Help Stop Cockfighting in Kansas

Last year, some 40 individuals were arrested in connection with a July 22 cockfight in Anderson County, Kansas. Investigators found two horse trailers converted to carry fighting roosters, a number of live roosters, and a dozen or so birds believed to have been killed in contests. More than 100 people were believed to have attended the three-pit cockfight that was held on land known as The Cadillac Ranch owned by Richard Radke of Olathe, Kansas.

County Attorney Fred Campbell evaluated the evidence in the July 22 arrest. The HSUS offered case review and expert testimony. Campbell initially believed he might be able to charge participants with animal cruelty and unlawful assembly. However, the lack of a state statute specifically outlawing cockfighting made him decide not to pursue the case any further.

"The fact that participants in this cockfighting incident were allowed to evade justice underscores the need for a continued on page 2"

This bird and many others were confiscated in a recent cockfighting raid.

Why Haven’t We Shut Down Puppy Mills?

This is one of the most often-asked questions at our office. The simple answer is that puppy mills won't be shut down until individuals stop buying the puppies from the retail outlets that sell them. Unfortunately the simple answer is also the complicated answer. Much of America thinks this problem has been solved. Walk into any pet shop and customers will speak of their disdain for puppy mills, even though they may be unwittingly purchasing their puppies from them.

So, what is The HSUS doing? Much of our work goes on behind the scenes and doesn’t make the newspaper when we are successful. We work to assist the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in its efforts to enforce the laws that govern large-scale breeding facilities, informing them of cases we learn of and providing documentation, when possible, that points them to unlicensed dealers.

The USDA regulates puppy mills through licensing and inspection. Facilities not required to be licensed may still be regulated by their state's agriculture departments. Unfortunately, not all states have such provisions, and some states have no laws at all to address large-scale breeding operations. For the past several years, The HSUS has successfully lobbied Congress for more funding for the USDA to increase enforcement. The USDA, which has been understaffed, hired more than a dozen new inspectors in 2001, due in part to The HSUS lobbying efforts in Congress. The HSUS has participated in the training of the newly hired inspectors to improve puppy mill standards. Congress approved an increase in funding for USDA of just over $5 million in 2001.

The HSUS has been working diligently in Washington, DC, to ensure passage of the Puppy Protection Act. This piece of federal legislation would affect all breeders licensed under the USDA and would ensure swift action against chronic violators of Animal Welfare Act regulations, set requirements for socialization of dogs and puppies with people and other dogs, as well as require continued on page 2

Dogs such as this one spend short, miserable lives in puppy mills. Until consumers stop purchasing dogs from pet stores, the problem is unlikely to end.
MWRO enthusiastically welcomes the newly hired HSUS Vice President of Farm Animals Dr. Michael Appleby and Farm Animal Campaign Manager Chris Bedford. When asked for his viewpoints on priorities for farm animals in the Midwest, Appleby had the following to say: “This region has both the worst and the best of the American livestock industry. It has vast factory hog farms that cause problems for the animals, the workers, the communities, and the environment. But it also has many small farms, and some of those are doing well at developing humane ways of treating their animals and avoiding most of the other problems. We need to reverse the trend towards factory farming and foster the humane farms instead.”

Our office, along with The HSUS’s farm animal and sustainable agriculture section, plans a major campaign to:

- limit the use of antibiotics in animal production,
- establish close working relationships with farmers and farm organizations in an effort to help them and their animals escape destructive factory farming,
- help communities whose health and environment is threatened by animal factories, and
- educate consumers about the consequences of their food choices.

The HSUS participated in the Farm Rally at the Capitol in Des Moines, Iowa, on January 15th in support of family farm organizations. If you are interested in joining The HSUS in fighting the expansion of factory farms, contact MWRO or Chris Bedford at cbedford@hsus.org or (301) 258-3036.

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MWRO Hosts Animal Fighting Seminar
In November, MWRO, along with the Nebraska Humane Society, co-hosted a day-long training seminar in Omaha on illegal animal fighting. The seminar featured nationally recognized cockfighting expert Robert Beals of the Los Angeles County, California, Sheriff’s Department. The seminar focused on the importance of information sharing and teamwork to combat illegal animal fighting. Attendees included law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and animal welfare advocates from Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

Although cockfighting is illegal in Kansas under the anti-cruelty law, this blood sport flourishes underground across the state because Kansas is one of six states with no specific law specifically outlawing the practice. What’s more, it is currently legal to keep and train birds for fighting or even attend a cockfight. All of these loopholes make arrest and convictions even less frequent.

The good news is legislation to crack down on illegal cockfighting has been introduced by Rep. Peggy Long of Madison. H.B. 2181 would make cockfighting a felony, as well as owning, training, and selling the birds for the purpose of fighting, and would make it a misdemeanor to be a spectator at a cockfight.

Unfortunately, the cockfighters are now organized and have hired a lobbyist. This bill will only pass if legislators hear that Kansans care about this issue. You really can make a difference simply by sending a letter to your Senator and Representative in Topeka and asking them to support H.B. 2181. If you are interested in obtaining more information on cockfighting, go to www.animalfighting.org or contact MWRO. Please contact your legislators as soon as possible to express your views. Your voice is absolutely critical to the passage of this important legislation.

MWRO Director Amy Suarez (second from right) joins members of Operation SPOT.

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 charitable remainder trusts. Giving The HSUS a gift of stock.

Promoting the protection of all animals
The HSUS encourages all such education on every front, and we’ve instituted a new initiative to help further this process. The HSUS Pets For Life national training center shows shelter professionals how to institute stress-reduction programs for shelter animals, offer dog-training and pet-parenting classes to the public, and even set up telephone help lines for frustrated pet owners. The program has one very ambitious goal: to keep pets and their people together.

This year MWRO will be involved in many training opportunities. Look for seminars on “adopting” a classroom and disaster planning for equines in June. In addition to MWRO training, you can seek out training opportunities from state associations (which hold annual training conferences as well as smaller local workshops around the state), from your local animal shelter, and on the Internet.

We all must pursue a lifetime of learning. Identify learning opportunities that will enable you to do your humane work more effectively. Think of yourself as a teacher—one who can bring valuable messages to the public and in turn protect animals from pain and suffering. Together we are a dynamic team promoting a society in which the welfare of animals is protected on many fronts.

The MWRO Regional News is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States, Midwest Regional Office, 1515 Linden St., Ste. 220, Des Moines, IA 50309; 515-283-1393. Amy Suarez, director. 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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