Training for Tomorrow

Education is the backbone of success in our society. And training in the field of animal care and control is no exception. Good training promotes professionalism and excellence in animal care, humane education, and law enforcement while protecting animal welfare and public safety.

Everyone has a vested interest in the success and quality of training that our local animal care and control professionals receive. It is MWRO’s intent to ensure that animal control officers in our region receive the best training possible.

In 2003, MWRO sponsored state training programs in Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, and Nebraska. But our biggest success was co-hosting the Animal Sheltering Training Conference with the Ames Animal Shelter. This was the first training event for animal welfare professionals in nearly 15 years in Iowa, and MWRO was instrumental in bringing it all together. The conference was well attended by animal care and control representatives from all over the state, as well as Kansas and Missouri. Workshop topics covered everything from responsible adoptions and handling continued on page 4

MWRO’s Diane Webber shows off a few of the educational materials available to animal protection advocates.

Freezing in the Fires

By MWRO Director Diane Webber

To the untrained eye, the iguana appeared dead. He seemed totally lifeless, wasn’t breathing, and was as cold as an ice cube. Exotic reptiles like the iguana are difficult to care for and are also at greater risk in an emergency because of their need for warmth. This fellow—whose name I never learned—had been left in a cold house for five days while his owners were evacuated from the California wildfires, so he was in bad shape.

The vastness of the October wildfires brought rescue workers from all over the country to California, and I was glad to be called to assist San Bernardino County Animal Care and Control (SBCACC) as part of The HSUS’s National Disaster Animal Response Team. The mountainous areas northeast of San Bernardino (Lake Arrowhead, Big Bear, Running Spring, Crestline) had been evacuated five days prior to our arrival. The area was suffering from power outages, and stormy weather had moved in, causing the temperature to plummet. Heavy snow began to fall at the higher elevations.

SBCACC had a backlog of more than 200 calls from homeowners requesting rescue for animals they had left behind when they evacuated. Those left behind would now not only be hungry but cold. Our job was to locate the animals and bring them to one of the county animal shelters set up to provide temporary housing until their owners could reclaim them.

At the end of one day, we were heading down the mountain with our animal control truck filled with rescued pets when we were stopped in Crestline by a group of firefighters who had spotted a kitten in a second-story window. The kitten was literally panic stricken, meowing and screaming at the window, begging us for rescue. The firefighters set up a ladder. My partner climbed the ladder, pried open the window, and coaxed the little kitty into his arms. The little three-month-old pet was handed down to me, examined, and placed into a warm carrier for transport to the shelter in DeVore with the rest of our load. It was an emotional role reversal with the firefighters calling us the “heroes” as they drove off to continue their work.

As mentioned earlier, it wasn’t just furry companions who needed rescuing. Our team found two iguanas, one of whom appeared to already be dead. But in my examination, I noticed a slight reflex in his eyes, and his tongue still had color. I knew that reptiles continued on page 2
Federal Legislation Important to the Midwest

President Bush Signs Law Restoring Trade in Big Cats

In his last December, President Bush signed into law the Captive Wildlife Safety Act, which bars the interstate and foreign commerce of dangerous exotic animals—including lions, tigers, leopards, cheetahs, jaguars, and cougars—for the pet trade. An estimated 10,000 to 15,000 exotic cats, such as lions and tigers, are kept as pets in the United States.

“It is important and timely that the federal government has stepped in to restrict the exotic pet trade,” says Wayne Pacelle, a senior vice president for The HSUS. Just in the week prior to the law’s signing, Pacelle noted that “another person was killed by a tiger when he got too close to the animal’s cage.”

The Captive Wildlife Safety Act provides exemptions for legitimate wildlife sanctuaries and for those licensed to exhibit these animals. Nine states already ban keeping big cats as pets.

“Lions and tigers are dangerous and unpredictable wild animals, and there is simply no justifiable reason for keeping them as pets,” said Pacelle. “It is crucial that the states that don’t ban keeping dangerous exotic animals as pets adopt their own laws, as a necessary complement to the newly enacted federal law.”

HSUSDomesticBan of Processing of Downed Animals

In a strongly worded letter sent December 24, 2003, to Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, The HSUS demanded that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) implement an immediate ban on the processing of “downed animals.”

The letter from HSUS Senior Vice President Wayne Pacelle relayed the history of efforts by The HSUS and Farm Sanctuary (a New York-based farm animal welfare group) to ban the processing of downed animals. In 2002, both chambers of Congress passed amendments to the Farm Security Act restricting the transport of downed animals, but a conference committee nixed the provision. Earlier in 2003, the Senate passed an amendment banning the processing of downed animals for human consumption, but the House rejected similar language by just three votes.

A conference committee struck the downed animal language on December 9, 2003—the very day that the Holstein infected with mad cow disease (bovine spongiform encephalopathy or BSE) was processed in Washington state.

According to USDA, there are perhaps 130,000 to 190,000 animals every year presented at slaughterhouses who have gone down and cannot stand up again. According to the best estimates provided by USDA for 1999-2001, nearly three quarters of these animals are processed for human food—often on the basis of only a visual inspection at slaughterhouses. Even with the stepped-up testing program of the USDA, only 10–15 percent of downed animals are being tested for BSE.

“Secretary Veneman is emphasizing to Americans that our food supply is safe, yet only 10 to 15 percent of the animals most at risk for mad cow disease are being tested. Her assurances are clearly more an expression of personal faith, rather than a reflection of sound policy,” said Pacelle. The HSUS has long argued that downed animals are among the most abused of animals in industrial agriculture. They are often dragged by chains or pushed with bulldozers to get them into a slaughterhouse.

With the threat of mad cow disease looming, it is more important than ever to ban processing of downed animals like this cow.

Webber feeds an iguana who survived a close call in California’s wildfires.

I want to learn how I can help our animal friends and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS. Giving The HSUS a gift of stock.

Promoting the protection of all animals.

Send me more information about__________________________

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.

I want to learn how I can help our animal friends and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).
Director's Report

By Diane Webber
Director of the Midwest Regional Office

Happy Birthday, HSUS!

What a truly altruistic accomplishment—50 years of protecting animals! And as part of the HSUS legacy, MWRO has a history to be proud of.

MWRO was established to more effectively address the animal protection concerns of Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri. From its Kansas City office, The HSUS tackled the puppy mill issue and brought public attention to the horrors inherent in these breeding facilities. In 1992, MWRO worked diligently with other concerned groups to get the Animal Care Facilities Act passed in Missouri to address not only puppy mill atrocities, but also the operation and care conditions at all animal facilities in the state. Since then, MWRO has been directly or indirectly involved in the closing of 15 puppy mills, resulting in the rescue of more than 5,000 animals.

MWRO was also instrumental in bringing resolution to the violent attack on cats at the Noah's Ark Foundation shelter in Fairfield, Iowa. Twenty-three cats were bludgeoned with baseball bats and seven more were severely injured by three teenage boys. MWRO provided the reward that led to the arrest of teens involved in the Scruffy killing in Kansas. The HSUS and MWRO staff worked extensively with prosecutors to prepare these cases and provide background information related to the link between animal abuse and violence against humans.

This office has been instrumental in assisting animal protection organizations and governmental agencies in getting several other key legislative efforts passed as well, including banning animal fighting in Nebraska; establishing state licensing and inspection of animal facilities in Kansas; mandating spay/neuter of adopted animals in Kansas and Iowa; refining animal cruelty definitions and increasing penalties for such in Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri; repealing mandated pound seizure and defeating mourning dove hunting in Iowa; and passing felony cockfighting in Nebraska and Missouri. Our legislative efforts today include establishing felony penalties for animal fighting and banning pets as prizes in Iowa, drafting a felony animal cruelty bill in Kansas, and promoting the passage of the Puppy Protection Act.

Our action hasn't been limited to the halls of legislature. When an ocean of floodwaters inundated nine states and submerged entire communities in the spring of 1993, nearly 50 people were killed and 55,000 homes were damaged or destroyed in what became one of the most widespread natural disasters in U.S. history—the great Midwest floods of 1993. MWRO sprang into action and into the spotlight. A team effort from all animal protection agencies in the Midwest was needed to help provide relief for thousands of animals. MWRO was there to coordinate the rescue efforts. And the office was on the scene again in 1994 to assist the flood victims in eastern Missouri and in 2001 in Davenport, Iowa.

On May 4, 2003, when tornadoes ripped through Kansas, Missouri, Tennessee, and Arkansas killing 44 people, countless animals, and causing devastation for hundreds of families, MWRO was there again. MWRO responded to Pierce City, Missouri, a town of 1,400 where not a home or business was left untouched. In all, MWRO provided temporary housing, support, and assistance for more than 200 animals and a sigh of relief to hundreds of pet owners and city officials.

MWRO moved to Des Moines in June of 2000, and last year Minnesota joined our region. I too, came to the region last year! After my first year, I'm prouder than ever to be a part of The HSUS and to have this chance to celebrate its 50th birthday. Happy birthday, HSUS! Keep up the great work!

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dangerous dogs to handling large-scale impounds and dealing with urban wildlife issues. The response was fantastic, and plans for 2004 are already in the works for Iowa and our other Midwestern states.

Anyone who works or volunteers with dogs, cats, or other animals can benefit from the training opportunities HSUS has available. It's MWRO's goal to help animal advocates receive the best.

For more information on regional training opportunities, contact our office.

Contacting HSUS

Write:
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1515 Linden St., Ste. 220
Des Moines, IA 50309

Call: 515-283-1393
Fax: 515-283-1407
Web Page: www.hsus.org/mwro

Promoting the protection of all animals

MWRO has worked for years to improve conditions for dogs in puppy mills.