My experience responding to Hurricane Charley as part of HSUS's National Disaster Animal Response Team was gut-wrenching, heartwarming, and rewarding—all at the same time. Charley was the first hurricane I've responded to, and I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I've been part of animal disaster relief for tornadoes, so I did expect to see a great deal of destruction. But unlike the aftermath of a tornado, Charley cut a swath immensely larger in scale, and those affected by it were much greater in number—including the animals.

Countless were left homeless. Public shelters don't accept animals, so having pets can make finding shelter (temporary or permanent) difficult. In many cases, people were left with no choice but to leave their pets behind. Our temporary animal care facility was set up in Punta Gorda, one of the hardest hit areas in Charlotte County. There we cared for hundreds of animals brought in by the continued on page 2

MWRO's Diane Webber with one of the many animals HSUS teams helped in response to Hurricane Charley.

Iowa was gaining the dubious distinction of being a haven for animal fighting. The state's animal fighting law was one of the country's weakest. Because it was surrounded by states that had made animal fighting a felony offense, it was no wonder that these barbaric activities were crossing the borders into Iowa. And if animal fighting weren't bad enough, illegal gambling, drugs, weapons, and violence tend to accompany the activity. Iowa needed stronger penalties to provide the support law enforcement needed to make arrests and gain convictions.

Our office began working toward passage of just such a piece of legislation more than a year ago. Scarcely a day went by that we didn't field and make calls about it. We sent out numerous action alerts to our members, urging them to contact their legislators in support of the measure. And we attended key committee hearings and legislative sessions to offer testimony and support.

As introduced, Iowa's felony animal fighting bill prohibited the possession, ownership, purchase, or sale of a dog or bird for fighting, as well as the possession, ownership, manufacture, or transfer of certain animal fighting implements. It also increased the penalty for crimes related to animal fighting from a serious misdemeanor to a class D felony.

The bill passed unanimously out of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, but hit a snag when it was assigned to the Public Safety Committee. There it was amended, and all penalties were reduced to aggravated misdemeanors. When the bill went up for debate, several legislators expressed their opposition to the amendments. One even read aloud a chat room e-mail from a dogfighter in Nebraska advising others that if they wanted to fight their dogs they needed to take them into Iowa, that a person could "get away with anything" there.

Finally, the Speaker called for a vote on the amendment. After a handful of "ayes," a resounding shout of "opposed" rang through the House—not once, but twice! It was a stirring moment for animal welfare in Iowa.

When the unamended Senate version of the bill, now designated S.F. 2249, came up for a vote, the "ayes" were 98, with only two absent or not voting.

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The Next 50 Years

HSUS can look back on its accomplishments and animal research and attracting more HSUS members in communities are active—in financially supporting our work, writing letters to newspapers and lawmakers, making responsible and humane choices in the marketplace, and educating people about animal issues in their communities—can we succeed. Only with your active engagement will we see, on the distant horizon 50 years from today, a truly humane society that accounts for the basic needs of animals and treats them all with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Wayne Pacelle took over as The HSUS’s president and chief executive officer this summer. He has been with The HSUS for 10 years and served most recently as senior vice president for communications and government affairs.

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public and by our rescue teams. The facility took in found animals as well as those pets voluntarily surrendered by displaced owners. It was the voluntary surrenders—made by owners who said they would have no way to shelter or care for their beloved pet for a long time—that were the hardest. When one man brought his Australian shepherd mix to the Carmelita Animal Compound in Punta Gorda, he was in tears. He and his pet had survived the hurricane together, but they had lost their home. The man explained that he had walked the streets with his dog for three days, trying to make a decision about what was best for his companion of 11 years. The man had no home, no family, and less than $60 in his pocket. “I have no place to take her,” he told me. So he turned his dog over to animal rescue workers, who placed her for adoption. I’m not sure I could be that brave.

Our goal was to reunite lost animals with their owners, and we saw several reunions. After losing so much, the joy shared by pets and owners alike made everything else worthwhile. Tail wags and puppy kisses can brighten up the bleakest day!

As public information officer for our team, I was rewarded by the attention the media gave us. Thanks to their coverage, we were able to help hundreds feed and shelter their pets, find those lost, and care for those injured. I look at it this way: Every time the media plays up the need for communications and government affairs.

continued from “Iowa,” page 1

Lucrity to game warden dogs (H.B. 2621 and H.B. 2721). Makes it a class A nonperson misdemeanor to injure or kill a game warden dog (as it is already with other service dogs). Signed into law.

Inspection of kennels (S.B. 378). Removes the requirement that kennels licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture be inspected by state authorities. Oppose.

Nebraska


Legislative Update

M WRO actively works for greater legal protection for animals in each of our states. Here is an update on a few of the animal bills that we followed during the 2004 session. If you would like more information about any of these bills, or would like to join one of our state legislative action alert teams, please contact MWRO.

Iowa

Animal fighting (S.F. 2249). Prohibits owning, selling, or possessing an animal for fighting; prohibits manufacturing, owning, transferring, or possessing cockfighting implements; increases the penalty for all animal fighting crimes from a serious misdemeanor to a class D felony punishable with up to five years imprisonment and a fine up to $7,500. Signed into law.

Pets as pets (H.F. 2480). Makes it a simple misdemeanor to give away a pet as a prize for participating in a game or fair event, as an inducement for visiting a place of business or attending an event sponsored by a business, or as an inducement for executing a contract. Signed into law.

Kansas

Cruelly to game warden dogs (H.B. 2621 and H.B. 2721). Makes it a class A nonperson misdemeanor to injure or kill a game warden dog (as it is already with other service dogs). Signed into law.

Inspection of kennels (S.B. 378). Removes the requirement that kennels licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture be inspected by state authorities. Oppose.

Minnesota

Dogs in pick-up trucks (S.F. 2335). Requires that animals transported in the cargo area of a motor vehicle be secured to prevent them from falling, jumping, or being thrown. Signed into law.

Injury to service animals (H.F. 1817 and S.F. 1614). Requires dog owners to pay restitution for any harm done to service animals by their dogs. Signed into law.

Ownership of dangerous exotic animals (H.F. 1593 and S.F. 1530). Prohibits and regulates the ownership of dangerous animals, including lions, tigers, cougars, leopards, cheetahs, ocelots, servals, bears, primates, and hybrids. Signed into law.

Dove hunting (H.F. 2368 and S.F. 2203). Allows mourning doves to be hunted for the first time in nearly 60 years. Attempts were made to remove the language on dove hunting from the omnibus game and fish bill, but we hope to make a late vote on the back of a truck. videotelephone, or otherwise obtain images of an animal facility from a location not legally accessible to the public without the written consent of the facility’s owners. This legislation would hamper investigations of animal facilities such as puppy mills and factory farms. Oppose.

The national animal protection organization, and the challenges ahead for communication and education programs across the globe.

institutional forms, such as factory farming-the continuation from “Charley,” page 1

When millions of healthy and adoptable animals face abandonment or euthanasia for the basic needs of animals and treats them all with the dignity and respect they deserve.

My two dogs, Gorda and Charley, survived the hurricane together. We were uprooted and sent by the back of a truck.

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 estate tax planning.

Planning my estate and will to help animals and The HSUS.

Send me more information about:

Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS.

Giving The HSUS a gift of stock.

Promoting the protection of all animals.
Director’s Report

By Diane Webber
Director of the Midwest Regional Office

Cruelty Comes Out in the Open

Too often these days our office receives reports of horrific acts of cruelty to animals. Last year, dragging an animal behind a motor vehicle seemed to be the thing to do. This year, almost anything goes. In just one month, MWRO offered rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those involved in five cases of intentional cruelty ranging from the poisoning of neighborhood dogs to slashing horses’ throats.

It’s disturbing to consider that our society has degraded to such a point that these unconscionable acts of violence are becoming almost commonplace. Or are they? I don’t recall hearing about these ghastly crimes when I was growing up. But we all know that such brutality was happening all along—even in the days of Ozzie and Harriet. Sadly I believe, society just turned a blind eye to it. Now after years of humane education, society’s awareness has been raised to realize that violence is violence, and whether it’s directed toward a human or inflicted upon a defenseless animal, it’s a serious crime that deserves serious attention.

In 1997, HSUS launched its First Strike campaign. One of the main goals of the campaign is to increase public and professional awareness about the connections between animal cruelty and human violence. The tragedy at Columbine High School and others have shown us that our children can be part of this link.

MWRO has made a concerted effort to promote First Strike through presentations at state association conferences, providing handout materials at vendor booths, and through direct contact with prosecutors and judges dealing with specific animal cruelty cases. Most recently, we worked with domestic violence and social service agencies to advocate relationships with local animal shelters and provide a life-saving alternative for family violence victims and their companion animals.

Celebrate the Season and The HSUS’s 50th Anniversary

The HSUS is proud to have May Company department stores and Christopher Radko as sponsors of our 50th anniversary. As part of the celebration, May Company is offering three exclusive HSUS 50th anniversary products for sale this fall: a Radko ornament (shown here) and a dog and cat plush toy by Gund. For more information visit www.hsus.org/marketplace.

Contacting HSUS

Write:  
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1515 Linden St., Ste. 220  
Des Moines, IA 50309

Call: 515-283-1393  
Fax: 515-283-1407  
Web Page: www.hsus.org/mwro

Promoting the protection of all animals

HSUS’s new Safe Havens for Animals program is designed to assist these animal care professionals, domestic violence shelters, veterinary clinics, and other community organizations in establishing temporary sheltering options for pets of domestic violence victims. I believe this is the ideal next step in combating the problem while protecting companion animals.

With this in mind, MWRO’s goal is to provide the information and resources necessary to assist regional shelters in establishing a Safe Haven in all our communities. It won’t be easy, but it’s important to protect our children, our pets, and our families. For more information about how you can help accomplish this goal, contact our office.