New Native Nation Program

A Curriculum of Kindness

One of MWRO’s goals is to reach out to communities with limited resources to address animal welfare concerns. Native American reservations across the nation face problems stemming from companion animal overpopulation. Compounding these problems are a lack of awareness or interest in animal issues and lack of funding for programs to address them. MWRO, along with other HSUS regional offices, has been working with HSUS Native Nations Coordinator Sandy Grambort to develop long-term solutions to animal problems on reservations. Our overall plan is to bring awareness of animal welfare and public safety issues to Native American leaders. We have offered resources and expertise in involving the community to make decisions and plan for animals. Working side by side with key tribal administrators, a long-term solution to the companion animal problem in many native communities is now within reach.

Many of our country’s native nations lack the financial resources to adequately handle the myriad problems that arise because of animal overpopulation. Often continued on page 3

MWRO Responds to Iowa Flood

The mighty Mississippi River has always lured people to its shores, fascinating us with its vastness and power. For generations commerce flourished along the banks of the Mississippi, but unprepared businesses were often destroyed by the cycles of river flooding. Davenport, Iowa, is a river community that has been impacted more than once by the rising Mississippi River. The spring floods of 1993 and 2001 were the two most recent ones. The Humane Society of Scott County (HSSC) is currently located on River Road in Davenport, literally yards away from the banks of the Mississippi. This precarious location puts the Society and the animals in its care in a most vulnerable position.

In 1993 flooding forced the evacuation of HSSC and the subsequent relocation of their animal shelter for four months. Our office was there to assist HSSC and the community with displaced animals.

This year the combination of heavy snowfall, no “January thaw,” and a rapid spring melt provided ideal conditions for flooding. MWRO monitored the situation along the Mississippi River from northeastern Iowa to southeastern Missouri to ensure that the needs of animals and their owners and caretakers were being met. Then the spring rains came.

MWRO kept in contact with HSSC Executive Director Pamela Arndt and Scott County Emergency Manager Ross Bergen for the latest updates as this community appeared to be the most vulnerable in the region.

Then the day came when Pam Arndt decided the shelter would once again have to evacuate. Pam said, “The water is now covering our driveway and the river is not clue to crest for several days.” She requested HSUS’s help in relocating HSSC’s 200 animals.

MWRO Director Amy Suarez contacted HSUS Disaster Director Anne Culver to help coordinate our response. The day after Arndt’s request, the HSUS team pulled into Davenport. Arndt had secured a temporary shelter location: a currently unoccupied Denny’s restaurant generously donated by the building’s owner. The HSSC staff and more than 40 local volunteers met the HSUS team.

There was a bustle of activity; people moved cages, desks, and boxes of records and equipment into donated vehicles maneuvered by volunteer drivers. The continued on page 2
organize the set-up of the new shelter, including the location of cages, the dispatch center, the office, and supplies. Top priority went to risk management to reduce possible injuries to staff and volunteers, as well as stress to the animals. An exercise area for the dogs was constructed out of donated bull wire panels and located just outside the back door for both convenience and additional security. By the end of the first day, HSSC and all of the animals in its care had been removed to the temporary shelter. Before leaving, the staff displayed a huge banner at the front entrance indicating the Society was ready for business in its new location.

The next day the HSUS team met with Emergency Manager Bergen to discuss county plans for animals during disasters; to update HSUS on predicted river activity, weather, and disaster response plans; and to work as well as to discuss plans for pets owned by those in the most vulnerable neighborhoods. The HSUS suggested improvements in the Scott County disaster plan and offered additional assistance. Staff also met with public relations personnel of the Scott County Health Department to discuss animal issues and how HSUS could help.

The HSUS team toured neighborhoods most vulnerable to flooding to speak with pet owners. Some areas were already flooded. Many people were bemoaning homes whose first floors were under water. Team members spoke with numerous residents about animal issues during disasters, especially about disaster planning and evacuation with pets. While speaking with two area pet owners on a flooded street, HSUS crew observed a mask rat on a fence a few feet of where they were standing, demonstrating that not only were pets at risk but that wild animals were being displaced by the floods as well.

On the last day of the Davenport disaster response, the HSUS team assisted HSSC staff in a pet adopt-a-thon held at the local Petco. The staff of Petco generously donated their grooming services to "spruce up" the animals. One of the most touching moments was when a woman whose dog of 13 years had recently passed away met a Belgian Tervuren mix who looked gorgeously similar. The woman remarked how much King reminded her of her own dog. Speaking about her dog brought tears to her eyes as she gently stroked King, who looked admiringly into her eyes. The woman wondered if King knew how to shake hands. She reached out her hand. King immediately responded by placing his paw in her hand. While the woman bent over and hugged King. As King licked her face, the woman said, "I have to have this dog!" Moments like this make all of our efforts worthwhile.

Horse Owners Join in Disaster Planning

MWRO has been working with Midwest state horse councils to provide disaster preparedness training for equines and their owners. Recently MWRO Director Amy Suarez was invited to join Southwest Missouri State Emergency Management Coordinator Candy Adams in a presentation at the annual Missouri Horse Council Conference in Columbia, Missouri. The session included topics ranging from fitting into a local emergency management network to preventing barn fires. One of the most memorable portions of this workshop was an impromptu talk by Mary Kaye Murray of Springfield, Missouri. Last September Mary Kaye experienced the flood. She explained how she possibly could have saved her horses (even prevented the fire) if she had been more prepared. What we all learned was that we should practice safety daily, continually improve our disaster plans, and practice response.

MWRO has developed a curriculum for a day-long, hands-on disaster planning workshop for equine owners. This will include developing a disaster plan for the hosting facility and a simulated barn fire exercise and evacuation. In addition, MWRO is working with the Iowa Horse Industry Council and Missouri Horse Council to sponsor training at Iowa State University and the Humane Society of Missouri’s Large Animal Farm. If you are interested in learning more about disaster planning, or are interested in attending either of the workshops, contact MWRO.
Halt Hog Factories Campaign

In our last newsletter, you read about our efforts to promote humane sustainable agriculture and support family farmers. Sustainable farmer Tom Frantzen's hog farm was featured on the front page. Now our region is involved in a campaign targeted at exposing the cruelty and environmental damage caused by factory hog farms. Hogs are sentient, intelligent, and social creatures, but they are denied their most basic needs on factory farms. Hog factories cause nearby communities to absorb the costs of human health problems and environmental cleanup efforts. What many people do not know is that according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, taxpayer dollars support hog factory farms through tax exemptions and credits. Subsidies link benefits to acreage. Because most factory farms are owned by large landowning corporations, the corporations are the primary beneficiaries of subsidies.

Not surprisingly, a broad range of animal protection, environmental, social justice, labor, consumer, faith, and family farm activists have come together to try to put an end to factory farms. Humane sustainable agriculture is a way of farming that is sensitive to the needs of animals, the integrity of the environment, the concerns of family farmers, and the integral role rural communities play in our vital and diverse culture. There is a new type of agriculture on the horizon. With your help, it can replace the horrendous system of factory farming.

Contacting HSUS

Write:  
HSUS Midwest Regional Office  
1515 Linden St., Ste. 220  
Des Moines, IA 50309

Call:  
515-283-1393

Fax:  
515-283-1407

E-Mail:  
mwro@hsus.org

Promoting the protection of all animals