



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

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A monthly report of news from THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER



ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE



www.NationalLinkCoalition.org

[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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*May 1-7 is National Pet Week and Be Kind to Animals Week
May 15-21 is National Dog Bite Prevention Week*

THE LINK AND... CRIMINAL JUSTICE

NACA Endorses Mandatory Reporting of Dependent Person Abuse by Animal Care and Control Personnel



NATIONAL ANIMAL CARE & CONTROL ASSOCIATION

The National Animal Care & Control Association (NACA) has added its weight to the growing movement for cross-reporting of various forms of abuse by adopting [a new guideline](#) that calls for animal care and control personnel to be mandatory reporters of suspected abuse of children, elders and disabled persons.

The new guideline, approved by NACA's Board of Directors on March 31, supports and encourages legislation that includes animal care and control personnel on lists of mandated reporters of suspected abuse of dependent persons where they are not already so included. NACA recommends that animal control officers and other care and control personnel receive education regarding the recognition of, and response to, such abuse. NACA further recommends that agencies develop protocols and procedures to initiate such responses.

"It is not necessary for animal care and control personnel to be experts in preventing abuse of dependent persons or that are they certain that such abuse exists. Rather, an informed, well-intentioned suspicion that a situation may involve at-risk or abused individuals should compel a call to the appropriate authorities who will then take such action as is necessary," states the guideline.

"These organizational systems are much like animal cruelty investigators determining whether enough information is available and evidence valid to be actionable."

The guideline notes that extensive training materials regarding the recognition of child and elder abuse and domestic violence are readily available from federal and state organizations and local authorities can provide training at state animal control conferences.

NACA also noted that such procedures should have no budgetary impact and minimal workload impact beyond including findings in existing reports and making a call to the state’s 24-hour hotline. Most state statutes governing the reporting of abuse grant immunity from civil and criminal liability for persons making a report in good faith.

NACA also noted that in 18 states all residents are already required to report suspected child abuse, and in seven states reporting of elder abuse is likewise mandatory. Animal care and control personnel in those states should be familiar with those requirements and respond accordingly.

Current Statutory Reporting by ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL OFFICERS

Animal Care/Control MANDATED to report child abuse/neglect	California, Colorado, Connecticut, D.C., Illinois, Maine, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia
Animal Care/Control PERMITTED to report child abuse/neglect	Maine
Animal Care/Control MANDATED to report elder abuse	California
States in which EVERYONE is a mandated reporter of child abuse:	Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Wyoming
States in which EVERYONE is a mandated reporter of elder abuse:	Missouri, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Utah, Wyoming

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San Bernardino Co. DA Announces Animal Cruelty Prosecution Unit

The San Bernardino County, Calif., District Attorney's Office, which in 2012 created a multidisciplinary Animal Cruelty Task Force (ACT) to address interagency issues affecting animal welfare, has expanded its animal protection efforts by creating a specialized Animal Cruelty Prosecution Unit. In [announcing the unit](#) on April 28, District Attorney Mike Ramos cited how animal abuse impacts crimes against people and said the time was right to take the next step in the fight against animal cruelty.



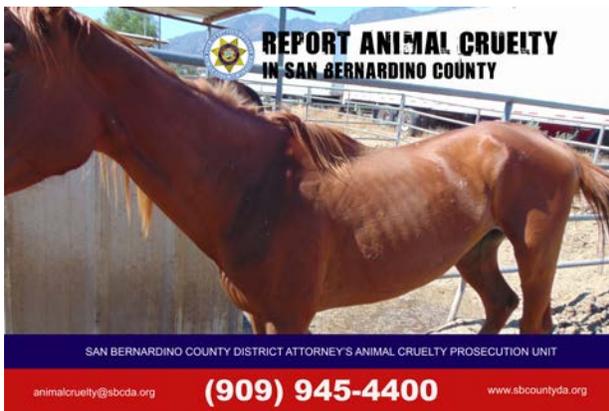
DA Mike Ramos

“Effective prosecution of animal abuse requires a collaborative team approach and specialized trained prosecutors and investigators who are dedicated to protecting innocent animals,” Ramos said. “In short, it requires a special vertical prosecution unit dedicated solely to prosecuting animal cruelty.”

The new Animal Cruelty Prosecution Unit (ACU), created in recognition of the link between animal cruelty and family violence, will be part of the Family Violence Unit. It will consist of:

- A Chief Deputy District Attorney
- A Supervising Deputy District Attorney who supervises a Family Violence Unit
- A Lead Deputy District Attorney as a lead prosecutor
- Two regional Deputy District Attorneys specially designated to handle select ACU cases as needed
- Two regional Juvenile Division Deputy District Attorneys
- A Senior Investigator from the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation

Although not technically a part of the ACU, the Asset Forfeiture Unit will designate a prosecutor to handle asset forfeitures arising out of ACU cases.



Throughout the enormous county – which at 20,105 square miles is the largest in the U.S. – all animal cruelty cases against adults will be handled vertically, from initial case review to sentencing, by either the Lead or Regional ACU Prosecutors. All juvenile ACU animal abuse cases will be handled vertically by a Juvenile ACU Prosecutor.

The Lead ACU Prosecutor will also be responsible for advising partners at the initial stages of case investigations and for education, training and outreach activities for deputy district attorneys, law enforcement and animal control agencies, other ACT partners, and the community. The ACU will also be combined with new stricter policies on prosecution.

Ramos cited the volume of cruelty cases handled as one reason for the new unit. Between 2013-2015, prosecutors filed between 71 and 84 cases per year related to animal cruelty.

In one recent case, charges were filed in March 2016 against Keion Hector for allegedly killing an 8-week-old pit bull puppy in order to intimidate a female victim. Hector reportedly told her, “I killed your dog because you went over there [next door]. Now lay down on the bed and turn the lights off. Lay in the bed or I’ll put your face by the dead dog. If you leave, I’ll kill you like I killed Sasha.”



DA Michael McMahon

Citing Link Figures, Staten Island DA Launches Cruelty Prosecution Unit

Citing statistics that animal abusers are five times more likely to commit violent crimes in the future, the District Attorney's Office in the Staten Island borough of New York City on April 13 opened a dedicated unit to prosecute animal cruelty cases.

Animal abuse "is a predictive crime or a gateway for us to see some very alarming things," District Attorney Michael McMahon told the [DNAinfo/New York](#) neighborhood news network. McMahon noted that as many as 75% of violent offenders in prison had histories of animal abuse.

Noting that some 40% of domestic violence survivors stay in abusive relationships because they fear for the safety of their pets if they leave, McMahon also announced an 11-count indictment against Jerry Moore, 38, for allegedly fatally abusing his wife's Chihuahua, Bambi. Moore is said to have strangled the dog on March 12, then threw it against a wall on March 24, and violated his protection order against his wife during those dates. Bambi had to be euthanized on March 26, he said.

The dedicated unit – the second of its kind in New York (*see the [November 2015 LINK-Letter](#)*) – will partner with the ASPCA and NYPD to investigate and prosecute cruelty cases on the island. The unit will be led by Assistant District Attorney Jane Grinberg. The unit will also educate the community about the resources and programs available to protect animals. It will facilitate relationships with residents and veterinarians to encourage the reporting of suspected animal abuse and "speak out for those who don't have a voice, always the most vulnerable."



Rob Reisman

ASPCA Forensic Team Sees Link Cases

"You can't really separate out what's happening to animals with what's happening to people," Dr. Rob Reisman (*See the [April 2016 LINK-Letter](#)*) told [ABC News](#) in New York in a major feature on the ASPCA's veterinary forensics program. "The most obvious reason is the connection between animal abuse and human interpersonal violence. The cases we see on a regular basis are domestic abuse cases where there's both a human victim and an animal victim."

Reisman leads a team of three forensic veterinarians who are actively capturing evidence to punish animal abusers. Their work involves traveling to crime scenes (a process sometimes called "Animal CSI") and working with the NYPD in a new partnership that has seen animal cruelty arrests double since animal cruelty enforcement was turned over two years ago from the ASPCA to the NYPD.

The New York team saw over 700 animals last year, many of which were collateral damage in interpersonal domestic violence situations. The forensic facility includes a necropsy lab, evaluation unit, and a rehabilitation center that can house 60 victims of animal abuse.

"The message to people who are abusing animals is that there is action being taken," said Dr. Alison Liu, one of the forensic vets on staff. "And if they're thinking they may not get caught, that's not always the case."

ANIMAL ABUSE AND... DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Michigan Enacts PPOs



Michigan became the 30th state to legalize protection-from-abuse orders that include pets when **HB 4478** was signed by Gov. Rick Snyder on May 3. The measure now allows courts to issue protection orders preventing

Rep. Robert L. Kosowski respondents from injuring, torturing, neglecting, threatening, or removing the petitioner's animals. It applies to: current or former spouses; individuals with whom the petitioner has a child in common or where there has been a dating relationship; or an individual presently or formerly residing in the same household.

"The biggest challenge we faced was people saying that victims could already include companion animals in personal protection orders under the 'other' box on the form," said Vicki Deisner of the ASPCA. "However, this argument was negated by domestic violence personnel who said victims didn't realize this when they filled out the form. Having a stand-alone checkbox would aid and protect victims from being further terrorized by their perpetrators using their pet(s) as a way to control them."

Deisner cited statistics from Minnesota. "In 2010, the number of personal protection orders including pets was 167. In 2013, they skyrocketed to 1,067."

"These statistics show that once domestic violence victims became aware they could include companion animals in personal protection orders, they overwhelmingly chose to do so," said Rep. Robert L. Kosowski, Democratic Caucus Whip and primary sponsor of the bill. "This legislation is more than just including a check box on a form. Right now, domestic violence victims are not leaving their dangerous situations because their abuser is using the family pet as a pawn. Ensuring victims are aware they can include their companion animals in a personal protection order not only can save the animal from further abuse, it can save the human victims, both adults and children, from being controlled and forced back into violent situations."

Alaska PPO Bill Would Address Animal Welfare in Custody Disputes



As *The LINK-Letter* was going to press, all eyes were on Alaska where the world's most progressive pet-protection-order bill passed the House on April 14 and the Senate on April 17 and was awaiting transmittal to the Governor's office.

HB147 would not only allow courts to include pets in protection orders but would also allow courts considering the division of property in divorce settlements or dissolution of marriages to award single or joint ownership "taking into consideration the well-being of the animal." This provision would be similar to child custody decisions and is believed to be the only state in the U.S with this specific provision regarding animals' welfare.

The new law would also add an act of animal cruelty to a pet to the definition of domestic violence. Alaska would join Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Maine, Nebraska, Nevada and Tennessee as states in which animal cruelty may also be construed as an act of domestic violence.

The law would also allow domestic violence petitioners to request the court to grant not only possession of a pet, regardless of whether it is considered individually or jointly owned, but also to ask the court to require the abuser to pay support for pets as well as child support.

Florida Shelter Seeks Funds to Become Pet-Friendly



CASA
Community Action Stops Abuse

Noting that “the connection between animal abuse and violence toward humans is becoming more and more obvious,” an online news service in the Tampa Bay area is publicizing efforts by a St. Petersburg domestic violence shelter to raise \$40,000 to open a pet kennel. [Community Action Stops Abuse](#) (CASA) currently has an ad hoc network of boarding facilities that can pitch in on a temporary basis when a domestic violence survivor needs to care for her pets as well.

That’s a good start, but if a client calls on a Saturday night the shelter might not be able to make arrangements, reported [Creating Loafing Tampa](#), a news service covering the Tampa Bay’s arts, culture and events. CASA’s planned air-conditioned and hurricane-proof kennel will be on the same undisclosed campus as its 100-bed emergency shelter which opened last summer.

Current plans call for the facility to be able to house six dogs, three to six cats, and a few members of other companion animal species. It would also include pet grooming stations, a fenced dog park, and a veterinary examination area. Pets will “be as safe in the kennel as the residents are in the shelter,” said John Biesinger, CASA’s manager of major gifts.

ANIMAL ABUSE AND... CHILD MALTREATMENT

Animal Therapists to Console California Child Sexual Assault Victims

Orange County, Calif. has become the latest jurisdiction to add trained therapy dogs to procedures for comforting sexual assault victims as they meet with prosecutors. District Attorney Tony Rackauckas announced the new program on April 8 called PANDA – PAWS Assist the Needs of the District Attorney.



The program will involve therapy dogs from PAWS – Pets Are Wonderful Support, a division of the Orange County SPCA established in 1987 to provide pet therapy visits to individuals with special needs, hospital and hospice patients, and the Orangewood Children’s Home.

“Dogs are nonjudgmental and are keen to others’ emotional needs and are able to fill the heart and soul with warmth,” PANDA director Kevin Marlin told the [Orange County Breeze](#). This therapy is particularly valuable for traumatized children coming to a prosecutor’s office for trial preparation. In the past month there have been five successful meetings between the PANDA and prosecution teams, the victims and their families.

PANDA is currently used only by the DA’s Sexual Assault Unit, which files some 350 cases per year with a 90% conviction rate. About one-half of the jury trials involve child victims under the age of 14.

“I know how difficult the legal process can be for sexual assault victims, especially children. We felt it was necessary to address this,” said Rackauckas. “This program is paws-ively beneficial for crime victims. We hope that someday, we might be able to expand this program to comfort all victims, including adult sexual assault victims and victims of domestic violence.”

Michigan Appeals Court Upholds Right to Courtroom Dogs



“Mr. Weeber” at the courthouse

When therapy, service, emotional support or courtroom dogs are called in to assist victimized children testifying in cases of child sexual abuse, defense attorneys have been known to oppose this practice, claiming the presence of the dog adversely prejudices the jury’s sympathies. A Michigan Court of Appeals has now upheld the use of courtroom dogs, denying a man's claim that a support dog skewed results of his trial.

Jordan Conrad Johnson had been charged with sexually abusing his young niece. During her trial in Berrien County, a black lab named “Mr. Weeber” accompanied the girl and her brother during their testimony.

Johnson's attorney argued that the dog prejudiced the jury and influenced the outcome. The court disagreed. “There is no indication that Mr. Weeber was visible to the jury while the witnesses testified, or that he barked, growled, or otherwise interrupted the proceedings or made his presence known to the jury,” court documents said. Mr. Weeber laid quietly at the children’s feet as they testified, [Michigan Radio](#) reported.

The court also noted that Michigan law allows a “support person” to accompany some witnesses. Currently, 23 support dogs are working in Michigan criminal and veterans courts, calming witnesses down and comforting them, making it easier for them to testify.

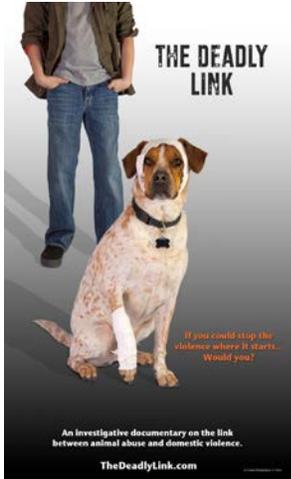
Dan Cojanu, founder and director of Michigan’s Canine Advocacy Program, hailed the ruling. Most judges already permit support dogs based on state court rules but this ruling now provides case law. The ruling “affirms the fact that these dogs are very valuable parts of the criminal justice system, that they are helping child victims get through this system without jeopardizing the rights of the defendant,” he said.

BUILDING AWARENESS ABOUT THE LINK

Fresno Law Enforcement, Animal Care & Control Get Link Training



The Fresno County, Calif. District Attorney’s Office partnered with the Central California Animal Disaster Team and the Central California SPCA to conduct an all-day training on The Link, the role of animal cruelty investigators, and strategies for prosecuting animal abuse cases. The DA’s office created a special animal cruelty prosecution unit in 2015 (See the [August 2015 LINK-Letter](#)) to be more effective in handling 1,200 animal abuse cases investigated annually. National Link Coalition Coordinator Phil Arkow spoke to 85 law enforcement, animal care and control and other personnel who gathered for training, education and communication. From left, Deputy District Attorneys Sydney Ricks and Lynette Gonzales, District Attorney Lisa Smittcamp, and CCADT founder Naomi Flam enjoy the symposium.

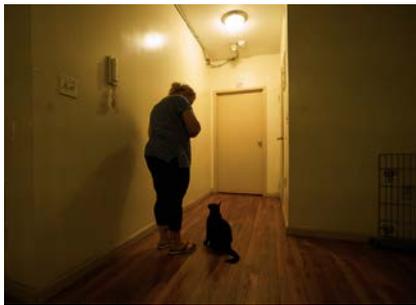


Contributions Support Link Documentary

Work is continuing in the lengthy effort by dedicated New Mexico film makers to bring [“The Deadly Link”](#) to the screen. The movie will be an investigative documentary on the Link between domestic violence and animal abuse. Producer Nina Knapp tells *The LINK-Letter* that a generous donation has enabled the film to acquire necessary music rights for “She Bled” by Rodney Branigan to be used as the film’s theme song.

Knapp has also been named to the board of directors of New Mexico’s [Positive Links](#) coalition (See the [April 2016 LINK-Letter](#)) and participated in a four-day spay/neuter clinic at the Laguna Pueblo. The film project is now able to accept tax-deductible contributions through the fiscal sponsorship of the New Mexico Film Foundation.

New York Times Covers City’s Pet-Friendly Domestic Violence Shelter



URI PALS – New York City’s pioneering pet-friendly domestic violence shelter (See the [June 2013](#) and [April 2014 LINK-Letters](#)) got another great boost of publicity through a [New York Times article](#) on April 14. The article described several case histories of women who are allowed to keep their pets with them in the 27-unit apartment complex.

A URI PALS resident and her cat in the shelter

“Pets are members of the family, and no one, especially victims of domestic violence, should have to make the impossible decision to leave their pets behind during times of crisis,” said Nathaniel Fields, President of the Urban Resource Institute which opened the pet-friendly shelter and dog park in 2013. Since then, URI PALS (short for People and Animals Living Safely) has housed more than 40 families and over 60 pets. It remains the only animal-friendly housing system in a citywide domestic violence shelter system that serves some 9,000 people annually.

Jasmin Rivera, a former college history instructor, spent nearly two years at the shelter after fleeing a partner who broke her ankle during a two-hour assault witnessed by her two terrified Shih Tzus. “I needed a place where I could heal and the dogs could heal,” she said. “They showed me the dog park and all the help they give you, and I said, ‘Oh, my God, this is everything I need.’ Because it’s not just me that went through it. My dogs went through it, too.”

THE LINK AND... VETERINARY MEDICINE

Dogfighting Raid Involves Veterinarians



Clockwise from top left: Frye, Hill, Robinson, and McGuffie

Seven Columbus, Ohio area veterinarians were called in to assist following a massive raid on an alleged dogfighting ring that resulted in felony charges against five individuals and the seizure of 45 dogs. Following a 15-month investigation, agents from the Capital Area Humane Society, the ASPCA and Columbus police raided several homes on April 5 and confiscated the dogs, whose conditions ranged from good to poor. Seven veterinarians assisted in the assessment of the animals' conditions, [The Columbus Dispatch](#) reported.

[ABC6/FOX 28](#) reported that one dog was seized from a veterinary clinic where USDA agents conducted an investigation. The USDA's search warrant sought vials of semen collected from dogs owned by the dogfighting suspects. Professional dogfighters are known to take their dogs to veterinarians to have semen collected for sale for breeding purposes, and to have dogs' injuries treated but billed under "no injury codes," the TV station said.

A veterinarian at the clinic said one of the dogfighting suspects had dropped off the dog, named "Escobar," on behalf of the dog's owner. USDA agents said the dog had old scarring over its face, shoulders and forelimbs, possibly consistent with stereotypical dogfighting injuries.

It was not clear whether anyone at the veterinary clinic had been charged, subpoenaed or cleared in the incident. Ohio state law neither requires nor permits veterinarians and their staff to report suspected animal abuse or fighting. Four dogfighting suspects – Henry Hill, Jr., 20, Anthony McGuffie, 22, Randall Frye, 57, and Dwayne Robinson, 32 – were arrested. The fifth suspect – Charles Granberry, 40 – was being sought.

An earlier report that children had been taken from one of the homes that were raided and turned over to Child Protective Services was incorrect, the *Dispatch* said.

THE LINK IN THE LITERATURE

WANTED: More Link Research!

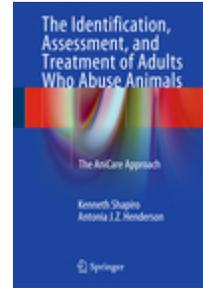
The National Link Coalition's [bibliography](#) of academic and mainstream publications contains over 1,200 citations and is growing exponentially. But many significant gaps remain in our understanding of how animal abuse intersects with other forms of family and community violence.

To encourage scholars to add to our knowledge, we have created a [page on our website](#) suggesting "starter ideas" which we hope will plant some seeds among researchers looking for new areas needing further study. We welcome your review of this list and your suggestions for additional topics that could help prevent human and non-human violence through greater understanding of these phenomena.



AniCare Handbook Updated

The AniCare handbook for psychological assessment and treatment of adult offenders who have committed animal cruelty has just been reissued in a 2nd edition. The handbook provides step-by-step guidance on how to identify, assess, and treat adults who have abused animals. The theoretical framework employed is broad, encompassing cognitive behavioral, psychodynamic, attachment, and trauma-based therapies. Organized by stages of therapy, the text discusses how to frame the therapy, establish a working relationship, deal with resistance, establish accountability, clarify values related to animals, and teach self-management skills such as empathy, attachment, accommodation, reciprocity, and nurturance. Additional materials include references, an appendix of cases that illustrate the variety of client presentations, and electronic supplementary material that demonstrates role-played interviews and a workshop presentation. A similar handbook for juvenile offenders (AniCare Child) was updated in 2014.



-- Shapiro, K., & Henderson, A.J.Z. (2016). *The Identification, Assessment, and Treatment of Adults Who Abuse Animals: The AniCare Approach*. New York: Springer.

NEWS FROM LOCAL LINK COALITIONS

S. Fla. Coalition Rescues Domestic Violence Pet, Opens Crisis Hotline



The [South Florida Link Coalition](#) reports that they have a new catchphrase, “Working together to stop violence against people and their pets.” Coordinator Amber Ahern tells *The LINK-Letter* that the group met on April 20th and has established a hotline (877-999-5374) to receive crisis calls and provide direct service to protect pets and people. On April 21 a volunteer stepped forward to provide the coalition’s first foster care for a pet belonging to a domestic violence survivor who was in shelter. Palm Beach County Animal Care and Control has added information about the Coalition to its website.

The coalition is a multidisciplinary, multi-county organization with representatives including the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office, animal care and control, fire rescue, the Spay & Neuter Alliance of the Treasure Coast, St. Lucie County Humane Society, Palm Beach County Victim Services, Palm Beach County School Police, and many others. The coalition’s next meeting will be on May 25th.

Dallas Link Group to Hold Initial Meeting

An inaugural group representing adult protective services, SPCA, humane legislation, domestic violence, prosecutors, probate court and juvenile justice will meet on Friday, May 20, in an effort to organize a local Link coalition. Contact [Linda Ross](#) for details.

THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

Bills We're Watching... and Laws We're Celebrating:

Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders



H.R. 1258 – the Pet And Women Safety (PAWS) Act – was re-introduced with a new number and 190 bi-partisan co-sponsors. The bill would expand existing federal domestic violence protections to include pets of domestic violence victims. It would prohibit crossing state lines to harm a domestic partner's pet, and establish a federal grant program to provide assistance and housing to victims' pets in need of emergency shelter. The bill has been assigned to the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and Investigations. A companion measure in the Senate – **S. 1559** – with 26 co-sponsors has been referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.



Alaska HB 147 would allow victims to petition the court for a protective order that the abuser may not remove, harm or dispose of any animals in the household, and to grant her exclusive care and custody of them. Peace officers investigating domestic violence cases must inform victims of this provision. The bill would also declare pets to be marital property and give courts authority to decide individual or joint custody when people divorce, with consideration of what would be best for the animal. It would also define an act of animal abuse in this context as domestic violence. The measure has cleared both houses and was awaiting transmittal to the Governor's office.



Indiana SB 343 would allow a court to grant an order of protection to: (1) grant possession and care of an animal to a petitioner; (2) prohibit a respondent from taking action against the animal; and (3) direct a law enforcement officer to accompany the petitioner to retrieve the animal. The bill has been referred to the Judiciary Committee.



Michigan SB 28 would make it a crime to knowingly kill, torture, mutilate, maim, disfigure, or poison an animal, or threaten to do so, with the intent of causing mental suffering or distress to a person or to exert control over a person. The bill passed the Judiciary Committee and is in the Committee of the Whole.



Michigan HB 4478 allows courts to issue protection-from-abuse orders preventing respondents from injuring, torturing, neglecting, threatening, or removing the petitioner's animals. It applies to current or former spouses; individuals with whom the petitioner has a child in common or where there has been a dating relationship; or an individual presently or formerly residing in the same household. The bill was signed by Gov. Rick Snyder on May 3.



New Mexico S 55 would have appropriated \$500,000 to the Children, Youth & Families Department to enhance the system of providing temporary care and housing for animals belonging to victims of family violence. In 2015 the Legislature enacted a statute appropriating \$300,000, to be paid in six annual installments of \$50,000 each. The bill was approved by the Public Affairs Committee and was been sent to the Finance Committee, where it was postponed indefinitely.



Pennsylvania SB 594 would increase penalties for killing, torturing, maiming or poisoning an animal belonging to someone who is protected by a protection-from-abuse order to a \$2,000 - \$15,000 fine and/or two years' imprisonment. The bill was approved by the Senate and is in the House Judiciary Committee.



Wisconsin SB 97 was signed into law on March 1 by Gov. Scott Walker. Judges or circuit court commissioners issuing temporary restraining orders or injunctions not only in domestic violence cases but also in child abuse, individual-at-risk and harassment situations may order the respondent not to remove, hide, damage, harm, mistreat, or dispose of a household pet. Petitioners or family members acting on their behalf may retrieve a household pet.

Animal Hoarding



New York A1265 would create the crime of companion animal hoarding. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

Animal Abuse in the Presence of a Child



Idaho HB399 would make the torture of a companion animal in the presence of a minor a felony. The bill is in the House Ways & Means Committee.



Massachusetts H3446 would criminalize animal abuse in the presence of a child under age 14 and would increase penalties for such cruelty to up to 10 years in prison and/or a \$10,000 fine. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.



New York A534 defines “aggravated” animal cruelty as causing extreme physical pain or done in an especially depraved or sadistic manner, a Class E felony. It would make the commission of aggravated cruelty in the presence of a child a Class D felony. The bill is in the Codes Committee.



New York A944 and **S1795** would criminalize knowingly causing a minor to attend a place where exhibition of animal fighting is being conducted. **A944** is in the Agriculture Committee. **S1795** passed the Senate, died in the Assembly, and was referred back to the Senate Agriculture Committee for a third reading.

Animal Abuse and Other Crimes



California HR28 would encourage the Superintendent of Public Instruction to ensure the incorporation of humane education in the core curriculum in order to disrupt the cycle of human and animal abuse by decreasing a child’s potential to be abusive or neglectful. The bill was approved by the House Education Committee and was scheduled for a third reading in the Assembly on May 2.



California SB 1200 would require the course on domestic violence within California’s Peace Officer Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) curriculum to include adequate instruction on “the seriousness of animal cruelty and its link to violence against humans.” The bill was approved by the Public Safety Committee and was sent on April 25 to the Appropriations Committee.



Florida S314 and **HB129** would have amended juvenile justice provisions to allow prosecutors to charge juveniles between the ages of 16 and 18 as adults for committing any of 17 crimes including aggravated animal cruelty by intentional acts. Prosecutors would have been required to gather considerable data regarding the children, including any histories of abuse or neglect.



S314 passed the Senate by a vote of 40-0 but died in the House. **HB 129** died in the House Justice Appropriations Committee.



Michigan HB 4353 would allow animal shelters to consider an individual's criminal history when determining whether or not to allow that individual to adopt an animal. Convicted animal abusers could not adopt for at least 5 years following conviction. The bill is passed the Judiciary Committee and is in the Committee of the Whole. **Senate Bill 219** would prohibit offenders convicted of animal fighting or bestiality from owning animals other than livestock for 5 years. The bill cleared the Senate by a 37-1 vote on Jan. 28 and is now in the House Judiciary Committee.



New York A346 and **S6919** would create a statewide task force to study how to improve investigations of animal abuse and enforcement of anti-cruelty laws. The bills are in the Agriculture Committees.



New York A1596 and **S2936** would expand the definition of aggravated cruelty to animals to include harm to animals during the commission of a felony. **A1596** is in the Agriculture Committee. **S2936** passed the Senate on March 7 and was sent to the Assembly Agriculture Committee.



The **Oregon** Veterinary Medical Examination Board has proposed Rule No. [875-030-1101](#) which would provide for a screening of applicants and licensees to determine if they have a history of criminal behavior that would preclude their fitness to practice as a veterinarian or certified veterinary technician.

Interventions for Animal Abuse Offenders



New York A1445 and **S1174** would increase penalties for animal fighting and aggravated cruelty to animals and would require a psychiatric evaluation for defendants convicted of aggravated cruelty. The bills are in the Agriculture Committees.



New York A1673 and **S814** would require unsealing of court records that juvenile offenders convicted of animal cruelty offenses and require them to undergo psychiatric evaluation and treatment where necessary. The bills are in the Agriculture Committees.

“CASA for Animals”



Connecticut HB 5344 would allow courts to appoint attorneys or law school students as advocates for any animals involved in prosecutions concerning custody of the animals or their welfare. The bill passed the House on April 26 and was sent to the Senate.



Massachusetts SB 851 would authorize actions to recover non-economic damages for the injury or death of companion animals and authorize a guardian ad litem to recover damages. The Joint Committee on the Judiciary approved the bill on April 4 and referred it to the Joint Rules Committee.



New York AB 3443 would authorize a guardian ad litem to be appointed by a court in tort causes of action for wrongful injury or death of a companion animal. It would also allow restraining orders and other injunctive relief for the wrongful injury or killing of a companion animal. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.

Animal Sexual Abuse



Michigan SB 219, which amends several sections of the state penal code regarding animal cruelty crimes, adds a provision that anyone convicted of animal sexual abuse (called “the abominable and detestable crime against nature” in the bill) is not only guilty of a felony but shall be prohibited from owning or possessing an animal for five years. The prohibition appears to also apply to persons convicted of anal sex with a human being. The bill cleared the Senate by a 37-1 vote on Jan. 28 and is now in the House Judiciary Committee.



Ohio SB 195 would prohibit a person from engaging in sexual conduct with an animal, and related acts. It would provide for the seizure of the animals involved and authorize the sentencing court to require offenders to undergo psychological evaluation or counseling. The bill is in the Criminal Justice Committee.



New Hampshire HB 1547 would establish the crime of bestiality as a Class B felony. Convicted offenders would be required to submit to psychological assessment and counseling at their own expense, and could be barred from residing with any animals for a time period deemed appropriate by the court. The bill unanimously passed both the House and the Senate and needs a conference committee to reconcile differences between the two versions.

Animal-Assisted Therapeutic Interventions for Abuse Victims



Connecticut Raised Bill No. 5140 would allow volunteer teams of therapy animals and their registered handlers, with whom a child victim of assault, sexual assault or child abuse feels comfortable, to be present during courtroom testimony. The bill was approved by the Joint Committee on Children and the House Committee on Judiciary but was tabled on April 6 by the House.

Cross Reporting



Georgia HB 892 would clarify that a veterinarian can report suspect animal cruelty without violating confidentiality requirements. The bill is in the Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee.



Kansas – HB 2451 would add animal control officers to the list of other professionals who are mandated reporters of child abuse, with immunity from civil liability for good-faith reporting. The bill is in the House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice.



Kentucky HB 269 would have amended the veterinarian-client-patient relationship provisions to allow veterinarians to provide information without the owner’s consent to public health, animal welfare, wildlife, or agriculture authorities employed by federal, state or local government agencies who have a legal or regulatory interest in the protection of animal or public health, with immunity from liability. The measure passed the House Agriculture & Small Business Committee and the Rules Committee and was approved by the House 67-30. The bill was in the Senate Agriculture Committee when the legislative session ended.



Maryland SB 722 and **HB 1586** would require a veterinarian who has reason to believe that an animal has been subjected to abuse or neglect to make a specified report. **Senate Bill 722**

received an unfavorable report from the Senate Judicial proceedings Committee. [House Bill 1586](#) is in the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee.

 [Massachusetts S863](#) and [H132](#) would add domestic violence workers, animal control officers and humane officers to the list of mandated reporters of child abuse. [H132](#) was referred to the Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities and [S863](#) was approved on April 4 by the Joint Judiciary Committee and was referred to the Joint Rules Committee.

 [New York A5082](#) would require anyone mandated to report suspected child abuse who also encounters suspected animal abuse in the course of their duties to make an immediate report to local police or SPCA agencies. Failure to report would be a Class A misdemeanor and civilly liable. An extensive list of medical, social work, therapy, education, camp, day care, counseling and law enforcement professionals are mandated reporters of child abuse. The bill is in the Social Services Committee.

 [New York's SB 6659](#) and [AB9346](#) would change language regarding reporting of suspected animal abuse from "the veterinarian may report" to the appropriate law-enforcement agency to "shall report." The bills are in the Higher Education Committee.

 [Pennsylvania HB 760](#) would protect veterinarians, certified veterinary technicians and assistants from civil liability if they report suspected cases of animal abuse in good faith to law enforcement authorities. The bill passed the House on Sept. 29 and is currently in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

 [Tennessee](#) is reportedly considering an amendment to its [Veterinary Practice Act](#) to include protection from liability for veterinarians who report suspected cases of abuse.



 [Virginia HB802](#) expands the definition of those who are granted immunity from civil or criminal liability or administrative sanction for reporting, in good faith, suspected animal cruelty from "veterinarian" to "any person regulated by the Board of Veterinary Medicine," thereby including veterinary technicians. The bill passed the House and Senate and [was signed into law on March 1.](#)

 [Wisconsin SB 727](#) would have expanded the reporting requirement to apply to a violation of any animal cruelty law; a veterinarian making a report of animal mistreatment in good faith would be immune from civil liability. (Current Wisconsin law requires a veterinarian to report to a humane officer or law enforcement officer only when the veterinarian has reason to believe that an animal has been in a fight in violation of the law relating to animal fighting.) The bill was in the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety when the legislative session ended. 

THE LINK... IN THE NEWS

Foster Parent of 140 Charged with Bestiality and Child Sexual Abuse



Cesar Gonzales-Mugaburu

A Long Island, N.Y. man who served as a foster parent of 140 children over two decades has been indicted for alleged bestiality and the sexual abuse of seven boys, endangering the welfare of children who were reported to have rummaged through garbage for food.

Cesar Gonzales-Mugaburu, of Ridge, was indicted on March 11 on 16 charges of sexual misconduct and endangering the welfare of the boys and one charge of sexual misconduct with a dog, Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota said.

[Newsday](#) reported that Gonzales-Mugaburu had taken in 140 children, all of whom were boys, to his “house of horrors” between 1996 -2015. Spota said other children had been victimized during this period, but the statute of limitations to prosecute those alleged crimes had expired.

Victims reported that they were physically abused, denied meals and forced to stand outside in the cold as punishment. Neighbors told detectives they saw children rummaging through garbage cans for food on multiple occasions.

Gonzales-Mugaburu was paid as much as \$18,000 per month, and had adopted five of the seven children he allegedly abused, officials said. Investigations are continuing as to why children were being placed with him and how the abuse occurred for so long. If convicted he faces up to 50 years in prison.

NYC Cruelty Prosecution Unit Lands 1st Indictment in Domestic Dispute

A New York City man who allegedly killed his girlfriend’s three-year-old Chihuahua by slamming it against the floor during a verbal dispute while the girlfriend’s 11-year-old daughter was present was indicted by a Queens County grand jury. The eight-count indictment against Carlos Hernandez, 33, is the first to be brought by the Queens District Attorney’s new Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit (see the November 2015 LINK-Letter).



“The defendant is accused of aggravated cruelty to animals for pulling his girlfriend’s small dog out of her arms during an argument and killing the helpless animal by violently throwing the dog to the floor. Such acts of aggression cannot – and will not – be tolerated,” said Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown in an April 27 [press release](#).

Hernandez was also charged with multiple counts of robbery, grand larceny, criminal mischief, harassment, disorderly conduct, and endangering the welfare of a child. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

Turtle Poachers Get Life Sentences in Murder, Kidnappings and Robberies



Hector Cash

Four wildlife poachers in Costa Rica received prison sentences ranging from 74 to 90 years when a court overturned their earlier acquittals in the 2013 murder of a wildlife activist and the kidnapping and robbery of four environmentalists who were protecting sea turtle nests. A three-judge appellate court in Limón reversed the 2015 acquittals of Hector Cash, Ernesto Centeno, José Bryan Quesada and Donald Salmón, all of whom will serve at least 50 years in prison. Under Costa Rican law, prosecutors are allowed to appeal acquittals.

[Animals 24/7](#) reported that Jairo Mora Sandoval was a sea turtle monitor for the conservation group Widecast (now renamed Latin America Sea Turtles) on a crime-ridden beach with a long history of conflict between environmentalists and poaching gangs who plunder nests to steal turtle eggs. On the night of the murder, Mora Sandoval and four female volunteers were ambushed by a group of masked men after attempting to bury the vulnerable turtle eggs safely away from the poachers. He was beaten and died of asphyxiation in the sand.

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

May 11-13 – St. Petersburg Beach, Fla.: Several Link programs will be offered at the 9th Annual [Veterinary Forensic Sciences conference](#).

May 12-13 – Denver, Colo.: Frank Ascione will present on “Implications of Animal Cruelty on Child Psychosocial Development” at the Denver University Institute for Human-Animal Connection’s [Animals on the Mind conference](#) on the social neurobiology of human-animal interactions.

May 14-15 – Prague, Czech Republic: Allie Phillips and Chuck Mitchell of the Florida Courthouse Therapy Dogs Program will give a presentation on “Therapy Animals in the Judicial System: How You Can Help Maltreated Child Witnesses” at the 2016 Animal Assisted Intervention International Conference.

May 16 – New Brunswick, N.J.: Phil Arkow will train New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency staff on the implications of animal abuse in child welfare through the [Child Welfare Training Partnership](#).

May 20 – Dallas, Texas: An inaugural group representing adult protective services, SPCA, humane legislation, domestic violence, prosecutors, probate court and juvenile justice will meet to organize a local Link coalition. Contact [Linda Ross](#) for details.

May 24 – Newtown, Penna.: Phil Arkow will present on “Animal Abuse, Animal Hoarding and Elder Abuse: Challenges and Strategies for Adult Protective Services” at the [Neff Symposium](#) on the Prevention of Crimes Against Older Adults.

May 25 – (Online): Allie Phillips will present on her Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T) Program on a [webinar](#) for the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

May 25 – West Palm Beach, Fla.: [The South Florida Link Coalition](#) will hold its regular meeting at the Emergency Operation Center.

June 1 – Pittsfield, Mass.: The regular meeting of [HAVEN](#) (Human-Animal Violence Education Network) will be held at the Berkshire Humane Society.

June 2-3 – Boise, Idaho: Allie Phillips will present at the [Idaho Council on Domestic Violence and Victim Assistance](#) on The Danger of When Animal Abuse Occurs with Family Violence, Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T), and Therapy Animals Supporting Kids in the Judicial Process.

June 3 – Hurst, Texas: Randy O. Frost will speak on “Understanding and Treating Hoarding Disorder” at the [6th Annual Southwest Conference on Hoarding](#).

June 8 – Piscataway, N.J.: Phil Arkow will train on “Breaking the Chain of Domestic Violence by Preventing Animal Abuse” at the [14th Annual Conference](#) of the New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence and the New Jersey Association of Domestic Violence Professionals.

June 20 – Hartford, Conn.: Phil Arkow will conduct a multi-disciplinary training for the [Connecticut Department of Children & Families](#)’ child abuse and domestic violence divisions, and animal control officers.

June 25 – San Francisco, Calif.: Jennifer Woolf, DVM will present on “The Veterinarian’s Role in Animal Abuse Cases” at the [Pacific Veterinary Conference](#).

July 11-13 – Paris, France: Phil Arkow will participate in a global exchange examining research and practice aspects of animal abuse and domestic violence at the [International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations](#)’ Triennial conference.

Aug. 3 – Baton Rouge, La.: Phil Arkow will present at the [Louisiana Animal Control Association](#) conference.

Sept. 13 – (Online): Allie Phillips will present on her program Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T) on a webinar for the [Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance](#).

Sept. 15 – Mashantucket, Conn.: Phil Arkow will train on the domestic violence/animal abuse Link at the [Connecticut State Animal Control Officers](#)’ conference.

Sept. 27 – Winnipeg, Man., Canada: Phil Arkow will speak on Animal and Family Abuse at the inaugural international [One Welfare Conference](#).

Sept. 28 – Norman, Okla.: Phil Arkow will present on The Link at the [Oklahoma Attorney General](#)’s annual Domestic, Sexual Violence and Stalking Partnership conference.

Sept. 29 – Black Hawk, Colo.: Phil Arkow will present on how The Link can shift the paradigm of animal shelters at the [Colorado Animal Welfare Conference](#).

Sept. 30 – West Lafayette, Ind.: Lila Miller will present on the veterinarian’s role in recognizing, documenting and handling animal abuse cases at Purdue University’s [2016 Veterinary Conference](#).

Oct. 6 – Seattle, Wash.: Phil Arkow will deliver the keynote presentation on “Advancing Animal Care and Control via Species-Spanning Services and Systems” at the [National Animal Care & Control Association Training Conference 2016](#). Other conference presentations will include Belinda Lewis speaking on “Crime Scene Processing,” and a discussion of animal control officer’ role in the FBI’s NIBRS reporting system by Mary Lou Randour, Dan DeSousa and Martha Smith-Blackmore.

Oct. 17-21 – Keene, Plymouth, Rochester, Manchester, & Concord, N.H.: Phil Arkow will present Link training to the New Hampshire Division of Children, Youth & Families, and other government, domestic violence and animal care and control [agencies](#).

Nov. 3 – (various locations): The One Health Commission, One Health Initiative, and One Health Platform will sponsor the 1st Annual [One Health Day](#), a worldwide series of events highlighting transdisciplinary, collaborative approaches to overarching community health and welfare issues.

Nov. 4 -- Phoenix, Md.: Nancy Blaney will present at the Baltimore County State’s Attorney’s Office Animal Abuse Unit [Animal Abuse Leadership Summit](#).

Nov. 5-6 – Sydney, Australia: [Lucy’s Project](#) will hold its 2nd annual conference on Perspectives of Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse. Speakers will include Lydia Tong, Catherine Tiplady, representatives from RSPCA offices, academia, and domestic violence programs.

Dec. 1 – Ontario, Calif.: Phil Arkow will present on “Overcoming Challenges at the Intersections of Animal Abuse and Other Family Violence” at the San Bernardino County District Attorney’s annual [Animal Cruelty Task Force](#) training.

To subscribe to The Link-Letter (*it’s free!*) – Just send an e-mail to Coordinator Phil Arkow (arkowpets@snip.net) and tell us what organization(s) you’re with and where you’re located.



ABOUT THE NATIONAL LINK COALITION



The National Link Coalition is an informal, multi-disciplinary collaborative network of individuals and organizations in human services and animal welfare who address the intersections between animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment and elder abuse through research, public policy, programming and community awareness. We believe that human and animal well-being are inextricably intertwined and that the prevention of family and community violence can best be achieved through partnerships representing multi-species perspectives.

Members of the National Link Coalition Steering Committee

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Chair, Animal Abuse & Family Violence Prevention Project,
The Latham Foundation
Stratford, N.J.

Lesley Ashworth

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