Cockfighting Raid in Napa

A team of more than 30 investigators, including a SWAT team, sheriff’s deputies, federal agents, local humane and animal control agents, and WCRO representatives served search warrants on two locations in south Napa County in early August. The team seized more than 2,000 gamecocks. It was the second such raid carried out in Napa County this year (see spring 2003 WCRO Regional News).

“This raid resulted not only in one of the largest seizures of gamecocks to date, but also in the confiscation of one of the largest collections of illegal cockfighting implements I’ve ever seen,” said WCRO Director Eric Sakach. Over the two-day search, officers found hundreds of cutters—the razor sharp knives that are attached to the legs of fighting birds.

“Investigating and raiding an operation of this size is no easy task,” said Sakach. “The HSUS commends the Napa County Sheriff’s Department for their proactive effort to stem the growth of this cruel and illegal industry in their jurisdiction, and we commend each of the agencies and organizations that provided personnel to assist them.”

WCRO’s Cynthia Cutler participated in the Napa County cockfighting raid.

Dosha, The Miracle Dog

Within the span of several hours, Dosha was hit by a truck, shot in the head, and left in a freezer. Somehow, the eight-month-old mixed breed dog survived it all.

Dosha’s ordeal began on April 15, 2003, when she reportedly escaped her yard and was hit by a truck in Clearlake, California. A Clearlake police officer who arrived on the scene thought the dog was suffering, or potentially dangerous, and decided to perform emergency field euthanasia by shooting Dosha in the head. Dosha was then transported to a freezer used by Lake County Animal Control.

When interim Lake County Animal Control Director Denise Johnson arrived two hours later to retrieve Dosha’s body, she encountered not a deceased animal, but a young pooch sitting up, very much alive. Johnson rushed the injured animal to the Clearlake Veterinary Clinic, where she was X-rayed and treated. To everyone’s amazement, Dosha had not suffered any life-threatening injuries.

After receiving reports of the incident, WCRO’s Bob Reder traveled to Clearlake and met with the Clearlake Animal Welfare Society (CLAWS), county and town officials, the director of the county animal control, the attending veterinarian, the dog’s care-giver, and of course with Dosha herself, who was recovering quite well. Her medical expenses have been covered, thanks to donations sent to a fund created by CLAWS, including a $500 donation by The HSUS.

During his meetings with government officials, Reder learned that there is a serious problem with dogs running at large and a disregard for the dog licensing laws. Reder also learned from officials that there is not adequate animal control available in Clearlake. Police Chief Robert Chalk made it clear that he doesn’t believe his officers should augment animal control efforts. Chalk also advised Reder that his officer made the correct decision under the circumstances. When questioned, Chalk told Reder that his officers do not receive training in the recognition of vicious dogs, evaluation of life-threatening injuries, or performance of acceptable euthanasia techniques, and the police department does not have an emergency animal transportation procedure in place. To this end, Reder offered to provide training to the Clearlake City Police. Chalk explained that he did not have funds in his budget to cover the cost of overtime to accomplish the training.

WCRO asked that CLAWS host a continued on page 2
Regional Efforts to Prepare for Disaster

Doing the Drill for Disaster Preparedness

The North Valley Animal Disaster Group (NVADG) knew their training had paid off when they were invited to participate in the Butte County/Canyon Oaks multi-agency disaster drill in June. As part of a mock wildfire scenario, NVADG members worked side by side with law enforcement, city and county fire officials, the California Department of Forestry, and the County Office of Emergency Services. The collaboration between human and animal responders enabled both groups to exercise their own disaster plans and better understand the roles each group has in a disaster. During the drill, responders evacuated animals to a temporary animal shelter, a local equestrian center. The team set up areas for animal intake, veterinary services, security, sanitation, large and small animal housing, feeding, and exercise.

WCRO Program Coordinator Cynthia Cutler participated in and helped critique the drill. “The North Valley Animal Disaster Group has come a long way in a year,” said Cutler. “The teams handled themselves effectively and professionally even when presented with challenging situations. In the event of an actual disaster, animal owners need to be prepared to evacuate with their animals. Residents living in this area should know that rescued animals will be well taken care of in a disaster.”

Hawaii Animal Disaster Training

WCRO’s Cynthia Cutler and Southeast Regional Office Director Laura Bevan joined forces with Kauai Humane Society (KHS) Executive Director Becky Rhoades to bring the first HSUS disaster training to Hawaii. Hawaiian Humane Society Director of Shelter Operations Linda Haller and Mark Marshall of Kauai Civil Defense Agency were also on hand to conduct the training. The KHS is a beautiful 30,000 square foot facility with a housing capacity of 1,000 animals. During times of disaster, the basement will be utilized as the Red Cross human evacuation center. Evacuees are welcome to bring their pets and house them upstairs in the animal shelter. In addition, KHS can house pets displaced by disasters as well as care for their own shelter animals. The three-day course included personal disaster planning, establishing pet-friendly shelters, maintaining the health and safety of responders, managing volunteers, and learning the incident command system. Thirty animal care professionals and volunteers attended. The training also included a hands-on component in which shelter staff and volunteers were presented with various disaster scenarios. Participants had to design and implement a functional evacuation animal shelter for those displaced.

continued from page 2

Conference Excels in Educational Offerings

Every year WCRO staff exhibit and present a wide variety of specialized education programs at conferences and training programs throughout the region. Helping local animal cruelty investigators and other animal care specialists gain expertise and skills to do their jobs more efficiently is one of the major objectives of the HSUS. One such event is The HSUS helps to support is the Animal Care Conference, an animal event sponsored by the California Association for Animal Control Directors Association, the State Humane Association of California, and the California Veterinary Medical Association. Attracting close to 600 participants, the 2003 Animal Care Conference was held in San Jose, California, last March. Among the dozens of educational sessions, WCRO Director Eric Sakach led a course on illegal animal fighting that was rated capacity; while WCRO Special Projects Coordinator John Donners helped present the conference’s first Award of Excellence in Education to human education filmmaker Erik Friedl. Friedl has produced seven outstanding films, some of which have aired on PBS stations across the United States. Information on Erik Friedl and his films can be found at www.acnet.com/erik_friedl.htm.

Those interested in gaining new information and skills for animal protection work should consider attending the 2004 Animal Care Conference to be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. For details see www.animalcareconference.org.

HSUS representatives discuss educational offerings with a conference attendee.

Bears on Bags

In an effort to inform residents of the Tahoe Basin area about peacefully coexisting with black bears, the folks at Safeway Supermarkets joined with the Tahoe Council for Wild Bears (TCWB) to put “bears on bags.” For several weeks in July, all northern California Safeway stores distributed paper grocery bags that displayed a “keep bears alive” message. “TCWB is a unique coalition of 11 government and non-government organizations working together to educate the public about bears and create an environment of peaceful co-existence of humans and bears,” said Bob Reder, WCRO regional coordinator and member of TCWBS executive committee.

WCRO’s Bob Reder (second from left) joins Tahoe Council for Wild Bears representatives at an event to introduce Safeway’s “bears on bags” bear awareness program.

WCRO Aids Neglected Pigs

It may have been intended as a sanctuary for unwanted potbellied pigs near Georgetown, California, but what WCRO’s Bob Reder (above) and Eric Sakach found when they helped El Dorado County Animal Control execute a search warrant on the property would more aptly be described as pig purgatory. Supervising Animal Control Officer John Vail obtained the warrant in response to complaints about loose potbellied pigs from a neighbor. Officers who investigated the initial complaint saw dead and emaciated pigs on the property. Reder and Sakach helped with the capture and loading of the pigs as needed immediate attention. They also documented the carcasses of a number of pigs. They and others participating in the search found the area littered with trash, debris, fecal accumulation, and broken-down vehicles. Fences, pens, gates, and structures on the property were in various stages of disrepair, with little or no food or water provided for the animals. In addition to more than 80 pigs found on the property itself, many more pigs were seen in the surrounding environs roaming at large. Officers also found feral cats, goats, and dogs. Several emaciated goats were seized upon veterinarian Ned Sakach’s recommendation, and one dog was euthanized for humane reasons. The property owner, who was cited, cooperated during the search and indicated that the conditions occurred because of a pending divorce. The matter has been referred to the district attorney’s office.

WCRO’s Cynthia Cutler in HSUS shirt speaks with a reporter about a disaster drill held in Butte County/Canyon Oaks.

RAYS Visits California Reservations

WCRO Program Coordinator Cynthia Cutler joined Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAYS) veterinarians and veterinary students at the Karuk and Round Valley Reservations in Northern California. The RAYS team spayed or neutered 144 dogs and cats free of charge, and provided wellness exams and vaccinations for 195 animals. Cutler also assisted the reservation’s pet care classes for children, adults, and tribal officials while the clinic was underway. RAYS’ team also presented with challenging situations. In the event of an actual disaster, animal owners need to be prepared to evacuate with their animals. Residents living in this area should know that rescued animals will be well taken care of in a disaster.”

WCRO Program Coordinator Cynthia Cutler leads a hard-working volunteer veterinary students (and the professional vets who oversee them), who travel to the neediest areas of the world to help the animals—and their owners. Go to www hsus org/ravsnetworker to sign up for this free, monthly newsletter.

Get the RAVS E-news

No matter where in the world the RAVS team travels, you can follow along with the RAVS E-newsletter. Whether it’s a stray/neutered cat who was left in Recreation in California or an equine wellness clinic Peru, readers can get a glimpse into the activities of these hard-working volunteer veterinary students.
by the disaster. The training had such a positive impact that shelters from neighboring islands are interested in bringing the training to their areas.

**Legislative Update**

**California**

- Penalties increased for cockfighting. S.B. 732, sponsored by WCRO and introduced by Sen. Nell Soto (D-32nd) of Ontario, was signed into law by Gov. Gray Davis on September 2, 2003, and takes effect January 1, 2004. The new law raises the penalties for a first-offense conviction of illegal cockfighting up to $5,000. Second offense fines go up to $25,000. Both also include a jail sentence of up to one year. The HSUS is grateful to the California Legislature and to Gov. Davis for passing this legislation to crack down on the barbaric and widespread practice of cockfighting. Cockfighting is not only inhumane, but it is also often associated with a range of other criminal activities, including gambling and narcotics trafficking.

- Sales of unweaned pet birds regulated. A.B.202, supported by The HSUS and introduced by Assemblywoman Ellen Corbett, prohibits pet shops with six or more employees from possessing; or offering for sale or giving away; unweaned parrots in California. The legislation was introduced on November 6, 2001, and was signed into law by Governor Davis on September 2, 2003. The law will go into effect in April 2004. The HSUS appreciates the role of horses in our history. Animal Care Expo is a world-class educational conference designed for anyone and everyone who works or volunteers to help animals. Animal Care Expo is a world-class educational conference designed for anyone and everyone who works or volunteers to help animals.
We live in an age in which violence seems to permeate every aspect of our lives. And if there isn’t enough actual violence with all its real victims and all its real suffering, we flock to simulated (and sometimes real) violence presented as entertainment. The fact is that we’re immersed in violence, and we still can’t seem to get enough of it. It’s difficult to imagine that things will improve any time soon for people, let alone animals, when we seem to be so inclined to commit acts of violence against others because they are of a different race, speak a different language, practice a different religion, or because they are a different species.

Throughout history, great thinkers and learned scholars have expounded on the importance of instilling in children a humane ethic, not just for the sake of the animals, but for all life. Humane education is not a new concept at all. As early as 1933, the National Parent Teacher Association Congress issued the following statement in support of humane education:

“Children trained to extend justice, kindness, and mercy to animals become more just, kind, and considerate in their relations with each other. Character training along these lines will result in men and women of broader sympathies, more humane, more law-abiding—in every respect more valuable citizens. Humane education is teaching in the schools and colleges of the nations the principles of justice, goodwill, and humanity toward all life. The cultivation of the spirit of kindness to animals is but the starting point towards that larger humanity which includes one’s fellow of every race and clime. A generation of people trained in these principles will solve their international difficulties as neighbors and not as enemies.”

As we first reported in the spring 2002 issue of the WCRO Regional News, a proposal by Dr. Yale Wishnick for a Humane Education Charter School in the Sacramento area, the first in the country; has received the support of our office. Charter advocates say they hope such a school for 300 students in kindergarten through sixth grade could open in 2004.

I am especially heartened by the fact that WCRO staff has served as part of the charter school’s planning committee from the very beginning, and we have been continually impressed with the way Dr. Wishnick has been able to bring together local parent and teacher support groups as well as many state and national groups that believe the school will be widely accepted and highly respected. The HSUS will provide resource personnel and materials for the project as well as guide curriculum development.

Finally, add Yale Wishnick to the list of great thinkers and learned scholars.

For updates on the Humane Education Charter School, call Yale Wishnick at 916-212-9297, or visit www.ctaregion2.org/San%20Juan%20Final.pdf.

The WCRO Regional News is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States, West Coast Regional Office, P.O. Box 417220, Sacramento, CA 95841-7220; 916-344-1710. Eric Sakach, director. The office is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is closed on federal holidays. © 2003 by The Humane Society of the United States. All rights reserved. A COPY OF THE LATEST REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION FILED BY THE HSUS MAY BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING THE HSUS, OFFICE OF THE TREASURER, 2100 L ST., NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20037, 202-452-1100. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT. Printed on recycled paper.