Preparation Pays Dividends in Huge Tahoe Fire

July’s Angora Fire Near South Lake Tahoe in El Dorado County burned more than 3,000 acres, destroyed 260 homes and businesses and threatened evacuation and loss for hundreds in the area.

HSUS’s Curt Ransom and Paul Bruce responded to a call for assistance from Chief Henry Brzezinski of the county animal control. Within four hours, Ransom and Bruce were on site, providing administrative assistance, logistical support, and experienced field response.

They visited emergency animal shelter facilities, coordinating with the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the California Animal Response in Emergency System (CARES) to provide support and ongoing communications between El Dorado County and state animal care officials. Ransom and Bruce continued on page 3

Animal Fighting: Wins and Challenges

The recent media attention surrounding the sensational Michael Vick dogfighting case thrust the issue squarely into the national spotlight and revealed the sordid underground activities of canine combat that The HSUS has fought against for years. And July marked a major milestone in our battle against animal fighting when Louisiana’s governor signed a bill to outlaw cockfighting. With the passage of an HSUS-backed law in Louisiana that phases out the practice in 2008, the state joined all 49 others in banning this cruel blood sport.

California, Illinois, and South Carolina increased penalties for participating in or attending cockfights, and we helped defeat an Oklahoma bill that would have allowed possession, transportation, and training of gamecocks.

This victory follows on the heels of another success: passage of H.R. 137, the Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act, which President Bush signed on May 3, 2007. After The HSUS led the six-year battle to pass this law, it now authorizes felony-level penalties for animal fighting and prohibits interstate and foreign commerce in cockfighting weapons.

Even with these successes, the pace of cockfighting investigations never slackens, and in two of our biggest cases, local law enforcement raided a large California animal-fighting ring in which more than a thousand gamecocks were seized and three key players arrested. In Oklahoma a cockfighting pit on American Indian land was raided by federal authorities who had been in consultation with HSUS staff for months. We also assisted in the investigation and prosecution of an Arkansas dogfighting ring. We conducted surveillance with Iowa police in a case of suspected dogfighters from Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Our assistance in a Wyoming case resulted in authorities charging a suspect with animal cruelty and with breaking into an animal shelter to retrieve his fighting dogs.

An HSUS investigation reveals a resurgence of vicious spectacles known as hog-dog rodeos. The fights are lopsided contests being staged in southern tier states from Florida to Arizona. Pit bulls and other trained attack dogs are loosed on defenseless wild pigs whose tusks have often been removed with bolt cutters. The feral hogs typically suffer severe or fatal maulings; disturbingly, the fights attract families with children.

With help from The HSUS, five members of a hog-dog fighting ring were arrested in Florida, including the president and vice president of the International Catchdog Association. In significant state legislative continued on page 5
Animal Agribusiness: Uncaging the Victims of Factory Farming

Pigs are benefiting from new laws that ban cruel, confining gestation crates.

Conditions in Factory Farms are improving thanks to significant victories for pigs, calves, and chicks. The latest success came in Oregon, where the crates have been outlawed by voter ballot initiatives.

The landmark measure, S.B. 694, was introduced and championed by Senator Ginny Burdick (D-Portland). It prohibits the confinement of breeding pigs in metal gestation crates so small the animals can’t turn around for months on end, and the crates are phased-out in six years. There are approximately 4,000 breeding sows in Oregon. The House approved the bill 32-25, and the Senate approved it 20-9.

"Gestation crates are truly cruel and inhumane, and this measure simply provides these highly intelligent and social creatures the ability to turn around and stretch their limbs," states Sen. Burdick. "I am pleased that my colleagues saw fit to offer a standard of care for these animals because they, too, deserve humane treatment. I was very pleased to work with The Humane Society of the United States on this issue." Senator Burdick’s determined leadership and the teams of dedicated volunteers and animal lovers are responsible for the passage of this important bill," states Kody Peterson, Oregon state director for The HSUS. "The measure sends a strong message to the agribusiness industry that gestation crate confinement is simply too cruel and inhumane for anyone to support."

Top Fashion Designers, Retailers Snared

A crowded street market in China, a small raccoon dog is hung upside down by his rear legs and skinned alive for his fur. Filmed by undercover investigators, the incident is yet another example of the widespread cruel treatment of animals in a nation that has virtually no animal welfare laws.

Estimates of raccoon dogs killed in China for fur range from 1.5 to 4 million, and China is the world’s biggest exporter of so-called "budget fur" used mostly for trim on hoods and collars.

An HSUS investigation tested fur trim on coats sold by some of the biggest retailers and fashion designers in the United States. Falsely advertised or labeled with such names as "raccoon," "coyote," "rabbit," or "baux," or carrying no label at all, 20 of the 25 coats tested were identified as raccoon dog fur and three as domestic dog fur. It’s illegal to import, export, sell, or advertise any domestic dog or cat fur in the United States. Fur from other animals must be properly identified in advertising and labeling, but only if its value exceeds $150.

The retailers involved included Bloomingdale’s, Burlington Coat Factory, J.C. Penney, Loehmann’s, Lord & Taylor, Macy’s, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, and Saks Fifth Avenue. Among the designers and brands involved were Andrew Marc, Calvin Klein, DKNY, Michael Kors, Oscar de la Renta, Sean "Diddy" Combs’ Sean John brand, and Tommy Hilfiger.

Many of the retailers and designers acknowledged their knowledge about the problematic fur and pulled offending items from the sales rack, swore off raccoon dog fur and said they would support better labeling. Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, and Foot Locker pledged to go fur-free. The HSUS named 14 companies that failed to take appropriate action in a legal petition filed with the Federal Trade Commission.

The Dog and Cat Fur Prohibition Enforcement Act (H.R. 891), backed by The HSUS, operates to protect companion animals by outlawing the import of fur from raccoon dogs and closing the $50 loophole so that all fur garments have to be labeled, regardless of value.

CA Campaign to Protect Farm Animals

California for humane farms, supported by The HSUS and other local and national groups, has launched a ballot initiative campaign to place the California Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act on the November 2008 ballot. Can you spare some time to help California’s farm animals?

Volunteers must gather 560,000 signatures by February 28, 2008, to place a measure on the ballot to ban the cruel and intensive confinement of breeding pigs, veal calves, and egg-laying hens. We urgently need your help to make this campaign a success for animals. Here are just a few reasons why this initiative is so important:

Breeding pigs are confined in metal cages called gestation crates and are unable to exercise or even turn around. Young veal calves are also kept in cramped, filthy conditions and are not allowed to turn around for months or even years. Young male hens are kept in small, dark, filthy cages that prevent them from even spreading their wings.

Veal and gestation crates have been outlawed in several countries. The gestation crate was outlawed in Florida in 2002; Oregon in 2007; and both gestation and veal crates were outlawed in Arizona in 2006.

Intensive confinement of millions of breeding pigs, veal calves, and egg-laying hens results in dangerous levels of animal excrement that contaminates water and pollutes the air.

For more information about the campaign, contact Heather Carpenter at 407-697-1192 or hcarpenter@humanesociety.org.

Washington Campaign a Possibility

We are considering launching a campaign to protect farm animals in all 50 states. If you are interested in being kept up-to-date on a Washington campaign, please contact Inga Gibson at igibson@humanesociety.org or 206-328-8100.
Hawaii Becomes 43rd State to Enact Felony Cruelty Laws

IN OUR LAST NEWSLETTER, WEST COAST REGIONAL DIRECTOR ERIC SALAZAR STATED THAT HAWAII WAS “ANYTHING BUT PARADISE FOR ANIMALS.” WELL, WE’RE HAPPY TO REPORT THAT THINGS ARE LOOKING BETTER IN HAWAII. SB 1665, A FELONY ANIMAL CRUELTY BILL, HAS SUCCESSFULLY PASSED. SEN. CLAYTON HECHE CHAMPIONED THE EFFORT WITH COMPANION BILLS IN THE HOUSE, SPONSORED BY REPS. BLAKE OSHIRO AND TOMMY WATERS. GOV. LINDA LINGLE DEMONSTRATED HER UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR HUMAN AND ANIMAL PROTECTION BY SIGNING THE BILL INTO LAW ON JUNE 1. THANKS TO THE DEDICATED EFFORTS OF OUR HAWAIIAN SOCIETY MEMBERS, SUPPORT FROM THE HAWAIIAN HUMANE SOCIETY, KAUA’I HUMANE SOCIETY, HAWAII ISLAND HUMANE SOCIETY, AND MAUI HUMANE SOCIETY, HAWAII IS NOW THE 43RD STATE WITH FELONY LEVEL PENALTIES FOR INTENTIONAL ACTS OF CRUELTY AGAINST A PET.

Sadly, the new law has loopholes. The felony provision applies only to pets—so clothing dogs, cats, and pigeons is excluded. It also excludes other animals such as horses, birds, and livestock. In addition, co-fighting, which is a felony in 35 states, remains a misdemeanor in Hawaii.

Oregon Advances

In addition to Oregon’s historic passage of S.B. 694, banning pig gestation crates, Gov. Kate Brown signed into law three other animal-friendly bills.

- S.B. 370, sponsored by more than 16 lawmakers, requires that Oregon’s pets, service animals, and farm animals be included in state disaster plans.
- S.B. 1017, introduced by Sen. Ginny Burdict (D-18), addresses the link between family violence and animal abuse. This bill allows public and private officials to report incidents of known or suspected aggravated animal abuse to law enforcement without fear of liability.
- S.B. 400, introduced by Sen. Vicki Walker (D-17), requires the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt rules that prohibit Internet hunting. This point-and-click “hunting” via the Internet involves fees of more than $1,500 to schedule a session and place an order for a deer, antelope, or other animal. The hunter then logs on to a Web site at an appointed time and watches a feeding station on the computer screen. The animal, often hard rearred, is headed in front of the camera by onsite employees, and the hunter uses a mouse to line the victim up in the on-screen crosshairs and clicks to fire the gun. The HSUS has been active in advocating for state legislation to combat Internet hunting, and 34 states have banned it.

Online Debut of “A Humane Nation”

YOU CAN NOW KEEP AHEAD OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WORLD OF ANIMAL PROTECTION READERS may notice the new daily blog by Wayne Pacelle, HSUS president and CEO, at our Web site, humanesociety.org. Pacelle took the helm of the organization June 1, 2006, after serving as chief lobbyist and spokesman, and many people are as well informed on animal issues as our chief executive. “Wayne Pacelle: A Humane Nation” is a lively and informative blog of commentary, criticism, and reportage. Stay up-to-date with fast-changing events as we celebrate animals and confront cruelty, and join the discussion by weighing in with your own opinions.

continued from “Fire,” page 1

provided regular status reports to CARES and The HSUS disaster services department, which provided additional support as needed.

Shutting down animals and supplies occupied much of their time, as well as making contingency plans in case the situation worsened. Several emergency sheltering sites were identified and secured, and other regional animal disaster groups and animal control organizations were placed on standby.

“Wildfires like this are extremely volatile, and the situation could have changed at any moment,” said Ransom. “Contingency planning is crucial to being ready for whatever may happen and assuring the safety of the animals and people in the affected areas.”

The director of the City of South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation Department, Gary Moore, was extremely helpful, providing a facility for animal care if needed and making sure that animals brought to a Red Cross shelter were provided for until other arrangements could be made for their care.

Ransom and Bruce also accompanied Chief Brezinski and his staff in patrolling the burned and evacuated neighborhoods to look for lost or injured animals. “It’s heart-breaking,” said Bruce. “So many homes and lives shattered. But at least there were no known human deaths, and very few pets. The message must get out, because most of the people who evacuated from here took their pets with them.”

The HSUS, Sacramento County Animal Control, Sacramento City Animal Control, Placer County Animal Control, Amador County Animal Control, Sierra Veterinary Hospital, Alpine Veterinary Hospital, Noah’s Wish, Pet Network of Incline Village, and 4 Paws Grooming and Boarding all played a part in this massive effort. Chief Brezinski was grateful for the support. “We are so thankful to everyone who gave their time, energy, and hearts to this effort. We could not have done it without you,” he said.

Horses are Beloved Icons of American Culture—Bringing Symbols of Both the Bonds We Share with Our Animal Companions and of Our National Heritage and Character. Despite this, more than 100,000 American horses were butchered last year at two foreign-owned slaughter plants in Texas and one in Illinois, and another 41,000 were shipped to Canadian and Mexican kiln floors, all to end up on European and Japanese dinner tables. The HSUS is working to end this abhorrent practice, and we are making unprecedented progress.

In cooperation with Capitol Hill staff, we helped to reintroduce the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (H.R. 503/S. 311) in Congress to outlaw the killing of horses for human consumption, as well as their export to Mexico or other countries for this purpose. The House overwhelmingly approved the measure last September by a vote of 263-146, but time ran out in the Senate. The legislation was reintroduced in both chambers this year, and we are already seeing progress. At the urging of House Agriculture Appropriations bill included language to stop the funding of horse slaughter for the next fiscal year, and a Senate committee has already passed the permanent ban.

Our undercover investigation into horse slaughter has documented the cruel conditions the animals endure during the vast distances they are transported from auction to slaughterhouse. We also revealed a barbaric killing method in a Mexican abattoir—referred to in the neck with a short knife leave the horses paralyzed—but still conscious—before they are hoisted by chains for their throats to be slit.

Our staff worked tirelessly to keep horses out of the slaughterhouse. A favorable ruling from the Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals finally enforced a 1497 Texas law banning the sale of horsemeat for human food and halting equine slaughter in the states’ two plants. Another federal court ruling temporarily closed down the remaining plant in Illinois. We worked closely with Illinois legislators to ensure the passage of H.R. 1711, a state bill to prevent horse slaughter for human consumption, and are lobbying to secure its enforcement in the courts.

Congressional action is urgently needed to keep the doors of the nation’s equine butcheries permanently closed and to prevent the flow of American horses to Mexican and Canadian slaughterhouses. Support on Capitol Hill remains strong. The horsemeat industry in the United States is on its last legs.

The Rescue of 30 So-Called “Miracle Horses” Began in early April 2007 when the Cavel Slaughter plant in DeKalb, Ill., was served a court injunction to discontinue operations. Horses awaiting death inside the plant were loaded back onto trailers to be returned to their owners. The reprieve for most of the horses was short-lived as they ended up at Mexican or Canadian slaughter plants.

But the owner of 30 of the horses, who were shipped to a Cheyenne, Wyo., stockyard, contacted The HSUS, and after negotiations, he relinquished them to us.

The HSUS Northern Rockies Regional Office in Billings, Mont., working with our equine department, arranged for most of the animals to be dispersed to sanctuaries or rescue groups in Wyoming and Montana. The horses—a mother and daughter pair named Mariah and Sahara—went to The Fund for Animals’ Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch in Texas. Many of the horses have been adopted into permanent loving homes. The remaining are healthy and young animal and wildlife alumni.

We thank the groups that took in the horses: Fair Dinkum Horse Rescue Farm in Wyoming; Colorado’s Denka Animal Sanctuary; Horse Protection League, and Front Range Equine Rescue; the Black Beauty Ranch; and Return to Freedom Wild Horse Sanctuary in California.

Spirit was spared from slaughter in Illinois and then came to stockyards in Cheyenne. Wyo., where The HSUS helped care for him and placed him with a loving family.

A horse enters the killing chute in a slaughter plant in Juarez, Mexico.

Miracle Horses Survive Kill Floor
Top Fashion Designers, Retailers Snared on Abuses

By Bernard Unti

THE COCKFIGHTERS LAY SPEWED on the ground near the fighting pits as law enforcement officials swarmed the site, collecting live and dead gamecocks, gloves, drugs, cash, and other evidence. As the lead detective approached, one of the suspects, a large, imposing figure, stood up. We were just having fun, why have you got to come in and spoil it? The detective reacted quickly, bent one of the man’s arms around his back, and sped him with a sweeping kick behind the knees. Arrest him and put him into a patrol car,” he told deputies.

Later pokings into the police vehicle, the detective said, “Hope I wasn’t too hard on you, Eric.”

The suspect in this 1978 northern California bust was Eric Sakach, a field investigator for The HSUS, desks to protect consumers and animals by outlawing the import of fur from other animals to be labeled, regardless of value.

cont. from “Animal Fighting,” page 1

Victories, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina approved new felony laws in 2006 banning dogfighting.

Our letters of complaint to several companies and to the U.S. Attorney in Texas persuaded Best Buy Circuit City and other suppliers to stop selling dogfighting videos. The HSUS is now suing Amazon.com to halt sales of dogfighting videos and cockfighting magazines such as Feathered Warrior and Gamecock.

Selling this animal fighting paraphernalia violates federal law by using the U.S. Postal Service to further illegal animal fighting.

A Great Friend, Mentor

Hired by John Hoyt in 1976, Sakach devoted 25 years to the HSUS, including the 2017 California cockfighting raid in 1978.

Eric Sakach (center) is a veteran disaster responder, Sakach has evaluated sheltering facilities, testified and lobbied on humane issues in legislatures, contested inappropriate uses of animals in secondary and higher education, and served as an expert witness in animal-fighting courts in several states and in Canada. As an undercover investigator for The HSUS, Sakach has also investigated cockfighting rings in the early 2000s, and in other settings in the United States.

As an undercover investigator for The HSUS, Eric Sakach (center) is “arrested” at a California cockfighting raid in 1978.

When Sakach has evaluated sheltering facilities, testified and lobbied on humane issues in legislatures, he has been forced to work the same kinds of cases as law enforcement officials, who are paid to investigate animal fighting in the courts of several states and in Canada. As an undercover investigator for The HSUS, Eric Sakach has also investigated cockfighting rings in the early 2000s, and in other settings in the United States.

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