(No. 31) -- Some Frank Talk about the Decompression Chamber

Humane Information Services, Inc.
We Accept the “Blame”

Our genuinely “esteemed contemporary,” Shoptrak, an interesting periodical published by the American Humane Association (AHA), contended in the December, 1974, issue by Milton C. Searle on “Euthanasia.” The theme of that article is: Misunderstanding of methods and equipment used for euthanasia.

Among the “equipment” to be so abused as humane and fully acceptable is the decompression chamber, otherwise known as an “unhumane” chamber.

This is one of the most widely-used methods of “euthanasia”; in terms of total numbers of animals destroyed, decompression may be ahead of even carbon monoxide. It is safe to say that many millions of dogs and cats are killed in these chambers each year, a fact which undermines the plea that this method is more important than to determine if this process is really humane?

We wholeheartedly agree that it is important to say exactly when it began or who was responsible, the AHA article begins, “but about three years ago a campaign against which underground spiritedly continues, the campaign against the decompression chamber.”

The opposition was well organized and continued to be installed by quite a few shelters and pounds, are far from humane. Furthermore, “adopted out”, he or she might not be the doggie or kitty to be killed, not “adopted out”, he or she might not be willing to go to the shelter, thus presumably encouraging abandonment. (3) Shelters and pounds which had adopted a rapid decompression method for “euthanasia” for the sake of convenience and economy, or out of ignorance, were loath to give them up and did not wish questions to be raised or to generate possible controversy by discussing the subject.

SHELTERS A MAJOR SOURCE OF SUFFERING

As a result of these and other conditions, millions of dogs and cats have been “put to sleep” every year in humane society shelters and public pounds in ways which undermine the plea that this method is more important than to determine if this process is really humane?

One has to use the criteria of (a) number of animals involved, (b) amount of suffering and (c) stress on the part of the animals. Formed ostensibly to prevent suffering and cruelty, no person involved, actually was a major source of suffering. If one uses the criteria of (a) number of animals involved, (b) amount of suffering and (c) stress on the part of the animals, then essentially all humane shelter personnel were guilty.

Many humanitarians who were suspicious of this so-called “euthanasia” ongoing on reacted by wanting to eliminate it altogether. A number have adopted a pet, not having done so, a negligible factor in the humane movement. And he or she easily becomes, to the defenders of the status quo, just a “wild-eyed radical, a real nut”.

Humane Information Services, in its campaign for animal euthanasia, is not defending anyone or anything except the suffering animals. We have no personal or organizational axes to grind. We have no shelter or affiliated shelters using some method that requires defending. We do not wish that all animals were actually a painless death.

If we were, we would drop the disagreeable subject like a hot potato. There are plenty of other sources of animal suffering to campaign against.

And, as raising and concern is concerned, we propose to have lost more contributions and friends than we have gained by entering the lion’s den of euthanasia. That does not bother us at all, so long as we are right.

We welcome any facts and objective analyses which might prove we are wrong, or even raise legitimate questions about our own facts or reasoning. We reject (see DECOMPRESSION report page 2, column 2).
DECOMPRESSION—FROM PAGE 1
seek only the truth about euthanasia, and as our readers know we have been extremely cautious about either endorsing or condemning any method.

In following this policy, we have repeatedly invited readers of Report to HumaneCitizens to write us about any specific paragraphs in our analysis with which they may disagree. We are ready to debate amicably and open-mindedly all the statements we make about euthanasia—or any other subject, for that matter—with anyone. We will not take offense, or get "mad", or huffy, or refuse to reply, etc., if we find that we are mistaken on any point, we stand ready to admit it publicly, and to make an apology to anyone who may consider himself to have been injured by any of our statements.

So far, however, nobody has questioned a single specific statement in the two comprehensive reports on rapid decompression which we have published: Report Nov. 20 and 21.

If the ANA disagrees with any specific statement in those reports, we would be glad to consider open-mindedly the reasons for such disagreement. We have invited such discussions. But there is no reply. The ANA prefers generalities, as evidenced by the following statements contained in the ShopTalk article:

Representatives of ANA testified at hearings in Fort Lauderdale, Chicago, Oklahoma City and the states of California, Connecticut and Massachusetts, supporting—low-pressure chambers.

It became obvious that the people testifying against the method were ignorant of the facts, but a great number of people were being taken in by the charges.

"The American Humane Association had cooperated with the U.S. Air Force in the research to try and knew there was no basis in fact, for the charges. The American Veterinary Medical Association also testified in the research and also stated that the method was in fact an acceptable means of euthanasia. We know that many of the charges were false, but the campaign against it continued and problems kept cropping up. A few of ANA's member organizations asked for help to protect them from charges being made by organizations who wished to criticize our methods.

QUOTING AUTHORITIES

The last paragraph quoted above illustrates a favorite tactic of those who cannot successfully deal with the specific issues in the facts. They attack "authorities" in support of their position. In this case the authority is the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA).

The latter organization has published a report purporting to be that of a committee of the AVMA appointed in 1969 by the Executive Board of the AVMA. This panel had only one member in common with a similar panel of distinguished veterinarians which was pointed out in 1961. So far as the verdict on rapid decompression is concerned, the two panels' findings are directly opposite. It is not a new convincing evidence to offer the findings of the 1961 panel as a rebuttal to those who claim decompression is a method of unethically humane.

Neither of these directly conflicting reports indicates that the respective panels' members had done their homework about rapid decompression sickness. AVMA could not understand how the 1969 panel could have evidenced such lack of knowledge of the scientific facts. As contained in our Report to HumaneCitizens No. 20 and 21, until we were told that a humanitarian had solicited a panel member to claim that the section on rapid decompression in the final report published by the AVMA was the same as the one actually written and that section was pointed to. We have no means of verifying or disproving this allegation. This should not be taken to imply that the panelists in the same section which may have been made were in response to pressures from any humane organization; if any person has made, they probably represented editorial revisions designed to make the panel's report less controversial.

CAMPAIGN GETTING RESULTS

Despite the publication of these AVMA reports, the rapid decompression chamber continues to be used. Hardly a month goes by without news being received of new purchases of decompression chambers. Right here in the State of Florida, in which we have our headquarters, a number of these chambers have been installed within the past year. Our reports have stopped the use of these chambers by some societies and publications. Normal control activities have expanded and probably has been a net increase in the use of rapid decompression.

SOME CRITICISMS UNFOUNDED

The AVMA is a federation of local humane societies which has been in control of its policies and programs. Since a majority of these local society shelters, especially those of influential societies located in big cities, use the decompression chamber for "euthanasia", it is most natural that the American Humane Association has become the leading defender of this method over the years.

We do not claim that the AVMA has been sincere in this defense. Many things have been said against rapid decompression by uninformed critics that were not true, and this has done to the good-name human society officers believe that there is no substance to any of the charges made against this method.

As the report published in our Report to HumaneCitizens No. 20 and 21 demonstrated, rapid decompression does not produce the "bends", but rather the very painful type of decompression sickness encountered when deep-sea divers and caisson workers operate. The high pressures are brought back to normal pressures (decompressed) too rapidly, and when aviators with oxygen masks but not in pressurized cabins, or divers to whom oxygen is applied are decompressed by rising to high altitudes. The bends are caused by the formation of nitrogen bubbles that form in the blood vessels, and by the distortion of nerve endings by bubbles forming in the tissues outside the blood vessels, producing severe pain.

read or heard about the spectacularly painful effects that have been assumed that they apply also to animals decompressed in euthanasia chambers. This is not true, at least for most mature animals, because it requires a longer period of time for the bends to develop than that during which the animals usually remain conscious in the chamber.

Anoxia, or hypoxia, which is interference with the normal flow of oxygen to tissues of the body, which results in unconsciousness and later death, may give rise to disagreeable symptoms in some animals, such as dizziness, anxiety and "headaches", but these effects probably are not sufficiently severe or common to offset other advantages of this method.

UNDESIRABLE EFFECTS

The really undesirable effects of rapid decompression arise mainly as a result of the expansion of gas containers contained within the body. As the ambient (outside) air pressure is rapidly reduced during decompression, the gases in these body cavities obey the laws of physics by attempting to expand, or to find an outlet so that they may be equalized. If these gases can easily escape from the cavities or hollow organs, there is little or no pain. Thus, such organs as the lungs, gastrointestinal tract and sinus and inner ear passages, there is little or no pain. If not, the pressure of the expanding gases is relieved, then is produced what in some cases may be severe pain.

Such pressures in the pulmonary system ordinarily are not significant, but the equalization of pressure quickly occurs by outward passage of the gases through the bronchial tubes and trachea. But in the lungs, gastrointestinal tract and sinus and inner ear passages, there is little or no pain. If not, the pressure of the expanding gases is relieved, then is produced what in some cases may be severe pain.

executive Board of the American Humane Association 1969.
Second of three articles

In Report No. 30 (December, 1974) appeared the first of three articles representing our attempt to answer the question posed in the title of another society: "Are animal societies a ripoff?" We decided to publish these articles because some legitimate objections to or questions about the arti­cles had been received, a very few objections to any humane society found wanting by any analysis. The reaction to the first article was almost entirely favorable. Many animals lovers, however, were doubtful about whether they have been giving intel­ligently to give to any (society) and thereby the animals will suffer. But she implicitly questioned the validity of her statement by channeling the flow of limited funds to channeling the flow of limited funds to those societies in a position to use them most effectively. We agree that there are worthy alternatives to the unworthy socie­ties, and that the animals will suffer. That cannot be done by failing to give po­tential contributors the information and the base facts to evaluate the means, that animals have insufficient­ly-developed central nervous systems to feel the same degree of pain as humans. In short, it offers the means, that animals have insufficient­ly-developed central nervous systems to feel the same degree of pain as humans. In short, the answer apparently is very simple: they are not interest­ed in stident destructive criticisms by and of others, but in carefully­thought-out principles which they can use in making their own evaluations.

A FEW OBJECTIVES

There were, as anticipated, a very few objections to or questions about the article from our members. Mrs. James C. Thompson, of Chicago, wrote: "I honestly believe that to give to any society and thereby the animals will suffer." But she implicitly questioned the validity of her statement by channeling the flow of limited funds to those societies in a position to use them most effectively. We agree that there are worthy alternatives to the unworthy socie­ties, and that the animals will suffer. That cannot be done by failing to give po­tential contributors the information and the base facts to evaluate the means, that animals have insufficient­ly-developed central nervous systems to feel the same degree of pain as humans. In short, it offers the means, that animals have insufficient­ly-developed central nervous systems to feel the same degree of pain as humans. In short, the answer apparently is very simple: they are not interest­ed in stident destructive criticisms by and of others, but in carefully­thought-out principles which they can use in making their own evaluations.

OBJECTIVES INFLUENCE APPRAISAL

Any attempt to evaluate the worthiness of any particular humane society must take into account the principles of all charitable dollar. They are not interest­ed in stident destructive criticisms by and of others, but in carefully­thought-out principles which they can use in making their own evaluations.

STANDARDS NOT ATTAINMENTS

"We understand that the other society that first raised the question did receive much criticism, and decided not to contin­ue its proposed series of articles. That, we believe, was a mistake, and the basic reason it announced its intention to evaluate indi­vidual societies by name.

The most serious objection to any movement is that all "avoidable " suffering by labora­tory animals should be stop­ped. By "avoidable" they mean that is not nec­essary to perform an experi­ment or test, and any suffering expe­rienced in experiments or tests the re­sult of which are unlikely to justify the suffering. Indeed, as these tests involves a knowledge of alternatives and analytical judgment. The second in­volved in an area of research that kind people make frequently, as when Congress decides whether to send relief food to an undevel­oped country or keep it for our own use.

This middle group holds that the number of animals used in experiments and tests could and should be greatly reduced by better experimental design. The degree to which objective examination has demonstrated, and by the use wherever possible of exper­i­mental models other than live animals, such as tissue cultures. They also be­lieve that for the remaining animals much suffering could be avoided by using vari­ous more humane experimental techniques, including anesthesia, and by more humane ways of housing and caring for the ani­mals. They wish you as much enj oyment out of your giving to the cause of animals as we get out of ours.

Are Animal Welfare Societies a "Ripoff"?"
policies. It works! Writing the managing director of the A-V society previously referred to: "There is a chance that your policy will change your mind and see the merits of sticking steadfast to the demand for abolition. There has never been a time when, for example, why our society is the largest and wealthiest society of its kind in the world. You would be the first to agree the reason is not my personal charm or use of a policy."  

But because this policy seems so ineffective, compared with the potential productivity of the money spent by the many groups, many of the latter think that the A-V societies are just money-hungry racketeers or the expense of the officers who run them. Humane Information Services does not entertain this view: we believe in the sincerity of the members, directors, and officers of these antivivisection societies, with one possible exception. In fact, the managing director of the A-V society which has been quoted is extremely capable in public relations, and probably could be making much more use of his own voice, his own agency, or working for some large corporation. We wish that the antivivisectionist movement, generally interpreted, had more humane societies and their leaders, who would be as open-minded about us as we are about them. Surely we can disagree about the results of alternative policies without publicly questioning the sincerity and integrity of each other.

WHICH TO SUPPORT?

How we are to return to our relationship between citizens, and the animal rights, if they are categorically and totally opposed to the use of animals in laboratories, not just temporarily, but permanently, at least permanently after approval by the public, and if you believe that no program short of total abolition will achieve our mutual goals, which society would support us with all our energies, and, of course, the straitlaced, unequivocal antivivisection society? It is this organization which you can spend on yourself, save for your children, or give to whatever cause you may wish. Who has been the most successful in using Humane Information Services, even though we strongly believe that other approaches to the laboratory animal problem far greater effect, there will be a great deal of animal suffering. And not the physicians and veterinarians who view antivivisectionist arguments with one eye should be locked up, or prevented from voicing their "crazy" opinions. Those who regard antivivisectionists as vengeously when someone proposes curtailing their own opinions or procedures.

IF NOT OBJECTIVES, HOW ABOUT EFFICIENCY?

But even though some critics might grant the self-righteousness, the over-the-top and freedom to support the straightlaced antivivisection society as a major tenet, we have not failed to ask whether such support on the basis of efficiency, of waste of the donated money in repetition of bulletins and emotion-packed advertising.

Well, some of the A-V societies have a pretty good answer to that. Once the basic premise of these societies is accepted, namely a long-time program of public conversion of the faith by publicity and conversion in terms of practical achievements. The performance records of some of the A-V societies.

Animal welfare societies have failed miserably to do their job (telling their story to the public). Our society (which is pushing an unpopular, at the moment, reform) is opposed by the most powerful trade association, the AMA, in America, yet I venture the assertion that our society has more paid-up, active members than all the major antivivisection societies put together... It is a constant source of amazement to me that humane leaders... apparently do not have the foggier notion how to make those products more non-kindest to animals--to the public. Their idea of 'accomplishment' seems to be the next whopper from the rescue of the dog or the rabbit has fallen into a hole, or, worst of all, their cowardly refusal to lead a public to their own society's words of unnumbered unwanted animals alive, often under conditions that ought to bring about the arrest and prosecution for vicious cruelty and for cruelty to animals. A basement filled with cats 'saved from the vivisectors' merely proves that the new antivivisectionists are not interested in compassion. (Our society) exists for one purpose: to place what we believe are the facts accurately and clearly before as many people as possible as quickly as possible at the lowest possible cost per unit. We are CREATING new antivivisectionists fast and furiously, and if the public is to have the A-V societies enforced. But we are not as good as our advertising. Advertising is propaganda rather than information. It is designed to achieve a specific action by the reader for the benefit of the advertiser, even though it may sometimes help the reader to respond.

Advertising is costly. Strictly insti-
HIGH SALARIES A RIPOFF?

Judging by letters we receive, some humane organizations believe that the honesty and efficiency of the societies to which they might contribute largely on the basis of those who manage and conduct the societies' operations. They begrudge "large" salaries of $25,000 to $50,000 per year plus generous bonuses paid to some human society executives.

It would be easy for the people at Humane Information Service to respond in force to allow themselves to succumb to this prejudice. Your president and editor, "Doc", receives no compensation for his services and continually encourages a better-than-humane attitude toward societies that pay high salaries. He, and all the humane and exceptionally capable service to HIS, receives a salary about half what she could easily make in private employment. Everyone else on the staff is paid the basic minimum. "Doc" is able to care for himself, but greatly regrets the society's present inability to offer to the employees who depend on this income for a living.

"Unfortunately, many of the members of humane societies are deprived economically, and no small proportion are dependent upon Social Security. It goes against the grain of their better nature to cut few dollars for membership dues in a society, only to find that its president makes more than any of their own staffs!"

This, however, really is a shortsighted viewpoint. What humane societies need almost as much as inspiration, capable executive leadership. The only ways to get it are to find volunteers who have the required experience, education, personal capacities, and money to go into the marketplace and bid competitively for the services of qualified executives.

One of the most amusing but disturbing aspects of the ripoff question posed by the society is that too large a proportion of its members constitute a "ripoff!" from the local government rolling in, and who shirk from the competition of the best paid employees of national, but those who have succeeded.

So, although quite a few humanitarians would settle for large salaries to execute the ripoffs, HIS does not agree. Generally speaking, and with many exceptions such as HIS(1), the humane societies that pay large salaries to their staffs are more efficiently operated than those run by low-paid workers and by volunteers. This is too true that the directors of such organizations must take special pains to prevent their societies from becoming too sinecures for the high-paid staffs.

The big ripoff from the local government that is an interesting one to take over control and craft policies and procedures designed mainly to avoid rocking the boat and to perpetuate the old system, in office. For example, the high-salaried shelter manager may not wish to send the animals to euthanasia because he is afraid this will cause a loss of money from income and adoption revenues. It is true that the "workers" are productive, that it is the people who actually use the tools and handle the product who contribute the most to society, but the directors of such organizations must take special pains to prevent their societies from becoming too sinecures for the high-paid staffs.

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WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

For instance, we feel that one of the most telling adverse arguments against the ripoff movement is that too large a proportion of its concerns has been with "actually handling the animals" in Florida, for instance, humane society animal shelters, even one which kills its dogs with the cruel drug succinylcholine chloride, are exempt from the State sales tax, while societies which do not actually keep animals on the premises are not exempt.

This is the same basic fallacy encountered in many other walks of life. Marketers have always known that only the "workers" are productive, that it is the people who actually use the tools and handle the product who contribute the most to society, but the directors of such organizations must take special pains to prevent their societies from becoming too sinecures for the high-paid staffs.

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THE FALLACY OF "HANDLING ANIMALS"

The humane organization whose challenge of various other animal societies partly spurred us to write these articles is a well-run one run in operating a shelter. This circumstance is reflected in some of its criticisms. Its executive director is critical of HIS because he is afraid this will cause a loss of money from income and adoption revenues.

"I'm very tired of seeing struggling local animal care organizations barely surviving while so-called national groups raise funds throughout the country without ever handling one animal!... This reflects a common prejudice found among humanitarians and others who equate "actually helping the animals" with "actually handling the animals". In Florida, for example, the really big humane society animal shelters, even one which kills its dogs with the cruel drug succinylcholine chloride, are exempt from the State sales tax, while societies which do not actually keep animals on the premises are not exempt.

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THE BIG RIPOFF

In this article we have examined some of the complaints or criticisms of the ripoff question posed by the society. Some of these organizations constitute a "ripoff!" from the local government that is an interesting one to take over control and craft policies and procedures designed mainly to avoid rocking the boat and to perpetuate the old system, in office. For example, the high-salaried shelter manager may not wish to send the animals to euthanasia because he is afraid this will cause a loss of money from income and adoption revenues. It is true that the "workers" are productive, that it is the people who actually use the tools and handle the product who contribute the most to society, but the directors of such organizations must take special pains to prevent their societies from becoming too sinecures for the high-paid staffs.

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PREVENTIVE ACTIONS

Some humane problems are capable of satisfactory solution through the activity of the ripoff movement. Some of the more important ones, especially those involving legislation, can be dealt with effectively only by the ripoff movement.

Humane Information Services has repeatedly proposed meetings to discuss priorities and the advantages and disadvantages of alternate approaches to solving various problems, and to agree on some courses of action to be followed by all in a cooperative effort. We feel that this oft-heard criticism is not true that the county society that does it offer? Does its literature read like a public relations man's blurb, or like an effective appeal to an interested, or are you sometimes startled or disturbed by what is said? Are the programs mainly theoretical? We wish that all current far, or do they break new ground?

We hope your judgment is good, because we feel that the most needed humane funds going to such barren uses.

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DECOMPRESSION—FROM PAGE 2—experience discomfort. Such citations mean nothing. One cannot generalize from individual experience in such matters. Dog breeders tell me that puppies suffer little or no difficulty in adjusting to changes in air pressures of the degree usually experienced during experimentation, and that veterinarians can open the eustachian tubes during decompression.

But according to a report by the National Research Council of Healthy humans fail to adjust rapidly to the change in pressure, and about 1.5 per cent experience unconsciousness among the rest. This is the author of this article, who experiences severe pain during and following plating. If this is the case, I am painfully punctured all too many times during costly after-travel treatments by a variety of ear specialists. But he does not seem to know much about the individual experience, and would be grateful if defenders of the decompression chamber would also follow this well-known principle of logic.

What proportion of the dogs, cats, puppies, kittens, and guinea pigs at the decompression chamber, will express their pain by scratching? Or are the dogs now dead by the AVMA in 1969, which authored the report?-duty to relieve suffering forever.

The question to be answered here is whether there is enough scientific evidence to support the decompression method. Business interests and public opinion give a false sense of security and eliminate the need for handling the individual animals, as they are "put to sleep" (employees who can't stand to see the dogs and cats pass out before their eyes) or "euthanased" for a "painless death", but a death which is convenient, inexpensive and out of sight of the employees who must handle this dis-advantageous method.

We do need additional research of the kind referred to in a later section of this report, designed to make decompression less inhumane. But we don't need to stop there. We need to find a way to destroy for many of the millions of animals destroyed annually in these chambers. And especially those engaged in the "deep-sea" and "space" industry, the Air Force, and to the public campaign against inhumane methods of destroying animals. In the United States alone, 20 million pounds, it will require many years to educate the public. So, we might as well make the best of it and do what we can to reduce the amount of suffering involved. What can be done?

INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION

The answer to this question which comes from the AVMA is a program of "inspection and certification" of hospitals and research laboratories to ensure that all equipment is used in a "proper operating condition and that the personnel charge with its operation are properly trained in its operation." The article in ShopTalk previously cited goes on to state that this is an impossible task arising from lack of proper maintenance which such inspections may turn up, such as valves which leak or are not turned "off" properly in the equipment that may become so deteriorated that the rubber breaks away and fouls the valves in the compressor, lack of proper seals in the "ball valve," lack of properly "led" gasketing of the "metal porthole" and "metal sewer," and inaccurate vacuum gauges.

The humane society representatives urgently suggest that mere inspection of the decompression chamber for possible mechanical defects will not be enough. In the contrary, it may actually give a sense of false security, and be used to save the consciences of shelter managers whose methods are already inhuman and still cause much unnecessary suffering. For such an inspection and certification program to be acceptable, it is necessary that all the chambers be destroyed, or at least inhumanely modified.
DECOMPRESSION—FROM PAGE 6

(1) All animals suspected of being or having been subject to acute or chronic disease or requiring any care should be separated from the healthy animals to be destroyed, and "put to sleep" in a manner compatible with the rapid oxygen supply in the blood. This probably accounts for some of the instances reported to HIS in which puppies have been mistakenly killed in the decompression chamber. Some pile of dead dogs coming out of the chamber after being held at maximum vacuum for periods of ten or fifteen minutes (perhaps resulting from air trapped among the bodies of the several animals included in a load placed inside the chamber) can cause such gas, which can be lethal to the animals in the chamber for the full length of time required to ensure death. In any event, puppies under four months of age should never be killed in the decompression chamber. And since cats are so frequently subject to decompression sickness and may remain unconscious for many hours as a result of compressed air being forced through the body, it is preferable that they, too, should be destroyed by some other method.

This writer has observed euthanasia rooms of shelters using decompression chambers, and talked with many shelter managers and workers who have encountered one in which provision is made and utilized for an alternate method of euthanasia for different, but not necessarily similar, combinations of animals, puppies, and cats and kittens. Usually they all go to the chamber. This indicates that the need for euthanasia in such shelters is not really humane. We hope that the AMA will make a suitable requirement of this kind a part of its recommendations and certification program.

(2) The tests made to determine operating efficiency of the decompression chambers are based on preconceived, a priori notions about what is the ideal speed of decompression. The general principle seems to be based on the assumption that the faster the speed of simulated ascent (or the less the length of time required to reach the specified degree of vacuum) the less is the likelihood that the animal will suffer. We have shown in our comprehensive analysis of rapid decompression previously cited, this assumption may be quite erroneous. A slower rate of ascent may produce more conclusive of pain than a very rapid one.

We do not know who was responsible for this inhumane method. It cannot be based on any evidence or reasoning it was based. Possibly it reflects the fact that the decompressing in such shelters is not really humane. We hope that the AHA will make a suitable requirement of this kind a part of its recommendations and certification program.

(3) The need for speed and volume can very easily lead to the chamber too full, putting ill-assorted dogs of differing sizes, sexes and dispositions in the same cage, cutting short the holding period, thereby exposing many animals during decompression. The latter point may be considered by some to be a more or less acceptable degree of inhumanity, but we dislike the idea of dumping the doomed animals into a cage which is already overcongested, even if it is only for a few minutes.

(4) The need for adequate holding time, and erroneous statements by the AVMA euthanasia committee that "too much time" is required to make sure all of the animals are dead before removal. The need for speed and volume can very easily lead to the chamber too full, putting ill-assorted dogs of differing sizes, sexes and dispositions in the same cage, cutting short the holding period, thereby exposing many animals during decompression. The latter point may be considered by some to be a more or less acceptable degree of inhumanity, but we dislike the idea of dumping the doomed animals into a cage which is already overcongested, even if it is only for a few minutes.

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(6) Each of the presently-available alternatives to the injection of sodium pentobarbital or other drugs. This requires the services of a person who is willing and able to invest the necessary time and effort to do the work, or who is skilled and well trained, or who is able to get the necessary cooperation of others. The terms of reference are the euthanasia room of some other shelter where the dogs are to be destroyed, and "put to sleep" in a manner compatible with the rapid oxygen supply in the blood. This probably accounts for some of the instances reported to HIS in which puppies have been mistakenly killed in the decompression chamber. Some pile of dead dogs coming out of the chamber after being held at maximum vacuum for periods of ten or fifteen minutes (perhaps resulting from air trapped among the bodies of the several animals included in a load placed inside the chamber) can cause such gas, which can be lethal to the animals in the chamber for the full length of time required to ensure death. In any event, puppies under four months of age should never be killed in the decompression chamber. And since cats are so frequently subject to decompression sickness and may remain unconscious for many hours as a result of compressed air being forced through the body, it is preferable that they, too, should be destroyed by some other method.

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FLEAS, FLEA COLLARS AND BREWER’S YEAST

It appears that the flea problem continues to be a great interest to our readers. We can see why when our neighbors’ dogs come to visit. The first thing they do—ever before going to the kitchen, where they know a snack awaits—is to sit in the middle of the living room rug and engage in vigorous scratching. They seem to think that is where to get rid of their unwelcome guests. Fortunately, Doc is an inveterate pipe smoker, which makes him uninteresting to fleas. These nice dogs have fleas, which seem ineffective.

An Associated Press story from San Francisco says there are “trailing flea collars by the ton. /One woman who, like her pets, have been bothered by "droves of the little pests" are wearing flea collars or tags as pop jewelry. But some say they are not as advertised about the side effects.

"Many collars contain the chemical vapor SVPC, which exudes a vapor some people are allergic to," said a member of the County Department’s Environmental Services. "It has been known to cause ulcers and headaches in humans and hearing loss in dogs."

Emily’s Tedy nixely scratches. She bathes him monthly with preparation. But some readers continue to endorse brewer’s yeast, as suggested in previous letters to the editor. The following are particularly interesting:

"I give my two cats powdered brewer’s yeast mixed in with their food, and they have a rat-free meal yet. I wish I knew the exact taste of the yeast, which isn’t very pleasant, is covered by the taste of the food. It is too soon yet to tell if the yeast is effective against fleas, but at least it will have a fair test. Consider: Flea powders bought in bulk can be quite expensive for the consumer, or a person can create an uncomfortable case of gas, so do not overdose!"

P. S. - I appreciate your paper with its objective, rational, and non-emotional tone. I can’t remember ever disagreeing with anything you’ve said.—Mrs. Linda J. Gray, San Jose, California

"Relative to the use of brewer’s yeast for fleas, the writer was quite startled to read that inquiry in Letters to the Editor. Although I have not used it, I think it is one of the most logical jugements regarding the use of thiamine or vitamin B1 for this purpose. The report was reasonably successful with doses up to 80 mg. daily. The rationale behind its function is the theory that thiamine exudes through the skin and acts as a repellent to mosquitoes and probably also to fleas. The component in yeast which per­
cipitates from yeast water in the presence of thiamine, is responsible for this action. I have tried this medication on our own cat, and what seemed to be favorable results. In any event, several mg. of thiamine is harmless and might prove beneficial nutritionally. What can you do to get rid of a flea by trial."—Louis Stambowsky, Ph.D., 720 Pleasant, New Jersey

M挽ORIAL CON8IBUTIOS.

have been received from:

Mrs. Richard W. Arey, Jr., Salisbury, North Carolina. "In memory of my beloved dog Mustang, who was lost to cancer December 17, 1974."

Mrs. Margaret Decker, St. Petersburg, Florida. "In memory of Denny Gild, my beloved kerry."

IF YOU HAVE TO CALL US

HIS does not have a listed phone num­

ber, in order to avoid the added expense of such a service. If you wish to communicate with us, call Emily at (813) 867-9236. For NAL, call Doc in the evening at (813) 867-5242.

WE HOPE WE CAN LIVE UP TO THIS KIND APPRAISAL

"By intelligently and commonsensically bringing the pertinent facts before the public, and by distinctly conveying the important facts without the practically impossible from the ideal but impossible—by performing so well these vital services, you have won our hearty thanks and support of all humanitarian."

--Alfred R. Babcock

Charles Clausing Elected HIS Director

Humane Information Services takes much pleasure in announcing election to its board of directors of Charles I. Clausing. Among other admirable traits of Charlie is his great modesty. It has required almost a year to get him to send us a photograph and personal data. He strongly urges us not to "waste space" on them.

Mr. Clausing became president of the Animal Welfare Association, Inc., of Camden County, New Jersey, in 1958, and is busily engaged in reviewing the activities of the animal control shelters operated by that society. In addition, he was elected vice-president of the HWS—New Branch in 1959, and acts as president of the Branch in 1973-74. His term as a director of the Branch expires in May, 1975.

Charlie received the B.S. degree in electrical engineering from the University of Vermont in 1942, and in 1950, was employed by 1-E & Imperial Corporation. As you can see, he doesn’t have much to do!

We have known Charlie for years, and he has earned our great respect as a very capable as well as really dedicated humanitarian. Although an engineer, he has given HIS the benefit of his concepts as well as specific proposals for improvement of euthanasia methods and other practical aids. We are especially pleased to have him on our board because of the excellent judgment he has displayed in connection with various aspects of humane work. That will be particularly valuable if something should happen to Doc. We don’t want control of HIS to become all-female: Emily is an ardent women’s lib’er.

NAHL’s Legislative Activities

Our sister society, the National Association for Humane Legislation, reports that it is working on a number of legislative projects, including:

(1) A possible revision of the 1973-74 Center bill, designed to avoid the objections raised by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and to broaden domestic coverage of the 1959 Act;

(2) A model state law for animal welfare which might replace present archaic and seldom-enforced state anti-cruelty laws;

(3) A comprehensive, detailed campaign plan for guidance in obtaining state humane legislation;

(4) Breeder and pet shop control legislation;

(5) A HWS Advisory Board, with members up to date on the status in the present Congress of all important humane bills introduced in 1973-74. The latter bills, if not passed, automatically become dead when Congress adjourns, but many of them will be reintroduced as new bills the next Congress. We need to have ready hand-held hears­

ings on some of them may be ready to act without going through the whole process again. This Digest will not be available until the situation has "simmered down".

He claims that HIS does not have sufficient funds to send frequent bulletins to its large mailing list. The cost of mailing is considerably greater than for a tax-exempt, nonprofit benefit corporation.