PET OVERPOPULATION CRITICAL IN REGION

Last year an estimated 1,200,000 dogs and cats were destroyed in animal shelters in the states of Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. Bill Meade, HSUS Regional Director, says this “out-of-control” pet population is even more severe in the Gulf States than in other parts of the country.

At a recent humane society conference Meade declared, “Due to a prevailing attitude that has not stressed preventive programs, we have a shameful and unconscionable waste of animal life in our region.”

Progressive cities have shown that control programs aimed at preventing animal problems will reduce them significantly. HSUS has long advocated these programs, which include mandatory spay/neuter requirements, education, and progressive ordinances. Yet, sadly, many local humane societies and animal control agencies ignore these facts and continue treating only the symptoms of animal problems and not the causes.

Meade stressed that public awareness of the surplus animal problem is still almost totally lacking in many cities. “The average man in the street doesn’t know about pet overpopulation and the enormous waste of life in his own community.” Humane societies and local governments must greatly expand their public awareness programs to have any real impact. Citizens should be continually exposed to radio and TV ads, posters, direct mail, and special events, all repeating the message of the pet overpopulation tragedy.

When informed about the consequences of their actions, people will usually respond by neutering more pets, disposing of pets less readily, and generally being more responsible owners. Change doesn’t happen overnight. Campaigns must be repeated month after month, to be effective.

The requirement that every shelter animal placed in a new home be neutered is fundamental to a preventive program. Failure to do this is not only counterproductive but it also makes the shelter guilty of contributing to unwanted litters and their inevitable euthanasia.

Even the smallest shelter can start this program by collecting a $20 to $30 spay/neuter deposit that is then paid to the veterinarian when the operation is completed. The pet owner pays all costs above this amount. Spay/neuter programs must have written adoption contracts and a follow-up to enforce the program successfully.

The HSUS Gulf States Regional Office will assist your shelter or community in starting these and many other meaningful preventive programs. Contact us today and help launch a new era that will see animal problems solved.
**Oklahoma Passes Strong Dogfight Law**

Dogfighters had better beware in Oklahoma! If you are convicted of being involved in dogfighting, which is a felony, you will be imprisoned not less than one year or fined not less than $2,000. Even a spectator may be jailed one year or fined up to $500.

Oklahoma legislators moved with courage and resolve to pass the bill sponsored by Senator Mike Combs. Humanitarians who supported and worked hard for the bill deserve the highest praise. The HSUS Gulf States Office helped draft the bill and worked continually for its passage.

Humane societies should now educate their communities about the law and be prepared to prosecute all violations.

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**HSUS Denounces Armadillo Roundup**

The roundup and slaughter of 20,000 armadillos was promoted this past summer by the D&W Fur Company of Hallettsville, Texas. Bill Wallace and John Shaddix, owners of the fur company, said they would sell the armadillo skins to make purses and other trinkets. Some of the meat was also to be sold for human consumption.

Newspaper reports stated that children and scout groups were being encouraged to kill armadillos to collect the $2.50 bounty. One thirteen-year-old boy brought in three armadillos he had shot to death. The D&W Fur Company placed newspaper ads in about 120 Central Texas towns to promote the slaughter.

The HSUS Gulf States Office mounted a protest campaign that drew support from humanitarians statewide, including two state legislators and the Texas Department of Health.

The protest stressed that the armadillos are often killed inhumanely, which violates the state's anti-cruelty law. Armadillos are also used extensively in leprosy research and may be able to transmit the disease, and rabies, to humans. Finally, HSUS condemns the hunt as a needless mass killing of wildlife.

Latest word from the Texas Department of Health is that the armadillo meat processing plant has been closed because of possibly contaminated meat.

If you object to this yearly slaughter, protest directly to the D&W Fur Company and send copies of your letter to your state legislators, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and The HSUS Gulf States Office.

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**Hot Car Warnings Success in Region**

Every summer many pets suffer by being left in a parked hot car. For some of these unfortunate pets, the result is an agonizing death from heat prostration.

Many people are unaware that pets don't perspire the way humans do. The pet's cooling system is its lungs, and it needs cool air. On a warm day the temperature in a car, even with windows partly open, may reach 160 degrees in a matter of minutes. This can cause the animal to suffer severe brain damage or die of heatstroke.

The HSUS Gulf States Office mailed letters to hundreds of large chain businesses in the region asking them to post "Hot Car Warning" signs at the entrances to their stores. Over 1,000 stores accepted our free poster for display.

If your local humane society would like to be a part of this campaign, they should get individual local merchants to agree to help. We will then mail posters to the local society for distribution.

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**Louisiana Bills Meet Fierce Opposition**

In a major attempt to halt cruelty to animals in Louisiana, a new anti-cruelty bill and dogfight bill were introduced by Senator Ted Hickey. The Coalition of Louisiana Animal Activists, local societies, and The HSUS supported these badly needed bills.

Once hearings began, Louisiana citizens were confounded to hear their own state representatives speak in favor of vicious dogfighting. State Rep. John John of Crowley said, “It’s wrong to change a custom close and dear to us.” “There are a lot worse things,” said Rep. Raymond “La La” LaLonde of Sunset, who pushed through a House amendment to weaken the dogfight bill. “Hang in there, La La,” called out Rep. Margaret Lowenthal of Lake Charles.

Also, a strong group of cockfighting supporters forced a revision to exempt fowl from the proposed anti-cruelty bill, thereby legalizing cockfighting.

Both bills passed in their weakened form and there is much work for humanitarians to do before the legislation will have its intended effect. Plans are already underway to revise and strengthen these laws in next year's session.

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**Remember Animals In Your Will**

There's only one way to make sure you can help animals after you are gone...make a Will and provide for them in it. HSUS will send you an informative booklet without obligation about how to best use your animal welfare bequest.

Write in complete confidence to:

Murdough Stuart Madden
Vice President/General Counsel
The Humane Society of the United States
2100 L. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037

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**Circus Watch Program Started**

Circus animals frequently face one of the worst existences of any exotic species. Circuses do not provide their animals with what HSUS considers proper habitats because the traveling life necessitates cages that are small and easily transportable. In addition, we have long been critical of circuses because they portray animals in a distorted manner, and subject them to stressful training.

The HSUS has now organized a coalition of local humane societies to inspect and report violations of circus animals standards. Under the federal Animal Welfare Act, circuses are required to provide safe handling and transporting, clean quarters, proper food and water, and veterinary care when necessary.

Once a circus in violation has been spotted, we will alert USDA and request an inspection. We will then notify the next city in which the circus will be appearing so conditions there can be monitored. Also, the media will be asked to inform the public of the bad conditions. This joint effort should force improvements for these exploited animals.

Your society may join this coalition effort by calling 512-854-3142 for details.

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**Around The Region**

- **BOSSIER CITY, LOUISIANA** Animal Welfare, Inc. has begun another phase of their spay/neuter program. One weekend per month they are giving $25 subsidies to each animal adopted from the shelter. The Bossier City shelter requires spay or neuter of all animals.

- **HOUSTON, TEXAS** Nearly 30 veterinary clinics now cooperate with the Houston Humane Society in its mandatory spay/neuter program. Each adopter is furnished a humane society certificate that pays for the operation.

- **DENTON, TEXAS** The Denton Humane Society is helping the adoption program at their city shelter by making a $15 spay/neuter rebate available for any animal adopted. Sterilization is required by the city.

- **OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA** Volunteers For Animal Welfare announced plans for a fall auction to benefit a new subsidized spay/neuter program. The program will help pet owners in need of assistance.

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John Shaddix sits proudly atop a pile of dead armadillos, the result of his company's offer to pay $2.50 per armadillo carcass.

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As a result of his company's offer to pay $2.50 per armadillo carcass, John Shaddix sits proudly atop a pile of dead armadillos.
Arkansas Excels
In Public Awareness

The Hot Springs Animal Control Department has proven that public awareness programs will reduce animal problems. John Seales, director of the city’s animal control, believes their work is much more than just rounding up stray animals. He feels they must protect the animals, as required by law, and also work to change public attitudes.

A public education program was started in 1979. Programs are taken into local classrooms and a pet therapy program is presented at local nursing homes. Each week a 50-minute radio program is produced highlighting responsible pet ownership. Donations from the program have funded the establishment of a shelter educational film library.

As a result of these efforts, animal complaints have dropped from 12,000 to 5,000 per year and animals reclaimed by owners has more than doubled.

Animal Control Director, John Seales, has developed a respected department by stressing public awareness campaigns.

Dr. Arlene Brooks, principal and kindergarten teacher at St. Michael’s Elementary and Middle School in Levelland, Texas, has been named 1982 National Humane Education Teacher of the Year by the National Association for the Advancement of Humane Education, the educational division of The HSUS.

Dr. Brooks, a teacher and principal at St. Michael's for nineteen years, was recognized for her outstanding commitment to humane education. Specific activities cited by the selection committee include development of a school-wide curriculum based on a humane education theme, “We Love Life.” Students and faculty were involved in firsthand learning experiences through finding homes for injured stray animals and yearly student-family outings to nearby wilderness areas.

The profound influence Arlene Brooks has had on not only children and animals but also on the parents, teachers, and citizens of her community serves as an example to us all. As the selection committee members read of Dr. Brooks’ activities, they were impressed with not only what she had done, but more importantly with the impact her work has had on those around her.

The Gulf States Regional Report is a publication of:

The Gulf States Regional Office serves the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas. The office operates Monday through Friday and is closed on federal holidays.