HSUS Launches Drive Against Cockfighting

Despite giant strides in the animal-welfare movement, cockfighting is a persistent evil that continues to exist. The general public often thinks that cruelty to chickens is nothing to get excited about and, unfortunately, some humane societies do not voice their protest because these bloody events are difficult to stop.

The HSUS Gulf States Regional Office has made cockfighting a priority program and is committed to stopping it within the region. Director Bill Meade states, “As long as fathers teach their sons that pitting birds against each other in violent combat to the death is OK, the children will never understand the evil of even greater cruelties.”

Our program to stop cockfighting includes three specific approaches. First, we will inform the public about the issue, and encourage people to spread our message to friends and neighbors. Second, we will seek out legislators willing to stand up and fight this cruelty to animals. Our federal government already has outlawed animal fighting. It is important now for all states to specifically prohibit cockfighting and then enforce the law. Third, our field investigator, Bernie Weller, will work actively with the state police and local law enforcement officials to infiltrate and bust major cockfighting operations. A recent raid in Texas, which was instigated by The HSUS, resulted in the arrest of 39 people.

We are asking our members to call or write their own state legislators. Ask these legislators to sponsor or co-sponsor an anti-cockfighting bill. All representatives who respond should be put in touch with our office.

With your help in this multi-faceted approach, we can succeed in eliminating this horrendous activity which is the cause of great animal suffering.

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San Antonio Needs Better Animal Control

For over ten years the city animal-control agency in San Antonio has used hot carbon monoxide from an engine to kill shelter animals. The HSUS Gulf States Regional Office has repeatedly urged and coaxed the city to improve this situation. Unfortunately, no change was made.

This past summer, a local TV reporter, Ed Gonzalez, telecast pictures of screaming animals dying in the hot, smoke-filled chambers. Things began to change then. The City Council held an emergency meeting and decided that all euthanasia be done by humane injection. Later, under pressure from the city health director, the Council unwisely retracted its decision and hearings were held to choose the “best” method of euthanasia.

Testimony by HSUS Director Dr. Amy Freeman Lee, Gulf States Director Bill Meade, local humane societies, and other veterinary euthanasia experts built a solid case for injection as the least costly, most humane method. Unfortunately, the majority of the Council disregarded the facts, allowing themselves to be swayed by political considerations. The Council’s weak, final decision was to purchase and use a new gas chamber along with occasional, limited use of injections. After ten years, San Antonio’s animal control is still a far cry from making the improvements that are so sorely needed.
Sheep and Goats Suffer Cruelly on Way to Mexico

The Gulf States office is currently helping the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSFAP) to gather information on the physical condition of sheep and goats being shipped to Mexico. Truckloads of these animals are in transit to Mexico for the next several weeks. It is not uncommon for female sheep or goats to give birth en route to Mexican slaughterhouses.

Our investigator, Bernie Weller, traveled to Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Laredo (ports of entry into Mexico) to observe shipment procedures. He found many abuses at the quarantine stations and holding pens of the private shipping companies. Here, the condition of many animals seemed worse. Weller observed broken legs, legs with no hooves, and females with teats hanging by a piece of skin. These suffering animals had passed the inspection of a Mexican veterinarian who cleared them for import into his country.

The HSUS wants to pass federal legislation to prohibit the shipment of sick or injured sheep and goats to Mexico. The trip may be as long as three days, usually without food, water, or rest. Many have injuries, or are suffering from health problems. It is not uncommon for female sheep or goats to give birth en route to Mexican slaughterhouses.

Self-examination is one of the hallmarks of a wise person. On the other hand, rationalization is practiced by many who justify cruelty to animals. The “sport hunter,” for example, rationalizes that he kills animals to save them from starvation. The scientist rationalizes that he inflicts pain on animals to save humans from suffering or death. In all our affairs, great and small, we tend to rationalize wrong behavior by telling ourselves there is a good reason for committing the particular act.

If we are willing to reject rationalization and practice self-examination, we must first be sure we are not ourselves cruel to animals while condemning others. It is easy to see the barbarism of the dog- and cockfight. But what about our own cruelty to animals? Albert Schweitzer said, “No one may think he inflicts pain on animals because it’s called fun or tradition.”

Have we allowed our own pets to breed, while our neighbors’ pets die in shelters, rationalizing that we “found good homes for ours”? Do we attend rodeos or other abusive animal events and rationalize that we are just a spectator and not really involved? Do we take part in or condone killing wild animals because it’s called fun or tradition? Are we afraid to speak out on behalf of animals because people may think we are sentimental? And, finally, are we a party to the massive cruelty to animals involved in the breeding, transport, and use of animals?”

We want to continue to fight cruelty, but we also need to examine our own actions. We must consider that the suffering animals are not the only victims. We are all accountable for the suffering of these animals.

Animal Trained Touted While Horses Suffer

It has been a torturous trip for many animals traveling throughout Texas in the Texas Sesquicentennial Wagon Train. Bernie Weller, our field investigator, found many of the horses in very poor condition. Most were not conditioned to perform such a long and grueling trip. The veterinarians involved in the trek judged that the horses were overworked and in poor shape for such a long, daily trip. Several humane societies along the long route monitored the progress of the wagon train and gave assistance to the animals, when possible. Unfortunately, halting the event was not an option.

We received many complaints from knowledgeable horse people who watched the wagon train pass. They judged that the horses were overworked and in poor shape for such a long, daily trip. Several humane societies along the long route monitored the progress of the wagon train and gave assistance to the animals, when possible. Unfortunately, halting the event was not an option.

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Oklahoma Enacts Spay-Neuter Law

Oklahoma now has the distinction of having the most progressive and far-reaching spay-neuter law within our region. After a three-year effort by Oklahoma Humane Society and The HSUS, this bill recently became law.

The new law requires that all animals adopted from shelters be spayed or neutered within a specified time. There is also a requirement that the pet’s owner sign a legal contract and pay a deposit at the time of adoption. Deposits collected but not used must be utilized in other spay-neuter programs. Enforcement provisions are included to help ensure the law’s effectiveness. With all good legislation, its success will depend on the support and willingness of animal shelters to implement its provisions.

This law is the first victory for the Oklahoma Humane Legislative Committee. The group was organized by the Gulf States office to promote good animal-protection bills. We are confident this is just the first of many victories for this fine, new organization.

HSUS Fights 1080 Poison

Sheep and goat ranchers in our region insist they must be allowed to poison coyotes to protect their herds from attack. In 1972, the highly dangerous poison Compound 1080 was outlawed, but ranchers continued to buy and use it illegally. Now, Texas is attempting to make use of its legal again.

The HSUS recently mailed an Action Alert to Texas members, which prompted a deluge of letters to Governor Mark White, protesting the state’s plan. The Governor responded by saying a “careful study” will be made before use of the poison is allowed. Although the Texas Department of Agriculture has not said so publicly, we know they are interested in allowing use of the poison. By the time you read this report, Compound 1080 may already be in use legally.

Compound 1080 is so deadly, a single teaspoon can kill 100 adult men. The poison is ecologically dangerous and produces horrid suffering and death in any animal or person who consumes it. It is unthinkable to use such a destructive substance on our land.

Because of your letters to the Governor, the state was forced to delay its plan to spread this poison. We believe, however, they are just waiting until the outcry dies down before officially deciding to allow 1080.

Let Governor Mark White know that we won’t stand still for the indiscriminate poisoning of lands in our state. Write today to The Honorable Mark White, State Capitol Building, Austin, Texas 78711.

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Charro Rodeos Under Attack

The Gulf States Regional Office, working with the Bexar County Humane Society, has been investigating the Mexican charro rodeo. This rodeo, held in San Antonio, Texas, has a multitude of events that cause animal suffering. In one event, a steer is released from a chute, and a cowboy contestant grabs its tail. The cowboy’s horse then turns away in a movement that twists the steer’s tail and throws the animal to the ground. This kind of heavy fall can and does cause injuries to the steer.

In another event horses are roped by the front feet at a full gallop. Result: the horse is slammed violently to the ground on its back and sides, and these same animals are used time after time.

The HSUS has been in contact with the Bexar County District Attorney’s Office, asking that legal action be taken under the anti-cruelty statutes against the charro rodeo association. The district attorney, however, has said that the Texas anti-cruelty law is “not clear.” Meanwhile, the investigator for the Bexar County Humane Society has agreed also to file a complaint and we hope these legal actions will be enough to halt these inhumane events.

Charro rodeo events would never be held on a well-run ranch because good cattlemen protect their stock from injury. Exactly the opposite happens in charro rodeos when participating animals are forced to risk injury and even death.