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HSUS Keeps Things Cool for Animals Rescued from Fires

The wildfires that burned more than 460,000 acres of eastern Arizona and displaced an estimated 30,000 people from their homes also forced hundreds of animals into temporary shelters in at least five different locations. The majority of those pets, distressed but otherwise healthy, were returned to their owners, thanks to several animal organizations, including The HSUS.

The temporary animal shelters were set up shortly after the Rodeo and Chediski fires, which were first spotted on June 18 and 20 respectively, began displacing residents in the area. The HSUS’s National Disaster Animal Response Team (N-DART) established a mobile emergency facility—actually a semi-truck, owned by Code 3 from Colorado, that’s equipped with boats, a horse trailer, a four-wheel drive vehicle, cages, and a triage unit—in Eagar, where volunteer veterinarians saw 20 to 25 animals a day. Some animals had serious medical conditions, but most were treated for minor problems such as stress, lacerations, and smoke inhalation.

From their base in Eagar, HSUS’s N-DART members also monitored an Apache Indian reservation in nearby McNary and Hon Dah, where more than 100 dogs were left behind when officials apparently told residents to leave immediately, without their animals. The N-DART members, some of whom came from places as far away as Florida, Maryland, Missouri, and Oregon, fed and watered the reservation animals daily.

In cooperation with state and local agencies—from the Arizona Humane Society and the Humane Society of Southern Arizona to the Payson City Council and its volunteer Police Department—N-DART members had earlier been operating an emergency shelter for dogs and cats in Payson, about 50 miles west of Heber.

During HSUS’s tenure at the Payson shelter, volunteers assisted many animals, some of them rescued by N-DART members and some brought in by evacuees. But by June 28, The HSUS had transitioned out of Payson and shifted all operations over to the mobile unit in Eagar.

But not before some rather dramatic rescues.

Beginning on Monday, June 24, N-DART’s Melissa Forberg and other team members joined firefighters, local police, and the sheriff’s department in rescuing several animals from Heber. They also tried to rescue a pot-bellied pig and two horses, continued on page 2.
In a Texas barn stands a skinny horse named Luke. Rescued from an auction and a saddened and compassionate HSVS member who visited an auction house for the first time, Luke had been bound for slaughter. He stood in a pen with several hundred other horses, most in poor condition, waiting to be placed on the auction block. No bidders looked his way. He was so thin and weak, he may as well have been invisible. Sharon Barrett negotiated his purchase before the auction began. She then called SWRO Director Lou Guyton to help. Knowing the nutritional and medical needs of debilitated horses, Lou offered to keep Luke at her barn until he was stronger.

Each year in the United States, 35,000 horses are auctioned for human consumption overseas. Thousands more are shipped across the U.S. border into Canada, all facing similar fates. Had Luke been purchased by a representative of one of Texas’s slaughter facilities, he would have been crammed into an overloaded trailer designed for cattle and hogs, and forced to travel for up to 48 hours without food, water, or rest until arriving at the slaughter plant. Many horses die in transport. Luke would not have survived such a trip.

"We’ll never know what led Luke to the auction barn in Texas. He was skin, bones, and scars. What life he had left supported into Canada, all facing similar fates. Had Lou offered to keep Luke at her barn until negotiated his purchase before the auction

Smoke billows from the horizon in a scene familiar to HSVS team members. That helped trigger the first N-DART deployment.

These trips are unfortunately part of every major disaster. Melissa Rubin, The HSUS’s vice president of field and disaster services, says animals are left behind because owners are not adequately prepared for such emergencies. When orders are given to evacuate, owners must move quickly, which is difficult when a scared animal is in hiding or wandering outside. That’s why it’s important for owners to confine their animals early in case they need to evacuate quickly.

The successes clearly outnumbered the losses. The HSUS estimates it treated more than 100 animals in the mobile unit, and fed and watered another 200; the Arizona Humane Society estimates that the other shelters handled 200 to 250 animals each. Because of the actions of countless animal-protection volunteers and professionals, many owners had happy reunions with their pets. The communities served by these humane organizations were appreciative of the animal volunteers from across the nation. ’We were wearing our HSVS T-shirts in a convince store,’ N-DART’s Rob Archibald says, ’and people came up to us and thanked us’.

This is how Luke looked two weeks after a handler HSVS member rescued him from being sold for slaughter.

Luke is a different horse after spending many weeks under the care of HSVS staff and his rescuer.

SWRO Saves Horse Bound For Slaughter

SWRO Hosts Disaster Conference

D uring the last week in May, more than 150 animal shelter directors, animal service officers, and other community disaster managers from throughout the United States attended The HSUS’s National Conference on Animals in Disaster in Fort Worth, Texas. SWRO organized and hosted the event, which included presentations ranging from bioterrorism and the threat from foreign animal disease to developing community plans for animals in disasters.

Presenters included Bob Sessions, assistant emergency manager for the Maryland Urban Search and Rescue Task Force-One, and his partner Sky, whose searches have included the Pentagon in September of 2001, the Oklahoma City Bombing, and the summer’s train derailment in suburban Washington. Other presenters included Marilyn Haggerty-Behm, executive director for the Center for Animal Care and Control in New York City, whose administrative offices are two blocks from ground zero; Chester Gibson, deputy administrator of animal care for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service; and Serena Vaninetti, a veterinary medical officer for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Oklahoma Voters Face Two Crucial Animal Issues

A new law signed by Gov. Bill Owens creates the felony offense of aggravated cruelty to animals and changes the unlawful dogfighting law to cover all animal cruelty from a misdemeanor to a Class 6 felony. The new law also mandates a state registry for cruelty offenders and requires distribution of this registry to all animal service officers, and other groups, and concerned citizens throughout the state.

The HSUS sponsored the adoption of the Oklahoma animal cruelty law. The new law also mandates a state registry for cruelty offenders and requires distribution of this registry to all animal service officers, and other groups, and concerned citizens throughout the state.

To fully inform Arkansas voters about this proposal, the campaign will need volunteers from humane societies, rescue groups, and concerned citizens throughout the state. To donate or volunteer, please call Citizens for a Humane Arkansas at 501-455-9661, or visit the campaign website at www.humanearkan.org.

Colorado, Arizona Legislate In Favor of Animals

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Andrews Cuts Federal Spending

A ballroom initiative proposing to strengthen the Animal Cruelty Act seeks to raise the penalties for the most extreme acts of animal cruelty from a Class A misdemeanor to a Class D felony. The proposal would also expand the existing felony and misdemeanor penalties in the unlawful dogfighting law to cover all animals in the custody of humans, including birds used for cockfighting. In the past few years, the people of Arkansas have seen a dog strangled and hung from a mailbox, a cat dropped from an overpass through the windshield of a moving car, and a puppy hanged with a hose and set on fire. In addition, birds are still being forced to fight to a horrific, torturous death in many pockets of the state. Although cockfighting has been outlawed, underground cockfighting industry thrives, understated by the relatively weak misde­meanor penalties provided by the current cruelty statute.

There will also be an anti-animal sale measure on the November ballot. SQ 698 would double the number of signatures needed for ballot qualification. It is extremely unlikely that any initiative in Oklahoma, so the new standard would make it a practical impos­sibility for any animal welfare measure to make the ballot. SQ 698, if approved by voters, would prevent the people of Oklahoma from using the initiative process to establish a new strong anti-animal cruelty law. "It is extremely unlikely that any initiative in Oklahoma, so the new standard would make it a practical impossibility for any animal welfare measure to make the ballot. SQ 698, if approved by voters, would prevent the people of Oklahoma from using the initiative process to establish a new strong anti-animal cruelty law. The HSUS urges all Oklahomans to vote "yes" on SQ 698 and "no" on SQ 699. To help, call the Oklahoma Coalition Against Cockfighting at 405-478-3128, or e-mail the group at OCAC@bancockfighting.org.

Learn more about SQ 698 and the ballot measure at www.bancockfighting.org.

Arkansas Ballot Measure Makes Extremes Animal Cruelty a Felony

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Oklahoma voters have an opportunity to ban cockfighting by voting “yes” on State Question (SQ) 697, which will make animal cruelty a felony and make Oklahoma the 48th state to outlaw it. Cockfighters had filed lawsuits in an attempt to prevent the measure from appearing on the ballot. The Oklahoma Supreme Court dashed the cockfighters’ hopes by issuing a unanimous ruling that the measure met all of the standards for ballot placement.

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Saturdays are hectic, nonstop days for the staff at our HSUS Spay Neuter Clinic and Animal Wellness Center in Dallas, Texas. The surgery schedule is always full, with up to 55 animals of all shapes and sizes anxiously waiting in the kennels. It is not unusual for the clinic to have a line of pets and owners outside the door, with every chair in the waiting room full, and all four exam rooms occupied. Saturday is a day when the phones never stop ringing, the dogs never stop barking, and the challenges for our veterinarians are always full, with up to 55 animals of all sizes present.

On this recent Saturday, the veterinary staff would be tested with several emergencies—each one a cherished pet, each needing urgent, immediate care. Perhaps the most challenging was an 85-pound American bulldog (Susie), who was unable to deliver puppies and in critical condition. Dr. Kelly Bruner took the call, and from the information given to her by the dog owner determined that the dog was in serious condition and needed immediate care. The owner and her husband had both lost their jobs as a result of the September 11 tragedy, and she said they were struggling to pay bills and had no money for emergency surgery. Within an hour, she was on her way to the clinic with a very sick dog.

In the meantime, spay/neuter surgeries began. One of the first animals on Dr. Bruner's table was a little cocker spaniel. As the animal was prepped for surgery by HSUS vet technicians, they discovered that she was a hermaphrodite, an animal possessing both male and female organs. This can often be a delicate surgery, but Dr. Bruner's skills and practiced technique soon had the dog in recovery, successfully spayed and neutered, with an excellent prognosis.

Next up was a beautiful male boxer, and during his pre-surgery preparation, staff discovered that he was a monorchid, an animal with just one testicle descended. This surgery would require that Dr. Bruner perform exploratory surgery to locate the other testicle. Just as carefully, she searched with her surgeon's skill and intuition, and finally located the organ within the dog's abdominal cavity. Within a few minutes, the boxer was in recovery with a good prognosis.

Susie, the sick bulldog, had arrived, and was being assessed by the vet techs. She was very sick, unable to stand on her own, and had a temperature of 105, which was dangerously high.

While she was being assessed, Dr. Bruner was assisting another clinic vet. A small mother cat and her four kittens had been brought in, and the mother cat appeared to be suffering from poisoning. She was having seizures and drooling. Even after both veterinarians administered several life-saving measures, the cat died. Volunteer staff members provided the kittens with specialized foster care.

Dr. Bruner visited with the owner of the bulldog. The surgery would be extremely dangerous, but without it the dog would die. The owner listened carefully, gave consent for surgery, and then hugged her dog goodbye. The next four hours would be a waiting game, while Dr. Bruner applied her skills yet again. She would have the life of a six-year-old, beloved family companion in her hands.

During surgery, it was discovered that Susie's puppies had not survived. Her internal organs revealed a massive infection. Staff gave her a blood transfusion to help replace some of the fluids lost during the difficult procedure. After almost an hour, the dog was placed in recovery and carefully monitored until she regained consciousness. She had a guarded prognosis.

By this time, nearly 30 of the day's 48 animal patients had been successfully sterilized and were recovering well. All four kittens whose mother had died had been placed with staff. Another cat had been brought in to the Wellness Center with an injury, and had been diagnosed, treated, and released to the owner with strict instructions for care. Another 45 pets had received treatment. And the clinic's reception area was still full of patiently waiting clients and their companions. It was another typical Saturday at the clinic.

Susie the bulldog has since fully recovered. Her family's love and care helped her through those first days after surgery, proving again how strong the connection is between a family and their pet.

Many of our clients are unable to pay standard veterinary fees for one reason or another. Some have lost their jobs, some have limited income, and many simply find themselves at a place in time when they need a helping hand. All of them love their pets and deserve our respect and appreciation. We signed on for this job because we are committed to improving the lives of animals as well as the people who care about them. And we consider ourselves lucky to be able to help the Susies of the world.
Native Nations Program Heads to Utah

This past April, SWRO sponsored the first spay/neuter and education event for the Uintah-Ouray Reservation, home to the Northern Ute tribe in northern Utah. The event was a cooperative effort, combining the talents of volunteer, licensed veterinary staff, and 30 veterinary students from across the country. Nearly 200 animals were spayed or neutered during the five-day visit. Additionally; 25 horses and approximately 450 dogs and cats received life-saving vaccines, worm medication, and minor medical procedures. These clinics have made their way to the Southwest region by way of The HSUS new program, Remote Area Veterinary Services (RAVS). RAVS's goal is to bring excellent veterinary services to native nations and remote or economically stressed communities.

Besides spay, neuter, and vaccinations, heads to Utah says Dittberner.

"Bringing a fresh approach to a variety of cultures has been the key that is turning statistics into success for the spay/neuter clinics held on the reservations. native communities, such as the Navajo, a close neighbor of the Northern Ute, report that tribal members easily connect with, whether or not they are pet owners. I would volunteer for another trip in a blink," says Dittberner. "The need is overwhelming, and the impact on every owner is immediate and extremely gratifying."

"I believe this statement to be true. My daughter, now six, used to want to dress our cats up in doll clothes, oblivious to the international concern and the identification tags, and microchipping when alerts are issued. The best way to ensure a lost pet’s safe return is to have pets vaccinated, and 

Director's Report

By Lou Guyton

Director of the Southwest Regional Office

Can You Teach Compassion?

D

r. Leslie Sinclair, DVM, and I were instructing a class recently, and one of the attendees asked, "Can you teach compassion?" After a silent pause, Doc said, "I am not sure if you can teach compassion, but you can provide the tools, knowledge, and skills necessary for people to behave compassionately."

I believe this statement to be true. My daughter, now six, used to want to dress our cats up in doll clothes, oblivious to the international concern and the importance of identifying pets—even those who remain indoors—with collars, identification tags, and microchipping when alerts are issued. The best way to ensure a lost pet’s safe return is to have pets vaccinated, and...

Mary Lou Guyton has been given the skills and knowledge to treat animals with respect and kindness.

Contacting HSUS

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Fax: 972-488-2964

Email: swro@hsus.org

Web Page: www.hsus.org/swro

Promoting the protection of all animals

We spayed and neutered more than 4,000 animals, and provided behavioral services for an additional 6,000 animals at the HSUS Spay Neuter Clinic and Animal Wellness Center. We provided instruction and outreach in animal care and control professionals. We worked through hundreds of animals concerning with constituents who called for help and there is more—there is always more—to do.

Do what I hope will be the fruit of this labor? I hope there are immediate as well as long-term benefits for people and animals, and the environment. I hope my daughter really does grow up to be a veterinarian. And I pray that our society as a whole will be more compassionate and like Doc, a person who helps animals (like Mom), and a singer—just for fun.

Disaster Conference," page 3 Service, and the HSUS's Executive Vice President Patricia Forkan. The HSUS's formal agreements with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Red Cross to take advantage of The HSUS's special expertise in animal protection and disaster mitigation and response to support the nations' response in time of natural disaster, as well as to improve the public's understanding of the close relationship between people and their animals. The HSUS's disaster work in communities and support relationships with these and many other organizations is recognition of The HSUS as a premier resource for community disaster education and emergency response.