HSUS Helps Crush National Pit-Bull Ring

About 150 dogs were rescued in an unprecedented raid on what federal and local investigators are calling the headquarters of a national underground dogfighting ring in southwest Ohio. More than forty law enforcement personnel took part in the predawn raids in Clinton and Clermont counties on June 16, 1988, culminating a six-month cooperative effort of the Great Lakes Regional Office of The HSUS, the FBI, and local law enforcers.

“This is the most significant effort of The Humane Society in investigating dogfighting to date, given it is the first time federal charges have been filed on dogfighting,” said Sandy Rowland, director of The HSUS’s Great Lakes Regional Office.

Two couples were arrested and indicted in the raid. Gregory Lowe, 41, and Samantha Lowe of New Richmond, Ohio, as well as Kenneth W. Gaines, 48, and Cathy Bell Gaines, 36, of Blanchester, Ohio, were indicted on federal misdemeanor and state felony charges. Two more indictments were handed down after the raids. Each federal charge carries a maximum penalty upon conviction of up to one year or a $10,000 fine. In the state of Ohio, illegal activities relating to selling, purchasing, possessing, continued on page 2

A treadmill used to train fighting dogs was part of the evidence seized in a June 16 raid on a dogfighting operation in Ohio.

Control Pesky Critters Humanely

Nearly one hundred animal-control personnel, humane-society employees, and other interested parties got together at our regional seminar in Worthington, Ohio, on March 24, 1988, to discuss how to deal with nuisance-wildlife problems without poisoning, shooting, bludgeoning, and terrorizing the critters.

For years techniques such as those listed above have been used misguidedly and unsuccessfully as solutions to the problem. The Humane Society of the United States advocates putting out the “Unwelcome” sign to wildlife for a more successful long-term effect on the control of urban wildlife and the problems it can cause.

Some of the techniques offered at the seminar included the following:

• Use ammonia-soaked rags or moth-ball-filled stockings to send critters scurrying from chimneys and attics; fans, noises, floodlights, and dog whistles may work, too.

• Attach PVC plumbing to electrical wires to prevent gnawing.

• Plant veggies that rabbits don’t like (squash, corn, cucumbers) around your

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and training dogs for dogfighting is a felony of the fourth degree, which carries a poten­
tial penalty of from six months to five years imprisonment and/or a fine of $2,500.
All offenders are currently out on bond.
Rowland explained what made this June raid unique:
“IT involved the FBI for the first time,” she said, “because of the alleged transport condi­
tions for the dogs in interstate commerce for dogfighting. It’s also unique because of the
number of dogs rescued, and the national and international connections of the people
arrested.”
About 150 dogs were seized, 135 of them pit bulls. Numerous champion and grand
champion fighters were among the animals. Dogfighters define a champion as a dog that
has won three fights, while a grand champion has won five. Such designations
escalate the value of not only the champions but also their offspring.
In addition to the dogs, records of dog sales from seven different foreign coun­
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Rowland and GLRO Program Coor­
dinator Robin Weirauch assisted in the handling of dogs at both raids.
“We also helped with the collection of other evidence,” Rowland added, some of
which included equipment used to train the dogs, such as treadmills and catmills. Both
contraptions are used to build up a dog’s stamina before a match, as fights may last
two hours or more. Catmills, or jennies, are heavily weighted mills that a dog may
be forced to pull in a circle for up to eight hours a day. Other species, tethered just
beyond the dog’s reach, are often used on the equipment to entice the dog. Live or
dead cats (hence the name “catmill”), roosters, or, in this case, a ferret, may be the
unlucky bait. The ferret was rescued from an extremely filthy, maggot-infested, and cramped crate.

Other evidence seized included
dogfighting paraphernalia, such as parting
sticks and the blood-stained fighting pit
itself; dogfighting publications and videotapes; drugs; and illegal weapons. A
marijuana field was also discovered at one location.
David Lichtenfeld, another special agent
with the FBI in Cincinnati, gave unstinted
credit to The HSUS for its assistance in the case. “The Humane Society was able to
assist a great deal in this investigation because of their experience in monitoring the
activities of dogfighting, and they con­
tributed some very valuable information,”
Lichtenfeld told a reporter.
In addition to services rendered before and during the raids, the GLRO also
worked with the media after the raids to educate the general public about
dogfighting. Rowland and Weirauch par­
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Dr. Randy Lockwood, HSUS director of
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Pit Bulls
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higher education and animal behaviorist, also assisted by testifying at the hearing to determine if the impounded dogs were a danger to humans and other animals. He stated that they could not adequately be held at any animal shelter without causing a dangerous situation.
Rowland agreed with Lockwood’s assessment. “Humane euthanasia was the kindest thing we could do for them,” she said. “Most of the dogs were destined to die fighting, anyway.
And if the dogs don’t die in the ring, they stand an excellent chance of doing so after­wards. Losers are sometimes shot by their owners, perhaps to help erase the embar­rassment of losing. Winners as well as losers may succumb to severe dehydration and a subsequent heart attack, as it is com­mon practice for owners to dehydrate dogs before the fight, supposedly to cut down on the amount of blood lost.
The GLRO has in the past participated in dogfight raids in Columbus, Dayton, central Ohio, Toledo, Ann Arbor, and Bond County, Ill. With the support of its members, The HSUS will continue its ef­
forts to end this barbaric “sport,” both regionally and nationally.

When the Harrison County (W. Va.) Humane Society (HCHS) was formed, back in 1959, its founders never dreamed that one day the society’s most serious cruelty complaint would involve its own animal shelter. It has become necessary, however, for the HCHS to close its shelter to save the animals from further suffering.
The Great Lakes Regional Office began receiving letters of concern from citizens about the conditions of the animals in the Harrison County shelter in October 1997. However, this was not the first round of complaints received by The Humane So­ciety of the United States. Phyllis Wright, vice president for companion animals, had been deeply involved in working toward correction of poor conditions for the animals in years past, helping the humane society get on the right track. Unfortu­nately, improvements in operational pro­cedures were not permanent, and matters once again went out of control.

Wright and Robin Weirauch of the GLRO traveled to Harrison County in response to the numerous false and serious complaints received recently from Harrison County residents. On May 31 and June 1, Wright and Weirauch inspected the grounds and buildings of the shelter in Shinnston, W. Va., and found extremely unacceptable conditions.
A meeting was arranged with the Har­rison County Humane Society board members, and they resolved that the shelter would be closed within thirty days. Upon returning to Shinnston on June 30, Wright and Weirauch found the shelter property vacant except for two animals: one very old dog that had lived out its life at the shelter and was reportedly being taken home by the shelter director, and one neighborhood cat that always came by for a free meal.
Most of the animals were euthanatized due to poor health and disease. Some animals were placed in homes.
Because there is a county-owned animal shelter that can humanely and effectively house Harrison County’s surplus animals, the GLRO recommended that the HCHS use its funds for projects such as humane education and spay/neuter programs. This would help toward the reduction of surplus animals that will need to be housed and/or euthanatized in the county shelter.
Locally, interest in the future of the Har­rison County Humane Society has been rekindled, and many new faces are becom­ing involved in reorganizing the society’s goals. The county government has already agreed to house and care for stray and un­wanted cats, and emergency services for sick and injured animals are being initiated by the society with the assistance of local veterinarians.
Pesky Critters
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garden edge. However, with rabbits, a fence is the best defense.
• Don’t be afraid of bats. They’re harmless and make better bug-eaters than those zappers that crackle with the sound of electrocution all night long.
• A one-way door (wooden frame with hardware cloth and hinge) allows an invader to exit from the hole it has found in your house, but keeps it from reentering. Once it’s gone, fix the hole.

If you’re not into home remedies and setting live traps, look for a local pet control service that will do the job for you—humanely.
The GLRO is most appreciative that Upper Arlington, Ohio, resident and HSUS member Ritchie Laymon volunteered to do the local legwork which made this seminar a reality and huge success.

Speakers for the workshop included Bill Bridgeland, an urban wildlife biologist; Donald Burton, D.V.M., director of the Wildlife Rehabilitation and Research Cooperative; and John Hadidian, Ph.D., an urban-wildlife specialist with the National Park Service. Representing The HSUS were staff members Guy Hodge, director, department of data and information services; Dr. Randy Lockwood, director, higher education programs; Sandy Rowland, director of the Great Lakes Regional Office; and Robin Weirauch, program coordinator at the Great Lakes Regional Office.

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

With legislative sessions down throughout the region, it is time to wrap up current legislative efforts and look to the next session, which will begin January first in all states within our region.

Michigan is still addressing the issues of who has the authority to name hunted species, dangerous and vicious dogs, and exotic animals. You may refer to past HSUS publications or contact this office for details of these efforts.

Ohio plans to celebrate passage of a license differential bill which we hope will pass the floor of the senate and be signed by the governor before the end of this session.

It is important to contact the GLRO if you are at all interested in working to help secure passage of bills that protect animals, or if you want to play a role in killing a bill that would be detrimental to our cause. We will keep you apprised by mail or telephone as your help is needed.

To make it easier for you, I have included the form below which you may complete and return to this office.

I cannot emphasize enough the need for your participation. The humane movement was very embarrassed this past spring when the governor of Ohio, who had made public his interest in vetoing Sunday hunting legislation, received only 500 letters from us opposing it and 14,000 letters from the “shoot’em up” lobby in support of the bill.

Your help can and will make a major difference and help ensure this never occurs again.

Reflect for a moment....

HOW CAN I HELP ANIMALS EVEN WHEN I NO LONGER SHARE THEIR WORLD?

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, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

The Regional Report is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States The Great Lakes Regional Office 735 Haskins Street Bowling Green, Ohio 43402-1696 (419) 352-5141 Sandy Rowland, Director The office is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and is closed on federal holidays. © 1988 The Humane Society of the United States. All rights reserved.