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9-1970

(No. 13) -- Good and Bad Animal Shelters

Humane Information Services, Inc.

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Local Society Animal Shelters constitute the base of the humane movement. The local animal shelter is the foundation of humane work. Probably, perhaps 98 percent of the millions of dollars spent annually for humane work goes directly or indirectly through local animal shelters.

The emotion-charged up-near all shelter directors and officers have ever expressed their determination to improve. The reasons for this are not hard to find. Nearly all shelter directors and officers have very specific needed improvements in their facilities or personnel: increased personnel, and dissension. This is an entirely different matter than constructive self-appraisal and "the prevention of cruelty to animals." Some shelters and public pounds, using a "probable" and "likely" system, do not come up with an answer about shelters which are not now available. But these really are the superficial aspects of shelter operation. We know pretty much what constitutes good shelter operation. Insofar as these considerations are concerned, shelters are overfed, with too much money being spent trying to improve these conditions. The large national societies, through their publications and activities, are working constantly to help the shelters benefit from the experience of other shelters, in order to improve their present facilities and operations.

These conditions, however, are not of primary importance in determining the effectiveness of local shelters in dealing with the humane problems associated with dogs and cats. The answers to all of the foregoing considerations may be affirmative, yet the total amount of suffering undergone by dogs and cats in the community may be as great or greater than in the past, and greater than in some other communities where facilities for care of the animals are limited but not acute.

In other words, the amount of suffering undergone by the animals of the community is determined by conditions in the city. Should the ones cared for at the shelter are treated during that period in the facility. A defective euthanasia chamber can cause at least a far more intense suffering for the animals, is now known than they may be spared while in their cages. And it is the policies and activities of the local society which really matter in the elimination of pet animal suffering. Shelter and the people of the community, but they are the things which will be given greater weight in this evaluation of local society shelters.

Funds Not the Major Problem

Ask a local humane society director or officer what is most needed to improve the operations of the society, and you will get the same answer: money. Yet, as more and more funds have been poured into shelters, it is very doubtful that results, in terms of the reduction of animal suffering and "the prevention of cruelty to animals," have risen correspondingly.

Local society directors and officers have very specific needed improvements in mind. Most or all of these are additional personnel, increased capacity, air conditioning, a new incinerator, additional equipment, and shelter attendance. All of these objectives are only means to an end. Sometimes it is easy to confuse means with ends. Providing a particular facility may or may not contribute to the end, either absolutely or relative to what can be done with the same amount of money used for some other purpose.

Now, everyone, a shelter may put on a fund-raising drive to provide a veterinary "clinic" at the shelter. This clinic could be used for vaccinations, (1) to provide continuous veterinary supervision of the sanitary precautions taken at the shelter, and (2) to prevent the spread of diseases (very important) and to prevent the spread of diseases. But it may not be of a kind which can be filled without operation of a clinic; (2) to provide a means of verifying the claims of many animal owners who are not insured, stray or unwanted animals for a reasonable fee. Are vigorous reports that orange cats may have a history of being finicky, is there, then is there a problem about the animals to the kind, and do they handle themselves? Nobody knows the answers to these questions, insofar as they apply to all animal shelters, and it is the function of the Humane Information Service to survey each and every other specific questions.

Critical Analysis

This article is an attempt to evaluate the local humane society shelter facilities and operations as a part of our overall examination of the effectiveness of the humane movement. This series of articles began in Report to Humanitarians, No. 11 (March, 1970), in an effort to explore such an evaluation in more detail. The problem was explained. In this article we do not attempt to cover many aspects of shelter operation which will be treated in subsequent issues.

This examination of local society shelters was purposely limited. It was not out to butter up our friends who are engaged in running these shelters, in order to win approval of the Humane Information Services. Some of these friends will get and when they read what we have to say, if they didn't, we are thoroughly sorry, we will read it again.

Shelters Need Continuous Self-Examination

Every successful business enterprise must constantly evaluate its policies and for the purpose of determining what it is doing well, what it is doing badly, and what it should do differently and what it should do better. This is the same basic need for continuing critical self-examination of the objective, the effective evaluation of operating policies and methods. Unfortunately, they frequently do not receive such scrutinizing criticism from the public.

This is not to say that criticism and disapproval are not coming among the members and in the meetings of humane societies. Far from it! The humane movement is being subjected to criticism by a discerning and discerning. This is an entirely different matter than constructive self-appraisal and the annual examination of policies and methods. The emotion-charged upward, which occur periodically in many societies, are not constructive, objective, factual and effective.

Basis for Evaluation

Ask the Humane Information Services: what is the basis of the evaluation of a shelter? The answers will come up with something like this: Do the animals have a continuous supply of good food and fresh water, do they receive nourishing food at least once a day? Are the dog cages sufficiently large to permit freedom of movement? Do they have exercise runs? Are species and sexes separated, and are ill, injured and well animals, as well as pregnant and non-pregnant females, housed separately? Are the animals fed on a regular basis? Are the floors heated, and if not are wooden pallets provided for sleeping? In the same way, are the cats housed in proper housing and in good condition? Do the cat cages provide for free movement, climbing and sharpening of claws? Is the water available at all times? Is the shelter free of objectionable odors? Are animals received examined carefully for disease or injury? Are cats and dogs kept injured, stray and unwanted animals for a reasonable fee. Are vigorous reports that orange cats may have a history of being finicky, is there, then is there a problem about the animals to the kind, and do they handle themselves? Nobody knows the answers to these questions, insofar as they apply to all animal shelters, and it is the function of the Humane Information Service to survey each and every other specific questions.

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Prevent Suffering, Not Death

Another misconception is that if realistic goals are not set, or policies established to achieve them are not adopted, is that very serious matters are being profusely discussed in the annual report of the humane society. The real truth is that in many communities the number of animals that ultimately leads to more rather than less suffering, was brought out in Report to Humane Society of America.

This particular confusion over goals leads to a number of mistaken policies, and not all of them seem to perpetuate our old maxim that particularly the dogs and cats handled by homeless society shelters try to "putting animals to sleep" probably is the greatest single reason that we continue to have an increasing number of homeless animals. As we brought out in Report No. 12, it is the principal reason why shelters do not establish a welfare adoption policy but have large sums of humane society money in increasing the capacity of shelters in a complete state of confusion about the situation. In this connection we would like to cite one somewhat typical example, of one of our special friends' efforts to put several animals to sleep. She had an adequate experience in her work and her experience so well illustrates the undesirable consequences of this confusion over goals.

This lady was a director of a local humane society who made herself personally one of the chief accusers of the animals handled by the society's shelters. She had an adequate experience in the shelter business and, for the most part, she had been doing things in the past. What almost seems to blame the community for was this lady's lack of effective and realistic goals, baffled by continually criticizing the shelter conditions and policies. She had ample justification for doing so. When the animals in her care could have become a source of much good in any community where they were kept, she was astounded at the large proportion of the animals received at the shelter which had to be destroyed. She was what's called an animal lover and humanitarian. When she read this she would be hurt and offended, but we realists know that her experience so well illustrates the undesirable consequences of this confusion over goals.

This was a lady who must be destroyed, so that the surplus received. In this connection we would like to cite one somewhat typical example, of one of our special friends' efforts to put several animals to sleep. She had an adequate experience in her work and her experience so well illustrates the undesirable consequences of this confusion over goals.

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which could do so much to eliminate animal suffering resulting from the continuing surplus production of puppies and kittens. We can do the same, if not found in these countries where determined efforts have been made to avoid it.

Humane Information Services, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida 33705
Page 3—Report to Humanitarians No. 13—September, 1970

Failure of Local Societies to Perform Their Programs

One of the greatest deficiencies of local humane societies is the almost complete failure of many of them to engage in any significant humane activity beyond the handling of animals in their shelters. Not only do they neglect the vast number of

national programs such as those to re-
duce the suffering of food and fur animals, but they also neglect the activities which are not directly related to dogs, cats and shelter operation.

There are far more members of local than of national humane societies. If the local societies really tried to bring their mem-

bers into direct contact with humane work beyond the horizons of the shelter, the over-all effectiveness of the humane move-

ment would be vastly increased.

The failure of local societies to do this reflects many conditions, including the de-

sign of these organizations to look only to contributions from themselves, in the wish to avoid con-

trovery, and the very lack of time in the case of small societies. Nevertheless, the larger societies, which generally are the most de-

ficient in these respects, are the ones which the public or governmental bodies who have least interest in animal welfare. We must continue, whether or not, the people of the

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communities.

of animal shelters discussed in the

foregoing sections is a better-informed mem-

bership which will both inform the member humanitar-

ians and bring pressure to bear upon the shelter operators to carry out their jobs, and to work for the extra mile, rather than to persuade him to accept a

figurative dog in a cage, or of the

less important segments of the big-city society to devote more of their billion-dollar annual budgets and dividends, which in the final analysis are the only things in which stockholders

are interested, to the humane movement, but little action, either on the part of the directors, or, in the case of some small

societies, to do anything at all, an "executive director" who is reasonably good at public re-

relations and who maintains a clean, alert manager who is reas-

onably good at public re-

management take the initiative, or should an

formulation of the problem, significantly, is seeking a

third party. The only poss-

ible answer to this is the collection of national, regional and state humane societies. Their police stations, which we have already noted for its accessi-

bility and dedication as well as for its substantial income, keep the dues and contributions that they collect, and the annual banquet of some local humane society, for example, is a national event, with no knowledge of humane problems and alternative solutions, or of what other local societies are doing.

under these circumstances, the directors of the larger societies operating animal shelters are likely to be asked, at the annual meetings of these societies, to adopt the same priorities as the employed executive director: to maintain a good pub-

licity program, to continue any important programs, or to initiate new important programs. In the case of those societies which produce emotional satisfactions, a constituent group will be most willing to give this most or all of their attention. And in the case of smaller societies, for the big-city humane movement, but little action, either on the part of the directors, or, in the case of some small

societies, to do anything at all, an "executive director" who is reasonably good at public re-

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National Societies Also Remiss

which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Here, too, the choice is no longer difficult. Whether the management takes the initiative, or should an informed membership initiate demands for

... Failure of Local Societies...

... Uninformed Members and Public...

... The Key to Shelter Shortcomings...
When Humane Information Services was established, we considered many possible names for the society. There are hundreds of humane societies. They have used, for their names, all manner of combinations of such terms as "animal welfare," "educational," "association," "society," "center," "united," etc. To use any similar combination would be unfair to existing organizations, and possibly confuse our public. We therefore hoped to change the name it originally adopted.

Some names were significantly different from those of other societies. Essentially, our purpose was to provide the research, analysis and planning that have been so woefully lacking in the humane movement. With this primary objective, we hoped to serve other organizations as well as local and regional societies as a sort of research and planning clearing house. Although we recognized that such specific action programs designed to fill the gaps left by lack of action on the part of other organizations are vitally needed,

With these considerations in mind, we selected the name, Humane Information Services. This name connotes service to the entire humane movement, rather than operation as just another society in the meeting today, we outlined some traditional methods and programs. And it is distinctly different from names used by other societies. We recognized that our name might give the impression that we are a private society, not operated under a board of directors and operated solely to prevent the suffering of animals. But after three years of operation we fondly believed that readers of our Reports to Humanitarians and other publications have heartily come to appreciate it.

We were, therefore, genuinely astounded, shocked and chagrined to receive a letter from an intelligent, influential, well-informed and devoted humanitarian, who has been one of our more consistent contributors since 1965, and who has generously praised our Reports. She said: "I assume I you were a private reporting service, I should think the majority of the people you reach assume the same. That is why I sent so little of the money you solicited this past year." We were very grateful to this lady for telling us this. Perhaps we should consider changing our name to "Human Information Society," or something else which more explicitly implies that we are a fully private society, not supported in any way by public funds. We would then be able to maintain a good public image. They do not really lead, but follow what the local societies seem to be doing. They usually appear to us as the field representative who is an exception, who frequently lays it on the line; and we have been told by several local society people that his frankness is respected. It is hard to "educate" people who do not want to be educated, as many a school teacher has learned in other words, the humane societies that deal with the general public are not motivated by the same considerations of emotion al reactions, maintaining the flow of communication, and propaganda, that motivate the local societies. Even those national societies which have built up large endowments, and have sufficient financial stability to permit taking risks of temporary disapproval, seem to habitually pursue easy and certain returns. We are A NON-PROFIT, TAX-EXEMPT, NATIONAL HUMANE SOCIETY, OPERATED SOLELY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS. We are just as much dependent upon our members for contributions as are other such organizations. We are careful and effective use of your contributions for the benefit of animals. When you send us dues and contributions you are not merely subscribing to our "paper" you are helping to develop a humane movement with a greater impact. We are grateful for the support, and appreciate your assistance in greatly increasing the effectiveness of the humane movement. We have no high salaries, expensive accounts or extravagances of any kind. WE NEED YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!

ANIMAL SHELTERS - from page 3

officers. Their principal task seems to be to approach the local societies, give them information about practical problems such as what kind of disinfectant to use, and making the following suggestions and guidelines for maintaining a good public image. They do not really lead, but follow what the local societies seem to be doing. They usually appear to us as the field representative who is an exception, who frequently lays it on the line; and we have been told by several local society people that his frankness is respected. It is hard to "educate" people who do not want to be educated, as many a school teacher has learned in other words, the humane societies that deal with the general public are not motivated by the same considerations of emotional reactions, maintaining the flow of communication, and propaganda, that motivate the local societies. Even those national societies which have built up large endowments, and have sufficient financial stability to permit taking risks of temporary disapproval, seem to habitually pursue easy and certain returns. We are A NON-PROFIT, TAX-EXEMPT, NATIONAL HUMANE SOCIETY, OPERATED SOLELY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS. We are just as much dependent upon our members for contributions as are other such organizations. We are careful and effective use of your contributions for the benefit of animals. When you send us dues and contributions you are not merely subscribing to our "paper" you are helping to develop a humane movement with a greater impact. We are grateful for the support, and appreciate your assistance in greatly increasing the effectiveness of the humane movement. We have no high salaries, expensive accounts or extravagances of any kind. WE NEED YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!

In our Report to Humanitarians No. 11, we showed that the majority of the humane societies were not using anything like euthanasia equipment and methods used in animal shelters and pounds. We pointed to the apparent shortcomings of a number of commonly used methods which we honestly feel that we can use any contributions our readers are in a position to make may be of help to them. We would not be worth our salt if we didn’t agree in theory with the desirability of the humane movement about how to handle the problem of euthanasia.

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On the Bloodless Bullfight

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SUMMARY

To sum up the foregoing analysis, it may be said without much fear of contradiction that local societies operating animal shelters have been dealing mainly with symptoms, not causes, of the problems in their community. And even in dealing with symptoms, they tend to emphasize the less superficial things rating themselves as "educational" for reducing the suffering of the animals handled. All of this may be attributed mainly to lack of concern or understanding of the problem by local government public. Efforts to introduce the subject have largely been directed at superficial aspects. Taken as a whole, the humane movement has not been sufficiently aware of the extent and the nature of the problems of pets and their owners.

Brutish reforms of policies and programs, from the top down, is badly needed. This drastic reform of policies and programs, decisive with the problems of pets and their owners, will not be accomplished in a day, a month or a year. We hope that this frank discussion, although it may seem distressing to people engaged in the operation of both local and national societies, will mark a beginning in the revision of the ideas of the humane movement about how to handle the problems of dogs and cats.

Where are the pictures? - Some people will object to these forbidding expanse of solid type unrelieved by photographs. We may say that they do tend to "tell more than a thousand words." It does -- to a child. But we are not trying to "tell more than a thousand words." Real humanitarians, we know, are willing to read an adult discussion of animal problems. We are, however, determined not to be at the mercy of pictures of cute animals or of shelter facilities so familiar to us all.