

FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Colleagues,

I am honored to bring you this edition of the Commission's eNewsletter, focusing on the link between animal abuse and domestic violence.

As long as battered women have been forced to flee from their homes, they have been forced to choose whether to take their pets with them. Family members, friends, and battered women's shelters have faced the challenge of accepting and assisting both battered women and their animals. Many shelters have "no pets allowed" policies out of concern for safety, a lack of resources, and the necessities of group living. These policies have led many women to choose to return to the home they shared with their perpetrator rather than be faced with leaving their pets or livestock behind, certain that abuse of their valued companion would continue without their protection.

The co-occurrence of animal abuse and domestic violence is well-documented. Studies have indicated that pet abuse is frequently an indicator of violence against family members as well. Moreover, children who have witnessed violence often mimic that behavior by abusing the family pet. Finally, abuse of guide dogs and companion dogs of blind persons is a recognized form of power and control by perpetrators abusing their intimate partners. Understanding the link between animal abuse and domestic violence is essential for attorneys representing victims so that we may ensure that the remedies and protection that is sought for their clients includes their concerns or needs for any pets or animals in their lives. Understanding a client's relationship to her animals and asking questions about possible abuse of any family pets is critical to ensure effective representation. Finally, a familiarity with the laws related to animal abuse and domestic violence is necessary. Thankfully, state legislatures recently have begun to provide specific remedies and protections for pets in protection order statutes, in addition to animal cruelty laws in the criminal code.

We are fortunate in this edition of our eNewsletter to have two articles that provide a phenomenal history of animal abuse and its relationship to domestic violence as well as an overview of the legal protections available to address "The Link" between the two. The first article is written by Phil Arkow, Interim Director of the Human-Animal Bond Programs at the American Humane Association entitled, "Expanding Domestic Violence Protective Orders to Companion Animals." The second article is written by Diana Wempen who is a third year law student at the University of Wyoming College of Law entitled, "Four Footed and Largely Forgotten: Exploring the Connections Between Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence." Diana's paper also received a third place award in the Commission's annual [Law School Writing Competition](#) this summer.

Congratulations Diana!

As always, the Commission welcomes information from you regarding resources or promising practices in addressing the intersection between domestic violence and animal abuse. Our heartfelt thanks to all of you for your work on behalf of survivors and their animals.

*The Honorable Pamila Brown
Chair, ABA Commission on Domestic Violence*

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