SC Takes on Dogfighting

Last year, South Carolina’s Attorney General got a glimpse for himself of the ugly world of dogfighting. He didn’t like what he saw, and SERO has joined his campaign to stop the blood sport in his state.

In June 2003, just days after SERO Program Coordinator Sandy Christiansen taught a law enforcement training class on animal fighting, officers in Orangeburg seized more than 70 dogs, training equipment, medical supplies, and other dog-fighting tools of the trade, including a bloody pit. Attorney General Henry McMaster visited the scene and was appalled. Shortly after, he gathered together representatives from animal protection organizations across the state, law enforcement officials, attorneys, and The HSUS with the goal of sharing information about the blood sport. Out of that meeting, the South Carolina Dogfighting Task Force was created to proactively combat dogfighting.

One of the task force’s top priorities was to gain in-depth intelligence about suspected dogfighters in the state. Fortunately, the State Law Enforcement continued on page 4

SERO Takes Charge in Charley Response

Hurricane Charley hit Florida on Friday, August 13, as if it carried a grudge. The storm not only defied all expert predictions by rapidly developing into a Category 4 ‘cane, but it also took an unexpected right turn into the heart of Charlotte County—an area dotted with dozens of trailer parks and populated with thousands of senior citizens who had little time to evacuate.

By Monday the extent of the damage was beginning to become clear: 17 dead, more than 2,300 people living in temporary shelters, more than $7 billion in insured damage, and nearly 1 million residents without power. Countless companion animals, livestock, and wildlife were among the victims, too. But the difficult conditions didn’t stop The HSUS and other animal groups in the region from setting up animal relief centers, arranging for emergency shelter space, securing veterinary supplies, and calling in tractor trailers to provide not only veterinary space but also alternate power sources.

Base of Operations

The focal point for emergency animal care in Charlotte County was a temporary facility in a sports/recreational complex in Punta Gorda called Carmelita Park, which is about a mile away from the county’s Emergency Operations Center.

Activated earlier by the state of Florida, The HSUS’s Disaster Animal Response Team (DART), which includes nearly 30 volunteers from around the Sunshine State, set up tents in Carmelita Park to serve as an animal services area. It’s there that volunteers cared for animals brought in by the public and by rescue teams. The temporary facility also took in found animals as well as those pets voluntarily surrendered by displaced owners. Livestock was kept on a series of baseball fields across the street and held there until the animals could be sent to temporary shelters. The goal, of course, was to reunite all lost animals with their families.

To call the Carmelita Animal Compound “makeshift” would be a disservice. The facility may have been temporary, but it was state of the art, thanks to an HSUS-affiliated DART team member from Sumter County who owns Prosthetics Research Inc., which, among other things, designs products for lame horses. The owner sent down three large vehicles, including an air-conditioned RV and a 30-foot semi trailer. DART team members organized the vehicles into a U shape and set up a tent at the base of the U, continued on page 2
crikey! willie circone, a disaster responder from new jersey, puts his reptile handling skills to work to capture an injured alligator.

continued from “charley,” page 1
where all animals were processed.
The number of animals handled at the facility steadily rose in the days after charley passed. “the numbers keep rising because the animals keep emerging,” said sero director laurel bevan, who led the charge for the HSUS’S DART teams in southwest Florida. “they emerge when they finally get hungry enough or when they get dehydrated from the 90-degree-plus heat here. and the residents have been amazing. they have rounded up countless animals and brought them to our compound. but at the same time, we have also been working overtime to get the word out that our Punta Gorda facility is open and that we’re the point of entry for all stray, lost, and injured animals. the public has clearly heeded the call.”

in the two weeks after the disaster, more than 500 animals came through the Carmelita facility. suncoast humane society took in all displaced animals who came through Carmelita, and held them for adoption or to await their owners’ return. the HSUS also helped set up temporary shelters in the impacted counties of DeSoto, Hardee, and Manatee. tons of pet food and bottled water were available to pet owners who found themselves without these basics. HSUS staff who weren’t tending the animals or helping residents with animal issues were in the field searching for lost or injured pets.

Stories from the Storm

Amazing stories arise from Hurricane Charley were many. Here are just a few.

Water Buffaloes for Livestock

Finding potable water was a serious problem in Charlotte County. The hurricane contaminated much of the drinking water. Understanding how this dearth of drinkable water could affect rural horse farms, which dot the landscape in the outlying regions, The HSUS secured two large containers called “water buffaloes.” One holds 600 gallons of water, the other 1,000. DART teams used the containers to fill a smaller, 4-wheel trailer that carries 250 gallons of water. Then they visited the horse farms, spreading water that was as precious as gold to those dehydrated animals. The teams also brought the farmers hay, since food was equally hard to secure.

Parting with an Old Friend

diane webber, director of HSUS’s Midwest Regional Office, who was serving as public information specialist during the response effort, told the story of a hearing-impaired man, whose home had been devastated, who brought his Australian shepherd mix to the Carmelita facility. He apparently had the dog for more than 11 years. He was there to surrender the dog for adoption. “he told us that he had no home, no clothes, no money— that he could no longer care for the dog as the dog deserved,” webber said. “he told us that it took him a long time to come to this decision. That’s the part that gets to you.”

to webbers and others, the scene was yet another reminder of how important it is to find new homes for every animal surrendered into their hands.

families reunited

on Friday, August 20, workers at the Punta Gorda facility got a small taste of what their work was all about. A woman whose home was badly damaged couldn’t find her dogs. she showed up at the compound and discovered two of them there, a mother and her young puppy. animal control had brought the mother, a lab mix, while a real miracle worker found the puppy in the rubble. nobody at the compound realized the dogs were related, but the owner did. “She was kising and hugging everybody,” said webber.

Bruzer’s story

an older woman and her husband arrived at the fairgrounds shelter with their two grandchildren and their dog, Bruzer. the older child, a boy who looked to be around seven years old, had apparently spent two hours freedoging with the puppy in the rubble. Nobody at the compound realized the dogs were related, but the owner did. “she was kising and hugging everybody,” said webber.

getting his dog back. in fact, Bruzer is such a little personality that workers there were lining up to foster him.”

Planning Pays

These stories and many more were possible through the planning and training of animal disaster responders who came together in the wake of this tragedy. DART teams from all over the state lent a helping hand, each operating in conjunction with the Florida Emergency Support Function-17, the state’s official disaster response for animals. Those cooperative DART teams even include one from Okaloosa County, located in the western-most reaches of the Florida panhandle.

“such cooperation and coordination,” notes Bevan, “reflect the work that The HSUS has put into building Florida’s emergency animal responses since Hurricane Andrew. Local DART teams in Florida have been developed through HSUS training and support in the years since. Andrews. This preparation paid off with many locally trained personnel being able to help their neighbors.” That, in turn, may have saved yet more tragedy in a storm that caused too much.
FL Animal-Friend License Plate To Fund Spay/Neuter

By summer of 2005, Florida drivers will be able to sport a new specialty license plate proclaiming their support for spay/neuter efforts to reduce the number of unwanted pets wandering the streets and ending up in animal shelters. This year, legislators approved the animal-friend license plate, with the proceeds of plate sales designated to fund spay/neuter efforts throughout the state.

Florida has nearly 100 specialty license plates, but none that celebrate companion animals. Passed on the last day of the 2004 legislative session, S.B. 2020 authorized 12 new specialty license plates—including the animal-friend plate—and made it more difficult for new specialty license plates to be created in the future. Gov. Jeb Bush signed the bill into law nearly two months later, despite last-minute opposition from the National Rifle Association and some sportsmen’s groups who objected to The HSUS’s involvement with the plate.

“The animal-friend license plate is something SERO has worked with a larger coalition on for more than a year in order to fund sterilization programs to help reduce pet overpopulation in Florida,” says SERO Director Bevan. “Those groups opposing the plate didn’t seem to care that hundreds of thousands of dogs and cats are being euthanized in shelters each year, they focused on a totally unrelated issue—our philosophical differences over some hunting practices.”

In the end, the governor signed the bill creating the new license plates. Now work begins with the Department of Motor Vehicles to turn the animal-friend plate design into a reality. This could take a while, since 11 other plates are going through the process at the same time.

Once it is available, Florida car owners will be able to purchase the animal-friend license plate for an additional $25 fee when they renew their annual vehicle tag. Proceeds from the first 2,400 plates sold will go to reimburse the state for the $60,000 required for development of the plate. After that, profits will go to a fund distributed by the Florida Animal Friend Coalition through grants to spay/neuter programs statewide.

The HSUS commends Attorney General McMaster, SLED, the animal welfare organizations, and other members of the task force for achievements so far. In addition to sparing countless animals a lifetime of suffering, law enforcement agents have also seized illegal drugs, guns, and even bombs in the dogfighting raids. “These are not upstanding community citizens,” says Christiansen. “Anyone who gains the trust of a dog, then enjoys watching and making money off of his suffering, is not someone who should be allowed to walk our streets freely.”

continued from “Dogfighting,” page 1

Division (SLED) allows dedicated officers to investigate particular crimes—if the funds to pay the costs associated with their employ-
HSUS Golden Anniversary: The Next 50 Years

By HSUS President and Chief Executive Officer Wayne Pacelle

At the age of 50, any individual or institution pauses to reflect on both the past and the future. That moment has arrived for The HSUS. While we have decades since inception, The HSUS can look back on its accomplishments with pride. The HSUS has grown and matured beyond recognition since its founding in 1954. We have now emerged as the most sophisticated government affairs, investigations, and humane education programs of any animal protection organization, and, recognizing that animal exploitation extends beyond our borders, we have suddenly realized that our impact is global in nature. The HSUS has moved well beyond the limits of the United States. As we look ahead, The HSUS will continue to expand its presence in the global community.

The HSUS President and Chief Executive Officer Wayne Pacelle and Grace.

I want to learn how I can help our animals 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 case of emergency. Planning my estate and will to help animals and The HSUS.

I live in: [ ] State [ ] Zip Code [ ] Phone [ ] Email

I am interested in: Making a charitable gift to The HSUS in my will. Making a gift to The HSUS of a [ ] stock [ ] other asset. Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS.

I am interested in learning more about: (check all that apply) Making a gift to The HSUS in my will. Adopting a companion animal from my local animal shelter. Supporting The HSUS' efforts to ensure that all pet ownership! That was quite a shock to me. The HSUS is celebrating its 50th anniversary with new President and CEO Wayne Pacelle. 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 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.

Today, a truly humane society that accounts for the basic needs of animals and treats them all with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Licks and Kicks

Sheila Seredowicz

• Licks to the Monroe County Commission, whose territory includes the Florida Keys, for approving of a plan to provide shelter for the companion animals of its special needs residents when they evacuate for hurricanes. Without such a plan, these animal lovers are faced with staying in a hurricane’s path, or leaving their pets behind in a storm.

• Licks to the Alabama Legislature for approving a new law setting standards for humane euthanasia at animal shelters.

• Kicks to the Florida Legislature and Gov. Bush for approving a new law weakening protections for the state’s endangered manatee. The new law weakens the Manatee Sanctuary Act and will lead to the death or injury of more of these gentle marine mammals.

• Kicks to the Mississippi Legislature for failing to approve a new animal cruelty statute. The state is now without basic anti-cruelty protections for animals.

• Kicks to the backers of a proposed Florida constitutional amendment to allow slot machines at Broward and Dade county greyhound and horse racing tracks. The expansion of gambling at these pari-mutuel facilities will only prop up these failing industries.

The HSUS can look back on its accomplishments with pride. The HSUS has grown and matured beyond recognition since its founding in 1954. We have now emerged as the most sophisticated government affairs, investigations, and humane education programs of any animal protection organization, and, recognizing that animal exploitation extends beyond our borders, we have suddenly realized that our impact is global in nature. The HSUS has moved well beyond the limits of the United States. As we look ahead, The HSUS will continue to expand its presence in the global community.

The HSUS President and Chief Executive Officer Wayne Pacelle and Grace.

2004 Fall

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES SERO Regional News