SWRO Battles Cruelty

January
In Dennis White’s director’s report, you will read about Loco, the dachshund mix whose eyes were gouged out in Dallas, Texas. Just a few months later, another dog became victim of a similar crime. Rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrators of these crimes total more than $10,000, including $3,000 contributed by The HSUS.

March 9
Waco, Texas, police responded to the case of a cat named Queso, who was allegedly mutilated and tortured to death by two Baylor University baseball players. The McLennan County District Attorney’s Office filed Class A misdemeanor animal cruelty charges against the two, and they were scheduled for separate trial dates in March. Baylor University baseball players. The McLennan County District Attorney’s Office filed Class A misdemeanor animal cruelty charges against the two, and they were scheduled for separate trial dates in March.

Texas’s new felony animal cruelty law will help protect dogs like Loco (right). Shown at the bill’s signing are (from left): Jack Knox, Gov. Rick Perry, Carol Autrey, Robert Skip Trimble, Cile Holloway, Gregg Autrey, Sen. David Cain, and SWRO Director Dennis White.

Flooding Can’t Dampen a Good Plan

On Sunday, June 10, SWRO Program Coordinator Jef Hale and Dee Stephens, an HSUS volunteer and cruelty investigator for the Humane Society of Greater Dallas, went to Houston, Texas, to help animal victims of the worst flooding experienced there in years. More than 20,000 homes were destroyed. Numerous businesses were deluged, and downtown highways were impassable for days.

The Houston SPCA, the lead agency for animal disaster response, was literally an island for nearly 36 hours at the height of the crisis. Animals in its care prior to the flooding had been moved to the second floor in anticipation of rising floodwaters. The SPCA quickly formed animal rescue teams. Teams worked hand in hand with the U.S. Coast Guard, the National Guard, and the American Red Cross. Hale and Stephens monitored the situation at other area shelters: the Houston Humane Society, Special Pals, Citizens for Animal Protection Humane Association, Houston Animal Control, and Harris County Animal Control.

More than 600 animals came into the area’s shelters as a result of this flood. Houston SPCA housed most of them. To make space for all the flood victims, adoptable animals already in the shelter prior to the flood were transported to approved animal sheltering agencies across the country. Patty Mercer, Houston SPCA executive director, took great care to ensure that these animals were placed in facilities where they were most likely to find permanent, adoptive homes. In addition to sending staff, HSUS contributed $4,000 to the flood response and helped to secure an additional $5,000 from PetsMart charities. SWRO also helped manage the food and supply drive, as shelters quickly became overwhelmed with contributions.

This flood caused damages estimated in the billions of dollars. Entire neighborhoods were wiped out. The city’s infrastructure will take years to regenerate. But with the help of an efficient disaster plan, the flood’s effect on the city’s companion animals was comparatively minimal. Strong, pre-existing working relationships with emergency management officials proved to be a key to the success of this crisis response. Additionally, highly trained animal disaster response staff and volunteers, working with the proper equipment and a comprehensive plan of action were able to provide professional assistance to Houston’s people and animals. If you would like to learn more about planning for animals in disaster, our office has guidelines for individuals, animal shelters, and municipalities. And we frequently offer training to make sure responders are prepared when emergency strikes. Contact our office for information.
Spay/Neuter Clinic’s Effects Far Reaching

Gayla Nash’s cargo of companions who will be spayed or neutered at The HSUS Spay/Neuter Clinic and Animal Wellness Center in Dallas, Texas.

Doggie and cat overpopulation in the small East Texas town of Longview has changed Gayla Nash’s life. The HSUS Spay/Neuter Clinic and Animal Wellness Center in Dallas now plays a key role in Gayla’s life as she works diligently each month to help end the tragedy of homeless, abandoned animals.

Gayla says the HSUS clinic in Dallas is “the best kept secret in Texas.” One of her goals is to help change that. “Everyone needs to know that The HSUS provides an affordable option to relinquishing unsterilized pets.” Jeanne Jackson, clinic manager in Dallas, calls Gayla an earthy angel. “Her work on behalf of the animals and people is inspiring to all of us,” she says, as she highlights the dedicated HSUS clinic staff. “We come here every day for the animals. Gayla reminds us that we are here for the people, also.”

Once a month, Gayla leaves her home at 4:30 a.m. to begin a trip to the Dallas clinic. Her station wagon is loaded with empty animal crates, often as many as 15, carefully stacked from front to back. She sets out with her “right hand man,” daughter Jole Ray, and together they meet the pet owners, who have also taken advantage of this early morning opportunity. At prearranged meeting points along Interstate 20, pets are transferred into the waiting crates in Gayla’s car. “It still amazes me each time,” she says, “that these pet owners trust us enough to place the lives of their family companions in our hands. It is proof to me that people really want to do the right thing. They really want to have their pets spayed and neutered.”

Such trust and acceptance of Gayla, Jole, and the spay/neuter message has not come easily. Years of work knocking on doors and hand delivering flyers has made Gayla’s home phone number almost a public commodity. It is not unusual for her to answer her phone and hear a desperate pet owner, ready to surrender the again­pregnant family dog. They have called to ask for help. Gayla’s work has inspired hundreds of pet owners, proving to them and time again that they are not alone in their desire to provide a better life for their pets. It is because of the resources of the HSUS Spay/Neuter Clinic in Dallas that Gayla’s answer is always, “Yes, we can help.”

So far in 2001, the team of Gayla, Jole, and the HSUS clinic staff have surgically sterilized nearly 100 pets from Longview, Tyler, and surrounding towns in East Texas. Each owner pays for the surgeries. Gayla’s husband, Gary, pays gasoline expenses. At the end of the day, the recovering pets are carefully loaded back into Gayla’s car for the trip back to their families.

With growing support from the community, the Smith County Animal Shelter, and the local rescue group Pick of the Litter, of which the Nash family are active members, the word is out in Smith County that the HSUS Spay/Neuter Clinic is an option. Kendra Spec, kennel manager for the Smith County Shelter, says that Gayla’s work and the clinic has had an impact. “It’s great to be able to provide a solution to pet owners who may otherwise relinquish their pets to us. Many of them know that spay/neuter will help, but they think the cost is beyond their means. Gayla and the HSUS clinic have made a tremendous difference here in our county.”

The work of individuals like Gayla Nash serves to remind all of us in the animal protection field that helping people can often be the key to helping animals. The teamwork between the HSUS clinic staff and the Nash family can provide us with a blueprint for success.

Attention Dallas- Area Members ...

Please plan to attend the Friends of the Spay/Neuter Clinic’s Fabulous Fashion Show fundraiser, and bring your checkbook or credit card for the silent auction on Thursday, October 4, 2001, from 7-11 p.m. at the Sarah Ellen and Samuel Weisfield Center at Cadiz and Brovver streets in Dallas, Texas.

You’ll enjoy magical entertainment and a buffet dinner. Tickets are $50 and benefit The HSUS Dallas Spay/Neuter Clinic and Animal Wellness Center. Call 972-468-2264 for reservations. Space is limited.

Legislative Victories for Animals

The following bills made it through their state legislatures and have been signed by the governor.

Arizona
- H.B. 2010 makes a veterinarian responsible for reporting in writing any dogfighting or animal abuse to a local law enforcement agency in the county where the veterinarian is practicing within 30 days of any examination or treatment of any animal the veterinarian reasonably suspects has participated in an organized dogfight or has been abused.

Arkansas
- H.B. 2443 gives the court the ability to order any person found guilty of cruelty to animals to receive a psychiatric or psychological evaluation and counseling.

Colorado
- H.B. 1317 creates a pet animal overpopulation authority, funded in part by voluntary contributions designated on the state income tax form.
- H.B. 1069 makes the owner of an animal who was impounded on charges of animal fighting responsible for the costs associated with the animal’s care. This bill also allows the court to either forfeit or sell the animal if the owner was convicted of animal fighting or cruelty.

Louisiana
- H.B. 1493 increases dogfighting penalties.
- S.B. 653 provides for the adoption and donation of unclaimed horses.
- S.B. 866 makes a crime of intentionally owning, possessing, or training a dog for the purposes of dogfighting. It also makes training paraphernalia being used for or intended for use in the unlawful training of a dog to fight with another dog illegal, along with the possession of a dog for the purpose of fighting.
- S.B. 925 provides for cross-reporting cases of animal and human abuse to relevant public agencies.

New Mexico
- H.B. 282 permits, regulates, or prohibits the taking or capturing of native, free­ranging amphibians or reptiles not specifically protected by law.
- S.B. 35 amends the current felony animal cruelty law. This bill removes exemptions for research laboratories, intermediate handlers, carriers, and exhibitors registered or licensed by the federal government, making them subject to state anti-cruelty laws.

Oklahoma
- S.B. 472 authorizes the county sheriff to require that dangerous dogs be impounded and modifies the definition of a dangerous dog.

Reflect for a moment...

By making a planned giving gift to The Humane Society of the United States, you can assure that animals will receive the protection they need while providing significant tax savings and income to yourself. Naming The HSUS as a beneficiary of your estate or trust demonstrates your lasting commitment to animal welfare and strengthens the society for future tasks. We will be happy to send our latest information on planned giving and our programs to help animals.

Mail this coupon in the envelope enclosed or send it directly to The Humane Society of the United States, SWRO, 3001 Lbj Freeway, Ste. 224, Dallas, TX 75234.

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
City State Zip ______________________
Phone ____________________________

Save These Dates!

When: May 29–June 1, 2002
Where: Radisson Plaza Hotel, Fort Worth, Texas
Why: The HSUS National Conference on Animals in Disasters.
You’ll meet hundreds of people involved with caring for animals in disasters. You’ll gain information about disaster planning, preparedness, and response as well as hands-on training and more. For more information, contact Andy Adams at 303-258-3003.

When: April 3–April 6, 2002
Where: Fontainebleau Hilton Resort in Miami Beach, Florida
Why: Animal Care Expo. Animal protection professionals from around the globe will gather at Expo. Don’t miss this opportunity to get some sunt, sand, sun, and shelter education. Find out more details online at www.AnimalSheltering.org.

Okahoma Initiatives

While the Oklahoma Supreme Court reviewed the validity of signatures submitted for an initiative petition to ban cockfighting, the Oklahoma Legislature approved a measure that would double the number of signatures required to place any animal protection measure on a statewide ballot. State Question 968 is the first such measure advanced in any state that singles out animal protection measures for a higher standard of ballot qualification. If the Supreme Court validates sufficient signatures to qualify the anti-cockfighting petition, it may appear side­by-side with State Question 968. The HSUS urges a “yes” vote to ban cockfighting and a “no” vote on State Question 968.

Texas
- H.B. 1362 requires owners of wild animals to register with local animal control authorities and possess liability insurance. It also provides minimum standards for housing and care. U.S. Department of Agriculture permit holders are subject to the requirements.
- H.B. 92 authorizes the sale of specialty license plates, the proceeds from which fund spay/neuter programs.

Utah
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wielding a pointed instrument. Loco’s case received a flood of media attention, and The HSUS and local groups offered a reward of more than $10,000 for the arrest and conviction of those responsible.

This courageous young dog received intensive veterinary care that allowed the injuries to heal, although he will be blind for the rest of his life. During this Texas legislative session, Loco and his family made the trip to Austin to testify on behalf of H.B. 653, which strengthens the penalties for animal cruelty in Texas to felony status. His appearance was televised as Loco’s human companion, Gregg Autrey, testified about the heinous crime perpetrated against his family.

It is up to us, as citizens, to promote long-term solutions to help animals. Legislative changes that positively affect the health and welfare of all creatures give us the tools to do that. Stronger anti-cruelty laws allow us to provide immediate relief for animals in peril. They also can provide help for perpetrators, as many states have requirements in their newly passed legislation providing for mandated counseling, including Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Texas.

There is never an instance where there is “nothing we can do.” Change only comes about with the direct involvement of those who demand change. Our legislative process is designed to give the people a voice. Only those voices that are heard can have the opportunity to make the changes happen. Give those who care a phone number they can call. Sharing a list of all your state’s legislators’ names and their phone numbers reassures callers that there is something we can do, together, as one voice caring about the future of our animal companions. You can find a list of your legislators and how to contact them at www.vote-smart.org/index.phtml.

Director’s Report

By Dennis J. White
Director of the Southwest Regional Office

Doing “Something”

Our office answers many phone calls from citizens who are reporting what they believe to be animal abuse or animal cruelty. Sometimes they identify their neighbors and describe a specific incident, sometimes they are vague about the problem and location and just want “somebody to do something.”

Sometimes, depending on the locality, there are limits as to what can be done to immediately remedy the situation. Many states are still working with antiquated laws, some dating back to the early 1900s. Tougher anti-cruelty laws are in demand because of increased awareness and are now found listed on almost every legislative docket. Caring citizens, after years of effort by animal protection organizations, have taken their outrage over animal abuse to the steps of their capitols.

Take the case of a small beagle mix in Dallas named Loco. One day last year Loco went missing from his family’s yard. Two days later, he was mysteriously returned, severely injured. Loco was allegedly intentionally blinded, his eyes having been damaged beyond repair by a person

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April 18

In the early afternoon, a criminal broke into a home in southeast Albuquerque. Firefighters and police arrived to find the home vandalized and many of the owner’s possessions destroyed. They found the owner’s beloved dog muzzled and taped and burned to death in the bathtub. SWRO contributed $2,500 to a reward fund totaling more than $6,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrator of this crime. A suspect has been arrested in this case. New Mexico animal cruelty law allows for felony prosecution and punishment.

April 20

A relative found Beth Gentry’s horse lying in their Lake Charles, Louisiana, pasture, fatally wounded. A veterinarian called to the scene determined that Jake had been shot in the lung and could not be saved. The veterinarian euthanized the horse after consulting with family members. SWRO posted a $1,500 reward bringing the total to $3,000. No suspect has been arrested in connection with this incident.

The severity of these crimes against animals raises a red flag. “Anyone capable of so viciously attacking defenseless animals poses a potential danger to other animals and people in the community,” says Lou Guyton, SWRO regional coordinator. “The connection between animal abuse and violence against people is well documented. I hope our actions will help bring those responsible for these crimes to justice.” For more information on how you can be an advocate for animals, contact SWRO.

Contacting HSUS

Write:
HSUS Southwest Regional Office
3001 LBJ Freeway, Ste. 224
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Call:
972-488-2964

Fax:
972-488-2965

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Promoting the protection of all animals

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