SERO Fall 1986

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POUND SEIZURE: NEEDLESS SUFFERING WE MUST STOP

Thousands of former pets are sent from animal shelters every year to research facilities. This practice, known as “pound seizure,” is widespread throughout the southeast and is of major concern to The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Animal shelters that release dogs and cats for research fail to fulfill their most important objective. They are charged, first and foremost, with the obligation to provide a humane sanctuary for lost, stray or owner-relinquished pets. They have the responsibility to prevent or abate animal suffering. If an animal shelter is unable to return or adopt a lost pet, then the shelter is morally bound to provide the animal with a painless death by humane euthanasia.

Pound seizure is not an acceptable alternative to euthanasia. It does not prevent suffering and death. Too often, it simply assures that the pet will suffer before it is ultimately killed.

Ethically, using former pets for experimentation is a sad betrayal of the special relationship existing between humans and pets. Dogs and cats, having shared our homes and affections, are neither physically nor emotionally conditioned to the pain and trauma of lab research. They are our companions, helpers, and protectors—not research tools.

The scientific community itself questions the suitability of pound animals for research. The National Institutes of Health, the largest single funding agency in the world for medical experimentation, prohibits the use of pound or “random-source” animals for its own in-house research projects. Many prominent scientists have publicly stated that experimentation on pound animals can produce unreliable or invalid results—data which fails to advance the goal of protecting human health and draws erroneous conclusions that may endanger our well-being.

Good scientific methods require the strict control of variables. The use of shelter animals with unknown genetic, environmental or medical histories is as inappropriate for accurate evaluations as using rats from the town dump for cancer studies.

Why, then, are pound animals used in research? The answer is simple. Strays and former pets are cheap and abundant. During 1985, the University (continued on page 2)
of Florida acquired nearly 2,000 dogs and cats from nearby shelters in Jacksonville and Clay County. The animals were used for a variety of medical and psychological experiments and for student teaching. The university's veterinary school, for example, supplied students with live dogs on which to practice life-saving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) techniques. After each dog was used, it was killed for post-mortem examination to determine if the procedure was done correctly. Sadly, this use of dogs was completely unnecessary. A much better alternative for CPR training is a computerized mannequin dog, called Resusci-Aid.

Dogg, which provides students with instant evaluation of their technique. Because it is reusable, it can replace hundreds of living animals. But despite its clear advantages and modest cost, the veterinary school did not acquire a Resusci-Aid for a year and a half after it became available. The university's veterinary school did not acquire a Resusci-Aid for a year and a half after it became available.

When our office opened in Tallahassee in January 1985, there were six animal-control centers in Florida sending animals to research laboratories. Nearly 10,000 former pets were annually shipped to several universities for experimentation and practice surgery. Today, there is only one county animal shelter, Hillsborough, which continues to do so. That is the sole remaining target in Florida to abolish pound seizure in Florida.

There are no laws in the southeast that require veterinarians to return animals to researchers. It is simply a matter of local option. Therefore, pound seizure must first be viewed as a community problem, and successful opposition is largely dependent upon local activism. Our task is to heighten public awareness among the citizenry and to properly focus growing concern.

Take, for example, the problem in Jacksonville, Florida. Several months ago, S.E.R.O. was contacted by Marjorie Angelo, who had only recently learned that her local animal-control department sent unwanted dogs and cats to the laboratories of the University of Florida. Angelo wanted to unite all her local animal-control departments in Tallahassee into a coordinated effort to defeat the legislation. She formed a grassroots organization called Balance, Inc. The HSUS provided assistance in the form of information resources, professional guidance, and membership development. Balance gained strength and political sophistication and was soon able to turn out hundreds of local voters at successive City Council hearings. The HSUS testified on behalf of its membership and in support of Balance at these hearings. On June 10, 1986, an ordinance to permanently ban pound seizure passed overwhelmingly. Similar strategies were employed in other communities. Local coalitions in Escambia and Marion Counties, Florida, and Greyson County, Georgia, won hard-fought victories to ban pound seizure. S.E.R.O. was active in these and other campaigns, but it must be noted that without strong local coordination, our efforts alone would not have prevailed.

The HSUS can lend a persuasive voice against the cruelties of pound seizure and offer unique techniques, national prestige, and scientific credibility. No politician, however, can guarantee the future of an animal shelter in his or her community. Nor can he be argued that without strong local coordination, our efforts alone would not have prevailed.

The HSUS can lend a persuasive voice against the cruelties of pound seizure and offer unique techniques, national prestige, and scientific credibility. No politician, however, can guarantee the future of an animal shelter in his or her community. Never has the HSUS had more reason to be proud of the work of its dedicated animal-welfare staff across the country. Our efforts have been strengthened by the contributions of hundreds of local groups, but it has always seemed the massive greyhound blood sport was not specifically illegal. In fact, cockfighting pits in some counties were issued occupational licenses to operate openly and legally. They even collected state sales taxes.

The following year, I investigated and attempted to prosecute a greyhound trainer for using live jackrabbits in a bloody training exercise called coursing. The racing dogs were turned loose in a large fenced enclosure to chase, kill and dismember the rabbits. This case, too, never went to trial, partly as a result of previously unsuccessful attempts at criminal prosecution. One judge in another county had ruled that greyhound coursing did not violate the state's anti-cruelty law because, in his opinion, the jackrabbits were not animals; they were rodents. Even though I left Florida to join the HSUS headquarters staff in 1977, I remained interested in getting strong animal-control legislation passed in the state. Many attempts were made involving the efforts of thousands of individuals and groups, but it always seemed the massive greyhound-lobby and pro-cockfighting politicians found ways to defeat the legislation.

Since my return to the glorious south, I have worked to get coursing and cockfighting anti-murder laws passed in the state. Many attempts were made involving the efforts of thousands of individuals and groups, but it always seemed the massive greyhound-lobby and pro-cockfighting politicians found ways to defeat the legislation.

The International Whaling Commission voted in 1982 to impose a moratorium on all commercial whaling, effective in 1986. Norway is the only country that has flatly refused to abide by this decision even though the whale population around Norway is severely depleted and in need of immediate protection.

On May 19, 1986, the southeastern offices of The Humane Society of the United States and Greenpeace sponsored a joint demonstration in Charleston, South Carolina, against Norwegian whaling. We chose this opportunity because the Norwegian luxury cruise ship, S.S. Norway, arrived in Charleston harbor during the special week-long cruise that included live broadcasts of NBC's Today Show.

We distributed thousands of postcards calling on Norway to abide by the IWC moratorium. Many of the ship's passengers and local townpeople pledged to support our efforts and promised to contact the Norwegian ambassador to the U.S. to express their concern. During the early morning hours of May 20, Greenpeace and HSUS representatives circled the S.S. Norway in a small boat towing a forty-foot inflatable whale, affectionately known as Flo. A large banner pinned to Flo's side read: "I am a gift from the Florida Federation of Conservationists. I demand that you return me to sea."

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With such time as Norway ceases to kill whales, we urge all HSUS members and friends to boycott Norwegian whale products. Norway's exports of $143 million worth of fish products to the U.S. are far more profitable to their economy than the $2 million they net from commercial whaling.
**Around the Region**

**ALABAMA**—The Birmingham Humane Society and the Alabama Federation for Animal Welfare hosted a day-long cruelty investigations workshop on May 31, 1986. SERO director Marc Paulhus was the program instructor. Participants learned how to professionally investigate, document, and prepare an animal abuse case for court. Also, since Alabama has only recently been included in the geographical area serviced by SERO, the meeting gave Paulhus the opportunity to become acquainted with animal-welfare leaders from across the state.

**FLORIDA**—In April, SERO attended a seminar entitled “Survival of the Florida Panther—A Conference on the Issues.” After two days of sessions, it was obvious that a great many obstacles face the twenty or so endangered panthers existing in the wild. Chief among these are habitat encroachment, vehicular kills, inbreeding, disease, and starvation. Some experts contend that the panthers on public lands are severely malnourished due to excessive deer hunting. Since deer are the preferred prey species for panther, an obvious solution would be to restrict deer hunting in areas of the Fakahatchee Strand and Big Cypress Preserve. Powerful pro-hunting groups, such as the Florida Wildlife Federation, oppose such restrictions, making state and federal wildlife agencies reluctant to impose stricter limits on deer kills.

**SOUTH CAROLINA**—In a state long held to have some of the most archaic attitudes toward living creatures, bear-baiting, coon-on-a-log contests, and other vicious activities in which wildlife is tormented for amusement are still taking place. Long prohibited in virtually all other states, these blood sports regularly take place in backwoods locations. SERO pledges to prosecute these crimes under existing laws, if possible, and to work statewide with animal-protection leaders to enact new and tougher laws during the upcoming legislative session.

**GEORGIA**—The Atlanta regional office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) received input from nearly 20 animal-protection organizations opposed to hunting and trapping on National Wildlife Refuges. Alerted to the public hearing by Lorraine Moore of SERO, each group’s spokesman expressed a strong desire to see the refuge system restored to its original purpose of providing “inviolate sanctuary” for wildlife. We believe the opening of refuges to sport hunting in recent years is inconsistent with Congress’ goal of preserving the diversity of wildlife species for future generations. Animal-protection groups, the only true conservationists speaking at the hearing, made such a formidable showing that a pro-hunting lobbyist later complained they were “massacred.” The Fish and Wildlife Service should recognize the fact that more than 90% of Americans don’t hunt. It is time that government policy is changed to reflect majority interests.

The Regional Report is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States.

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The Humane Society of the United States is a charitable, tax-exempt, national animal-welfare organization with headquarters in Washington, D.C., regional field offices, and an education center in Connecticut.

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**Reflect for a moment...**

**HOW CAN I HELP ANIMALS EVEN WHEN I’M NOT THERE ANYMORE?**

By your bequest for animal protection to The Humane Society of the United States, your will can provide for animals after you’re gone.

Naming The HSUS demonstrates your lasting commitment to animal welfare and strengthens the Society for this task. We will be happy to send information about our animal programs and material that will assist in planning a will.

Please send will information to

**Name ___________________________**

**Address ____________________________________________**

**City __________________ State _______________ ZIP code ________**

Mail in confidence to Murdaugh S. Madden, Vice President/General Counsel, The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

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