



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



Top Stories in This Issue:



**Conference to
address
co-sheltering of farm
animals (Page 3)**



**Swiss call animals
“more than
property” based on
“dignity” (Page 4)**



**Veterinary forensics
course gets national
attention (Page 7)**

HUMAN MEDICINE... and THE LINK

Please Respond to Our Survey About Link Awareness

In the [May 2025](#) LINK-Letter, we announced that we are conducting a survey to explore health care professionals' comfort level with recognizing and reporting incidents of child, elder and animal abuse. We are seeking responses from anyone who works in the human healthcare professions (e.g., MDs, DOs, nurse practitioners, nurses, physician assistants, etc.) as well as those who work in social service (e.g., therapists, psychologists, counselors, and social workers).



The survey is brief, taking approximately 5 minutes to complete and is entirely anonymous. This survey has been determined as IRB exempt status.

Please click on [this hyperlink](#) to complete the survey or, if it's more convenient, simply take a picture of this QR code with your phone. Thanks for participating!

Inside this issue

Human Medicine & The LINK	1
Domestic Violence & The LINK.....	2
The Courts & The Link	4
Animal Sexual Abuse & The LINK.....	6
Child Maltreatment & The LINK	6
Veterinary Medicine & The LINK	7
Legislation & The LINK.....	16
LINK Training Calendar	24
The LINK in the News	19

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THE COURTS... and THE LINK

Defining Animals as “More Than Property” Based on Inherent “Dignity”

In the [December 2024 LINK-Letter](#), we reviewed a recent journal article by Canadian researcher Amy Fitzgerald who argued that the growing number of Link-related laws, such as states and provinces that allow courts to include pets in domestic violence protection orders or that include acts of animal abuse within statutory definitions of domestic violence, are helping to redefine animals as something more than their historical categorization as “property.” She proposed that the Link concept of framing animal maltreatment in terms of how animal abuse also harms people warrants positioning animals in a new legal category she called “more-than-property.”

It recently came to our attention that there is a potential precedent for animals being considered other than “property,” albeit not one based on The Link, in Switzerland. Since 1992, Swiss animal welfare has been strongly augmented by a constitutional provision warranting the protection of the “dignity of creature”, explicitly conceding esteem to all nonhuman living beings, namely animals, at the highest legal level. Since 2004, Swiss animals have not been considered “objects” but rather are seen as having their own status between objects and humans – somewhat “more than property”.

In Switzerland, the constitutional status of animal welfare as an essential principle of society resulted in an animal welfare act in 2005 based upon the dignity and well-being of animals and that prohibits both cruelty to animals and disrespect of their dignity. Animal welfare and “dignity of the creature” were defined within Articles 80 and 120, respectively, of the Swiss Constitution as basic principles.

Animal cruelty can theoretically be punished with fines of up to one million Swiss francs, depending on the offender’s income, and imprisonment for up to three years. Swiss anti-cruelty laws, however, appear to make no reference to animal abuse’s



Vanessa Gerritsen

potential impacts on human well-being, but rather are based upon the need to protect an animal’s inherent dignity and its well-being.

As an example, bestiality was prohibited in the Animal Welfare Act of 2008 based upon how humans’ having sex with animals demeans animals’ dignity. (By contrast, anti-bestiality laws in the U.S. in recent years have been framed as animal sexual abuse and enacted based upon documented Links with child sexual abuse and pornography.)

The appreciation of an animal’s dignity is described as “an acknowledgement of its intrinsic nature and a respect of animals in their being and otherness,” animal law attorney Vanessa Gerritsen wrote back in 2013.



-- Gerritsen, V. (2013). Animal welfare in Switzerland – Constitutional aim, social commitment, and a major challenge. *Global Journal of Animal Law*, 1, 1-15. <https://journal.fi/gjal/issue/view/11207>



What is The LINK?

Legislation...

Intervention...

Networking...

Knowledge...

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