What Is the Greatest Animal Tragedy?

We continually hear about new atrocities inflicted upon animals. It may be laboratory cruelty or the mistreatment of performing animals. Or, perhaps, a stray neighborhood animal is cruelly treated. To all of these, as humanitarians, we react with shock and an urgent desire to take corrective action.

Unfortunately, animal problems that have been around for a long time tend to lose their impact and be overlooked. Euthanasia to control pet overpopulation is this kind of problem.

In every city and county throughout our Gulf States region, lovable and healthy pets are euthanized daily by the hundreds. No one wants to do it, but there seems to be no alternative unless and until animal births are controlled.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has demonstrated, in city after city, that this tragic taking of life can be greatly curtailed. If every animal shelter, big or little, will require spaying and neutering of each adopted pet, thousands of animals will be saved from this sorry fate. Public awareness and education programs combined with strong enforcement of leash laws also are part of the solution.

Unfortunately, many shelters still adopt out animals without requiring surgical sterilization. Many different excuses for this are given. Some fear the extra cost, or that adoptions will decrease. Others mistakenly think it is more important to get the animal into a new home even if the pet produces more surplus animals.

Our Gulf States Regional Office will gladly help shelters overcome this misconception. We can help set up spay/neuter programs (often at little or no cost to the shelter) and maintain pet adoptions at the same time. Check your local shelter’s policy soon and get in touch with us for any advice or information needed.

Animals as loving and cute as this puppy and kitten are born every day, but often no homes are available. Many forms of cruelty or neglect pale when compared to the tragic consequences of surplus-animal breeding. Fortunately, there are solutions, if people will act promptly.
It should be illegal to share such animals as pets, or for "roadside zoo" display.

Spay/Neuter Legislation Fails in Oklahoma

At this particular auction, most of the small animals such as monkeys and birds were confined in cramped cages for several days. A group of peacocks was stuffed in cages so tight, individual birds could not be distinguished.

The HSUS is working on ways to counter this unfortunate trade in exotic animals. Since some of these animals end up as pets, we have written model legislation to restrict wild-animal ownership. (Recently, we contacted a Texas legislator who is concerned with the problem and interested in introducing remedial legislation.) Any legislature considering exotic-pet laws should write us for this model bill.

Around The Region

New Orleans, Louisiana - Three exotic animals were sold at auction in Orlando, Florida, for $200 each. The exotic animals were sold without the knowledge of the owners and were later seized by authorities.

Arkansas Dogfighters

Two people in Fort Smith, Ark., were fined $2,000 each for attending a dogfight. The HSUS has long been concerned about the use of dogs in cruelty fights.

If you have any concerns about exotic animals or their treatment, please contact the HSUS for assistance.

Stronger enforcement of laws against dog fighting helps end this so-called "sport." New laws, recently passed, have increased penalties and jail sentences for spectators.
Decompression Chambers Stopped in Many Cities

The infamous decompression chamber, still used for euthanasia in a small number of shelters, is vigorously opposed by The HSUS. Regional Director Bill Meade stated, "We have attempted to identify every shelter using decompression to educate them to the possible pain they are inflicting on their animals."

Recently the cities of Austin and Houston, Texas, have dropped decompression. Dallas outlawed it several years ago. Nationwide, 24 states have completely banned this cruel method of destroying unwanted animals.

Meade recently testified before Amarillo officials and also urged El Paso humane society officers to switch to humane injection of sodium pentobarbital, the preferred method of euthanasia. The Texas cities of Irving and Garland also still use decompression, and, unfortunately, officials there are reluctant to change methods even for the animals' benefit.

When first manufactured, decompression chambers were considered humane. The process was thought to be similar to a pilot ascending in an open plane and passing out due to lack of oxygen. New insight and experience during the last ten years, however, has established that animals can suffer severe pain during this process. Many animals are unable to equalize pressures inside their body cavities, resulting in extreme bloating. If the animal has upper respiratory blockage due to disease, the resultant inner-ear pain can be excruciating.

The HSUS urges animal shelters to use only the best methods of euthanasia. Best current methods are injection of sodium pentobarbital and use of bottled (cooled and filtered) carbon monoxide. Protest strongly to your city officials if one of these is not being used in your community.

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 which will assist in planning a will.

Please send will information to

Name ____________________________
Address ____________________________
City ____________________ State ______
ZIP code __________________________

Mail in confidence to Murdough S. 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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