

Pet Abuse and Human Violence Linked

Experts address connection between violence and animal abuse.

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Studies have shown a link between animal abuse, domestic violence and child abuse. A survey of pet-owning families with substantiated child abuse and neglect found that animals were abused in 88 percent of homes where child physical abuse was present, according to the American Humane Association. Studies also indicate that children who witness animal abuse are more likely to repeat the cycle.

National experts in animal welfare, veterinary practice, humane operations, social services and child protection, criminal justice, education and domestic violence prevention met last week in Portland, Maine, for a brainstorming session on the pet abuse-human violence link.

Strategizing The Link: A National Town Meeting on Advancing Public Policy and Community Coalitions was an opportunity for professionals to talk about ways to resolve violence more effectively by working together toward a common purpose.

The event's "town meeting" format provided a forum for professionals from around the United States and from all areas involved in and related to the link between pet abuse and human violence to meet, network and build national awareness about the link. At the end of the meeting, a group of leaders from national organizations will meet to use feedback from the attendees and help create plans for their respective agencies, individually and jointly.

Goals of the national town meeting included: Strengthen community responses to family violence by uniting community groups and other professionals to plan a nationwide joint effort.

Find out how research, legislation and team-building initiatives will impact Link programming on the national, state and local levels.

Use the pros and cons of Link community ties as guides for successful team program development.

Form a diverse national network to allow local groups to learn from one another's experiences in addressing pet abuse and human violence.

Sponsors of the two-day conference were American Humane Association, The Linkage Project and the Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust. Event coordinators chose Portland for this event because of the work being done by The Linkage Project and Maine's statewide efforts in this field, said Phil Arkow, interim director for Human-Animal Bond programs at AHA.