HSUS Helps FBI in Raid

It is believed to be one of the nation’s largest illegal cockfighting pits. And in June 2005, HSUS staff assisted the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, the Tennessee Highway Patrol, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in raiding the Del Rio cockfighting pit in Cocke County, Tennessee, while a fight was in progress. Authorities arrested 144 participants on site for illegal gambling and cockfighting, confiscated $40,000 in cash, and seized more than 300 gamecocks. According to law enforcement, hundreds of cockfighters regularly came to Del Rio from all over the country to fight their birds and gamble on the matches.

The pit was believed to be owned by the former president and current secretary of the United Gamefowl Breeders Association (UGBA), a tax-exempt organization continued on page 5.

HSUS’s Melissa Forberg with one of the 300-plus birds rescued in an FBI raid.

HSUS’s Massive Rescue Effort in Wake of Hurricane Katrina

As the National Guard entered New Orleans to quell civil disorder coming in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, members of the HSUS National Disaster Animal Response Team (DART) worked their way into the nearly obliterated regions of southern Mississippi and Louisiana. The situation could not have been more urgent in both areas, with reports of animals locked in homes, kennels, veterinary clinics, and other locations. It was a race against time for our first responders on the ground in the stricken areas.

The presence of HSUS personnel was good news for nearly 130 dogs and cats in Gulfport, Mississippi. There, HSUS team members rescued these animals from the animal shelter of the Humane Society of South Mississippi, which was flooded by the combination of a storm surge with an overflow discharge of human waste from the sewage treatment plant next door. Some animals swam in their cages for hours, somehow managing to keep their heads above water. Others were not so lucky. Those rescued went to Jackson, Mississippi, where the HSUS logistical team worked to place them with humane societies around the country.

The rescue in Gulfport occurred as dozens of HSUS relief workers extended their reach into devastated areas of Louisiana and Mississippi, working to establish pet-friendly shelters, coordinating animal relief activities with local partners in both government and the nonprofit sector, and improvising solutions to a host of animal-related emergencies.

But the devastated city of New Orleans was still waiting.

An airboat moves down a flooded New Orleans street September 5 with animal rescue workers, a rifle-toting guard, and several rescued dogs. With thousands of stranded pets in the city, HSUS rescuers were frantically trying to reach as many animals as they could.

Answering the Call

Phones began ringing at The HSUS almost as soon as Katrina struck. The HSUS moved quickly to set up a dedicated Disaster Call Center at its headquarters in the nation’s capital, and dozens of staff members suspended their normal duties to handle external communications, logging thousands of telephone calls and e-mails from around the country—many from people seeking urgent assistance as they tried to locate, recover, or keep their animal companions in the midst of the disaster.

Many of the calls came from the afflicted city of New Orleans: A man who couldn’t continued on page 2.
continued from "Katrina" on page 1

A volunteer with HSUS's Rural Area Veterinary Services comforts a dog suffering from severe mange found along with nearly 40 other neglected animals in rural Tennessee.

Mississippi will remain The HSUS's first priority in the weeks ahead. "We're just beginning to get a sense of the work that lies ahead of us," he said. "But we're committed to doing all we can. We know that it's something that our members support, and we're confident that they'll demonstrate their faith by contributing in every possible way to the work that we're doing."

The costs associated with The HSUS rescue efforts are expected to vastly exceed the organization's previous major disaster responses, which include aiding the animal victims of last year's Asian tsunami and responding to the four hurricanes that hit last year. To support The HSUS's animal protection efforts, go to www.hsus.org/china.

Hurricane Dennis Proves a Menace

The Southeast was impacted early this hurricane season when Hurricane Dennis came ashore along the same Florida coast devastated by Hurricane Ivan in 2004. In the end, Dennis proved menacing but not as damaging as "Ivan the Terrible."

In early July, when Dennis was churning in the Caribbean, HSUS Disaster Animal Response Team (DART) members mobilized and went to work identifying and preparing for potential relief needs such as food, rescue teams and sheltering locations. They also tapped established partnerships that provide coordination among animal protection organizations, disaster relief agencies, and state and local governments.

More than 100 animals were moved out of the Humane Society of South Mississippi to the safety of shelters in Alabama and Georgia. At the same time, SERO worked with the Louisiana SPCA in New Orleans to help coordinate the evacuation of hundreds of its animals to shelters in Texas. The disaster team also hailed its newest resource into action: a mobile unit that will stay in the Southeast throughout hurricane season. The new HSUS disaster truck and trailer serves as a mobile command post and medical suite.

A volunteer with HSUS's Rural Area Veterinary Services comforts a dog suffering from severe mange found along with nearly 40 other neglected animals in rural Tennessee.

An overwhelming task

Longer reach on the telephone. The owner of a kennel, whose operators she could no longer contact, left a friend with whom he had left his dogs in the care of the Louisiana SPCA, an affiliated group, back in June. "It's always hard," said Guyton, director of HSUS's Southwest Animal Response Team (DART). "But we're committed to doing all we can. We know that it's something that our members support, and we're confident that they'll demonstrate their faith by contributing in every possible way to the work that we're doing."

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Natural Foods Chain Pulls the Chicken Before the Egg

Natural foods chain Just Food Co. announced that it would no longer sell the eggs of chickens confined in battery cages. "For some years, we've been working with farmers to help them transition to more humane egg production methods," said Mark Siegel, CEO of Just Food Co. "But this is a difficult transition, and it's important that we all work together to make it happen."

Animal abuse is found in many forms and in many places. In June, SERO staff, joined by HSUS's Matt Carriker, in Texas, Tennessee, and Washington, DC, traveled to the rural mountains of Bledsoe County, Tennessee, to assist the local sheriffs' office in an animal cruelty investigation involving nearly 40 animals.

When local law enforcement and HSUS arrived at the property, the animals were found suffering from malnutrition and skin conditions so severe that several dogs were virtually hairless. The animals' owners relinquished custody of the animals to the sheriff's office, and were later charged with cruelty to animals.

Animal care professionals removed 30 dogs, a rabbit, a duck, a pig, two horses, and several fowl from the property. Because Bledsoe County has no animal control or humane shelter, the animals were transported to the Young-Williams Animal Center in Knoxville, where veterinarians and veterinary students conducted health assessments, and volunteers gave each animal affection and good food. Unfortunately, 11 of the dogs were in such poor health that they had to be humanely euthanized. The remaining animals, however, were transferred to other shelters, including the Humane Society of the Tennessee Valley, for rehabilitation and adoption.

The animals appeared to be victims of a condition known as animal hoarding. Animal hoarding is a tragic situation in which an individual acquires more animals than he or she is able to provide even basic sanitation, shelter, veterinary care. The result can be starvation, illness, and even death. Often the persons involved are in denial of the magnitude of the neglect and its impact on the animals, the household, and the humans living in the home.

Hay Fever

The HSUS has been working with local shelters to adopt those pets people may be forced to give up. "It's always hard," said SERO Director Laura Bevan, who is directing the Mississippi effort. "But sometimes it's necessary when large numbers of people have lost their pets."

But there is good news too. "I spoke with a gentleman today who evacuated with four cats and thought he was going to have to give up. It's always hard," said SERO Director Laura Bevan, who is directing the Mississippi effort. "But sometimes it's necessary when large numbers of people have lost their pets."

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Florida's Animal Friend license plate is now making an appearance on vehicles around the state! After nearly three years of effort, the license plate is being sold at county tax collector's offices for an additional fee of $25 a year, which will help fund future programs statewide to sterilize animals and, hopefully, reduce the state's pet overpopulation problem.

So far, the Animal Friend license plate is a hit with the public, becoming the highest seller of the 12 new license plates available in 2005. There is stiff competition though, with Florida offering drivers a choice of nearly 100 specialty license plates for their cars.

In May, Florida Animal Friend, the coalition of groups and individuals who worked so hard to make the plate a reality, celebrated with a gala event in Fort Lauderdale. The event brought together 300 people to honor State Sen. Nan Rich, who shepherded the Animal Friend license plate through its approval by the Florida Legislature in 2004. HSUS President and CEO Wayne Pacelle provided the keynote address and presented Sen. Rich with awards for her efforts on behalf of the plate and animals in general. Local media celebrities presented awards to SERO, the Florida Veterinary Medical Association, and the Florida Animal Control Association for their work as coalition members.

Protecting FL Black Bears

A coalition of conservation and animal welfare organizations and individuals, including The HSUS, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Sierra Club, is taking legal action to force greater federal protection for Florida's black bears.

In June, the coalition notified Secretary of Interior Gale Norton and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that it will legally challenge the agency's most recent decision to deny protection to Florida black bears under the Endangered Species Act. The Florida black bear, a distinct subspecies of American black bear, historically lived throughout Florida and into Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Now an estimated 3,000 bears live in nine isolated populations, occupying only about one-quarter of their former range.

The primary threat to the Florida black bear is habitat destruction caused by increasing urbanization and other human development. In addition, bears are killed on roadways, by illegal hunting and poaching, and by sport hunting in Alabama and Georgia. The coalition hopes that a listing under the Endangered Species Act will provide Florida black bears with essential protections necessary to prevent further population losses.

"Once again, the Fish and Wildlife Service is relying on state agencies and local officials to protect these bears, even though entire populations of this subspecies are being exterminated on the state's watch," said Jonathan R. Lovvorn, vice president of animal protection litigation for The HSUS. "Without federal protection, bears in Florida will have no meaningful defense against a multitude of threats, including habitat loss, poaching, and even future trophy hunts."

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 case of emergency.
___ Planning my estate and will to help animals and The HSUS.
___ Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS.
___ Giving The HSUS a gift of stock.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

DAYTIME PHONE

E-MAIL (OPTIONAL)

Promoting the protection of all animals

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE

1624 Metropolitan Circle, Suite B

Tallahassee, FL 32308

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

SERO Regional News

FALL 2005
**Godfather** of Louisiana Dogfighting Goes Down

**One of Floyd Boudreaux’s dogs, whom HSUS teams helped rescue.**

While authorities collected evidence for Boudreaux’s prosecution, animal care professionals removed the dogs and documented their physical condition. Industrial bolt cutters were needed to cut the heavy logging chains shackled to most dog’s necks. Later the dogs were transported to the Louisiana SPCA in New Orleans where veterinarians evaluated them and cataloged their scars and injuries. Unfortunately, because the dogs were trained fighting and as a threat to other dogs or children, they were humanely euthanized.

Boudreaux’s lineage of dogs dates back almost 60 years. The dogs, who are sold locally and online for thousands of dollars, are bred and trained to compete in vicious fighting matches. The HSUS estimates that more than 40,000 people across the country buy and sell fighting dogs and are involved in organized dogfighting. Many registered pit bulls currently used for fighting have allegedly come from Boudreaux’s stock. Known as “ES” dogs, the bloodline is considered the top choice for dogfighting. It is hoped that his arrest will lead to the eventual elimination of his line of dogs, and the “sport” of dogfighting altogether.

continued from “FBI Raid” on page 1 representing the interests of cockfighters nationwide. The HSUS has asked the Internal Revenue Service to revoke the UGMA’s tax-free status because it promotes illegal activities. Staff from SERO and HSUS headquarters in Washington, DC, joined animal handlers from the Spartanburg Humane Society in South Carolina to participate in the raid. “We found more than 30 birds who had already been fought through in the trash. Another 300 were waiting to be fought over the weekend,” according to SERO Director Laura Bevan. “The Del Rio had to be towed back to their yard because of the cockfighting equipment and supplies, as well as an array of T-shirts promoting the illegal sport. Most appalling was a children’s shirt for sale with fighting roosters right on the front.”

Cockfighting is a misdemeanor in Tennessee, punishable by 11 months and a $2,000 fine. Since 2003, a federal law has prohibited the interstate or foreign transport of fighting animals. Despite that, law enforcement authorities reported license plates from many states at the event.

“I am the only person left who doesn’t want to do it,” says Boudreaux’s father, Boudreaux. “I have stopped all of that. I have turned a blind eye to it and stopped doing it.”

The film explores the evolution of the “dog men” who allowed him to film turns a blind eye to it and stopped doing it. But he also marks of Buster Brown shoes and RCA Victor television’s “Our Gang.” And Stubby, the “Godfather” of Louisiana the entire province of Ontario, Canada? That’s what Director Bobby J.

**By Laura Bevan**

**Director of the Southeast Regional Office**

More Goodbyes

In my last newsletter I wrote about all the changes that SERO had experienced in past months, and the hope that things would quiet down a bit. Well, that didn’t happen, and more changes, both good and sad, took place.

In April, SERO Regional Coordinator Sandy Christiansen resigned to become executive director of the Spartanburg Humane Society in South Carolina. It was a blow to our small office, with two employees new to the job since January. Nancy pink and Jen, the new staff, have jumped in feet first and done excellent work, but we still miss Sandy and his expertise in dealing with cruelty cases and animal fighting issues.

In May, the night of the gala kickoff for Florida Animal Friend license plate, my dog Pepper, whom I adopted after Hurricane Andrew, passed away. I left her that morning with the traditional doggie biscuit and instructions to eat in it her bed. She trotted off, and that is where she was found later. It was a shock for me, but a peaceful passing for Pepper, who was 15. We traveled a long road together since 1992. She had a great life, but it is still hard to believe she is gone.

A happy goodbye came with the adoption of a little dog I listened from Levy County Animal Control in Florida. A smooth-coated Jack Russell terrier, Lily had a sensitive condition due to untreated heart problems. I think the FCh and tail were raw from chewing and scratching, but her charisma shone through. With partner papers in hand, we took her back to Tallahassee with me.

Because of my extensive travel schedule, I haven’t been able to go much to the office. In fact, the compassion animals at my house all arrived with the decision of finding them a new home. My sense of loss was overwhelming.

That came close to happening with Lily also. As her back healed and regained hair, her overall health improved, and she became the fun-loving, peppy personality we suspected she would be. During the office day, she would make rounds of other staff, then settle in her bed for a well deserved rest. When I traveled, Nancy or Jen took her home. She adjusted to each new place like it was her own.

From the beginning, we posted her photo on the Internet, but her health problems prohibited a quick adoption. Just the time I had convinced myself that Lily was destined to be mine, fate intervened. During a cursory visit to an adoption booth she found her new family. The man had been looking for months for the perfect dog as a companion, and Lily was it. She would now be an only dog (she never cared for my other dogs), and they weren’t fond of the competition, with walks in the park and lot of personal couch time. Another goodbye, one mixed with some sadness, some happiness, and some envy that Lily would spend the rest of her life with someone else.

Goodbyes are hard. I am happy for Sandy and Lily. And I am happy that Pepper was at peace on her own bed when her time came. But I miss them all in my daily life. You would think that in 45 years, 18 of them with The HSUS, goodbyes would get easier. They don’t. But I never knew those people and animals, how much power my life would have been. So, as they say, let’s not say “goodbye,” but “until we meet again.”

The SERO Regional News is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States, Southeast Regional Office, 1624 Metropolitan Cir., Ste. B Tallahassee, FL 32308; 850-386-4354. Laura Bevan, direc- tor. The office is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is closed on federal holidays.

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**Promoting the protection of all animals**

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**Director’s Report**

**“Off the Chain” Reveals Betrayal of Man’s Best Friend**

President Theodore Roosevelt owned one. So did Helen Keller. This breed of dog was the trade- mark of Buster Brown shoes and RCA Victor. Fido was the canine star of television’s “Our Gang.” And Stubby was the most decorated dog in American history, having received numerous medals and the honorary rank of Ser- geant for his services during World War I. What do these famous dogs have in common? They were all American pit bull terriers.

How did such a beloved breed come to be feared as a “public enemy” that is now banned in more than 200 counties and the entire province of Ontario, Canada? And how did the story of Bobby J. Brown seek to show in his film new film “Off the Chain,” available on DVD from Ardustry Home Entertainment.

This is what is supposed to be the essence of the breed and gives viewers a disturbing look into the minds of the dog owners and trainers who participate in the gruesome world of dogfighting. Brown spent three years infiltrating the under- ground subculture of pit bull fighting, gaining the trust of well-established “dog men” who allowed him to film behind their veil of secrecy. But he also captured another side: the loving nature of the dogs and their brutal misuse by those who use them for entertainment.

Brown is generously donating to The HSUS one-third of the proceeds from sales of “Off the Chain” DVDs sold through The HSUS. To order, go to www.offthechainproduc- tions.com/store and use the redemption code: HSUSOTC.