NRRO Helps Dog Owner

It was a case of a dog yard grown out of control. One rural man kept 406 dogs at his Alaska home. He obviously needed help, and we saw this as an opportunity to reach a unique, non-judicial settlement.

At first, this case seemed like a routine one for the HSUS Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAYS), HSUS's program that provides free veterinary care to needy communities. RAYS would sterilize the majority of the dogs so that the owner could stop population growth and start to place some of his animals. However, that direction changed considerably when the RAYS team visited the site two weeks before the scheduled clinic and found some dogs with health problems. There were also some humane issues to address.

After we established a good working relationship with the dog owner, we found that he was willing to release dogs for adoption. Over the course of three days, he released nearly half of his dogs to us, which created a happy but immediate problem.

The local veterinary, animal control, continued on page 4

Collies’ Camp Days Come to a Close

Much has happened in the continuing and complicated animal cruelty case that we now simply call Camp Collie. This case began on Halloween night 2002, when U.S. Customs officials stopped a tractor-trailer at the Canadian border north of Shelby, Montana (see spring 2003 NRRO Regional News). The 7 by 45 foot trailer contained 172 sickly and dehydrated dogs (mostly collies) and 11 cats.

The owners were charged with 180 counts of animal cruelty. But it took two jury trials and six months of intensive animal care before the couple was convicted and plans could go forward for sterilizing and adopting these animals.

Thankfully, volunteers came from across the U.S. and Canada to care for and walk the dogs during their many months of confinement at the Toole County Fairgrounds as “evidence” in the trials.

A Crisis Arises

This past May, the Toole County Fair Board decided that the animals had to be removed from the Fairgrounds, where they'd been since they were rescued, to make way for a major improvement project. The Toole County Sheriff’s Office, Cascade County Humane Society, and NRRO searched for a new Camp Collie site. A warehouse in Great Falls fit the bill.

Always looking for ways to turn adversity into opportunity, we decided to make the relocation of the animals a disaster training exercise. A local animal foundation, the local humane society, and a military engineering squadron pooled resources to transform the warehouse into Camp Collie, Great Falls. The team power washed and sealed the 20,000 square-foot floor, supplied an emergency water supply, and assembled the portable dog kennels. The HSUS purchased most of the 70 portable dog runs needed to house the dogs in their new temporary home.

NRRO organized and facilitated the huge move that included 45 trucks of various sizes to carry the nearly 200 animals 100 miles from Camp Collie in Shelby to Camp Collie in Great Falls. At least 100 volunteers were stationed at each end of the trip to move the dogs, all the while following the rules for maintaining them as evidence in a criminal proceeding. At least eight squad cars from four law-enforcement agencies provided escort and traffic control once the mile-and-a-half-long convoy left Toole County for the continued on page 2
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Protection of Animals, and International
Most of the shelters visited were low­
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Welcome to Camp Collie!
Great Falls, Montana
Volunteer Hours: 9am - 4pm
Volunteer Information
Up to 500 volunteers are needed to help sort for the
Volunteer work site at animal evaluation
Sponsor your next photo shoot.
Please share your photos.

These are just a few of the dedicated volunteers who kept Camp Collie running for the better part of a year while the case against the dogs' owners played out.

Permanent Homes at Last
NRRO continued to play a team­building role when there was widespread disagreement about the procedure for sterilizing and adopting the dogs. After our office sponsored a conference call involving all the interested parties, it was decided that adopters must submit to both a background check (to search for animal or domestic violence or other crimes that might endanger the animals) and a home site visit to ensure that they are prepared to accept and care for the animals. NRRO co­sponsored a spay/neuter clinic in which 103 of the collies were spayed or neutered in preparation for adoption.

In the end, about 30 dogs were adopted out to 25 of the volunteers who had worked so
fiercely for the dogs over the past nine months. Cindy James was one such volunteer. James was attracted to her two dogs' calm demeanor. "They weren't barking," she says. "They were quiet little souls, just wanting to see what would happen to them. They were so sweet amid all the chaos." This major cruelty case would not have had such an amazing result without the work of the excellent Toole County Sheriff's Office and the aid of many organizations. But the true heroes in this case are the hundreds of volunteers who donated thousands of hours feeding, grooming, and walking the dogs, and caring for the cats. This was an amazing effort in which NRRO was privileged to play a role.

Dave Goes to Russia
T
this past May, NRRO Director Dave Pauli was privileged to be part of a Humane Society International (HSI) team to visit Moscow, inspect local animal shelters, and provide two days of training to veterinary and animal sheltering leaders from Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Armenia, Russia, Ukraine, and Yugoslavia. By invitation, representatives from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, World Society for Protection of Animals, and International Fund for Animal Welfare joined HSI to bring the 50 attendees much needed training in many areas of animal sheltering and adoptions.

During our shelter tours and training, we learned that these countries from the former Soviet Union faced the same lack of finances and resources that many of our own rural communities face. In one community, the volunteer director of a neighborhood shelter also provided free animal control services to his community. Most of the shelters visited were low­volume, private facilities that could benefit greatly from some of the market­ continued from "Camp Collie," page 1
comforts of Great Falls.

Meanwhile, Back at Court
The dogs' owners' first trial resulted in a hung jury. But shortly after the move, the second trial, held in Anaconda, Montana, resulted in a quick conviction on all the animal cruelty counts. The defense then made a plea bargain with the Toole County prosecutor. Under the terms of the June 6 sentencing agreement, the owners had to surrender all the animals except for three dogs. The court also ordered that 20 collies be awarded to kennels, as designated by the owners but approved by the Toole County Sheriff's Office. That left more than 150 dogs to be adopted. They and the cats would become the property of the county, and the spaying and adoption process could begin.


HSUS's Betsy McFarland, shown here with a Russian dog, joined NRRO Director Dave Pauli on a Humane Society International trip to evaluate Russian animal shelters.

 Legislative Victories
T
he 2003 legislative session was the best in the history of our office.

A

Instead, no fewer than seven bills that benefit animals passed this session. Primarily among them are two felony cruelty bills, which were hard­fought battles in Montana and Wyoming. In both states these bills faced committee tabling, and major overhauls, but also had huge public support. Both felony cruelty bills added important options for prosecutors, and they picked up momentum and support as they worked their way through committee hearings. HSUS members and animal rescue groups added to the voice of animal control, humane society, and law enforcement professionals to get stronger penalties for both felony cruelty and felony animal cruelty.

Montana and Wyoming each passed bills that will ensure uniform euthanasia standards. NRRO hopes to create curricula that would allow students to attend both states to attend available training classes in either state. South Dakota and Idaho each had some progressive legislation pass. South Dakota passed a good bestiality law, and Idaho strengthened several laws restricting game and fur farms. Our Montana coalition was also able to defeat a game­farm bill meant to overturn the restrictions gained in last year's public referendum victory. This was not an easy victory, but was part of a very respectful session.

While thankful for the successes of this session, we are already working on draft legislation for the next two years. We have lots of follow­up in Montana and Wyoming to help write regulations that will support the important legislation passed this year. We also plan to support HSUS's Pacific Northwest Office as it pursues getting felony animal cruelty passed in Alaska. Our office had initiated that effort, and we hope our experience in Montana will help achieve success in Alaska.

NAME TEXT END
Happy Ending in Horse Neglect Case

In March 2003, a Montana Department of Livestock inspector called our office about 10 horses living in a small pasture who were the subject of concern among passers-by and neighbors. Would we help evaluate the horses and the conditions they were living in?

Upon arrival at the site, we saw that the horses appeared to be in poor shape. Spinal ridges were clearly visible even from a distance on at least two of the horses, which demonstrated either a serious illness or severe malnutrition. Two horses were eating fecal matter. Upon closer inspection, we found two carcasses, one from a horse who appeared to have died within the last five days. The pasture was overgrazed and posed many hazards, including poor fencing and dangerous debris. All agreed to impound the horses for further evaluation.

The horses were hauled to the local fairgrounds and veterinarians assessed their condition. The team presented photos and documentation to the county attorney, who charged the owner with animal cruelty.

At the fairgrounds, the horses began a good feeding program and were wormed and vaccinated. The trial was then scheduled for mid-July. Since the fairgrounds were only able to care for the horses temporarily, they were moved to a ranch several miles away where a knowledgeable horseman has been caring for them.

NRRO visited the horses at the ranch twice within a three-month period, and the transformation was remarkable. The horses quickly went from emaciated, dull-coated, and lethargic to well-conditioned, shiny, and active.

The case then took a positive turn when the owner pleaded guilty to multiple counts of animal cruelty and surrendered all the horses to the county, agreeing to pay restitution. The trial would not be necessary, and the horses were now the property of the county.

Since The HSUS had paid for all the veterinary expenses and contributed a major portion of the boarding fees, our office was able to formulate an agreement with the prosecution and defense. The county would release the horses to NRRO for placement at a horse rescue organization instead of being sold by the sheriff’s office. This would ensure that the horses would become companion animals and not end up at the slaughterhouse.

Get the RAVS E-newsletter

No matter where in the world the Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAVS) team travels, you can follow along with the RAVS e-newsletter. Whether it’s a spay/neuter clinic on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming or an equine wellness clinic in Peru, readers can get a glimpse into the activities of these hardworking volunteer veterinary students (and the professional vets who oversee them), who travel to the neediest areas of the world to help the animals—and their owners.

Go to www.hsus.org/ravsnewsletter to sign up for this free, monthly newsletter.

There’s no place like home.

The HSUS Wildlife Land Trust protects wild animals by permanently preserving their natural habitats and providing them sanctuary within those habitats.

We accept tax-deductible donations—including tax-deductible donations of wildlife-abundant properties where thereafter wild animals are permanently protected.

Please help us save wildlife.

If you have property that should be permanently protected, please contact

The HSUS Northern Rockies Regional Office
490 N. 31st St., Ste. 215
Billings, MT 59101
406-255-7161

An affiliate of the Humane Society of the United States

continued from “Dog Owner,” page 1
Opportunities to Get Involved

W

ant to make a difference for animals? NRRO has several programs you can participate in. Mentioned here are just a few.

Humane education reaches children as well as adults. Speaking about dog bite prevention, pet care and responsibility, animal ordinances, the role of humane animal care and control, or the importance of spaying and neutering helps make your community safer for both animals and people. The rewards are many! Your community’s dog bite statistics and shelter im

...of prevention, pet care and responsibility; community safer for both animals and... }

jobs from local shelters or law enforcement. Then add some unique animal rescues, including an alligator, two desert tortoises, and a dozen other species. Again, add individual humane education classroom visits to more than 3,000 native nations youth in South Dakota and Wyoming, and you would think it was a pretty effective year.

But we are just talking about the first six months of 2003, and we haven’t even mentioned that Program Coordinator Suzi Hansen and I gave eight training workshops at HSUS Animal Care Expo and state association meetings. I can’t forget to mention my involvement in the Russia project or our ongoing involvement in supporting a number of local startup groups or special fundraisers. If the rest of the year keeps pace with the above we will be ecstatic, but also very over budget and very weary!

As covered elsewhere, this issue announces the difficult task of saying goodbye to Alaska and Idaho while happily welcoming Colorado and Utah. The lessons learned in Idaho and Alaska will serve us well as we develop outreach programs in our two new states. We wish Alaska and Idaho great success as part of the Pacific Northwest Regional Office and look forward to the new challenges of serving Colorado and Utah.

Welcome, Colorado and Utah!

E

effective September 1, three western HSUS regional offices experienced a realignment of states. This realignment gives each of the three affected regional offices more balance and greater states with similar needs and issues.

NRRO transferred responsibility for Alaska and Idaho to the Pacific Northwest Regional Office in Seattle. Our office accepted Colorado and Utah from the Southwest Regional Office. So NRRO now covers Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

Such changes are difficult, as each regional office develops strong personal relationships with the agencies and individual members in its states. But because these changes will help the HSUS to better staff and serve the states, we hope that the transition will be a smooth and productive one.

We are excited to welcome Colorado and Utah to our Northern Rockies region. We already have networked and trained with many of the agencies there in these, federal and large-scale cruelty cases. Now we look forward to developing stronger relationships and helping address animal protection issues unique to both states. We hope we can immediately enhance disaster response and promote native nations programs.

I want to learn how I can help our animal friends and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Please send me information about: [ ] Making a memorial donation to honor the life of a pet, friend, or relative. [ ] Providing for my pets in my will and in case of emergency. [ ] Planning my estate and will to help animals and The HSUS.

Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS. Giving The HSUS a gift of stock.

Helping to educate children or adults about kindness and responsible animal care is one way you can improve your community.

NRRO will be happy to help you develop a program and provide materials to make it easy and fun.

By Dave Pauli

Director of the Northern Rockies Regional Office

Here’s to the Next Six Months!

W

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Then we had the ups and downs of Camp Collie, including a second trial conviction, a major translocation project, and an interesting final resolution process. Add to that the major hoarder cases in Idaho (560 dogs) and Alaska (406 huskies), some equine cruelty cases, RAVS clinics in South Dakota, North Dakota, Alaska, and Wyoming, and literally hundreds of requests for assistance from local shelters or law enforcement. Then add some unique animal rescues, including an alligator, two desert tortoises, and a dozen other species. Again, add individual humane education classroom visits to more than 3,000 native nations youth in South Dakota and Wyoming, and you would think it was a pretty effective year.

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Dave’s Dialogue

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Animal Care Expo 2004 in Dallas

When: March 10-13, 2004
Where: Dallas, Texas, at the Hystett Regency Reunion

The HSUS has developed a dynamic education conference designed for anyone who works or volunteers to help animals. Animal Care Expo is a world-class educational conference combined with a full-scale international trade show, the goal of which is to help those in animal sheltering, care, and rescue do the best and most efficient jobs possible. Go to www.hsus.org/sheltering/general/expo_information.html to learn more.

Contacting HSUS

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E-Mail: nrro@hsus.org
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