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Recession Limits Animal Welfare Legislation

Legislators Defer Costly Proposals

According to the Oriental calendar this is the Year of the Rabbit, which traditionally is gentle, happy, harmonious and full of good will for all. But 1975 is also a year when state legislatures are encountering the most difficult economic and social problems they have dealt with in two generations. During the current economic recession, pressing human needs overshadow animal welfare problems. In this supposedly sunny Year of the Rabbit, most lawmakers' rule of thumb toward animal welfare legislation is, “If it costs money, forget it.”

Many animal welfare bills being introduced in New England state legislatures this year call for expensive construction or an increase in animal control personnel. Most of this legislation will not become law and will only serve to publicize the need for future legislation when solutions become financially feasible. There are, though, many proposed laws with no price tags attached which may be approved. The following legislative summary is offered to aid New England humanitarians in assessing the trends, scope, and content of the 1975 legislative effort in the region. Because of space limitations, all animal-related bills cannot be listed. As of this writing, many proposals have not been reported out of committee or voted upon. A follow-up summary will appear in the next HSUS New England Report.

Most New England states have proposed legislation directed at controlling domestic pets. Several bills deal with adjusting dog license fees to encourage spaying and neutering. Others are aimed at discouraging dog owners from allowing their animals to run free. The New Hampshire legislature is considering bills that would clarify the state's cruelty law with regard to reporting injuries to animals and instituting licenses for horse

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Vermont Zoo Proposal Defeated

A proposal to establish a commercial drive-through zoo in Vermont has been quashed by the combined efforts of state humanitarians and environmentalists. Months ago promoters evoked visions of zebras, camels, giraffes, rhinoceros, elephants, and primates in the minds of Vermonters in an attempt to establish a commercial zoo called Wildlife Wonderland. It did not take long for concerned citizens to see the prospect of tropical animals suffering on frigid Vermont mountainsides.

As the proposal gathered momentum Vermonters formed a group called Citizens Against Wildlife Wonderland to oppose the project. Aided by the counsel of the HSUS New England Regional Office and Sue Pressman, HSUS director

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The Problem of Pet Abandonment

By Rear Adm. James C. Shaw, Director
HSUS New England Region

Elsewhere on this page is a picture of Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy. Except for her name, she seems to be an ordinary long-haired German shepherd dog. D.J. (picture at upper right) also seems to be a run-of-the-mill short-haired domestic cat of uncertain lineage. Actually, they are really not unusual, which is what this column is all about. They are merely two among the thousands of canines and cats cruelly and deliberately abandoned last year by criminal and immoral humans.

The only extraordinary circumstance about either animal is that each was rescued and nursed to good health instead of dying from exposure and starvation in the harsh New England winter. Nurse Jane, when aid came, was staggering on an icy mountain road in New Hampshire, barely alive, ribs and backbone showing, height eroded, legs swollen, mouth sore, and lungs clogged by pneumonia. D.J. (Dump Job) was dumped on a Vermont country road in sub-zero winter. The cat was sick, frightened, undernourished, bleeding from a large open wound, and pregnant. Both animals were living specimens of human depravity in terms of money, morals, and more.

Consider the aspect of money. In the case of the dog, two factors may have led to her abandonment. First, the owner may have jettisoned her in order to save the cost of a spaying operation. Second, perhaps her master had a financial crisis caused by unemployment or inflation which prompted the abandonment. A spay fee, the prospect of a litter, and the cost of treating an injury may have deci-
dated the owner's decision to dump the cat. Regardless of the reason, no financial rationale can excuse the immorality of marooning the two animals. Who people who treat helpless and sentient creatures with such calloused irresponsibility be likely to treat fellow humans in the same fashion? We fear so.

Regard now the matter of mores, the messed-up-mores in these instances. Law and custom should prevent such cruelty. Usually, though, the law did not. The dog's owner was never apprehended and probably never will be. The cat's owner was hauled into court and fined the paltry sum of $1.00. Thus, a general disregard for the law is engendered since the likelihood of being caught is slight and the punishment is a travesty of justice. Like the prohibition era, the entire foundation of the law is eroded. Turning to custom, there exists a whole subculture of people who think that a domestic animal left in the woods or elsewhere to fend for itself will do just that, earning its living by predation on wildlife or making its way to some soft-hearted person who will provide it with sustenance and shelter. Nurse Jane and D.J. luckily found such people. Both animals required round-the-clock personal care, extensive and expensive veterinary treatment, innoculations, special foods, and a spaying operation. Additional, like the cat with nine lives, D.J. had seven lives to be ministered unto, namely the litter she bore before spaying—with the kittens needing shotr spaying-with the kittens needing shorter medical treatment, innoculations, special care, and the dollar cost to the good samaritan. Plenty, we are proud to say. Our education program is reaching new levels of effectiveness, new heights of success, and presently unaware audiences. Our animal care and control programs are becoming models for communities throughout the country. Our conviction that the law be obeyed and enforced is engendering respect for that law. Our appeals to the responsible American public to join us in our campaigns to prevent suffering and eliminate cruelty is being re
cited and acted upon.

But we do not fool ourselves that doing “plenty” is enough. We need more help from our membership with respect to both the law and custom. The question is asked, “What can I do?” We say “Whatever you would like to do.” Myriad opportunities exist in animal welfare, such as publicity campaigns, letter writing, research, specchmaking, special projects, new policy reform, recruitment, workshops, education and direct animal care. To whatever extent you are able, contact Nurse Janes and D.J.s...whether they be canine, feline, equine, bovine, or whatever, we can connect you with money, the dollar cost to the good samaritan. Lend us your help if you are interested.

Identification:

Don’t depend on a good samaritan to place an ad in your local newspaper or a billboard in your store. Your pet has found your pet. HSUS has brass identification tags that will prevent the return of surrendered pets to the shelter for your pet. Send $1.50 with your pet’s name, your name, address and telephone number to HSUS, Box 257, Pleasant St., Alstead, NH 03802. Proceeds will be used for animal welfare.

HSUS Endorses Veterinary College

HSUS has officially endorsed a proposed veterinary medical college now being jointly considered by the Connecticut, Maine and Massachussets legislatures.

The endorsement was made at a regional policy meeting attended by HSUS advisors, including Vice Chairman Everett Smith, New England Region Director; James C. Shaw, and Field Representative Herbert Vidales.

Dr. George Whitney, DVM, outgoing president of the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Assn., spoke in favor of the new college. Hammer said that all of New England’s aspiring veterinarians must jettison their muddled thinking and prejudice which have jettisoned their existence. They must now go outside the region for their training. He said it is very difficult for New England vets to be accepted by the veterinary schools elsewhere because of an allotment system that limits the number of vacancies available to students in the New England region.

The lack of a veterinary college has caused a drastic shortage of veterinary doctors in the region. Most communities report that they are not able to attract and retain qualified veterinarians for round-the-clock service.


HSUS Gains Allies In Dog Track Campaign

The exploitation of animals for commercial profit in greyhound racing, and the use of live rabbits in the training of dogs, have been among HSUS’s prime objections to the so-called sport for years.

But, HSUS has found that these and other humanitarian objections have not always been successful in preventing dog tracks from being established. To strengthen its position, the New England Region Office has united with other individuals and organizations that oppose greyhound racing for such diverse reasons as the noise and visual pollution surrounding track areas and the detrimental effects of the gambling that goes hand in hand with dog racing. By opposing for a common goal, HSUS and its new allies have recently stopped three proposed New England dog tracks from being built.

While anti-track sentiment does emerge for differing reasons, most oppo
sition has one characteristic in common—they all live in the affected community. To take advantage of this common trait, HSUS has prepared a community action plan. HSUS members who find their hometown threatened with a proposed track should write to the regional office for information.

Aquarium Creates Cruel Illusion

The manner in which an animal is displayed at a public facility may appear to be inhumane until the viewer gains more insight into its behind-the-scenes lifestyle.

Sue Pressman, HSUS director of wildlife protection, recently visited the Mystic MarineSauarium in Mystic, Conn., after receiving reports that dol
phins were being displayed in tanks too small for proper exercise. After talking to Dr. Lawrence Dunn, the facility's general manager and staff veterinarian, she discovered that the dolphins were allowed to swim in small tanks in a much too small for proper exercise. After talking to Dr. Lawrence Dunn, the facility's general manager and staff veterinarian, she discovered that the dolphins were allowed to swim in small tanks in a
Aquarium Continued
tank separated by fishing nets, to an adjoining tank much larger in size. Because of the similar appearance of the dolphins, viewers did not realize that the dolphins had exchanged positions in the tanks. To alleviate the deception, Mrs. Pressman suggested that the smaller aquarium be covered with a movable shield, blocking it from public view.

Mrs. Pressman complimented Dunn on the aquarium’s operation and technical staff. She said the facility’s water testing system and nutritional programs were of the highest quality. “Unlike roadside zoos, aquariums require a high caliber staff and animal care equipment to assure the safety and welfare of the animals. I wish many zoo animals were cared for as well as Mystic’s animals,” she said.

Zoo Continued
of wildlife preservation, the citizens group succeeded in killing the scheme.

HSUS New England Regional Director James C. Shaw said the Citizens Against Wildlife Wonderland did a splendid job of organizing people, facts, figures, and expert testimony to stop the zoo.

However, the zoo’s promoters are now proposing an alternative proposition that will feature barnyard animals in the midst of merry-go-rounds, jukeboxes and hot dog stands.

“I can’t imagine why these promoters think Vermonters will pay to see barnyard animals when the state is replete with such animals,” said Shaw. “I see nothing but grief for the commercially exploited animals, whether they be orange-bottomed monkeys or Rhode Island red hens.”

The Citizens Against Wildlife Wonder-

Legislation Continued
riding schools. In Connecticut, legislation has been introduced to restrain cats, require outdoor shelter for dogs, and authorize selected pets in state housing. Among the formidable array of proposed legislation in Massachusetts are bills for pet food inspection, reimbursement to veterinarians for care of stray animals, controls on the sale of infant pets and recodification of general animal laws. Maine lawmakers are considering a bill that would require humane transport of animals and a prohibition on the use of animals in commercial promotions.

In the field of education, the state legislatures of Connecticut, Maine, and Massachusetts are considering legislation that would create a veterinary medical college for the entire New England region. Another Massachusetts bill provides for specific humane education courses in schools.

As a consequence of recent national publicity on dog fighting, Massachusetts and Rhode Island legislators have introduced bills that would increase penalties for individuals involved in animal fighting.

Wildlife issues permeate much of the regional legislation. A proposal for Sunday hunting in Maine was voted down, while a similar measure awaits approval in Connecticut. The Maine legislature removed the state’s bounty on bobcats, but proposed another on the Eastern coyote. The Maine lawmakers must also decide whether to open a hunting season on moose. A Massachusetts bill would ban the use of lead pellets in hunting waterfowl. Vermont legislators authorized an increase in the state’s hunting license fee. Connecticut bills that would have authorized falcon and mourning dove hunting have failed in committee. In April the Connecticut Senate passed a bill designating the sperm whale the official state animal. Sen. Lawrence J. DeNardis said he hoped the designation of the whale as the state animal would give ecologists a boost in their attempts to stop Soviet and Japanese whaling fleets from hunting the mammal, which is dwindling in numbers.

Trapping legislation was introduced in four New England states. In Maine, a bill proposes the elimination of the auxiliary teeth in leghold traps. The New Hampshire and Connecticut bills call for an outright ban on the trap. A Massachusetts bill now under discussion would modify the restrictions imposed by the anti-leghold trap law enacted last year.

Two first-of-a-kind bills are now being considered by the Connecticut legislature. One would provide funds for animal welfare and pet population control from the state sales tax on pet food and supplies. The other would authorize a state subsidized spay clinic in Fairfield County.

The variety and number of animal welfare measures submitted to New England legislatures this year indicate an intense public interest and concern for animal-related issues. HSUS will continue its customary practice of furnishing pertinent information to regional lawmakers on request.

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