

(Continued from Page 10)

They offer several recommendations:

- “Efforts to increase veterinary professionals’ responses to suspected animal abuse should move beyond general knowledge acquisition and prioritize the development of applied confidence,” they write. “Knowing what to do, when to act, and how to navigate reporting or referral processes may be especially important for translating concern about animal abuse into professional action. In practical terms, veterinary curricula and continuing education programs may be strengthened by providing clear, jurisdiction-specific reporting procedures, documentation protocols, and opportunities to rehearse decision-making in suspected abuse cases.”
- Educational programs should emphasize recognition that animal cruelty frequently co-occurs with interpersonal violence, child maltreatment, and elder abuse as a means to strengthen practitioners’ likelihood of perceiving a case of suspected animal abuse as being more serious.
- Veterinary curricula should increase students’ and professionals’ experiences through such vehicles as animal cruelty or forensic coursework, shelter rotations, webinars, conference

presentations, exposure to cruelty-related cases, scenario-based training, case simulations, mock demonstration exercises, interdisciplinary case reviews, and guided practice with reporting pathways. These may help build the self-efficacy needed to respond effectively.

- Clinics, hospitals, shelters, and veterinary teaching programs could benefit from developing institutional policies and written protocols for suspected animal abuse as a means to improve confidence. Such protocols could include guidance on recognizing warning signs, documenting clinical findings, preserving evidence, communicating with clients, consulting supervisors or legal authorities, and making reports when appropriate.

They caution that reporting suspected abuse may not always be the best or only option and that intervention decisions occur within broader social and community contexts.

“Veterinary professionals must often balance animal welfare concerns with an understanding of caregiver circumstances and available community resources. Depending on case characteristics, appropriate responses may include reporting to authorities, client education, referrals to supportive services, subsidized veterinary care, or collaboration with animal welfare organizations,” they advise.

“As veterinary medicine continues to expand its role in identifying and responding to suspected animal cruelty, educational approaches that integrate forensic knowledge with ethical reasoning, structural awareness, and One Welfare principles may better equip professionals to make decisions that protect animals while minimizing unintended harms to people and communities,” they conclude.

-- Long, K., Spencer, C. M., Orchard, R., Moreau, C., & Otteman, K. (2026). Factors associated with veterinary professionals’ intent to intervene in cases of animal maltreatment. *Animals*, 16(17), 2675. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani16172675>

“Efforts to increase veterinary professionals’ responses to suspected animal abuse should move beyond general knowledge acquisition and prioritize the development of applied confidence.”

-- Long et al.



COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS... and THE LINK

Montana Collaborative Resource Program Notes The Link

“Animal crimes proliferate alongside domestic violence, neglect of children, gang activity, and mental illness. A proactive and comprehensive response to animal neglect and abuse, including resources for prevention, is foundational to building or rebuilding healthy communities and restoring public trust and goodwill. As in so many other areas of policing, collaborative relationships and community partnerships are filling gaps and offering solutions that result in positive outcomes for communities and enforcement agencies.”

That was the watchword offered by the Animal Legal Defense Fund in announcing that Cascade County, Mont., has been selected as the site for a year-long intensive [Collaborative Response Project](#) to train law enforcement, veterinarians and prosecutors to better prevent and respond to animal cruelty cases. County residents will participate in public surveys to help identify needs and collaborative solutions.

“Properly addressing and preventing animal cruelty requires coordination. It is critical for the local animal control, law enforcement, and veterinarians to work closely together to both implement the solutions that prevent cruelty and also build the effective legal cases when abuse does occur,” said Animal Legal Defense Fund Animal Cruelty Investigations Manager Linda Fielder.

“In a time of budget cuts and staffing shortfalls, ALDF’s Collaborative Response Project will work to support the specific needs of the communities in Cascade County and set up stakeholders for long-term success in their efforts to stop animal cruelty from the start.”



Linda Fielder

Cascade County’s 2,712 square miles includes urban, suburban and rural areas around the hub of Great Falls. As is common in many counties, multiple animal control and law enforcement agencies cover different jurisdictions. Cascade County Animal Control alone evaluates 11,000 calls per year.

The Collaborative Response Project will include tools for building a network of local experts to respond to reports of animal cruelty, with a focus on: veterinary support; funding for veterinary forensics; training for veterinarians, law enforcement and prosecutors; and creative solutions to close resource gaps and prevent cruelty.

ALDF has conducted similar collaboratives in previous years in McHenry County, Ill., Clark County, Wash., and Pima County, Ariz.

Raising GLOBAL LINK AWARENESS

Link Cited in Training for Indian Police Officers

Citing research that found that “Those who engage in cruelty to animals were [three] times more likely to commit other crimes, including murder, rape, robbery, assault, harassment, threats, and drug/substance abuse,” PETA India conducted a training on combating animal cruelty for 100 police officers at the Kerala Police Academy in Thrissur.

The four-hour workshop on Sept. 9 was part of PETA India’s ongoing efforts to sensitize law enforcement personnel to ensure that crimes against animals are addressed with the seriousness they deserve. Similar workshops have been conducted recently in Gwalior, Goa, Sikkim, Pune, Nagpur, Mira-Bhayandar, Belagavi, Hubli-Dharwad, Bengaluru, Jammu, Kathua, Samba, and Chikkakagaluru.



PETA India noted that for the first time, the National Crime Records Bureau tracked cases of cruelty against animals in the country and compiled data, registering 9,039 cases and the arrest of 10,312 persons in 2024. In 2021, the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organization’s released a report revealing that in the decade prior, nearly 500,000 animals were victims of crimes.



CHILDREN... and THE LINK

The Dangers of Juveniles' Cruelty to Animals – A Follow-up Commentary

In our [September LINK-Letter](#) we reported on the tragic incident in China where a group of boys mercilessly beat a dog named “Wang Wang” and her puppies to death and apparently escaped prosecution, rehabilitation, or other interventions. We have subsequently learned that the incident has drawn worldwide attention from advocates launching a global petition and news media interest in the U.S., the U.K., Germany, Italy, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, and India.

China has no comprehensive national law specifically protecting companion animals such as dogs and cats from cruelty. Petitions are decrying the lack of enforcement in China’s animal protection systems, calling out long-standing gaps in the law, and demanding stronger animal welfare legislation in China based, in part, on *The Link*.

An example of this came to us in an email from another animal welfare advocate in Taiwan who is particularly emphatic about recognizing the potential lifelong impact of this incident on these youths and society. We thought we’d share her insightful letter to us in full:

After learning more about the National Link Coalition’s long-standing work on *The Link* between Animal Abuse and Human Violence, I began to see the Wang Wang case from another perspective.

“On June 28, 2026, Wang Wang, a stray mother dog in Jieyang, Guangdong, was subjected to prolonged abuse by several minors under the age of 14, shortly after giving birth to three puppies. Part of the abuse was filmed. Wang Wang and all three puppies ultimately died.

“Much of the public discussion that followed focused on one question: Why did these minors not face criminal punishment?

“But the work of the National Link Coalition raises another question that may be equally important: When minors engage in extreme, prolonged, and group-based animal cruelty, should society dismiss it simply as “children behaving badly,” or should it be treated as a warning sign requiring professional assessment and early intervention?

“The National Link Coalition has long warned against dismissing childhood animal cruelty with attitudes such as “boys will be boys” or “it was only an animal.” Your work emphasizes the importance of considering the intensity, frequency, and motivation behind such behavior, and of professionally assessing and intervening when children seriously or repeatedly harm animals.

“This made me reconsider what we should be asking about the Wang Wang case.

“Perhaps the question is not only: “What did these children do to Wang Wang?” but also: “What has happened in the lives of these children?”

“I was particularly struck by the National Link Coalition’s recommendation that questions about animal abuse be incorporated into forensic interviews involving child abuse.

“This is important because when a child commits violence against an animal, protecting the animal is only one part of the response. It may also be necessary for pro-



fessionals to examine whether the child has witnessed violence, experienced abuse, lived in a dysfunctional environment, or is facing other circumstances requiring assessment and intervention.

“The National Link Coalition has also made clear that not every child who abuses animals will later become a violent offender. Animal abuse should be understood as a possible indicator within a complex pattern of

(Continued on Page 14)

CHILDREN... and THE LINK

The Dangers of Juveniles' Cruelty to Animals – A Follow-up Commentary

(Continued from Page 13)

antisocial behavior, rather than as a simple or inevitable causal pathway.

“For that very reason, what the Wang Wang case calls for is not labeling these children, but professional assessment and early intervention. The age of criminal responsibility should not mark the end of society’s response.

“When minors engage in extreme, prolonged, and group-based animal cruelty, should society dismiss it simply as “children behaving badly,” or should it be treated as a warning sign requiring professional assessment and early intervention?”

- Audrée

“One of the most difficult aspects of the Wang Wang case is the young age of

those involved. But if their age limits the use of criminal punishment, I believe we should ask a different question: When a justice system cannot respond with adult criminal punishment, what alternative mechanisms for violence prevention should take its place?

“The U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), in [Animal Abuse and Youth Violence](#) identified animal abuse as a potential sentinel behavior and discussed responses including reporting, assessment, treatment, and professional training.

“The Wang Wang case therefore should not end with the question of whether these minors can be punished. It should also raise questions about: professional assessment, early intervention, treatment or counseling, and continued follow-up. Age may limit criminal responsibility, but it should not limit society’s responsibility to recognize warning signs of violence and intervene early.

“For this reason, I respectfully hope the National Link Coalition will consider the Wang Wang case through the lens of The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence, and the broader questions it raises.

“I also hope the case might be considered in your ongoing

discussion or documentation of childhood and adolescent animal cruelty, warning signs of violence, and early intervention.

“Because the question left by Wang Wang’s death should not only be: “Why were these children not criminally punished?” Perhaps the more important question is: “After punishment is no longer an adequate answer, what does the system do next?”

“When children this young are already capable of prolonged and extreme violence against a defenseless mother dog, with part of that violence being filmed, this should not be where society’s response ends. It should be where professional assessment, early intervention, and violence prevention begin.

“Thank you for taking the time to read this letter from a concerned citizen in Taiwan.”

Sincerely,
Audrée
Taiwan



California Expands Child/Animal Sexual Abuse Prohibitions

California has expanded its law prohibiting the production and distribution of online sexual content, including animal sexual abuse, involving a minor to now also prohibit downloading or livestreaming that sexual content.

SB 1276, the End Child Exploitation Act, sponsored by Sen. Susan Rubio (D - Baldwin Park), was signed into law on Sept. 10 to close digital loopholes used by predators.

The new law also broadens the responsibilities of mandated reporters of child abuse, which includes animal care and control officers, to report cases of digitally altered or A.I.-generat-

ed matter that depicts a person under age 18 engaged in an act of sexual conduct.

“Protecting our children in this digital age is more important than ever. As technology continues to advance, our laws must keep pace to ensure predators cannot use new tools and platforms to exploit our children,” said Rubio.



Sen. Susan Rubio

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 218 LINK-related measures -- 24 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.

SUCCESS!! SB 1276 extends 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. It also broadens the responsibilities of mandated reporters of child abuse, which includes animal care and control officers, to report cases of digitally altered or A.I.-generated matter that depicts a person under age 18 engaged in an act of sexual conduct.

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

HAWAII

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

ILLINOIS

HB 72 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 died when the General Court adjourned.** They would have allowed 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 died when the General Court adjourned. It would have updated 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 died when the General Court adjourned. It would have would have made 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 have been required to participate in psychiatric rehabilitation under a psychologist who specializes in bullying. The family could have been 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.

A 3524 and **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.

A 3809 and **S 1150** would revise the statutory definition of domestic violence to include “psychological abuse that causes fear or serious alarm or distress that has a substantial adverse impact on a person’s daily activities.” While acts of harm or threats to animals are not specified, they are now widely considered means of coercive control.

A 5459, “Moksha’s Law,” would allow courts to award compensatory damages to the owner of a service animal, emotional support animal or companion animal in a civil action arising from the animal’s death. Damages could include veterinary and burial expenses and the animal’s fair market value.

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 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

S 274 died when the legislature adjourned. It would have replaced the “crime against nature” with the term “bestiality”.

S 573 died when the legislature adjourned. It would have defined 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 have required individuals convicted of companion animal hoarding to undergo psychological evaluation and treatment.

S 591 died when the legislature adjourned. It would have prohibited 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.

Permission to Reprint

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.

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

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.

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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.

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

Oct. 14 -- Daytona Beach, Fla.: Don't Forget the Pets wull hold a free in-person training [workshop](#) on how to create and sustain pet housing programs for survivors of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness.

Oct. 14 — Pennsylvania (online): The [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will meet.

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 present at the [Animal Law Conference](#), sponsored by the Animal Legal Defense Fund and the Lewis & Clark Law School.

Oct. 18 -- London, U.K. (online): Mackenzie Fong will present "Enhancing pet inclusion in homelessness accomodation services in the U.K." in the 2026 Society for Companion Animal Studies' [virtual conference](#).

Oct. 20 -- Kansas City, Mo. (online): BestyBnB will present a [webinar](#) on "Navigating Barriers to Safety: Survivors and Assistance Animals" featuring Zoe Agnew-Svoboda.

Oct. 21 -- Washington, D.C. (online): The American Bar Association's Companion Animal Subcommittee will host a [webinar](#) on "Closing the Gap: Safeguarding Veterinary Records to Protect Domestic Violence Survivors."

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. 23 -- Atlanta, Ga.: The 27th [Animal Protection & Wellness Expo](#) on Animal Crimes, Cruelty and Cases Training will provide training on topics including Animal Crimes & Civil Cases, The Link Between Animal Cruelty and Human Violence, Local Ordinances & State Laws, Police Officer Safety, Investigations, De-escalation, First Aid in Animals, and Initiatives.

Oct. 28 -- Washington, D.C. (online): The American Bar Association's Companion Animal Subcommittee will host a [webinar](#) on "Expanding the Scope of Protection: Strategies to Shield Domestic Violence Survivors and their Horses."

Oct. 29 -- Sacramento, Calif. (online): RedRover will host a [webinar](#) on "Impactful Partnerships: Supporting Both Ends of the Leash".

Oct. 31 -- San Antonio, Texas: The Center for Pet Family Well-Being's 2026 [One Health Systems Summit](#) will feature 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 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](#).

LINK TRAINING CALENDAR

Nov. 4-6 — Vancouver, Wash.: Nancy Blaney and Kathleen Wood will be among the more than two dozen speakers presenting at the [Association of Prosecuting Attorneys](#) 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. 12 -- Pittsburgh, Pa.: Don't Forget the Pets will hold a free in-person training [workshop](#) on how to create and sustain pet housing programs for survivors of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness.

Nov. 25 — London, U.K.: Phil Arkow will speak at The Links Group UK's [25th Anniversary celebration](#) inaugurating 16 Days of Activism 2026.

Dec. 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. 5 -- Houston, Texas: Phil Arkow will speak to the [Texas Humane Legislation Network](#).

Dec. 8 -- Raleigh, N. Car (online): Phil Arkow will present “Another One Health Role for Veterinarians: Response to Animal Cruelty and Other Family Violence” in a [veterinary forensics selective webinar](#) for the NCSU College of Veterinary Medicine.

Dec. 9 — Pennsylvania (online): The [Keystone Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular bi-monthly meeting.

Jan. 19, 2027 -- Orlando, Fla.: Jennifer Bonovich will present “Veterinary Forensics for the Shelter Veterinarian” and “Animal Neglect: Recognizing, Documenting, and Treating Animal Neglect and Abuse Cases From a Forensic Viewpoint” at the [NAVVC/VMX](#) Veterinary Conference and Expo.

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](#).

March 25, 2027 -- (online): Phil Arkow will present “Another One Health/One Welfare Role for Veterinarians: Responding to Animal Cruelty and Other Family Violence” in a [webinar](#) for the Justice Clearinghouse.

June 15-19, 2027 -- Baltimore, Md.: The International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association will hold its 20th Anniversary Annual [Conference](#).

Sept. 10, 2027 -- Albuquerque, N. Mex.: [Positive Links New Mexico](#) will hold its conference on “Exposing the Link between Animal Abuse & Domestic Violence.”



THE LINK... in the NEWS

Hospital in Lockdown After Suspect Allegedly Rapes Girlfriend, Abuses Dog

A hospital in Columbus, Ohio, was forced to go into lockdown after a man who allegedly raped a woman, strangled her, set her hair on fire, and abused her dog discovered that she had checked herself in for treatment.

[WCMH-TV](#) reported that Mohamed Wisman, 31, is facing multiple charges in conjunction with the assault. The woman told police that her boyfriend had punched her, beat her with a broomstick, strangled her to the point of losing consciousness, lit her hair on fire before raping her, abused her dog, and threatened members of her family. She walked herself and her dog to the hospital, where Wisman was reportedly able to track her whereabouts. The dog was taken to a veterinarian for treatment, but its condition was not reported.

Police Seek Alleged Dogfighter for Feeding Live Chicks to Dogs

Police in Cleveland, Ohio, were reported to be looking for Miguel Elliot II after he allegedly posted a video of him feeding a live baby chick to his dogs. [Cleveland 19 News](#) reported that in addition to animal cruelty, Elliot is also facing 12 other counts including not stopping for police when they attempted to pull him over on a DUI and endangering children in the car, weapons offenses on a liquor store premises, obstruction of justice, falsification, and dogfighting.



Mother Charged Again with Child Abuse in "Deplorable" Apartment

A mother whose children had already been removed from her case was re-arrested after police in Lyndon, Ky. found five children again living in deplorable conditions. [WLKY-TV](#) reported that authorities said the smell of human and canine urine was so pungent, it could be smelled from outside the one-bedroom apartment where the children, aged 9 months to 9 years old, and a 76-year-old grandmother were living. Desiree Nicole Pohlmann, 35, was charged with criminal abuse and endangering the welfare of a minor.



Police said they didn't have enough food, water or working air conditioning. They allegedly found old food on the walls, mold in the home, and feces and urine.

The children had been removed from Pohlmann's care in April 2025 for what authorities said were "strikingly siminal circumstances" but were returned to her custody last March. The children were taken to a hospital for treatment. There was no word on the welfare or disposition of any animals in the apartment.

Indiana Man Charged with Child and Animal Sex Abuse

Joseph A. Jackson, 52, of Greenville, Ind., was arrested at a traffic stop and charged with seven counts of possession of child sexual abuse materials and one count of bestiality. [WHAS-TV](#) reported that police used forensic information from his phone to obtain an arrest warrant.

DV Suspect Said to Use Dog as Shield Against Police Taser

When Dayton, Ohio police responded to a domestic violence situation, they encountered Derrick Baxter Stinson II who allegedly swung a knife at an officer before grabbing a dog and using it as a shield as officers attempted to tase him. Stinson was indicted by a Montgomery County grand jury on charges of assault and cruelty to animals, according to [WHIO-TV](#). The dog was reportedly tased but not seriously hurt.



Ohio Dog Breeder Faces Additional Charges Including Animal Sex Abuse

A Loudonville, Ohio commercial dog breeder who had been charged in August with animal cruelty and falsification and obstructing official business after 72 dogs and puppies were removed from his property was later charged with 10 additional counts including alleged sexual conduct with an animal. [Ohio Animal Advocates](#) reported that Daniel A. Miller, 64, was charged in Ashland Municipal Court in a case involving a dog named "Hiro". Miller has a history of animal welfare and kennel violations dating back to 2018. The Ohio Department of Agriculture has reportedly begun the process of revoking the facility's commercial breeding license.

THE LINK... in the NEWS

Italian Police Raid Dogfight Marked by Minors and Gambling

In what may be the first instance of an illegal dogfight raid coming to our attention from Italy, 13 dogs were recently seized in Gela, Sicily, prompting the [Fondazione Cave Canem](#) to urge the public to warn authorities about such activities because “dogfighting is often linked to other crimes, including illegal gambling and drug or arms trafficking. The presence of minors or young adults is particularly alarming, as involvement in these activities can amount to an initiation into a criminal career.”



The Italian State police, the CITES units of the Carabinieri in Palermo and Rome, and the Agrigento Nature Anti-Crime Unit seized the animals – including four puppies and a pregnant female – and accompanying paraphernalia in what [Humane World for Animals Italy](#) called a case that exhibited the classic hallmarks of a serious underground dogfighting ring. The fights were apparently being filmed with extremely graphic videos posted on social media. Minors and gambling were reportedly involved and the fights were clearly organized for profit.

Salvatore Vella, Gela's chief prosecutor, told Italian broadcaster TG1 that “minors often attended these matches” and that “this is an element that should not be underestimated, as it amounts to a form of training in criminal deviance.”

The investigation was triggered when local citizens alerted police to a man seen with a small dog who had been reported missing. Upon searching the man's home, officers found a dog with muzzle and body injuries consistent with dogfighting wounds. The dogs were placed in the care of veterinarians from the Provincial Health Authority of Palermo.



Ohio Woman Convicted for Child, Animal Sex Abuse

A woman who faced 24 charges of sex crimes against animals and a 5-year-old child ([See the February 2026 LINK-Letter](#)) has been convicted on several of the counts. Erica Grove, of South Lebanon, Ohio, was convicted by Judge Robert Peeler on two of five counts of gross sexual imposition and two counts of child endangering. She previously pled guilty to four counts of sexual conduct with animals.

Before the trial, eight counts involving nude material of a child were dismissed. She was acquitted on five counts of rape and corrupting another individual with drugs. She is being held in custody pending future sentencing, according to [WLWT-TV](#).

The trial focused on thousands of graphic text messages sent between Grove and her former partner, Tory McCollister, whose trial was scheduled to start soon.

85-Year-Old Man Charged with Having Sex with Dog

After a DeGraff, Ohio resident called the Logan County Sheriff's Office when a security camera showed suspicious activity inside, deputies arrested Curtis Cox, 85. [WPKO-TV](#) reported that Cox was charged with a misdemeanor offense of having sexual conduct with a dog.



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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