HSUS Helps in Katrina’s Wake

As the National Guard entered New Orleans to quell civil disorder coming in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, members of the HSUS National Disaster Animal Response Team (DART) worked their way into the nearly obliterated regions of southern Mississippi and Louisiana. The situation could not have been more urgent in both areas, with reports of animals locked in homes, kennels, veterinary clinics, and other locations. It was a race against time for our first responders on the ground.

The presence of HSUS personnel was good news for 130 dogs and cats in Gulfport, Mississippi. There, HSUS team members rescued these animals from the animal shelter of the Humane Society of South Mississippi, which was flooded by the combination of a storm surge with an overflow discharge of human waste from the sewage treatment plant next door. Some animals swam in their cages for hours, somehow managing to keep their heads above water. Others were not so fortunate.

An airboat moves down a flooded New Orleans street September 5 with animal rescue workers, a rifle-toting guard, and several rescued dogs. With thousands of stranded pets in the city, HSUS rescuers were frantically trying to reach as many animals as they could.

Amador County Cockfighting Farm Shut Down

They allegedly showed up for a Sunday cockfight near Fiddletown, California, but instead of participating in bloodsports and gambling, 28 people were arrested by Amador County Sheriff’s deputies, who caught some of them climbing down from trees where they had attempted to hide. The May 15 bust followed a year-long investigation into illegal cockfighting activities at the California Game Farm, a 10-acre property located near the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Among those arrested was the property’s owner, Richard Warren Bohn.

“In addition to finding hundreds of razor-sharp slashers (knife-like implements designed to be attached to the birds’ legs), officers discovered three bloodstained cockfighting arenas at the scene, along with firearms, drugs, and thousands of dollars in cash,” said HSUS West Coast Regional Director Eric Sakach, who was present to assist deputies during the raid.

“One suspect reportedly dropped $4,000 as he attempted to flee,” he said.

All the individuals arrested were charged with attending an animal fight. Some were also charged with possession of fighting cocks and cockfighting implements. About 30 others fled into the surrounding area.

WCRO was instrumental in the formation of an ad hoc task force to help investigate Bohn’s alleged cockfighting operation and assist with the handling and documentation of animals during the raid. Authorities seized and removed 58 roosters, including birds who had been brought to the location and a representative sampling of the more than 350 gamecocks found on Bohn’s property. All of the remaining gamecocks were tagged, photographed, and impounded on the property by HSUS staff and personnel from Amador County Animal Control, with assistance from police and animal control officers from Stanislaus, El Dorado, Placer, Merced, Yolo, Tehama, and Sacramento counties, as well as the cities of Galt, Sacramento, and Lathrop. The HSUS also provided an emergency grant to Amador County’s small, cash-strapped animal control facility to help defray the costs of sheltering and caring for the seized roosters pending trial.

Informal charges have since been filed against Richard Warren Bohn by the Amador
for the purpose of permitting the taking of animals into adoption programs in Texas and other states. Working with local humane societies in Mississippi, where the HSUS logistical team worked to place them with humane societies around the country—and the world—by providing free spay/neuter surgeries, vaccinations, and veterinary care in some of the most impoverished places imaginable. While all these animals are

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Pai in the Sky

HSUS’s Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAVS) program helps thousands of animals around the country (and the world) by providing free spay/neuter surgeries, vaccinations, and veterinary care in some of the most impoverished places imaginable. While all these animals are needed, the HSUS DART, together with animal control staff from the Louisiana SPCA, targeted animals stranded at the Superdome as their priority. There, they rescued dozens of animals relinquished or abandoned by desperate evacuees who fled the city to safety. They took it upon themselves to resettle these animals into adoption programs in Texas and other states. Working with local humane societies, rescuers saved more than 6,000 animals on the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast. The total number of animals lost to the storm will be difficult to determine for months,” said Laura Biever, director of HSUS’s West Coast Regional Office and head of the Minnesot a puppy rescue effort. Tens of thousands of people and animals are still waiting for rescue and assistance. “This is going to require a massive, long-term effort,” she said. But The HSUS is committed to the task. To support The HSUS’s animal protection efforts, go to www.hsus.org/join.

Pai (now Kaiya) with new owner Tessa Hall.

pecially,” sometimes a case comes along that demands even more extraordinary care. At only 10 weeks old, an adorable Australian shepherd mix had already given up. She was admitted to the RAVS’ Walker River Panne tribe clinic in Shurez, Nevada, with bloody diarrhea, fleas, ticks, and little hope for a happy ending. Besides her physical problems, she was also homeless, and seemed to have resigned herself to a lonely, miserable end.

University of Missouri veterinary student volunteers Meredith Hall, Sonya Weissbach, and Amy Crowder had a different ending in mind. They wanted to nurse the pup they called Pai back to health and find her a home. But they had a big problem. Pai was too sick to fly, and they were returning home in two days. Enter WCR0 Program Coordinator Paul Bruce. Paul’s heart went out to the pup (and the other students), and he agreed to take Pai with him back to Sacramento, get her the veterinary help she needed, then send her on to Missouri when her health

legislation

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Tiger Abuser Finally Sentenced

On July 18th, John H. Weinhart, former owner of Tiger Rescue, was sentenced to two years in county jail and five years of probation for his February 22, 2005, conviction of 56 counts of animal cruelty, which included 14 felonies. He is also to receive psychological counseling and attend anger management and parenting classes. Mr. Weinhart had been in custody since February. The conviction is a result of an animal saga that began on April 22, 2003, when more than 90 animals were discovered on Weinhart's property, including 70 tigers. Over the past two years all the tigers were relocated to several sanctuaries in California, Colorado, and Texas. During this time, the Fund for Animals (now merged with The HSUS) was instrumental in caring for adults and cubs alike, and raising money to create a suitable permanent home for the cats.

“We were pleased that some jail time was included,” said Michael Markarian, executive vice president of The HSUS. “It sends a strong message that if you abuse animals, you don’t get a slap on the wrist; you go to jail.” Judge Taylor also ordered that Weinhart not own, possess, care for, or volunteer in a place with animals, and that he stay 50 yards away from exotic cats.

For more about this amazing story of law enforcement and animal agency cooperation, as well as video showing how the tigers are doing, go to www.hsus.org and the PAWS (Performing Animal Welfare Society) Web site at www.pawsweb.org.

Preventing for Disaster

Disaster preparedness is an ongoing priority for our office. To that end, WCRO’s Curt Ransom and Paul Bruce helped organize and participate in a well-attended and highly successful HSUS/DART (Disaster Animal Response Team) training workshop held June 25–26 in Orange County, California. The course attracted 79 attendees from northern and southern California, and included animal sheltering, human and animal safety, legal issues, field communications, media relations, damage assessment, small and large animal handling, and much more. A mock disaster scenario using live dogs and miniature horses gave participants hands-on experience.

Special thanks go to local Huntington Beach volunteer Susan Keys-Huelego, who acquired locations, speakers, pre-registrations, and equipment for the animal handling portion of the training.

DART training will again be held in southern California in 2006, and we are also looking for venues in northern California. For more about disaster training and preparedness, please visit www.hsus.org/disaster.

“Off the Chain” Reveals Betrayal of Man’s Best Friend

President Theodore Roosevelt owned one. So did Helen Keller. This breed of dog was the trademark of Buster Brown shoes and RCA Victor. Petey was the canine star of television’s “Our Gang.” And Stubby was the most decorated dog in American history, having received numerous medals and the honorary rank of Sergeant for his services during World War I. What do these famous dogs have in common? They were all American pit bull terriers.

How did such a beloved breed come to be feared as a “public enemy” that is now banned in more than 200 counties and the entire province of Ontario, Canada? That’s what director Bobby J. Brown seeks to show in his film “Off the Chain,” available on DVD from Ardent Home Entertainment.

The film explores the evolution of the breed and gives viewers a disturbing look into the minds of the dog owners and trainers who participate in the gruesome world of dogfighting. Brown spent three years infiltrating the underground subculture of pit bull fighting, gaining the trust of well-established “dog men” who allowed him to film behind their veil of secrecy. But he also captured another side: the loving nature of the dogs and their brutal misuse by those who are supposed to be their caretakers. WCRO Director Eric Sakach is featured in the documentary.

Brown is generously donating to The HSUS one-third of the proceeds from sales of “Off the Chain” DVDs sold through The HSUS. To order, go to www.offtethechainproductions.com/store and use the redemption code: HSUSOTC.

Is Your Cat Safe at Home?

Core it a double, as HSUS and the Sacramento River Cats teamed up with local animal care agencies for the second year to promote The HSUS’s Safe Cats campaign, aimed at getting cat owners to keep their furry friends “safe at home.”

The promotion began with Sacramento Mayor Heather Fargo pronouncing March Safe Cats month, and culminated with a game between the Sacramento River Cats and the Colorado Sky Sox in June. Members of nine local animal care agencies were in attendance.

WCRO had a booth at the game and provided T-shirts and brochures informing baseball fans about the dangers of allowing their feline friends to roam free. Besides brochures, WCRO provided cat toys, magnets, and an autograph session with Dinger, the River Cats feline mascot. Kids, including a number of Girl Scouts, lined up for autographs and a chance to meet their favorite feline.

WCRO Program Coordinator Paul Bruce spent the fourth and fifth innings being interviewed by the voice of the River Cats, Johnny Diskow, during the radio broadcast of the game. Bruce and Diskow dispelled some of the myths about free-roaming cats and outline ‘many of the reasons why a safe cat is a happy cat.’

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County District Attorney’s Office, listing Gina May Bohn and Robert Edward Wendell as co-defendants. They each face one felony charge of alleged conspiracy to engage in cockfighting. According to Amador County District Attorney Todd Ribe, the conspiracy charge was based on the alleged commission of five overt acts related to cockfighting: communicating to others that there would be a cockfight on the property, collecting admission fees, admitting other fighting birds to the property, weighing and tagging birds with numbered bands, and drafting a fighting schedule board displaying the weight and band numbers of the birds.

The trio was arraigned June 15 in Amador Superior Court.

“WCRO will continue to work with the Amador County Sheriff’s Department and District Attorney’s Office to ensure that Bohn is prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” noted Sakach.

Other charges filed against the Bohns and Robert Wendell include misdemeanor possession or training of fighting animals, possession of cockfighting implements, and possession of a bird or animal for fighting. Richard and Gina Bohn are further charged with felony counts of maintaining a place for wagering and three counts of contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Sakach believes the felony charges are a good sign. California, he explained, “has become a bit of a refuge for cockfighting” because the crime is only a misdemeanor in the state. As a result, “cockfights often locate in California rather than in neighboring states, all of which have made cockfighting a felony.”

But a new bill, S.B. 156, sponsored by state Sen. Nell Soto, seeks to remedy this situation. If passed, the legislation will allow felony charges for spectators’ second or subsequent offenses related to cockfighting. S.B. 156 passed 1st, 2nd, and 3rd reading in Senate on May 31, and is now under consideration in the Assembly.

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.

[Signature]
[Address]
[City, State and ZIP]
[Phone]
[Email]

[Handwritten note: Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS. Giving The HSUS a gift of stock.]

Promoting the protection of all animals

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THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES WCRO Regional News Fall 2005

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THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES WCRO Regional News Fall 2005
Director’s Report

By Eric Sakach
Director of the West Coast Regional Office

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

In May, a seven-month investigation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) concluded that the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), mistreated and neglected research animals. The federal agency cited research animals were being abused and that UNR researcher, complained to the USDA’s concerns and is disagreed with some of the agency’s findings.

University officials agreed to pay a $11,400 fine to settle the case, but said they disagreed with some of the agency’s findings.

University President John Lilley was quoted as saying that the school has of veterinary care, and failure to investigate complaints of animal neglect.

Director’s Report

investigative reporting by “Reno Gazette-Journal” reporter Frank Mullen, university officials continually denied that any research animals were mistreated and claimed the case stemmed from false claims made by a disgruntled faculty member. The university accused Hussein of violating research protocols by asking an independent veterinarian to examine pigs he believed were being abused.

Hussein noted that the USDA report revealed that the university animal oversight committee had failed to investigate his complaints and follow other rules. A UNR hearing officer and review panel has since declared the charges against Hussein to be groundless and recommended that they be dismissed.

Hussein has filed two lawsuits in federal court against the university, Lilley, and other administrators accusing them of seeking reprisals and trying to fire him because he complained. Both lawsuits are pending.

This whole shameful and embarrassing matter won’t be put to rest unless university officials are completely honest and sincerely contrite for their roles in allowing animals to suffer needlessly.

I’m betting that Nevadans who care about animals and how they are treated won’t rest either until that happens.

Contacting HSUS

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Promoting the protection of all animals

Call on Trader Joe’s

Unlike its competitors in the natural foods market, such as Whole Foods and Wild Oats, Trader Joe’s still sells eggs from hens confined in “battery” cages so small they can’t even spread their wings. These animals are so intensively confined that they never engage in many important behaviors, including nesting, perching, and dust bathing. Their lives are filled with immense suffering. In the past, Trader Joe’s has been responsive to customer concern for animal welfare, but the chain is refusing to stop selling eggs from caged hens.

The HSUS needs you to call Trader Joe’s at 626-599-3817 and ask the company to sell only cage-free eggs.

During your next trip to Trader Joe’s, talk with the store manager and request that the chain adopt a policy against selling battery cage eggs.

Please send us your Trader Joe’s receipts. We’ll send them to the company to show that their consumers care about the welfare of laying hens. Send receipts to: The Humane Society of the U.S., Factory Farming Campaign, 2100 L Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

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. © 2005 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.