

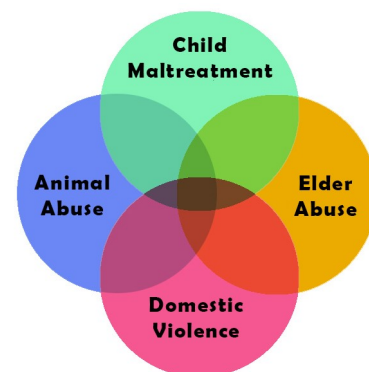


**NATIONAL LINK COALITION**

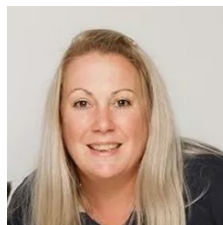
*Working together to stop violence against people and animals*

The LINK-Letter  
Vol., 18, No. 5  
May, 2025

*A monthly report of news from  
THE GLOBAL RESOURCE CENTER ON THE LINK BETWEEN  
ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE*



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**Divorce disputes  
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**Bill would create  
pet protection  
orders for elders  
(Page 8)**

## HUMAN MEDICINE... and THE LINK

### What Does the Medical Field Know About The Link? Please Help Us Conduct a Survey!

The National Link Coalition is asking the help of our *LINK-Letter* subscribers as we embark on a new project to assess the human medical and behavioral health fields' recognition and reporting of violence against both humans and animals. We are conducting a national survey of people working in human medicine, therapists and psychologists to build on what we have already learned about the veterinary fields' recognition of, and responses to, suspected animal and interpersonal violence.

A task force of medical professionals has created the survey, which can be accessed at <https://cmhredcap.cmh.edu/surveys/?s=FJX7DNXD8HF4TTWA> and which we have printed out on Pages 2-3. Please ask your colleagues in these fields to complete the survey; the results will help us gain valuable insights into how human medicine may be better engaged in preventing abuse against vulnerable people and animals. Thank you!

#### The Survey Task Force Members:



**Sue Skinner,  
MD**



**Barbara  
Boat, Ph.D.**



**Kathie  
Nurena, MD**



**Serena  
Wagoner, DO**



**Shaina  
Gordon, DO**

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# HUMAN MEDICINE... and THE LINK

This is a re-creation of the online survey at <https://cmhredcap.cmh.edu/surveys/?s=FJX7DNXD8HF4TTWA>. Please complete the survey online if you are in a relevant human medical field to help us learn more about the field's awareness of, and response to, The Link.

## Recognition and Reporting of Human and Animal Violence

This questionnaire is a combined effort, created by medical and behavioral health professionals across the US alongside the National LINK Coalition. The LINK is an international educational & advocacy organization working to prevent animal cruelty, domestic violence, child maltreatment and elder abuse by showing how they intersect.

**What is your professional role?**

- ☐ Physician      ☐ Physician Assistant      ☐ Nurse Practitioner  
☐ Psychologist      ☐ Social Worker      ☐ Therapist  
☐ Counselor      ☐ Other Allied Health Professional  
☐ Student

**Please specify your specialty:**

**How long have you been practicing in your field?**

- ☐ 0-5 years      ☐ 6-10 years  
☐ 11-20 years      ☐ 21+ years

**What state do you practice in?**

**Who do you provide care or professional services to?**

- ☐ Children      ☐ Adults      ☐ Both

**How would you describe your place of employment?**

- ☐ Academic center      ☐ Community-based  
☐ Private practice

**How well do you understand your role in reporting concerns of ELDER abuse?**

- ☐ Not at all      ☐ Slightly      ☐ Somewhat  
☐ Moderately      ☐ Extremely

**How comfortable are you with recognizing signs and symptoms of ELDER abuse and neglect?**

- ☐ Not at all      ☐ Slightly      ☐ Somewhat  
☐ Moderately      ☐ Extremely

**How familiar are you with the process of reporting ELDER abuse to authorities?**

- ☐ Not at all      ☐ Slightly      ☐ Somewhat  
☐ Moderately      ☐ Extremely

**Have you ever made a report to authorities regarding concerns of ELDER abuse?**

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No

**How comfortable are you with recognizing signs and symptoms of CHILD abuse and neglect?**

- ☐ Not at all      ☐ Slightly      ☐ Somewhat  
☐ Moderately      ☐ Extremely

## HUMAN MEDICINE... and THE LINK

How well do you understand your role in reporting concerns of CHILD abuse and neglect?

- ☐ Not at all    ☐ Slightly    ☐ Somewhat  
☐ Moderately    ☐ Extremely

How familiar are you with the process of reporting CHILD abuse and neglect to authorities?

- ☐ Not at all    ☐ Slightly    ☐ Somewhat  
☐ Moderately    ☐ Extremely

Have you ever made a report to authorities regarding concerns of CHILD abuse and neglect?

- ☐ Yes    ☐ No

How comfortable are you in recognizing signs of ANIMAL abuse?

- ☐ Not at all    ☐ Slightly    ☐ Somewhat  
☐ Moderately    ☐ Extremely

How well do you understand your role in reporting concerns of ANIMAL abuse and neglect?

- ☐ Not at all    ☐ Slightly    ☐ Somewhat  
☐ Moderately    ☐ Extremely

How familiar are you with the process of reporting ANIMAL abuse and neglect to authorities?

- ☐ Not at all    ☐ Slightly    ☐ Somewhat  
☐ Moderately    ☐ Extremely

Have you ever made a report to authorities regarding concerns of ANIMAL abuse and neglect?

- ☐ Yes    ☐ No

To what extent do you believe there is a link between animal abuse and interpersonal violence?

- ☐ Not at all    ☐ Slightly    ☐ Somewhat  
☐ Moderately    ☐ Extremely

In your practice, do you screen for abuse of animals including concerns for neglect?

- ☐ Never    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Sometimes  
☐ Often    ☐ Always

If you screen for animal abuse, how do you do this?

- ☐ Questionnaire    ☐ Patient interview  
☐ Other    ☐ N/A

Have you ever evaluated an adult or child and had concerns of animal abuse in the home?

- ☐ Yes    ☐ No

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

### Links Group UK Discusses Pet Protection Law, Visits Family Justice Center

Our British counterpart, [The Links Group UK](#), was invited by Parliament to participate in a roundtable discussion with MPs about protecting pets in households impacted by domestic violence. The All-Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) met with Links advocates to consider the ways in which pets can be used as a tool for control by perpetrators, the significance of this in risk assessments of domestic abuse, and specialist pet fostering services in the UK.

Potential protections that could be introduced through [Ruby's Law](#) were raised. Ruby's Law is a proposed measure that would close a gap in British family law through which abusers can cause harm to family pets. The proposal would:

- Expand non-molestation orders to explicitly allow orders to cover pets (similar to including pets in protection orders now in 41 American states);
- Expand occupation orders, allowing courts to decide who retains care of the pet and ensure the pet's safety when determining occupation orders;
- Broaden the understanding of domestic abuse by introducing language which recognizes that harm to pets can be used as a form of coercion or control, linking this to the broader understanding of domestic abuse under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Advocates pointed out that 90% of households experiencing domestic abuse in England and Wales reported that animals were also abused by the perpetrators; in 12% of these households, the animals were killed.

The Links Group also was represented at a Joint Ministerial Visit to the [Foyle Family Justice Centre](#) by Jess Phillips, Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls, and Fleur Anderson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. The visit discussed safeguarding and violence against women



Participants at the Foyle Family Justice Centre meeting

and girls and met with survivors and staff who shared their experiences of navigating services and the issues facing survivors, as well as staff and board members to learn about the work of the Centre and its new approach to bringing services to victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

The Centre is the first of its kind in Britain and Ireland. It opened in 2022 and is a unique trauma-informed interagency response to victims of domestic and sexual violence where agencies work in the same building to provide a wrap-around service. The Family Justice Centre model has been specifically designed to increase and improve access to joined-up holistic support services for victims and survivors. Co-location of relevant agencies prevents re-traumatization of victims, who only have to relate their experiences once, and promotes collaborative, effective responses to keep families safe.

### UK Pet Fostering Programs Featured on BBC

The BBC's Morning Live program on February 26 featured an



8-minute interview with Mary Wakeham, founder of the UK's Refuge4Pets. She described the role of four organizations that have been accredited by The Links Group UK to provide foster care for the pets of domestic abuse survivors: [Refuge4Pets](#), [Endeavour](#), [Lifeline](#), and [Freedom](#). The program also featured an interview with "Helen," a survivor, who shared her experiences and how Refuge4Pets enabled her to flee her abuser.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

### Patriarchal Oppression Called Most Apparent in Domestic Violence/Animal Abuse Link

**A** new article by British Link advocate Mary Wakeham argues that not only are the oppression of women, children and animals intertwined in patriarchal systems, but also that nowhere is this interconnection more apparent than in the co-occurrence of animal abuse and domestic abuse.

“A humancentric approach dominates definitions and the prevailing public story about domestic abuse across society,” she writes. “This conceptualization focuses on the human victim-survivor in isolation but undermines the status of the animal and the significance of the animal in the dynamics of abuse. We need to extend our construction of domestic abuse to include animals as victim-survivors.”



Mary Wakeham

Wakeham, Chief Executive Officer of [Refuge4Pets](#), a pet fostering service for domestic violence survivors in Cornwall and Devon, traces this power imbalance to the widespread status of animals in society as being considered “less important” than human beings and as “property” that is “owned” by humans. This conceptualization of animals is underpinned by animal welfare legislation in the UK that provides a platform for perpetrators of domestic abuse who abuse animals to continue the abuse of animals, often with little consequence or challenge.

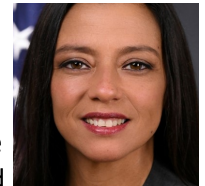
The article, an extension of her doctoral thesis at the University of Bristol ([See the August 2023 LINK-Letter](#)), highlights the many parallels between the abuse of animals and people in the context of domestic abuse. Research findings highlight the importance of an integrated approach across human and animal welfare services in order to safeguard the whole family (including animals), prevent homicide, and manage a perpetrator’s behavior.

— Wakeham, M. (2025). *Animal abuse as a strategy of coercive control*. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1332/23986808Y2025D000000076>

### NY Bill Would Fund Co-Sheltering Toolkit

**N**ew York State Sen. Monica Martinez (D—Long Island) introduced **S 7612** into the General Assembly on April 23. It would take the unique step of establishing a co-shelter toolkit of best practices, resources, case studies and other information to inform and encourage implementing and sustaining co-sheltering models for victims of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness with companion animals.

The preamble to the measure declares a legislative finding that “There is a statewide need for sheltered housing that accommodates companion animals for victims of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness.” The lack of such facilities causes victims to “remain in abusive situations to curtail abuse against their companion animal, placing an additional burden on individuals already in a dangerous and taxing situation.”



Sen. Martinez

The toolkit would be designed by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance in consultation with the Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. No state funds appear to be authorized for the project.

New York is believed to have 13 pet-inclusive domestic violence shelters, including seven in New York City operated by the Urban Resource Institute.



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

### Divorce Disputes Over Pet Custody on the Rise, Says Lawyer

**D**isputes over custody of pets are on the rise in family law proceedings in Canada, as a result of two factors: the number of pets that were adopted during the Covid pandemic, and millennials who commonly consider pets to be members of their family.

Animals are legally considered property, and consequently most courts still primarily see pets as pieces of property and base custody decisions on who paid for the animal or who signed the initial

contract for the animal, said Christine Ashbourne, a family lawyer in Ontario in an article in [Canadian Lawyer](#).

Ashbourne argued that Ontario is lagging behind the pioneering law in British Columbia whereby companion animals in family law matters are considered in a separate category from property. British Columbia enacted a new law in 2023 that allows courts to award custody of companion animals to a divorcing couple based upon what the court determines

to be in the animals' best interests

(See the [August 2023 LINK-Letter](#)).

The B.C. law requires the court to consider factors such as a history of family violence or animal cruelty, along with which party is most responsible for the care of the animal and if there are children who have a relationship with the pet, in determining who will retain the animal.



**Christine Ashbourne**

### Massachusetts Link Advocates Testify for Pet Custody Bill



Several Link advocates testified on April 22 at a Judiciary Committee hearing on [H.1817](#), which would standardize the consideration of pets in divorces and separations, to require courts awarding care and custody of a pet to “consider 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.” Rep. Meghan Kilcoyne (D—Clinton) met at the State House with several of the advocates, who included: Allison Blanck of the Animal Rescue League of Boston; Jeremy Cohen of Boston Dog Lawyers; and Stephanie Harris of the Animal Legal Defense Fund.



Please [click here](#) to make a tax-deductible donation to help keep The LINK-Letter’s news, trainings, and information flowing freely.

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

Thank you for caring!

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

## Safe Havens Directory Expanded to Co-sheltering for the Homeless' Pets

**T**he Animal Welfare Institute's Safe Havens for Pets initiative, which since

2011 has offered an online national directory of on- and off-site sheltering options for domestic violence survivors with pets, has [expanded the directory](#) to include sheltering services that assist pet-owning individuals who are experiencing homelessness.

The listings, which are searchable by ZIP code and updated regularly, feature organizations that either: provide sheltering services for the animals of unhoused individuals and/or domestic violence survivors; have a relationship with an entity that does; or provide referrals to such facilities. They include humane societies, veterinary offices, foster homes, and shelters that house humans and pets together.

The Safe Havens for Pets expansion now includes more than 200 sheltering resources in all 50 states for unhoused individuals and their pets, said Claire Coughlin, director of AWI's Companion Animal Program. The Safe Havens website also includes information on funding sources for shelters that wish to become more pet-friendly, safety planning tips for survivors with pets, and guidance on including companion animals in personal protection orders, among other resources.



**Claire Coughlin**

serves on the National Link Coalition's Professional Advisory Committee. "AWI is proud to offer the most comprehensive directory of pet-friendly safe havens nationwide — totaling more than 1,200 entries — to help these individuals locate safe sheltering options, not only for themselves but also for their beloved companion animals."

## SAFE HAVENS FOR PETS

The number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the United States is steadily increasing, reaching a record 256,610 in 2023, according to federal data. Some research also suggests that up to 25% of unhoused individuals have companion animals, which can create an additional barrier to locating secure housing. Many unhoused individuals are also survivors of domestic violence.

The Safe Haven models listed in the directory include:

- [Hale Mauliola](#) on Oahu, Hawai'i, uses upcycled shipping containers to provide temporary housing for up to 100 guests and their pets.
- [The Alameda County, Cal., Safe Parking Program](#) offers secure parking for unhoused individuals living in their vehicles. The location welcomes pets and is equipped with essential amenities, including lighting, restrooms, and security patrols.
- [Deep Roots](#), a homeless shelter in Earleville, Md., recently became pet-friendly and provides apartments for up to 12 families with children at its Clairvaux Farm.

Coughlin said that while the Safe Havens for Pets directory is comprehensive, it is not necessarily exhaustive and is a work in progress that must be updated continually. If you are aware of a safe haven that should be included, please contact [safehavens@awionline.org](mailto:safehavens@awionline.org).

### AN INTERESTING FACTOID:

The [National Crime Victimization Survey](#) found that, during one 12-month period, stalking victims reported receiving over 87,000 threats to harm pets from stalkers threatening to harm the victims' pets.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE... and THE LINK

### Kazakhstan Study Links Animal Abuse to Domestic Violence Prevention

**T**he latest recognition of animal abuse as a risk factor for domestic violence – and an indicator of how rapidly this message is spreading globally – comes from the central Asian nation of Kazakhstan.

Publishing in both English and Russian, the authors, based at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, describe animal abuse as “a growing public health concern” as well as “an early indicator of domestic violence,” especially when directed against pets.

*“Animal cruelty and domestic violence are inextricably linked, thus justifying joint investigations and efforts against both phenomena.”*

“Study findings reveal an unexpected connection between animal abuse and domestic violence that could help law enforcement agencies, public organizations and professionals working in social support and psychology detect cases sooner. It would also allow victims to receive immediate assistance,” they write.

“This research holds great relevance for law enforcement officials as well as practitioners working within these fields of social support and psychology.”

They emphasize that examining this subject matter is highly pertinent “as it allows not only for greater insight into violence within family settings, but also warns against negative repercussions for animals who also face this challenge.” This study’s central thesis is “the belief that animal cruelty and domestic violence are inextricably interlinked, thus justifying joint investigations and efforts against both phenomena.”

The authors call for: an integrated series of tougher laws; restricted access to weapons; creation of a reporting system; victim protection programs and shelters for both pets and people; psychological support; development of social services; educational campaigns; and fostering a culture of nonviolence focused on preventing and responding to animal abuse and domestic violence.

“Joint programs between animal protection services and domestic violence services should be created for more effective assessment and intervention in family situations where both animals and family members have been victims of mistreatment,” they write.

“Combatting animal cruelty can help combat domestic violence,” they summarize succinctly. “Animal welfare should receive priority consideration in creating an equitable society where all its members, including animals, feel safe.”

— Muratova, A.Z., Smanova, A.B., & Daurembekov, E.K. (2023). *Animal cruelty as an indicator of domestic violence. Bulletin of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. Law Series*, 3(144).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32523/2616-6844-2023-144-3-63-70>

## ELDER ABUSE... and THE LINK

### Michigan Bill Would Create Pet Protection Orders for Elders

**A** bill in the Michigan Legislature would enable elders and vulnerable adults to file petitions for personal protection orders that would include enjoining an individual from harming or threatening the person’s pet.



Sen. Klinefelt

**SB 111**, sponsored by Sen. Veronica Klinefelt, would allow elders and vulnerable adults to petition for personal protection orders that could include restraining or enjoining individuals from harming, removing or threatening the petitioner’s animal with the intent to cause the petitioner mental distress or to exert control over the petitioner.

While 41 states currently allow domestic violence survivors to file Pet Protection Orders, only four states — Colorado, Missouri, Tennessee, and Wisconsin — are believed to have similar provisions for elders and vulnerable adults.



### Congress Again Addresses Link-themed Federal Enforcement Bill

Citing extensive Link-themed reasons for the measure, Congress is once again attempting to create an Animal Cruelty Crimes Section within the U.S. Department of Justice to “vigorously pursue investigations and prosecutions” of animal cruelty crimes that fall under federal jurisdiction.

**H.R. 1477**, the “Animal Cruelty Enforcement Act of 2025,” would establish an Animal Cruelty Crimes Section within the DOJ’s Environment and Natural Resources Division. The division would coordinate with other federal agencies, including the Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Marshals Service, the FBI, and Customs & Border Protection, to address federal crimes against animals.

Significantly, the preamble to the bill states the following Congressional findings:

- (1) There is a significant connection between animal cruelty and violence against humans, domestic violence, child abuse, sexual abuse, homicide, gang activity, drug trafficking, and other crimes.
- (2) Animal fighting activity may increase the spread of diseases transmitted between animals and people.
- (3) A number of Federal laws have been enacted to address cruelty to animals.
- (4) Recognizing the connection between animal cruelty and serious crimes, the Federal Bureau of Investigation tracks animal cruelty crimes.
- (5) There is bipartisan and widespread support for addressing animal cruelty.
- (6) There is a government interest in ensuring laws are robustly enforced for the betterment and protection of society.
- (7) The lack of a dedicated animal crimes enforcement unit within the Department of Justice has resulted in unacceptable delays in prosecutions, and an overall lack of prosecution, of animal crimes.
- (8) Dedicated staff and resources at the Department of Justice will facilitate successful enforcement of animal cruelty laws, which often have unique investigative elements, by providing specialized knowledge and focus, and streamlining the handling of these offenses.



**Clockwise from top left: Reps. Joyce, Neguse, Ciscomani, and Cohen**

The bill has bipartisan support and was introduced by Reps. David Joyce (R—OH-14), Joe Neguse (D—CO-2), Juan Ciscomani (R — AZ-6), and Steve Cohen (D—TN-9). The bill currently has 16 additional bipartisan cosponsors.

The bill is a repeat of a previous effort in 2020 introduced by Reps. Cohen and Neguse, along with two other Representatives. That effort secured the support of 45 other members of Congress to include language in the base Appropriations bill to encourage enforcement of animal cruelty crimes and to instruct the Department of Justice to study the creation of a dedicated animal cruelty crimes unit ([See the October 2020 LINK-Letter](#)).

Most anti-cruelty laws are enacted and enforced on a state-by-state level, but increased awareness of The Link between animal abuse and human violence has resulted in a notable increase in federal attention to such crimes, including:

- Recognition of animal abuse as a potential sentinel warning sign for terrorism by three federal counter-terrorism agencies ([See the August 2018 LINK-Letter](#));
- Inclusion of four types of animal cruelty in the FBI’s National Incident-based Reporting System (NIBRS) ([See the October 2014 LINK-Letter](#));
- The Pet And Women Safety (PAWS) Act which allows states’ pet protection orders to be enforced across state lines and allocates \$3,000,000 annually to help domestic violence shelters build facilities to co-shelter survivors pets ([See the January 2019 LINK-Letter](#)).

### Philippine Anti-Cruelty Bill Leads to Link Awareness in Media

A bill working its way through the Senate of The Philippines would update and strengthen that nation's 1998 Animal Welfare Act by ensuring that offenders face more than a fine and a temporary inconvenience. While the measure itself is based on the more standardized "Five Freedoms" underpinning for good animal welfare practices and does not call attention to animal cruelty's Links to human violence, the legislative action prompted a major Philippine newspaper columnist to address The Link in encouraging support for the bill.



Sen. Grace Poe

Philippine Sen. Grace Poe introduced **Senate Bill 2458**, which was later substituted by **Senate Bill 2975**, calling for stricter standards, harsher penalties, and the establishment of a national Animal Welfare Task Force. The bills also propose deputizing law enforcement officers and trained volunteers as animal welfare enforcement officers and setting guidelines to promote responsible ownership and ethical animal care. They call for establishing inter-agency, multi-sectoral, and local government cooperation for the promotion and protection of animal welfare. "Animal groups and advocates are clamoring for a more effective, implementable, and responsive law," Poe wrote in a preamble to the bill.

On March 31, Eleanor Pinugu, a columnist for the Philippine [Daily Inquirer](#), published a column describing the "Dark Link Between Animal and Human Abuse." Citing Link research and statistics from the U.S., Pinugu quoted a Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) statement that "Abusers of animals are often capable of inflicting harm on humans as well. By taking a stand against animal cruelty, we are fighting for the safety and well-being of people."



Eleanor Pinugu

"For a long time, there was a general tendency to minimize cases of animal cruelty as a simple misdemeanor," Pinugu added. "Extensive research on the matter, however, now confirms what PAWS stressed in the statement. Studies have repeatedly shown a disturbing Link between animal abuse and serious crimes, including domestic violence, child abuse, and serial killings."

Pinugu concluded: "Strengthening the enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act, increasing public awareness, and treating animal abuse cases with the gravity they deserve could help prevent future crimes against animals and humans alike." Recent well-publicized cases of animal cruelty in the Philippines "should serve as a wake-up call for policymakers, law enforcement, and the public to take animal cruelty more seriously. Because when we ignore the senseless suffering of animals, we may also be allowing the seeds of more serious violence to take root in our communities."

### Link Referenced in Training for Police Officers in India

The Indian branch of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals cited Link research in three workshops on animal cruelty for police officers in the western India state of Goa. Some 100 officers attended the April 23–26 events, according to [AIZ Goa News](#), as part of an ongoing series of trainings to introduce Goa police to India's laws and enforcement procedures.

PETA India noted that "many violent criminals have a documented history of cruelty to animals. A study published in *Forensic Research and Criminology International Journal* warns, "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. The major motivations for engaging in cruelty to animals include anger, fun, control, fear, dislike, revenge, imitation, and sexual pleasure."



A speaker at one of the Indian trainings

### Witness Preparation in Link Cases Requires Extra Attention and Care

“If one set out intentionally to design a system for provoking symptoms of posttraumatic disorder, it might look very much like a court of law.”



**Betsy Biffi**

That was the advice cited by Animal Legal Defense Fund contract attorney Betsy Biffi, whose Justice Clearinghouse webinar on April 1, “*Witness Preparation: It’s Not Just About the Facts*,” encouraged participants to recognize that prosecutors need to handle witnesses to animal cruelty, domestic violence and similar crimes with special care.

As difficult as witness preparation is for any prosecutor, given the fact that many people are not happy about being called as a witness, the difficulties are exacerbated when witnesses must testify in a hearing or trial in a case that involves domestic violence or animal cruelty, she explained. That additional reluctance requires prosecutors to have additional sensitivity to the witness’ experience.

Witnesses’ reluctance to testify is a common phenomenon, driven by a variety of factors, she said. It may be an inconvenience having to adapt to constantly shifting court dates. They may be losing money by having to take time off from work. They may fear retaliation from the defendant or pressure from family or friends who know the alleged perpetrator. But in cases involving abuse or horrendous crimes, testifying may require a witness to relive something that was upsetting or traumatic, especially if they have to confront the abuser.

“Your prep should go beyond the testimony,” Biffi emphasized. The witness preparation process should not only identify what the witness saw or heard, but also identify and address any sources of apprehension or reluctance so that both the witness and the attorney are prepared to present the strongest case possible.

“Acknowledge their feelings and their frustrations with our judicial system,” she said. “Take time to build

rapport and establish trust.” Recognize the possibility that the witness is responding to a trauma and empathize with the various ways in which people respond to trauma.

“There is a demonstrated Link between interpersonal violence and animal cruelty,” she said, citing several National Link Coalition resources. “If you’re dealing with any of these types of cases there may be trauma from other types of abuse.”

Even professionals who deal with abuse every day – such as law enforcement, emergency rooms, child protection caseworkers or victim advocates – may be especially traumatized by a case that is truly the worst that they have ever seen. “Be empathetic with witnesses, even people who see terrible things for a living,” she advised. “In doing the witness preparation, “Don’t just go down your checklist. Watch their body language to appreciate that maybe something is a little different here.”

---

***“If one set out intentionally to design a system for provoking symptoms of posttraumatic disorder, it might look very much like a court of law.”***

- Judith Lewis Herman, “The Mental Health of Crime Victims: Impact of Legal Intervention” *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, April 2003
- 

In cases with multiple or overlapping forms of abuse, there may be multiple traumas, extensive fear and feelings of guilt. Look for body language signs that can help explain why a witness is afraid to go home or doesn’t want to talk to you – or keeps calling you over and over because they need to talk, Biffi said. Spend extra time with them – especially if the witness is also the victim.

Although witnesses may be under subpoena and have to testify, recognize their fears, feelings and frustrations, she concluded. Acknowledge those feelings and apologize for what the judicial system requires. “Remember – we can’t do cases without witnesses.”

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE... and THE LINK

### Trial Advocacy Program to Focus on Animal Cruelty/Domestic Violence Link



**T**he Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, in partnership with the Tulsa County District Attorney's Office and the Animal Legal Defense Fund, will conduct the [Animal Cruelty/Domestic Violence Basic Trial Advocacy Program](#) in Tulsa, Okla., on May 28-30. The program is designed to hone trial skills from voir dire to closing arguments in domestic violence cases linked with animal cruelty and domestic violence. One session will specifically address The Link between animal cruelty.

The program is designed for prosecutors with 1-3 years of experience and will include one-on-one critiquing of trial practice exercises. In order to register, candidates must be nominated by their county's District Attorney or tribal nation's head prosecutor. Each student will develop their trial skills in practice sessions using the experts and evidence required in animal cruelty/domestic violence cases.

Participation is limited to only 36 students and only two nominations per office will be considered.

### Florida Bill Cites Link In Calling for Harsher Animal Cruelty Penalties

A bill working its way through the Florida State Legislature cites Link research in arguing for harsher penalties for aggravated animal cruelty, "making it more likely that individuals committing these crimes will go to prison."



Rep. Linda Chaney (R — Hillsborough/Pinellas) wrote that she **Rep. Linda Chaney** filed **CS/HB 255, "Dexter's Law"** in memory of a shelter dog who was found beheaded in Ft. DeSoto Park, because "Animal cruelty is a public safety concern. Individuals who commit these heinous acts typically don't stop at animals; they are better indicators of future violence, harassment, assault, rape, murder, and arson cases as found by the FBI. Animal abuse is a strong predictor of potential aggravated violence towards humans and animal abuse can serve as an early warning sign for family violence."

The bill passed the House and was sent to the Senate.

### N.C. Bill Would Require Counseling for Animal Hoarders

**A** bill in the North Carolina General Assembly would address issues of animal hoarding by requiring judges to impose a requirement that companion animal hoarders obtain a psychological evaluation and comply with any treatment recommended as a result of the evaluation.

**SB 573**, sponsored by Sen. Natalie Murdock (D—Chatham, Durham) would define a companion animal hoarder **Sen. Murdock** as someone who:



- Possesses 10 or more companion animals;
- Fails to or is unable to provide adequate shelter, sustenance, space, or freedom of movement; and
- Displays an inability to recognize or understand the nature of, or has a reckless disregard for, the conditions under which the companion animals are living and the deleterious impact they have on the animals' and owner's health and well-being.

If enacted, it would take effect on Dec. 1, 2025.



## VETERINARY MEDICINE... and THE LINK

### Veterinarians Called the “First Line of Defense” In Breaking the Cycle of Violence

A recent article in the Southern California Veterinary Medical Association’s magazine argues that because the public often feels more comfortable reporting suspected animal abuse to veterinarians than to law enforcement or humane societies, practitioners can be “the first line of defense in identifying not just animal cruelty, but also potential signs of domestic violence.”



**Mandi Pratt**

Mandi Pratt, a member of the Board of Directors of [Dogs on Deployment](#), writes that “understanding The Link between animal abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, and domestic violence is essential for all veterinary staff.” Citing National Link Coalition statistics and findings that veterinarians are one of the three professions most likely to encounter cases of abuse, she writes that “by acting early, veterinarians can help break the cycle of violence, protecting both animals and humans.”

Veterinarians are “uniquely positioned” for this work and can play a “pivotal role”, she writes, noting that in many states they enjoy legal protections for reporting abuse, advising clients on safety plans, directing them to local shelters, and offering temporary shelter for pets in urgent situations.

She offers suggestions as to how to engage clients in non-confrontational questioning, creating protocols for reporting suspected abuse, training staff on recognizing abuse, and building relationships with local shelters and protective services.

“Ultimately, pets are family, and their well-being directly impacts the safety and healing of domestic violence survivors,” she concludes.

- Pratt, M. (2024, October). *How veterinarians can help break the cycle of violence. Southern California Veterinary Medical Association Pulse*, 68(10), 17-18.

### Serbian Vets Asked to Respond to Animal Abuse Committed by Youths

What appears to be only the second Link research to emanate from Serbia ([See the March 2025 LINK-Letter](#)) is alerting veterinarians to the widespread presence of juveniles who abuse animals – cases which are often under-reported and inadequately responded to – and to emphasize the importance of a timely and appropriate response from all relevant sectors of society, including the veterinary profession. Such response is especially relevant in a country like Serbia where, the authors write, “The social and legal responses to crimes of animal abuse committed by juveniles and children are often inadequate or entirely absent.”

Analyzing juvenile animal cruelty cases obtained from veterinary forensics sources as well as the courts, and citing Link literature from the West, the authors note that animal cruelty offenses were introduced into Serbia’s Criminal Code only in 2006 and 2009 and only after overcoming objections from scholars who claimed that the object of criminal legal protection could not be an animal but only a human. “Such assertions from prominent legal experts demonstrate a lack of awareness of the critical link between violence to animals and to humans,” they write.

“It is alarming that the perpetrators of this criminal offense, who exhibit violent behavior toward animals, are often very young individuals, i.e., children under the age of 14, who cannot be held criminally responsible,” they write. “Timely recognition and punishment of such behavior is crucial, as it can help prevent future violence against humans and raise public awareness about the significance and role of animals in our society.”

-- Davitkov, D., Bajović, V., & Radojković, A. (2025). *Animal cruelty by children and juveniles: Case studies in veterinary forensic and legal practice. Veterinarski Glasnik*, 79(1), 65-82. <https://doi.org/10.2298/VETGL241105005D>



**What is The LINK?**  
**Legislation...**  
**Intervention...**  
**Networking...**  
**Knowledge...**

*...to protect **ALL** vulnerable members of the family*

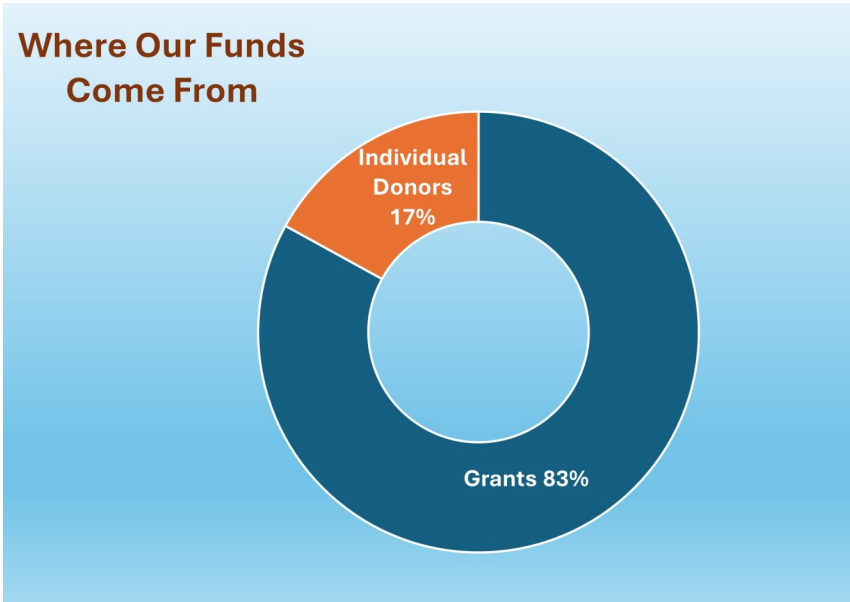
# News from LINK COALITIONS

## Thank You for Your Continuing Support of the National Link Coalition!

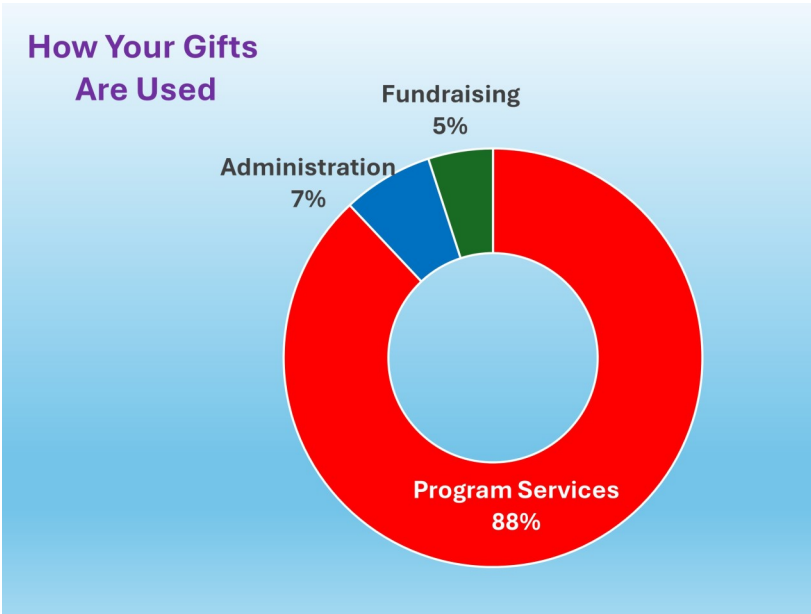
Since our founding in 2008, the National Link Coalition has consistently operated on an extremely bare-bones budget. We believe that it is vital for our contributors, potential donors and funders, and readers of our monthly *LINK-Letter* to know where their contributions come from – and how they are being used to help protect vulnerable animals, children and adults from the LINKed forms of family and community violence. People are often amazed at how much we are able to accomplish with such limited funding. In a spirit of full transparency, and to demonstrate our stewardship of our funding, here are the figures from our [2024 I.R.S. Form 990](#).

Relying on you to help us continue to support our mission, we are proud that **88 cents of every dollar goes to direct services of education, training and outreach.**

Thanks to your [generous support](#), we are changing lives, changing crime prevention models, changing laws, and building a future where people and animals can live free from violence. Thank you for standing with us in this vital work!



**PROGRAM SERVICES: 88%**  
**ADMINISTRATION: 7%**  
**FUNDRAISING: 5%**



### Podcast Describes How to Remain Sane while Working with The Link

People who work in the caregiving professions – whether they’re protecting animals or other people – are especially susceptible to compassion fatigue. Colleen Pelar, who spent 25 years training dogs and people to connect with each other, experienced that burnout but turned it around by studying the science of resilience. Today she produces a podcast called [“Unleashed at Work and At Home”](#) to help pet professionals find balance in their lives. She invited National Link Coalition President & Secretary Phil Arkow to share his ideas of how to remain sane while dealing with unspeakable grief and tragedies.

In the [38-minute episode](#), Phil describes his personal journey of how he stumbled into the animal shelter field and how his childhood experiences and animal shelter work caused him to fall in love with both the “bright side” and “dark side” of the human-animal bond. He describes the domestic, child and elder abuse components of The Link, as well as the positive benefits of animal-assisted therapy.

Phil explains a mantra he recommends to pet professionals to help them cope. “A man must have a little madness if he is to break the rope and be free” is a line from the 1964 movie *Zorba the Greek*. “You’ve got to be a little bit crazy particularly when you are dealing with such emotionally charged issues as all of us are dealing with, whether we’re in family violence

or social services. If you can’t be a little bit mad about it you’re going to go nuts,” Phil explains, describing what he calls the sensory deprivation of people who have lost their sense of humor.

He also describes how he tells animal care and control personnel who feel isolated that “we all need a shelter to cry on,” so they know that they’re not alone. He encourages pet professionals to meet their counterparts from other organizations. “They’re all dealing with the same issues and the same life and death situations that you are,” he advises.

People who work in animal shelters, in particular, often feel alone because they may not receive cross-fertilization from people in other shelters or in human services, even though “we’re all dealing with the same people and the same problems and that’s what The Link is all about.”



He also encourages people who work with pets to leave their problems at the office or shelter at the end of the day, and to care deeply about what you’re doing but don’t let it eat you alive. “We can make incremental changes. You do what you can and you realize that everything you’re doing is making a difference but you’re not going to save them all,” he cautions. “You’re helping some animals and some people but some people just can’t be helped. You have to be able to detach just to preserve yourself.”

### Podcast Explores Link History and Future

The National Link Coalition’s Phil Arkow and Allie Phillips have recorded a video podcast for Phillips’ [SAFeTy Chronicles](#). The 45-minute program reviewed accomplishments over the 35-year history of Link activities, recent developments and emerging new trends in Link work and research. It identified gaps in the various systems impacted by The Link. The podcast is [available on YouTube](#).



The SAFeTy Chronicles is the first podcast of its kind that explores how to keep people and pets safe from the cycle of interpersonal violence. Each of the 34 episodes shines a light on how and why animals are harmed in the cycle of family violence and the human-animal bond that keeps victims in harm’s way with their pets.

# LEGISLATION... and THE LINK

As the 2025 legislative season continues, we're following 120 bills that are working their way through state legislatures, the U.S. Congress, and Canada's Parliament. The bills are color-coded as follows:

- Purple bills affect domestic violence and pet protection orders
- Dark blue bills affect child abuse and maltreatment
- Grey bills affect abuse of the elderly and disabled
- Pink bills affect animal sexual abuse
- Green bills affect cross-reporting among animal care & control, veterinary and human services professionals
- Orange bills affect court-appointed advocates for animals
- Red bills affect animal hoarding
- Brown bills affect psychological assessments, interventions and treatments for animal cruelty offenders
- Light blue bills affect animal abuse Linked with other crimes

Please join us in following their progress and alert us to any additional bills we may have missed!

Note: Inclusion of a bill does not necessarily imply our endorsement of the measure or its specific language, but is included to demonstrate the breadth of proposals and the increased interest by legislators for laws addressing The Link between animal abuse and other crimes and acts of interpersonal violence.

## USA—FEDERAL BILLS

**H.R. 712, the Child and Animal Abuse Detection and Reporting Act**, would direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to include data on animal abuse in the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) clearinghouse for information relating to child abuse and neglect.

**H.R. 1477, the Animal Cruelty Enforcement (ACE) Act**, would establish an Animal Cruelty Crimes Section within the U.S. Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division.

## ALASKA

**HB 101** would allow judges to consider a history of cruelty to animals as an aggravating factor in imposing a sentence outside the sentencing guidelines for defendants convicted of domestic violence in the presence of a minor under age 18, or distributing material depicting bestiality to a minor under age 18; current law sets the threshold at age 16.

## ARIZONA

**HB 2211** would allow petitioners to file for a "severe threat order of protection" to prevent a respondent who has threatened or committed an act of violence resulting in injury, death or cruel mistreatment of an animal from possessing a firearm. Violation would be a Class 4 felony.

**HB 2530** would clarify that persons who are experiencing homelessness, such as domestic violence victims, are permitted to bring service animals into homeless shelters as described under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**SB 1038** would define the crime of aggravated assault to include assault on an animal control officer conducting official duties.

**SB 1412** would expand the definition of "domestic violence", which currently includes subjecting an animal to cruel mistreatment or neglect or abandonment that results in serious injury, to also include illegally killing a domestic animal.

## *Join Us In Our Mission!*

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



## CALIFORNIA

**AB 561** would allow domestic violence survivors to file for protection orders — which can include protection of animals — electronically and to appear remotely at hearings.

## FLORIDA

**CS/HB 255, and CS/SB 494**

**“Dexter’s Law”**, would provide harsher penalties for aggravated animal cruelty cases, making it more likely that individuals committing these crimes will go to prison, because the bill’s sponsor wrote, “Individuals who commit these heinous acts typically don’t stop at animals; they are better indicators of future violence, harassment, assault, rape, murder, and arson cases as found by the FBI. Animal abuse is a strong predictor of potential aggravated violence towards humans and animal abuse can serve as an early warning sign for family violence.”

## GEORGIA

**HB 177 passed both the House and the Senate and was sent to the Governor. If the Governor does not veto it, it takes effect July 1.** It would allow courts to issue protection orders that include “the care, custody and control of any animal owned, possessed, kept, or held as a household pet by either party or by a minor child living in the household or residence of either party.” Court orders could also prevent the respondent from harassing, harming, taking, transferring, encumbering, or concealing pets and committing animal cruelty.

**SB 102 died when the General Assembly adjourned.** It would have made it a crime to bring a minor under age 18 to a dog- or cock-fight; first offenses would be “high and aggravated misdemeanors” and subsequent offenses would be felonies.

## HAWAII

**HB 698**, recognizing that “animal cruelty offenders are a threat to the health and safety of all members of our communities, especially vulnerable populations,” that “animal cruelty is a predictive and co-occurring crime with violence against humans, including children, intimate partners, and the elderly,” and that “children who witness animal abuse are also more likely to abuse animals as teenagers and

adults,” would increase the criminal penalties for animal cruelty resulting in an animal’s death, dog fighting, causing the death of a service or law enforcement animal, sexual assault of an animal, and subjecting a minor to sexual contact with an animal.

**SB 460** would recognize that children living in a home where domestic violence and threats of animal cruelty occur are victimized even if they have not been physically harmed, and would have standing to file for a protection order or a temporary restraining order.

## IDAHO

**SUCCESS!!! HB 380 was signed into law on March 26.** It creates two new crimes of Aggravated Lewd Conduct with a Minor Child, including bestiality. Penalties for offenders are mandatory 25 years-to-life if the victim is aged 13-16, and life imprisonment or the death penalty if the child is aged 12 or younger.

## ILLINOIS

**HB 72** would amend the Code of Criminal Procedure to provide that a person with three or more pending charges for domestic battery, battery, violation of a protection order, criminal damage to household property, or felony animal cruelty that poses a real and present threat to the safety of any person or the community, may be classified as a habitual misdemeanor offender.

**HB 1903** would create the Human Trafficking Order of Protection Act that would include allowing courts to order respondents to stay away from, taking, harming, or disposing of any animal harmed by the petitioner.

**HB 3367** would allow courts to appoint attorneys or law students to serve as special advocates in the interests of justice in any criminal case involving a dog or cat.

## IOWA

**HF 227 and HF 869** would amend the Iowa Veterinary Practice Act and would grant veterinarians immunity from administrative, civil, or criminal liability or disciplinary action, and not subject to confidentiality requirements, for acting in good faith and reporting to or cooperating with any peace officer investigating animal mistreatment, animal fighting or

bestiality. Veterinarians would also be immune when providing testimony in any case or assisting in the rescue of a threatened animal. Veterinarians who knowingly make a false report about a client’s alleged conduct would be subject to disciplinary action, civilly liable for damages, and guilty of a misdemeanor.

## KENTUCKY

**HB 96 died when the General Assembly adjourned.** It would have defined “coercive control” to include intimidating or controlling or compelling conduct by damaging, destroying, threatening to damage or destroy, or forcing the other person to relinquish domestic animals. It would also have included communicating, either directly or indirectly, the intent to harm the other person’s domestic animals, including by use of physical violence; and causing isolation of the other person from domestic animals.

**HB 330 died when the General Assembly adjourned.** It would have required individuals who are subjects of a domestic violence protection order — which may include courts granting possession of the couple’s animals — to surrender any firearms. Protection orders would have been required to include language notifying the respondent about the firearms prohibition.

**HB 194 (“Kyan’s Law”) died when the General Assembly adjourned.** It would have required animal control officers to receive training on recognizing child abuse and would have added animal control officers to the list of people with a duty to report dependency, neglect or abuse of a child.

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

## MAINE

**H.P. 621** would create a new Class C criminal offense of Aggravated Operating a Motor Vehicle Under the Influence in the incident results in the death of a pet. Offenders would face a mandatory fine, incarceration, suspension of the driver's license, mandatory community service related to animal welfare, and financial restitution to the pet's owner.

## MASSACHUSETTS

**H.1817** and **S.1206** would allow courts handling divorce settlements to consider, in assigning ownership, care and custody of a pet, "the best interests of the animal, including the animal's health, safety, comfort and well being and whether any party or family member residing with any party has a history of abuse, cruelty or neglect to animals or humans."

**H.1832** would add humane officers to the list of professions mandated to report child sexual abuse. Currently, animal control officers are mandated to report, but not humane officers.

**S.1234** would make any parent who allows their child to subject an animal to cruelty or abuse without taking steps to prevent, discourage or correct the action: liable for a fine of up to \$500; and required to undergo psychiatric evaluation. The child would be required to participate in psychiatric rehabilitation under a psychologist who specializes in bullying. The family could be prohibited from having any unsupervised contact with animals and all current animals would be relocated to foster care.

## MICHIGAN

**HB 4300** would create a Courtroom Animal Advocate Program allowing judges to appoint a volunteer pro bono attorney or law student to represent the interest of the animal or of justice in prosecutions involving welfare or custody of animals.

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**SB 111** would allow elders and vulnerable adults to petition for personal protection orders that could include restraining or enjoining individuals from harming, removing or threatening the petitioner's animal with the intent to cause the petitioner mental distress or to exert control over the petitioner.

## MINNESOTA

**HF 1816** and **SF 1163** would create a statewide Link-based Office of Animal Protection office in the Department Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to be more effective in enforcing animal cruelty laws that protect animals and people.

## MISSOURI

**HB 1298, HB 1513, SB 65** and **SB 655** would add animal control officers and humane investigators to the professionals mandated to report suspected elder abuse and child abuse. APS and CPS workers, foster care advocates and volunteers, and psychologists, mental health professionals, social workers, school counselors, teachers, other school professionals, juvenile officers, law enforcement officers, probation or parole officers, and home health aides would be required to report suspected animal abuse to a hotline established by the Missouri Animal Control Association, with immunity from civil and criminal liability for good-faith reporting. APS and CPS workers would be required to complete one hour of training on how to identify and report animal abuse or neglect and The Link between elder and animal abuse. Animal control officers and humane investigators would be required to complete one hour of training on how to identify and report child and elder abuse and their Links with animal abuse.

## NEBRASKA

**LB 80** would amend the state's laws for issuing all-encompassing "protection orders" — which include provisions to award custody of pets to the petitioner and enjoin the respondent from harming the pets — to create new specific categories of "domestic abuse protection orders," "harassment protection orders," and "sexual assault protection orders." Existing pet protection provisions would be retained only under a "domestic abuse protection order."

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

**HB 62** would expand the state's current provisions that include animal cruelty within the definition of domestic violence abuse to include this definition within military protective orders for active U.S. military and National Guard members

**HB 593** would allow a spouse to recover damages for the "loss of consortium" from a spouse who intentionally or recklessly causes the death of that person's pet.

## NEW JERSEY

**A291** 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 296 ("Shyanne's Law")** would require mental health evaluation for all animal cruelty offenders.

**A 310** would allow employees of the Division of Children Protection and Permanency who have reason to believe that an animal has been subjected to, or who witness an act of animal abuse, cruelty, or neglect, to report the suspected or witnessed act of animal abuse, cruelty, or neglect. Nothing in the bill requires an employee to report such an act. Employees who make a report, provide records or information relating to the report, or who testify in any judicial proceeding arising from the report, would be immune from liability for any actions taken in good faith.

**A369** would prohibit convicted animal cruelty offenders from having or being issued a permit a firearm for a handgun.

**A 1516** would add "coercive control" to the definition of domestic violence in Section 3 of P.L.1991, c.261 (C.2C:25-19) to include acts of cruelty against animals owned or possessed by an adult or unemancipated minor.

**A 2250** would require humane law enforcement officers who have reasonable cause to believe that a person is a victim of domestic violence to report the situation to a local law enforcement agency, with immunity from civil and criminal liability for making a report in good faith. Currently, they are permitted — but not mandated — to report.

**A 2456** and **S282** 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 3236** would expand the definition of domestic violence to include psychological abuse. While intimidating threats against a person's animals are not specifically included in the state's definition of domestic violence, courts are allowed to consider such acts as coercive control in determining whether to issue a protective order.

**SB 26** would rename the Family Violence Protection Act as the Protection Against Abuse and Violence Act and replace the term "domestic abuse" with "abuse" that would now include "harm or threatened harm to an animal" within the definition of "abuse." Courts would be allowed to issue orders of protection that would enjoin the restrained party from committing or threatening to commit acts of "abuse" against the protected party or designated household members. Courts could also grant to any party the exclusive or shared possession and control of any animal kept, owned or leased by either party or any minor child in the household. The court could order any party to stay away from the animal and forbid the party from taking, transferring, concealing, mistreating, harming, or disposing of the animal.

## NEW MEXICO

**SB 26 died when the Legislature adjourned.** It would have defined coercive-control animal abuse as domestic violence and allowed pets to be included in protection orders. The bill would have renamed the Family Violence Protection Act as the Protection Against Abuse and Violence Act and replace "domestic abuse" with "abuse" that would include "harm or threatened harm to an animal" within the definition of "abuse." Courts

could also grant to any party the exclusive or shared possession and control of any animal kept, owned or leased by either party or any minor child in the household. The court could order any party to stay away from the animal and forbid the party from taking, transferring, concealing, mistreating, harming, or disposing of the animal.

**SUCCESS!!! SB 50** adds dogfighting and cockfighting to the list of crimes defined as "racketeering".

## NEW YORK

**A 599** would add acts of animal fighting, aggravated cruelty to animals, poisoning animals, injuring certain domestic animals, or harming a service animal to the definition of "serious offense" making it a crime to possess a firearm.

**A 640** and **S 2296** would allow civil and criminal courts to order that a separate advocate be appointed to represent the animal's interests and help ensure the well-being of any living animal victims.

**A 664, S 1044, S 1562, and S 1563, "Buster's Law,"** would prohibit persons convicted of animal cruelty from possessing a companion animal until they have undergone psychiatric or psychological counseling establishing their mental capacity and ability to humanely care for the animal.

**A 690 and S 3491** would increase prison terms for acts of animal cruelty when committed in the presence of a child.

**A 730 and S 1205** would increase penalties for animal fighting and aggravated animal cruelty and requires defendants convicted of aggravated animal cruelty to undergo a psychiatric evaluation.

**A 740** would allow courts to take into consideration the well-being of a companion animal when determining custody of the animal during divorce and legal separation proceedings.

**A 850** would create new crimes of "cruelty to animals to threaten, intimidate or harass" for intentionally injuring or killing, with no justifiable purpose, a companion animal for the purpose of threatening, intimidating or harassing a family or household member. Felony penalties would be enhanced if the act occurred in the presence of a child.

**A 897** would criminalize knowingly causing a minor to attend an animal fight.

**A 1391** and **S 5544** would require persons charged with enforcing laws prohibiting cruelty to animals to file a report when, in the performance of their duties, they have reasonable cause to believe that abuse or maltreatment of a child has also occurred. The bill would further provide that persons charged with the responsibility of filing a report of child abuse or maltreatment would also have to file a report of suspected animal cruelty.

**A 1432** and **A 1885** would relocate anti-cruelty statutes into the Penal Code from the Agriculture & Markets Law, where placement suggests that cruelty is not a "real" crime since it is not in the penal law and diminishes the seriousness of such crimes. The bill cites academic studies that "have found a clear link between animal cruelty during youth and violence against humans as an adult" and numerous documented studies that show that "there is a direct Link between acts of cruelty to animals and violence toward others, including child abuse, spousal abuse, elder abuse and other violent behavior . "

**A 1530** would establish "care and treatment of service animals, therapy dogs and companion animals in residential programs for victims of domestic violence." These would include allowing residents' service animals and therapy dogs full access to the shelters as long as they do not create an undue burden.

**A 1630** would amend provisions for the crimes of "sexual conduct with an animal," a misdemeanor, and "sexual conduct with an animal resulting in injury or death," a felony. Convicted offenders would be forced to relinquish all of their current animals and be permanently barred from keeping any animals, or residing, volunteering or working with animals.

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**A 1689** cites the prosecution of animal cruelty as a way to protect public safety to require all New York State counties to have an assistant district attorney to oversee animal crimes, as several counties in the state have already done.

**A 1693** and **S 673** would establish the Housing People and Animals Together grant program to expand access for co-sheltering victims of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness with companion animals.

**A 1816, S 3158** and **S 4633** would include animal fighting as a criminal act within the category of enterprise corruption crimes.

**A 1945** would enable veterinarians to earn continuing education credits for providing free veterinary care for individuals residing in domestic violence shelters.

**A 2387** and **S 6812** would establish a 24-hour toll-free animal abuse reporting hotline.

**A 3158** would require courts to require a mental health evaluation for offenders convicted of aggravated animal cruelty or animal fighting.

**A 3206** and **S 1159** would create a new category of “domestic violence crimes” to include interfering, harassing, intimidating, or harming a family or household member’s service animal.

**A 3528** would make the commission of an act of aggravated cruelty to animals in the presence of a child a Class D felony.

**A 4753** and **S 1753**, “Bella’s Law,” would require an investigation into possible domestic violence or abuse for persons who have been accused of animal abuse.

**A 5815** and **S 4613** would expand provisions of the Family Court Act, the Criminal Procedure Law, and the Domestic Relations Law, which currently allow courts to order respondents to refrain from harming the companion animals of the petitioner or a minor child, to also grant petitioners exclusive care, control or custody of any animal.

**A 6194** and **S 5998**, “Kyra’s Law,” would require courts determining child custody and visitation rights to consider credible evidence that includes any party’s history of domestic violence, child abuse, and threats to harm or kill companion animals.

**A 6397** and **S 7350** would expand the definition of aggravated animal cruelty to include causing serious physical injuries or the use of a weapon.

**A 6556** and **S 5514** would require courts to consider recent acts of aggravated cruelty to animals in determining whether grounds exist for issuing a temporary extreme risk protection order.

**A 7831, S 6986** and **S 7010** would make it a crime to assault a child protective services worker by releasing or failing to control an animal with the intent to obstruct the completion of their duties.

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

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

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

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

## NORTH CAROLINA

**SB 274** would repeal the archaic “crime against nature, with mankind or beast,” and replace it with the crime of “bestiality” as a Class I felony.

**SB 573** would require judges to order convicted companion animal hoarders to undergo psychological evaluation and treatment.

**SB 591** would make it a Class H felony to bring a minor under the age of 18 to a dog- or cock-fight.

## Permission to Reprint

The news items contained in *The LINK-Letter* are intended to disseminate as widely and as freely as possible information about the connections between animal abuse and interpersonal violence. Permission is hereby granted to re-post these articles in newsletters, websites, magazines, and electronic publications provided that appropriate credit is given to the National Link Coalition and with hyperlinks to [www.nationallinkcoalition.org](http://www.nationallinkcoalition.org).

## For Additional Information

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

## OREGON

**SB 626** would expand the definition of child sexual abuse to include exposing children to acts of bestiality created by artificial intelligence.

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Light Blue = Link & Other Crimes



## 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.

## RHODE ISLAND

**H 5125** would amend existing law, which allows courts to include household pets in domestic violence protection orders, to also allow courts to award custody of pets to plaintiffs and offer an enforcement remedy such as a restraining order or other injunctive relief.

**H 5669** would add animal cruelty offenses of “unnecessary cruelty,” malicious injury, killing, and abandonment to the definition of domestic violence crimes committed by family or household members against one another.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

**H 3143** would allow individuals convicted of felony-level animal cruelty to apply for a limited pardon that would enable them to possess a firearm for hunting purposes only, because animal cruelty is not considered a “crime of violence.”

**H 3641** and **H 4123** would expand the definition of child sexual abuse and obscenity to include exposing children to acts of bestiality created by computer generated images.

## TENNESSEE

**SUCCESS!!!** **HB 540** and **S 916** were signed into law on April 24. They expand the definition of “racketeering activity” to include engaging others in the criminal activity of animal fighting.

## TEXAS

**HB 3049** would designate animal control officers as “first responders” whose duties include responding rapidly to an emergency.

**HB 4563** would allow children or persons with a disability to be accompanied by a therapy or facility dog in various criminal proceedings.

**SB 1658** would allow courts to issue Extreme Risk Protective Orders, prohibiting respondents from possessing firearms; Texas protection orders already prohibit respondents from harming, threatening or interfering with the custody of the plaintiff’s pet, companion animal or therapy animal.

**SB 1673** would require courts to order individuals convicted of cruelty to non-livestock animals to undergo psychological counseling.

## UTAH

**SUCCESS!!!** **HB 159 was signed into law on March 25.** It allows Utah authorities to recognize domestic violence protection orders issued in Canada. Utah protection orders already include provisions protecting household animals.

**HB 461 failed to pass.** It would have allowed courts to order individuals convicted of animal cruelty to participate in animal cruelty prevention programs, education programs, or psychological counseling for treatment of mental health disorders that the court considers contributed to the commission of the crime.

**SB 24 failed to pass.** It would have replaced the definition of child abuse “serious physical injury” with any injury that seriously impairs a child’s health, mental well-being or development including threatening an animal known to the child or forcing or coercing a child to injure an animal.

## VERMONT

**H.492** introduces the concept of “coercive control” within the animal cruelty context. It proposes that persons who commit or threaten to commit animal cruelty upon an animal to influence a victim of domestic abuse may face additional criminal penalties.

## WEST VIRGINIA

**HB 2068 died when the Legislature adjourned.** It would have prohibited activities connected with sexual abuse of an animal, establish criminal penalties, provide for forfeiture of animals, and restrict ownership of animals upon conviction.

## CANADA

**Bill C-332** would add to the Criminal Code a new crime of controlling or coercive conduct, defined as a “pattern of conduct” with intent to cause the accused’s intimate partner to believe their physical or psychological safety is threatened, including actual or threatened violence against their animal. It would also add this offense to the criteria for determining the accused’s eligibility to have a firearms license.

## The Link Training Calendar

More and more organizations are recognizing the value of training their staffs, multi-disciplinary groups, and the general public that preventing and responding to animal abuse can prevent other forms of family and community violence.

Here are some of the many training opportunities coming up — both in-person and virtual — in coming months. Click on the underlined hyperlinks for specific details and registration information.

If you're conducting a Link training, please let us know at least a month in advance so we can include it in the Calendar. And if you're looking for a speaker, please contact us so we can refer someone to you from our Speakers' Bureau.

## LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

**May 13-14 — Las Vegas, Nev.:** Phil Arkow will present "A Salute to the Pioneers Protecting 'Woman's Best Friend,'" and Nancy Blaney will present "Under One Roof: Animals and Interpersonal Violence" at the Noah's in a Box convening of PAWS grantees organized by [Noah's Animal House](#).

**May 13-16 — Clearwater, Fla.:** The 2025 Conference of the [International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association](#)'s programs will include: Roshni Ladny presenting "Childhood Animal Cruelty Exposure as Violence Against Children, Society and the Environment: Implications of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child General Comment 26"; Jeremy Hoffman presenting "Chasing Monsters: Intersections of Paraphilic -Behavior in Animal Sexual Offenders"; and Jill Hollander presenting "Animal Cruelty as Coercive Control in Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Cases."

**May 19 — Dallas, Texas:** Allie Phillips will present "Animal Abuse + Family Violence: Investigation and Prosecution Strategies to Keep Families Safe" at the [2025 Conference on Crimes Against Women](#).

**May 20 — United Kingdom (online):** Maya Badham of Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse (SAHSDA) will present the "Safeguarding for Pet Professionals" [training](#) on how to recognize and respond to domestic and animal abuse.

**May 20 — Kansas City, Mo. (online):** Zoë Agnew-Svoboda of BestyBnB will present a [webinar](#), "Navigating Barriers to Safety & Security: Survivors and Assistance Animals."

**May 21 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania's [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**May 22 — Ottawa, Ont., Canada (online):** Humane Canada's ACT Project will present its [Spring Community of Practice](#) (COP) on "ACT to Keep Families Safe."

**May 22 (online):** Janet Hoy-Gerlach will present "Ask About Pets! An Ethical Call to Action for Social Workers and Other Human Services Professionals" in a [webinar](#) for the International Association of Veterinary Social Workers.

**May 22 — Sacramento, Calif. (online):** RedRover will announce the [Purple Ribbon Award](#) organizations voted to win \$30,000 in grant funding for co-sheltering pets and domestic violence survivors.

**May 28-30 — Tulsa, Okla.:** The Association of prosecuting Attorneys will conduct the [Animal Cruelty/Domestic Violence Basic Trial Advocacy Program](#) to hone prosecutors' skills in these cases.

**June 3 — Bloomington, Ill.:** Phil Arkow will present "Learn What the Monster Likes... and Feed it! Bridging the Animal Rights/Welfare Gap by Focusing on The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence" at the [Prairie States Animal Welfare Conference](#).

**June 4 — Edinburgh, Scotland:** The Links Group UK and the BSAVA will present a [Links Veterinary Training Initiative](#) for large, small and equine veterinary teams on a multi-agency approach to recognize and act on non-accidental injury and domestic abuse.

# LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



**June 5 — United Kingdom (online):** Maya Badham of Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse (SAHSDA) will [present](#) “Recognizing and Responding to Companion Animal Abuse as a Tactic of Coercive Control.”

**June 6 — Surry Hills, N.S.W., Australia:** Lucy’s Project will [celebrate its 12th birthday](#) with an event featuring several speakers on animal abuse and domestic violence.

**June 18 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**June 24 — Colorado Springs, Colo. (online):** Phil Arkow will present “Pet Protection Orders: A Powerful Tool to Respond to Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence” in a webinar for the [Justice Clearinghouse](#).

**June 26 — New Orleans, La.:** Phil Arkow will present “Moms, Kids & Critters: Connecting the Dots between Child, Domestic and Animal Abuse” at the [32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Colloquium](#) of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC).

**June 29 (online):** Janet Hoy-Gerlach will present “Ask About Pets! An Ethical Call to Action for Social Workers and Other Human Services Professionals” in a [webinar](#) for the International Association of Veterinary Social Workers.

**July 9 — United Kingdom (online):** The Links Group UK will conduct its virtual [Annual Meeting](#).

**July 16 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**July 21 — Washington, D.C.:** Phil Arkow will speak to the [American Veterinary One Health Society](#).

**July 21 — Washington, D.C.:** Rachel Touroo will present “Overcoming Barriers to Recognizing and Reporting Suspected Animal Cruelty” at the [American Veterinary Medical Association’s](#) Convention.

**July 22 — Kansas City, Mo. (online):** Zoë Agnew-Svoboda of BestyBnB will present a [webinar](#), “Pet Advocacy 101” to help social services agencies become more pet-accessible.

**July 23 — San Francisco, Calif. (online):** Phil Arkow will present “Closing the ‘PAWS Gap’ in Victim Advocacy through Pet-Inclusive Services” at the National Organization for Victim Advocacy’s [51<sup>st</sup> Annual Training Event](#).

**Aug. 20 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania’s [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**Aug. 22 — Statesville, N.C.:** Phil Arkow will present “The ‘Dark Side’ of the Human-Animal Bond: Animal Abuse and its Link with Human Violence” to [Equuvation](#).

**Sept. 9 (online):** Rebecca Stephens will present “Who Keeps the Dog?”, a guide to navigating the legal and ethical complexities of pet custody during divorces, in a [webinar](#) for the International Association of Veterinary Social Work.

**Sept. 11 — United Kingdom (online):** Maya Badham of Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse (SAHSDA) will present the “Safeguarding for Pet Professionals” [training](#) on how to recognize and respond to domestic and animal abuse.

**Sept. 16 — Redmond, Ore.:** Phil Arkow will present “Connecting the Dots in Animal Care & Control and Human Violence: How to Better Protect People AND Animals” at the [Oregon Animal Control Council](#) Training Conference.

**Sept. 16 — Newtown, Pa.:** Jessica Bibbo will present on the relationship between elder abuse and animal abuse at the Bucks County Area Agency on Aging’s 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual [William J. Neff Sr. Symposium](#) on the Prevention of Crimes Against Older Adults

# LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

**Sept. 17 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania's [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**Sept. 17-18 — Albuquerque, N. Mex.:** Phil Arkow will present on "Protecting 'Women's Best Friend'; Assessing the Impact of Animal-Inclusive Protection Orders" among multiple speakers speaking at Positive Links' [New Mexico Conference on The Link](#).

**Sept. 24 — Belleville, Ill.:** Phil Arkow will present at the Downstate Illinois Conference for Children's Advocacy Centers.

**Sept. 25 — Wetherby, England:** The Links Group UK and the BSAVA will present a [Links Veterinary Training Initiative](#) for large, small and equine veterinary teams on a multi-agency approach to recognize and act on non-accidental injury and domestic abuse.

**Sept. 30 — Sacramento, Calif. (online):** Claire Ponder Selib from the National Organization for Victim Advocacy, and Ashley Rumschlag of DomesticShelters.org, will join Katie Campbell of RedRover in a [panel discussion](#) on The Link between animal abuse and human violence and RedRover's efforts to have 25% of domestic violence shelters pet-friendly by 2025.

**Oct. 9 — Colorado Springs, Colo. (online):** Elkie Wills of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys' Human Animal Support Services, and Lauren Rogers from the San Diego Humane Society, will present "Building a Safety Net of Connections and Resources for Your Community" in a [Justice Clearinghouse webinar](#).

**Oct. 15 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania's [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**Oct. 17-18 — Atlanta, Ga.:** Phil Arkow will present at the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual [Animal Protection & Wellness Expo](#).

**Oct. 23 — United Kingdom (online):** Maya Badham of Safeguarding Animal & Human Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Abuse (SAHSDA) will [present](#) "Recognizing and Responding to Companion Animal Abuse as a Tactic of Coercive Control."

**Nov. 5-7 — Pittsburgh, Pa.:** The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, in partnership with the Animal Legal Defense Fund, will host the 14th [National Animal Cruelty Prosecution Conference](#).

**Nov. 12 — Sketchley Grange, England:** The Links Group UK and the BSAVA will present a [Links Veterinary Training Initiative](#) for large, small and equine veterinary teams on a multi-agency approach to recognize and act on non-accidental injury and domestic abuse.

**Nov. 18 — Morristown, N.J.:** Phil Arkow will present on "The 'Dark Side' of the Human-Animal Bond" to the Soothing Paws Program at the [Morristown Medical Center](#).

**Nov. 19 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania's [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.

**Dec. 4 — Colorado Springs, Colo. (online):** Andrew Campbell will present "No Safe Place: How Domestic Violence Harms Children" in a [Justice Clearinghouse webinar](#).

**Dec. 17 — Pittsburgh, Pa. (online):** Pennsylvania's [Keystone LINK](#) will hold its regular monthly meeting.





## THE LINK... in the NEWS

### "Catfight" Puts Woman in Jail, Neighbor in Hospital

A woman who allegedly attacked another woman with a knife after also threatening to kill her cat was in jail in Pike County, Ky., facing multiple charges of assault, burglary, terroristic threatening, menacing, and public intoxication. [WYMT-TV](#) reported that police said they saw a video shot by the victim showing Kathryn Belt, 31, of Pikeville, standing over the victim with a knife in her hand. The altercation started after the victim reportedly asked Belt to stop slamming her apartment door, and Belt retaliated by attempting to kick the victim's door in. The victim said Belt threatened to kill her and her cat. The victim was taken to Pikeville Medical center for treatment.



### Couple Charged with Abandoning Daughter and Dog When they Left to Charge their Phones

A couple living in two tents in Volusia County, Fla., were charged with desertion of a child and abandonment of a dog when they allegedly left them in their car to go charge their phones. [WOFL-TV](#) reported that a woman called the Sheriff's Office when she saw the 6-year-old girl, who said she was hot, thirsty and hungry, sitting in her carport and the dog wandering in their yard. Authorities were able to track down the girl's mother, Aquania Aleshia Estes, 27, and her boyfriend, Pitrez Floyd, 29, some nine hours later. The girl was placed in the custody of her grandparents; the dog was turned over to Deltona Animal Control.



### 11 Charged with Animal and Child Abuse and Narcotics Offenses in Massive S.C. Dogfighting Bust

Eleven men were arrested on a variety of charges of crimes against animals and humans, and 160 dogs were rescued, following an extensive investigation by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division of dogfighting events that occurred on nine different dates in Dillon and Marion Counties. [WYFF-TV](#) reported that the investigation also resulted in the seizure of 55 firearms, 17 pounds of marijuana, 990 fentanyl pills, 11 grams of crack cocaine, 2,266 ecstasy pills, 1 kilogram of cocaine, 2 grams of ketamine, and \$69,700 in cash. Charges filed against the suspects included: animal fighting; "ill treatment of animals"; unlawfully placing a child at risk; criminal conspiracy; possession and trafficking of multiple illegal substances; and possession of firearms by a convicted felon and during a violent crime. The cases will be prosecuted by the South Carolina Attorney General's Office.



### Groomer Whose Dog Died Gets 4 Years on Heroin Conviction

The New Jersey dog groomer who was accused of animal cruelty and narcotics offenses after a dog died during a grooming appointment ([See the August 2024 LINK-Letter](#)) was sentenced to four years in prison and ordered to never work with animals again. [PennLive](#) reported that Trevor Hunt, 40, of Woodbury, was sentenced by Superior Court Judge William Ziegler. Hunt had been indicted after he called the family to tell them that their dog, named "Harley," had died. The family called police, and when Hunt became uncooperative he was arrested. A search of the business turned up 60 small plastic baggies with heroin; it was never determined what caused Harley's death. In a plea agreement, Hunt pled guilty to possession of a controlled dangerous substance and the animal cruelty charge and other drug charges were dropped.



## THE LINK... in the NEWS

### Man Charged with Throwing Kittens' Tails at Woman Following Dispute

**A** Summit County, Ohio man with a history of domestic violence and violating protection orders was charged with animal cruelty for allegedly threatening a woman who lived on the property and throwing a container at her containing the tails of three kittens. A [press release](#) from the Summit County Sheriff's Office said deputies responding to a disturbance encountered Bret Stalnaker, 57, of Green, living in a van on the property. Authorities said that following an altercation, Stalnaker allegedly began sending the woman text messages stating he was going to harm kittens that were born nine days earlier. Additional charges were pending. The kittens were reported to be recovering from their injuries at a local veterinary clinic.



### Offense Violator Pleads Guilty in Animal Hoarding Case

**J**adden Alexander Moore, 21, who pled guilty to 80 charges for his role in abandoning 22 live animals and 54 dead animals found in freezers, also violated terms of a first-time offender program from when he stole an all-terrain vehicle back in 2022. [Lancaster Online](#) reported that Susquehanna Regional police and the Pennsylvania SPCA found the animals during a raid in Conoy, Pa., last October. Moore was sentenced to 24 months in prison, one year of probation, and is also banned from owning animals for 50 years. Moore shared the house with Mary M. Good, 57, and her son Eric Lee Wiser Werner, 40, whose trials in the case are forthcoming. Seventeen cats, three rats and a snake were rescued from the house, which officers said was coated in urine and excrement, which the individuals had left after they were evicted.

### Rapist Convicted of Animal Cruelty

**A**fter employees of a waste service company in Warren, Ohio found an emaciated dog that was "skin and bones," Randall Charlton — who, according to court records, had been convicted of felony rape several years earlier — was charged and pled guilty to misdemeanor animal cruelty. [WKBN-TV](#) reported that Charlton was sentenced to five days in jail, probation, and ordered not to have contact with any domesticated animal.



"I think the message is getting out there that, at least in Trumbull County, we're not going to tolerate the mistreatment of our animals, and you are going to be held criminally liable and there could be harsh consequences," said Jason Cooke, founder of the Healthy Hearts and Paws Project which took care of the dog, named "Oscar."

### Kentucky "Predator" Gets 10 Years For Child and Animal Sexual Abuse

**A** man whom the Kentucky Attorney General called a "predator" who "was already far down a dangerous path of criminal activity" was sentenced to 10 years in prison after pleading guilty to seven counts of child and animal pornography. [Fox56News](#) reported that Kent Simpkins, 43, of Salyersville, Ky., was discovered by Kentucky State Police following a tip to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Investigators found multiple images of minors involved in sexual acts, numerous animal sex videos, and a video of Simpkins involved in a sexual act with the family's dog. Simpkins will also be a lifetime registrant on Kentucky's Sex Offender Registry and receive five years of post-incarceration supervision.



## THE LINK... in the NEWS

### Animal Charity Defrauder Gets Longest Animal Abuse Sentence in Ohio History — And May Be Linked to Missing Woman

**T**he Ohio pit bull rescuer indicted on 42 felony and misdemeanor counts of animal cruelty, grand theft, bribery, telecommunications fraud, tampering with evidence, and impersonating a peace officer (*See the [January 2021 LINK-Letter](#)*) received what is said to be the longest prison sentence in Ohio history for animal abuse — and may be linked to the case of a woman who disappeared more than 20 years ago in New Hampshire.



**Steffen Baldwin**

A Union County, Ohio Judge sentenced Steffen Baldwin to more than 15 years in prison for abusing dogs and defrauding the animal charities he ran. But the FBI is now investigating why Baldwin's fingerprints were found on a CD or a CD case in the car of Maura Murray, who disap-

peared in Haverhill, N.H. on Feb. 9, 2004, when she was 21, reported [The Vindicator](#).

Baldwin, a former director of the Union County Humane Society and organizer of a multi-county animal cruelty task force (*See the [December 2013 LINK-Letter](#)*) was originally known as Steffen Finkelstein but changed his name to Baldwin several months after Murray went missing. Baldwin and Murray had both known each other, traded CDs, and then dropped out of West Point within a week of each other.

Baldwin was charged with allegedly defrauding pet owners by charging as much as \$1,000 to rehabilitate or re-home their dogs, then pocketing the fees for personal use and euthanizing at least 18 of the dogs. He created a network of followers in California through a dog training ranch in Acton.



#### **HELP US KEEP THE LINK FREE!**

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

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

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

## 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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