280 Fighting Birds Seized in PA

A Pennsylvania state police officer informed HSUS of a farm he believed was breeding birds for cockfighting. He needed expert confirmation from our office. HSUS investigators assisted the state troopers in developing a case during a four-month investigation.

Officials seized more than 280 roosters. Working as a team, the troopers, HSUS investigators, and the Adams County SPCA served search warrants on two homes. Between the two properties, investigators found cockfighting paraphernalia including magazines, trophies, veterinary supplies, contest photos, a weight scale, and gaffs (blades attached to birds’ legs during a match). Officers arrested four residents of Adams County and charged them with cruelty to animals for raising and selling fighting birds and criminal conspiracy. One resident was charged with cockfighting in Virginia; he also shipped birds within the United States and to Canada and Mexico. All four defendants pled guilty under plea arrangements.

Animals, Too, Were Affected by Sept. 11 Attacks

Even as we watched the September 11, 2001, terrorist acts on television, MARO and HSUS headquarters staff members were responding to animal needs in New York City and the National Capital area. The HSUS worked with the New York Center for Animal Care and Control (CACC), and placed several trained disaster response teams on alert. We contacted the New York City animal shelters to determine if there was any direct impact on these facilities, finding that while the facilities housing animals were fine and not affected by blowing dust and debris, the CACC administrative offices, a block from Ground Zero, were unusable, though the staff were unharmed.

Our concern then moved quickly to the plight of animals possibly stranded in dwellings in lower Manhattan. We assisted CACC in setting up a toll-free number for people to call with information about pets in need and in publicizing this number through our affiliated groups and through press releases and the HSUS Web site. HSUS staff responded to a massive amount of correspondence and calls from concerned citizens and the media about issues such as offers of volunteer assistance, in-kind donations, and requests for information about the well-being of animals stranded in residences as well as those possibly stranded in the transportation system, of potentially orphaned animals, and of the search-and-rescue dogs at both sites.

The HSUS quickly sent CACC a check to help them set up temporary offices, as well as money to buy essential electronic equipment. Subsequently the HSUS disaster services staff obtained the anonymous donation of 10 additional complete computer workstations to facilitate CACC’s ability to network and coordinate operations among its five shelters. In addition, The HSUS provided information via our Web site to clarify the volumes of information and rumors circulating about the situation in New York City and to channel public contributions directly to CACC.

In the aftermath of this event and well into October, donations of pet food and supplies exceeded warehouse facilities in New York City. At the request of the Federal
The HSUS kicked off its Disaster Dog program with a mock disaster and candlelight vigil. It was presented by Robert Sessions and his dogs Sky (below) and Thunder last November at The HSUS headquarters in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Sessions is the first recipient of HSUS Disaster Dog sponsorship. He is an accomplished canine handler and assistant search manager for the Maryland Urban Search and Rescue Task Force. He and his black Labrador teammates Sky and Thunder were on the first team sent to the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. The September 11 tragedies have demonstrated the important role urban search and rescue (USAR) dogs and their handlers play in responding to disasters. These dogs are trained to work with their handlers, using instinctual behavior and natural scenting abilities to recover survivors or find bodies in circumstances that make other methods impossible. September 11 has also shown the need for more USAR canine teams. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) deployed about 100 canine teams to the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, stretching their resources to the limit.

"Most of these Disaster Dog teams are volunteers," explains Anne Culver, director of disaster services for The HSUS. "FEMA requires extensive training and certification to work as part of its National Urban Search and Rescue Response System. FEMA pays the volunteers' expenses when they are deployed, but many expenses, such as the cost of training, exercises, and travel, are frequently not covered. The handlers give of their own time and money to train themselves and their dogs, demonstrating the power of the human-animal bond in service to the good of society. Training to high standards takes time and can be expensive for the individual volunteer. That's why The Humane Society of the United States wants to help."

For more information on the Disaster Dog program or disaster preparedness for you and your pets, call 202-452-1100 or visit The HSUS on the Web at www.hsus.org/disaster.

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Emergency Management Agency, MARO arranged for the transportation and safe storage of thousands of pounds of donated supplies originally intended for the search and rescue dogs working at Ground Zero. MARO arranged for their later distribution to animal shelters and pet owners adversely affected by the disaster.

As the weeks went on, public inquiries shifted to the anthrax threat and its significance for animals. HSUS staff members from disaster services, companion animals, and farm animals departments cooperated to gather and disseminate information about anthrax and other bioterrorism agents to pet owners and shelters.

The events of the past several months created a heightened interest in disaster preparedness, not only by the general pet-owning public but also by the media.

Staff of the Center for Animal Care and Control in Brooklyn, New York, accept The HSUS's gift of computer equipment after the September 11 attacks.

Meet HSUS Disaster Dogs

T he 10 HSUS regional offices all extend the important work of The HSUS in many ways. Following are just a few stories from other regions about some of the good work being done.

Arthur’s Plight May Change State’s Bear Policy

T he story of Arthur (shown in photo on page 4) first came to the attention of The HSUS’s West Coast Regional Office (WCRO) thanks to a call from a newspaper reporter in the small, picturesque community of Mammoth Lakes, located in the Sierra Nevada mountain range in California. Arthur, an adult black bear, had been living in a drainage culvert near a golf course when residents noticed he was dragging one of his hind legs. “It was believed that the bear was possibly suffering from a gunshot wound,” said WCRO Program Coordinator Bob Reder. Concerned citizens notified California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) officials who at first suggested that “nature should take its course,” but later decided that the bear should be euthanized.

According to Reder, “The latter decision caused a great deal of outcry among Mammoth lake’s citizens.” In an effort to save Arthur, WCRO staff intervened. “Thankfully, DFG decided to capture and transport Arthur to its holding facility in Rancho Cordova where he was given a preliminary medical examination,” he said. Arthur was found to be underweight for an adult black bear who was preparing for hibernation. A more in-depth examination followed at the University of California (UC) at Davis, where x-rays revealed three small shotgun pellets imbedded in Arthur’s hindquarters. Although the wounds had long since healed, Arthur was diagnosed as suffering from a degenerative bone condition caused by either bacterial or fungal infection, possibly related to

Great Lakes’ Appalachian Spay/Neuter Program in High Gear

T he Belmont County Animal Rescue League hosted the first HSUS Appalachian Spay/Neuter clinic in November at a National Guard armory. The Morgan County Humane Society held The HSUS’s second clinic in December at the Banquet Hall of the Stockport Mill Country Inn. Both two-day clinics were a great success, sterilizing more than 150 dogs and cats. The 2002 schedule is already filled, with clinics in Athens, Gallia, Jackson, Meigs, and Washington counties.

The idea for the Appalachian Spay/Neuter Program came out of a discussion between The HSUS Great Lakes Regional Office (GLRO) and humane groups from Southeastern Ohio in November of 2000. The local groups expressed the need to reduce the number of unplanned and unwanted litters of dogs and cats in their communities. Determined to address the problem, the groups formed Southeastern Ohio Humane Organizations (SOHO) and joined forces with The HSUS’s Remote Area Medical (RAM), a volunteer veterinary medical corps, completed the team. The HSUS provides spay/neuter surgeries for the pets of families who could not otherwise afford the service.

As GLRO director, it has long been Sandy Rowland’s dream to provide direct assistance to animals in Ohio’s Appalachian region. Thankfully, other’s believed in her dream too. The Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust, A Key Trust Company of Ohio, provided start-up costs and HSUS members provided funding for the program’s first year. With their support and with the ongoing support of countless other HSUS members, the first Appalachian spay/neuter clinic was held one short, but busy, year after the initial appeal from southeastern Ohio groups.

Marla Beaver, whose dog Pebbles was spayed at the Belmont clinic, confirmed this. “My pets are like part of the family, but getting Pebbles fixed was just not in the budget. I feel so fortunate to have gotten into this program.” Beaver added, “I was so nervous because Pebbles is our baby, but everything was so professionally done, and I was reassured she would be well cared for.”

From Left: Animal Protective Foundation of Schenectady, Executive Director Gordon Willard, New York First Lady Libby Patink, MARO’s Samantha Millen, and New York State Humane Association’s Sondra Woodvine

Albany Area Gets Spay/Neuter Van

O n August 23, 2001, New York’s First Lady Libby Patink christened the Animal Protective Foundation of Schenectady’s mobile spay/neuter unit at a ceremony in which several state and local political figures participated. Gordon Willard, executive director of the Animal Protective Foundation (APF), said the van would add to the number of animals sterilized in the Pet Pal Spay/Neuter Clinic. For example, it is to be made available periodically to shelters in the vicinity that are not yet able to fund their own spay/neuter clinics.

Dr. Beverly Blinn-Knapp, APF’s veterinarian, will provide information on APF’s spay/neuter clinic in a workshop to be offered during the Empire State Animal Protection Forum, in May.

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Northern Rockies Ft. Hall Spay Clinic

The Shoshone-Bannock tribes of the Ft. Hall Indian Reservation located in the southeast corner of Idaho invited The HSUS Northern Rockies Regional Office (NRRO) and University of Michigan School of Veterinary Medicine staff to participate in their first spay/neuter clinic in August 2001. The coordination and success of this event was due to hard work and outstanding communication with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Council, tribal health and human services agency, the Pocatello Humane Society, Pocatello Animal Shelter and Control, and the Blackfoot Humane Society. Each morning beginning at 5 a.m., this gentle community’s members began lining up with their pets outside the clinic. We held five days of surgeries, altering approximately 75 animals per day and vaccinating more than 300 dogs and cats. Veterinary students and NRRO team members also presented humane education programs to the community while pet owners and their children quietly waited for their pets’ recovery or health assessment checks.

having been shot, and that the condition could diminish his chances for survival in the wild. WCRO requested and received approval from DFG to have an HSUS wildlife expert review the x-rays and results of the examination and submit our recommendations concerning Arthur’s fate. HSUS experts concurred with the findings of the UC Davis exam, and we have recommended that Arthur be examined again in the near future to determine if the bone degeneration has worsened. In the meantime, The HSUS has recommended that Arthur be placed in an accredited sanctuary, providing he is not suffering. Should Arthur’s condition show improvement, we believe he may be a candidate for release back to the wild. Such a decision will require the concurrence of DFG, whose current policy forbids the release of adult bears back into the wild. “We will continue to monitor Arthur’s condition and well-being,” said Reder. “And we will also be working toward a change in DFG policy toward adult black bears.”

Tribal elders, dancers, and musicians honored our team with an outstanding performance on our final night in Ft. Hall. When the NRRO team returned to Billings, we received a certificate of thanks from the Shoshone-Bannock tribes expressing their thanks “for making our home a safer place, and for giving our pets the good health they deserve.”

Humanely Handling “Nuisance” Bears

The HSUS has embarked on a joint initiative with Steve Searles, the founder of Bear Affairs, to conduct nationwide training and outreach on non-lethal methods of dealing with human-bear conflicts. Searles has successfully implemented his program, which uses aversive conditioning techniques to teach bears to avoid conflicts with humans, in Canada and the United States. Most recently, Searles presented his program to police officers and New Jersey certified animal control officers (ACOs) at the Morris County Fire and Police Academy in Morris Plains, New Jersey. MARO believes that black bears will be better served if trained police officers and trained ACOs—rather than average citizens—act as first responders.

Conflicts between people and bears have been on the rise, fueled by increased human invasion of bear habitat and regional droughts, which cause food shortages for bears. Lured into human-populated areas in their search for food, bears, being smart and opportunistic creatures, soon learn that improperly-disposed-of trash makes for easy and tasty meals. Well-meaning residents often add to the problem by feeding bears, which leads them to view humans and their homes as easy and reliable sources of food. These “nuisance” bears are either caught and relocated or, tragically, killed.

“Bears live by a few simple rules,” says Searles. “Bear society is based on dominance. This means the biggest, toughest bear pretty much does what he wants and everybody else knows to get out of his way. And bears generally avoid conflict; they would rather flee than fight.”

Searles’ Bear Affairs program uses the bears’ own rules against them. Using dominant body language, vocalizations, and various props, law enforcement officers trained by Bear Affairs communicate to bears that humans are dominant, and that avoidance of people and their continued on page 6
Tough NJ Cruelty Law Passes

MARO Director Nina Austenberg was one of the few people invited to attend the private signing of S. 1515/A. 2698 by Acting Gov. Donald T. DiFrancesco at the State House.

The new law amends current law to establish as a crime of the fourth degree: purposely, knowingly, or recklessly tormenting, torturing, maiming, hanging, unnecessarily or cruelly beating, needlessly mutilating or cruelly killing a living animal or creature or to cause one of these acts. It would also require the court to order a juvenile who is found guilty of a disorderly persons offense or crime of the fourth degree to receive counseling by a licensed psychologist or therapist named by the court for a period of time to be prescribed by the licensed therapist.

In addition, the fourth degree classifies penalties of up to 18 months in jail and a fine up to $10,000.

We commend Acting Gov. DiFrancesco and the New Jersey Legislature for enacting legislation that substantially strengthens New Jersey's statutes against cruelty to animals. The public is often shocked when persons found guilty of aggravated animal abuse "get off lightly." However, the facts, without legislation such as that which Terrorizing, torturing, maiming, hanging, unnecessarily or cruelly killing a living animal or creature or to cause one of these acts...