It comes as no surprise to you that there is an overabundance of dogs in the US today. But did you know that so-called "puppy mills," mass dog-breeding facilities that wholesale puppies to pet stores, are adding an estimated half a million animals to an already overflowing population annually?

Those are the findings of a year-long HSUS study of the puppy mill problem by Robert Baker, an HSUS staff member who has spent nearly five months in the field, and visited nearly 300 dog-breeding facilities.

What Baker found was a trail of cruelty and misery, the scope of which had previously only been imagined. He found dogs living in utter filth, with inadequate housing, nutrition, and veterinary care. He found untrained owners, many of whom admitted they
The puppy mill problem is a complex one, and much of it is difficult to document. While we do know that most puppy mill puppies end up in pet stores, we also know that not all pet stores sell puppy mill puppies. Similarly, some puppy mills are more cruel than others. While a breeding facility may not be cruel according to the living or breeding standards it keeps, the very existence of so many places where dogs are raised to mere puppy-producing machines adds significantly to the pet overpopulation problem and cheapens the life of all dogs.

There is also evidence that puppy mill puppies, because of inadequate nutrition, poor medical care and the stress of being shipped long distances at an early age, are more prone to disease than properly bred and raised puppies. Haphazard breeding practices also tend to produce dogs with sometimes severe physical or emotional defects.

Dr. Bonnie Beaver, Associate Professor of Veterinary Anatomy at Texas A&M University, finds genetics to be the basis of most problems with puppy mill dogs. "Puppy mill breeders don't pay any attention to behavior or temperament when they breed," she says. "As a consequence, we see a lot of puppies with 'weirdo' behavior that come from puppy mills."

Some of the problems Beaver says she has encountered in puppy mill dogs include excessive shyness, fear biting and overaggressiveness. In too many cases, she says puppy mill puppies simply don't make good pets.

But if the product they produce is so inferior, why do puppy mills still exist? Unfortunately, the answer lies in ignorance. People walking past the local pet store have no idea where those puppies' parents are forced to live in for their entire lives. People who spurn the idea of adopting an animal from a shelter because "you never know where it's been before" somehow are led to believe that a purebred pup with AKC papers from a USDA-licensed breeding facility represents some kind of guarantee of quality.

But even AKC publishes disclaimers about its perceived "seal of approval." Says AKC in one of its publications: "There is, unfortunately, a widely held belief on the part of the general public that 'AKC' or 'AKC papers' and quality are one and the same. This is not the case. AKC REGISTRATION IN NO WAY INDICATES THE QUALITY OF THE DOG... Many people buy their dogs with no concern for the qualitative demands of the standard for their breed. When this occurs repeatedly over several generations, the animals, while still purebred, can be of extremely low quality in terms of the standard for their breed." (Emphasis on certain words is from the original text.)

To put it bluntly, puppy mills exist because the economic laws of supply and demand are in their favor. The merchandise moves rapidly at the pet stores, the demand is kept constant, and the puppy millers continue to reap profits at their dogs' expense.

Hard sell techniques from well trained salespeople combined with the puppies' own appeal add to the success of moving puppy mill puppies.

Karen Bayer, a special education teacher from Stafford, VA, calls herself a victim of the hard sell. "They're really great salespeople," she said of the pet store staff that sold her a 10-week-old Cairn terrier. "They really play on your emotions."

Bayer, who now admits she had no intention of buying a dog when she went into the pet store, no sooner got her impulse puppy home when it became ill. Less than 36 hours later, the puppy was dead, probably the victim of canine parvovirus.

After a battle of several months with the pet store for a refund (the outcome of which has yet to be determined), Bayer finally got a new dog from her local shelter, which she reports she is very happy with.

Not all stories end so happily, though. The HSUS continues to receive a significant number of reports about problems with pet store puppies. But what can be done?

First, try to determine if there are puppy mill puppies being sold in your community. Ask your local pet store owners where they get their puppies and whether they have visited those breeding establishments. Are they personally familiar with the breeder and the facilities?

When staff members at your shelter have the chance to speak to people about buying pets from pet shops, be sure to advise those people to ask the pet store owner where the puppies come from and whether the store owner has seen the conditions under which they were bred.

(The majority of puppy mills are located in the Midwest, particularly in Missouri, Iowa and Kansas -- although not all puppies from these states are necessarily puppy mill puppies.)

Then, help educate the public about the plight of the breeding stock imprisoned in puppy mills and about the dangers of buying puppy mill puppies. One hundred copies of the flipper inserted in this issue of SHELTER SENSE are available free -- just drop us a card requesting them.

Finally, make sure the dog-buying public is aware of the alternative to pet stores -- that is, your shelter. Stress the fact that with a shelter dog, they will save money and find good pets.
The Tri-Agency Animal Regulation Authority serving Eugene, Springfield and Lane County, OR, has been reorganized into the Lane County Animal Regulation Authority. The agency celebrated its new beginning and participated in the Lane County Fair by giving free licenses to previously unlicensed dogs during August. The dogs had to have rabies vaccination certificates, and in the city of Eugene, they had to be sterilized to receive the free license.

The Denver Dumb Friends League produced the handsome display shown here for exhibiting in banks, shopping centers and other public places. The League tried to schedule an exhibit at least once a month, and the display will stay on exhibit from one week to one month. The display includes information on the League’s history, the services it offers and the kinds of animals available for adoption. Executive Director Robert D. Rohde says he’s received many favorable comments about its design and content. (2080 S. Quebec St., Denver, CO 80231)


The Network has held tattoo clinics and plans a humane education workshop for 1982. Staff members from all the participating groups share the work of preparing and distributing materials. For further information, contact Martha Armstrong, Executive Director of the Animal Welfare League of Arlington, VA, Inc., 2650 S. Arlington Mill Dr., Arlington, VA 22206.

HSUS’s Animal Control Academy will hold its two-week Animal Control Certification Program November 2-13, and its three-day Euthanasia Technician Program November 6-19. Academy students participate in intensive sessions on animal care and handling, public relations, law enforcement and euthanasia with professionals from the University of Alabama, the University’s Law Enforcement Academy, the Center for Disease Control and The HSUS. Students receive a notebook of materials to take home. HSUS has also begun a regular mailing of up-to-date information to all Academy graduates. For complete information on the next program in Tuscaloosa, write Animal Control Academy, 4831 Springhill Dr., Tuscaloosa, AL 35405.

Texas has three new laws for animals, thanks to the Texas Humane Information Network and HSUS’s own Gulf States Regional Office in Corpus Christi. The new laws regulate roadside zoos, allow animal shelters to purchase sodium pentobarbital for euthanizing animals and set standards that all animal shelters (in communities with more than 75,000 people) must maintain.

The new law for shelters requires such measures as separation of sick and healthy animals and recordkeeping on all transactions. Specific provisions are made for training personnel. Shelters must allow a yearly inspection by a veterinarian. Each community must also appoint an animal advisory committee, including a veterinarian, a county or city official, a person whose duties include the daily operation of a shelter and a representative from an animal welfare organization. Euthanasia may not be by shooting (except in emergency field conditions), clubbing, unfiltered or uncooled carbon monoxide, curariform drugs (including succinylcholine) used alone, magnesium salts used alone, chloral hydrate, nicotine or strychnine.

If you would like further information on the new developments, contact HSUS’s Gulf States Regional Office at 5333 Everhart Rd., Building A, Suite 209, Corpus Christi, TX 78411.
Volunteer Services for Animals (401 Broadway, Providence, RI 02909) was incorporated in 1979 to provide various services to municipal animal shelters and other humane organizations throughout Rhode Island. Last December, VSA asked marketing students at Bryant College to conduct a survey on public attitudes toward neutering pets. The results were published in VSA’s summer magazine:

Of 226 respondents, 87 were dog and/or cat owners. Of these, 44, or 50.6%, had neutered pets. 75% of the owners felt neutering would not physically harm their pets, but 53.8% felt that neutering would change their pets' personalities. 63.7% felt male dogs and cats should be neutered even though they do not bear offspring; 31.8% felt males did not need to be neutered, and 4.5% were undecided.

47.7% said they would neuter their pets if it were made more convenient. 42.3% said they would not neuter their pets even if it became more convenient. 40.9% felt the cost of the operation would be too expensive.

77.5% said neutering would benefit them and their animals. The reasons given for not neutering included concern over the change in the animal's personality, the inconvenience, the expense, and the fact that males do not bear offspring. VSA comments that the survey results clearly indicate the need to convince people that neutering involves little inconvenience, and that neutering is highly beneficial for male pets. VSA does provide spay-neuter assistance, but points out that the cost is once-in-a-lifetime and can prevent even steeper veterinary costs later.

When David and Evelyn Cook adopted their dog Brandi from the Clinton (IA) Humane Society, they wanted it to be legal. David, a bailiff in the county district court, prepared a Final Adoption Decree on the form used for child adoptions and presented it to the presiding judge, who considered the matter carefully -- and signed it. The judge did reserve for the court the right to conduct a 90-day post-placement investigation. Clinton attorney Margaret Kolarik sent this interesting document to SHELTER SENSE.

Fighting animal abandonment

Last year, SHELTER SENSE featured an anti-abandonment poster from the North Carolina Humane Federation. The Hall County Humane Society (875 Ridge Rd., Gainesville, GA 30501) adapted the poster in the animal's personality, the inconvenience, the expense and the fact that males do not bear offspring. SHELTER SENSE comments that the survey results clearly indicate the need to convince people that their pet's personalities will not change, that the operation involves little inconvenience, and that neutering is highly beneficial for male pets. VSA provides spay-neuter assistance, but points out that the cost is once-in-a-lifetime and can prevent even steeper veterinary costs later.

Citizens for Animal Welfare Education would like to hear from any humane society or municipal shelter having a successful lost and found service. If you have such a program and are willing to aid us in our efforts, please contact Citizens for Animal Welfare Education, 713 Thurman St., Saginaw, MI 48602.

The El Dorado (AR) News-Times carries four regular animal features: "Playmates of the Week," showing one or two animals currently available for adoption from the animal shelter; "Fire Hydrant," an "award" given to people who abandon animals or are otherwise irresponsible; "All Tails Wag," for people who adopt pets; and "Pet Tip of the Week." The features give readers interesting information about animal control.

WANTED - Executive Director for Houston Humane Society. Progressive shelter needs person experienced in all facets of humane organization. Excellent pay. Please send resume to: Sherry Ferguson, 9312 Bassoon St., Houston, TX 77025.

WANTED -- Manager-Director to assume responsibility for active shelter, spay-neuter clinic. Experience essential in public relations, fund raising, public relations, investigations, animal control, contract negotiations. Resumes and salary requirements to Robert A. Schilfke, 125 N. Taylor St., South Bend, IN 46601.

WANTED -- Director for Humane Society of St. Joseph County, IN, Inc., handling 12,000 animals annually. Experienced in budget, supervision, education, fund raising, public relations, investigations, animal control, contract negotiations. Positions open immediately. Contact Donna S. Kirke, Route 4, Box 179, Independence, VA 24348.

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The Board of Directors of the Humane Society of San Bernardino Valley, Inc. (PO Box 2982, San Bernardino, CA 92406) has voted unanimously to join The HSUS as individual members. Their resolution states that "The Humane Society of the United States, through its publication Human Society News and through its other activities and publications in the animal welfare field, provides the support and information needed to enhance the ability of all persons concerned with animal welfare to pursue their goals...." The HSUS welcomes the society's board members as individual HSUS members and thanks them for their support.

POSITION WANTED -- BA in English eagerly desires entry-level position involving PR and/or humane education. Writing, research, publications experience. Extensive familiarity with farm animals and pets. Will relocate. Contact Donna S. Kirke, Route 3, Box 179, Independence, VA 24348.

POSITION WANTED -- Humane Officer wishes to relocate. Has experience with two HSUS-accredited shelters, including cruelty investigation and ticket citation systems. Please contact Elizabeth Tucker, Route 4, Box 269, Sheridan, IN 46069.
A new film, also available in videotape form, is available from Canine Consultants, 600 Country Lane, Cary, NC 27511. Titled "I Thought You Said Your Dog Didn't Bite," the 26-minute film gives specific information on how to tell the difference between friendly dogs, aggressive dogs and fear biters. Although the script is directed toward meter readers, the film could be appropriate for anyone who comes in contact with dogs regularly. It includes a review section allowing viewers to test themselves on what they've learned.

The cost of the 16mm films is $600. The cost for the videotape version, 1/2- or 3/4-inch, is $400. You can preview the film for $25. Quantity discounts are available. You may want to check with your local post office or utility company about purchasing a copy together. For further information, write Patricia Hudson at the address above.

Three items are available from Paul Miller, Director, The Humane Society of Tucson, Inc., 3450 N. Kelvin Blvd., Tucson, AZ 85716:

1) The society has found a professional artist who will produce posters on pet adoption for outdoor billboards at a low cost, depending on the number of orders received. You add your own name and address to the posters. The society will send you a 8" x 11" sample of the artwork and complete price information.

2) The society has also worked with advertising professionals to produce television public service announcements. Your local television station should be willing to add your name and address to these announcements. Again, there is a savings in quantity orders. The society will send you further details.

3) "Carlos and His Friends" is a handsome, illustrated booklet on desert animals, written for children in grades 1-6. The 60-page paperback is available for $4.95 for a single copy; $3.95 each for 50-100 copies; $2.95 each for 100 or more copies.

A first aid chart for dogs is available for resale at your shelter counter from Kramer Computer Aids, PO Box 57, 165 Rutledge Dr., Red Bank, NJ 07701.

The chart includes information on treatment for such emergencies as burns, fractures and poisoning and lists the necessary immunizations for dogs.

The 8 1/2" x 11" size costs $24 plus $2.70 (postage) for 100 copies, with a suggested resale price of $1 each.

The 11" x 17" size costs $48 plus $5 for 100, with a suggested resale price of $1.50 each.

A sample and complete price list will be sent on request.

The Animal Toxicology Hotline provides diagnostic assistance on poisoning cases 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you need help with a poisoning case, call 217-333-3611. There is no charge for the service, other than the cost of the call.

The Hotline is operated by the University of Illinois Foundation which accepts donations; if you care to contribute, make your donation payable to the Foundation and send it to the Hotline, Division of Pharmacology and Toxicology, University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine, Urbana, IL 61801.

Would you choke your dog?" The Humane Society of Santa Clara Valley, 2530 Lafayette St., Santa Clara, CA 95050, has produced a locally produced film which accepts donations; if you care to contribute, make your donation payable to the Foundation and send it to the Hotline, Division of Pharmacology and Toxicology, University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine, Urbana, IL 61801.

"I Thought You Said Your Dog Didn't Bite." The 26-minute film gives specific information on how to tell the difference between friendly dogs, aggressive dogs and fear biters. Although the script is directed toward meter readers, the film could be appropriate for anyone who comes in contact with dogs regularly. It includes a review section allowing viewers to test themselves on what they've learned.

Pamphlets for educating pet owners on animal behavior are available in quantity from animal behaviorist William E. Campbell, 487 Penny Lane, Grants Pass, OR 97526. There is room on the pamphlets for you to add your organization's name. The pamphlets cover such problems as shyness, aggressiveness, chewing and digging. Write for samples and prices.

Humane workers are often asked why one or another form of cruelty to animals is not against the law. We may be convinced that a certain law should be passed based on our feelings or the needs of our own agency -- but if we want the law passed, we must convince our legislators.

This may mean demonstrating that the new provision will benefit the general public or that it will benefit animals without costing the public money. More often, it means convincing legislators that their constituents -- the people who vote them in or out of office -- want the law passed.

A good state law can have far-reaching consequences for animals. Spending an afternoon working for a new law can be more beneficial for many more animals than spending that time rounding up strays. But legislative work requires many of those afternoons, some of which will end up being quite frustrating.

Walt Lane, President of the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies, Inc., says the first step of a legislative campaign for the Federation is for the membership and officers to decide what laws are most needed, through meetings, discussions and voting. The Federation officers then decide which new laws will be the most beneficial and will have the best chance of passage in the upcoming legislative session. They decide how many new laws to pursue based on how long the legislature will be in session.

In addition to considering new legislation, the Federation also works to strengthen existing laws. For example, if a law says "animal shelters must meet certain standards," you can work toward amending the law to say "animal shelters must meet certain standards." If you are not already part of a humane legislative network or state federation, you can find out more about your state legislature's schedule by calling the legislature's public information office. This office goes by different names in different states, but the directory assistance operator in your state capital can help you.

You can also call the home district offices of your own state representatives; your public library can give you their names and telephone numbers. You need to find out how your state legislature is structured and what the procedures are for making law.
You should get acquainted with your elected representatives for several reasons. They will be more likely to introduce bills that you propose or to vote for bills you support if you take the time to inform them about animal issues. Also, if you are part of a state network, you can provide the network valuable information about your representatives.

Contact your elected representatives and ask to meet each of them at his or her offices in the state capital or in your district. You can also invite them to attend one of your organization’s meetings.

Tell the legislator you’re meeting about your organization and the number of dues-paying members you have. Explain why animal welfare legislation is important to everyone in the community and then ask for his or her feelings on the issues you’ve raised. If you have specific new laws to propose, ask if the legislator will introduce them. He or she may not agree to introduce your proposed laws, and you may have to request help from legislators in other districts, preferably working in cooperation with the humane organizations or animal agencies located there.

The legislator who agrees to introduce your bill will help you put it into the proper format and will give you an idea of its chances for success. When appropriate, your bill should be introduced into both houses of your state legislature. In each house, the bill will be sent to one or more committees for hearings and possible amendment.

Committees are where the real work of the legislature is done. You should keep in touch with your sponsoring legislator’s staff to stay informed on which committee will handle the bill and who the committee members are. When the hearings are scheduled, you can contact the humane societies in the committee members’ home districts and ask those societies to urge their members to write letters or send telegrams supporting the bill.

(You may be able to deduct out-of-pocket expenses for lobbying activities from your income tax. Since this depends on several factors, ask the advice of a tax advisor or attorney.)

You want to have the best possible representation for your point of view at the hearings. Try to locate and bring in experts to testify on the issue.

If someone from your organization is to testify, make sure he or she is completely prepared with facts. Legislators do not respond to heartbreaking stories about poor puppies and kittens. They do...

The chart on the next page, reprinted from Congressional Quarterly, shows how a bill becomes law in the US Congress. In the last two-year congressional session, the 96th Congress, 10,389 pieces of legislation (including resolutions, bills to become public law and bills introduced on behalf of individuals) were introduced. Of these 10,389 "pieces of business," only 613 became public laws. When HSUS works for an animal law, we face a great deal of competition for the attention of the legislators. The structures of most state legislatures are based on that of the US Congress. However, the procedures and schedules differ from state to state. The first step of your legislative program must be to be thoroughly familiar with your own state legislation. Your public library should have information to help you.

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respond to professional presentations crammed with facts and, if possible, details about the financial effects of the proposed law. Legislators are necessarily very concerned about minimizing the costs of any new measure.

Walt Lane points out the importance of finding people who can make a good presentation and then asking those people to work with legislation all the time. That way, the legislators will come to know and trust your organization's representatives. He comments, "We had one lady one year...all she would talk about was her poor little pet parakeet who was ill all the time. That's not credibility!"

Lane also warns that state legislators may not appreciate testimony from someone outside the state. "They want people who live there, who vote there, who pay the taxes, but they don't want any outsiders, particularly on an emotional bill. And I've been told by many of the committee members that the reason a particular bill didn't pass is that they were sick and tired of hearing the emotionalism on both sides."

If an amendment to the bill is proposed in the committee, you must evaluate the effect of the amendment and work with your sponsoring legislator to decide on a course of action. Much of legislative work is compromise. You may have to make some tough decisions on whether you'll accept certain amendments in order to get the bill passed out of the committee.

If your efforts have been well organized so far, the committee will pass your bill without damaging amendments and send it to the floor of the house for a vote. Your organization can alert other humane organizations and their individual members should go into action again, asking animal advocates to contact their own representatives to ask them to vote "yes" and to oppose any weakening amendments. There may be more debate on the floor, and you can help by providing your sponsoring legislator with as much background information as possible.

Each house of your state legislature must pass your bill before it can be sent to the governor for the final signature that will turn it into law. If the two houses pass different versions of the bill, a conference committee will be called to work out a final version. You will not be able to testify before this committee, but you can call or write the committee members to speak on behalf of the provisions you think should be in the final law.

The final bill is then sent to the governor, whose signature formally makes it into state law. If there is any doubt that the governor will sign the bill, you can alert your network to send letters or telegrams urging that the bill be signed into law.

If a bill you've worked for is passed, be sure to thank the legislators who supported your measure.

Walt Lane says it's particularly important for all the animal organizations and agencies in a state to be in agreement about a particular bill to avoid confusing and frustrating legislators.

Lane also suggests getting to know legislators while they are still candidates for office. Your local Board can tell you who the candidates are. You can find out how sympathetic they'll probably be toward your efforts, and you can educate them about what makes good animal control and animal welfare legislation. You can also establish yourself as a source of reliable information. "But do it in a very nice way," he adds. "Don't ever alienate them because that way they'll never be on your side."

He says also that letters, calls or telegrams from constituents have a great deal of influence on legislators. "You hear people say: what good is a letter? What good is a telegram? But these special Western Union telegrams and phone calls mean a lot, particularly during an election year."

Lane urges animal advocates not to get discouraged if legislators seem reluctant to change animal laws that have been on the books for a long time. "There's a lot of work involved, but this change is eventually coming around not only with animal legislation but other legislation as well. I see it...all the time."

The Virginia Federation of Humane Societies, Inc., was instrumental in the passage of state laws regulating the operation of animal shelters and euthanasia of surplus animals.

After the Michigan state legislature outlawed the high altitude decompression chamber for animal euthanasia, one state legislator wrote a guest column for a newspaper, stating that letters from constituents had a great deal to do with the passage of the law.

Letters can help. When you write legislators about bills affecting the animals in your state, follow these guidelines:

1) Write on your organization or agency letterhead, and type your letter neatly.
2) Identify the bill you are writing about.
3) Explain who you are and why your organization or agency will be affected by the bill. If you have dues-paying members, tell the legislator how many people you represent. Explain how the bill will benefit the whole community.
4) Be brief - one page should be enough for a concise statement of your position.
5) Write when an issue is at stake, but don't write constantly. Your purpose should be to offer constructive comment, not to complain.
6) If the legislator votes as you requested, write a follow-up letter of thanks. If the vote goes against your position, you can write expressing your disappointment, but don't complain in such a way that you end up losing the legislator as a possible future ally.

If you are called on to testify before a committee of the state legislature, what you say will be important -- but so will how you say it. Follow these guidelines:

1) Write out your testimony beforehand, but don't bury your face in your paper when you read it before the committee. Look at the committee members, glancing down to follow your written text.
2) Have copies of your information for all the committee members.

Continued on next page...
Hunting new legislation does not guarantee that a particular problem will be solved. If that were the case, we would have little need for the extensive law enforcement network required to uphold local, state and federal codes.

The humane movement takes great pride in having achieved a body of progressive animal welfare laws. Through growth and organization, we have acquired "political clout" and many lawmakers are now eager to make our cause their own. We must, however, measure our success not by the weight of accumulated law, but by the suffering and cruelty we prevent.

Despite the fact that virtually all states prohibit organized dog fights and cockfights, these events are widespread. Insignificant fines and penalties are only partly to blame for the continuation of animal fighting contests; piecemeal enforcement is the major problem.

Several states have banned or restricted the surgical docking of horses' tails - an unnecessary cosmetic mutilation. Still, we find that tail docking is prevalent even in those jurisdictions where it is illegal.

General anti-cruelty statutes notwithstanding, animals are routinely mistreated in puppy mills, roadside zoos and livestock auctions. Laws that were intended to prohibit the "unnecessary torture or torment" of animals have not been successfully applied to rodeo, coon-on-a-log contests, greyhound coursing or greased pig chases. Simply put, many of our laws appear to be either unevenly enforced or unenforceable.

What can your organization do? Begin by examining your state and local animal laws to determine how they can best be implemented in your area (make sure you have the most recent laws). Two important considerations are:

1) Who can or should investigate animal cruelty reports and enforce animal welfare laws?
2) What other types of laws (i.e., zoning, health, environmental) and which enforcement agencies could help to solve a humane problem?

Animal welfare laws include municipal, county, state, and federal codes. Within a local area or individual state, reported violations can be investigated by any police officer or qualified humane agent having appropriate jurisdiction.

A few states have granted full enforcement authority and powers of arrest to humane organizations whose officers are particularly well trained. The Massachusetts SPCA and the Connecticut Humane Society, for example, have very effective enforcement programs recognized by their states. In California, there is a designation for state humane agents and a training program. Some other states have similar programs.

In most parts of the country, however, humane societies serve only a single city or county and they may or may not have an investigations program or enforcement authority. Under these circumstances animal welfare laws can and should be enforced by the local or state police.

If you are with a private humane organization without enforcement authority, you can still collect information about cruelty cases to give to the prosecuting attorney. You can also build a rapport with the police department, preferably with one individual officer who is interested in animal protection.

On the national level, suspected violations of federal law should be referred to the particular governmental agency charged with enforcement duties. The US Department of Agriculture is given authority over the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act. The US Department of the Interior has jurisdiction of the Endangered Species Act, the Lacey Act, the Wild Horse and Burro Act and several others. Again, you have the right to expect that those officials given the authority and resources to enforce the law, do so, or show cause why they cannot.

Sometimes, the best approach to stopping animal abuse is to utilize laws which were not designed to protect animals. Illegal gambling laws can be employed to stop cockfighting - especially in those states with insignificant penalties for cruelty. Zoning laws or health codes may come in handy when trying to close down a puppy mill or roadside menagerie. Other laws may prohibit the discharge of a firearm or the setting of leghold traps in a residential area. You should become thoroughly familiar with all fish and wildlife, environmental, health and firearm statutes as well as municipal animal control and zoning codes.

You may be surprised when you find out how many animal protection laws affect your state and community. Make the best use of those laws before you decide new laws are necessary.
A SHELTER SENSE reader asked recently if we could provide form letters to help animal shelters answer some of the more common questions from the public -- questions such as "Why won't you let me adopt this dog when you're just going to kill it anyway?"

It's difficult for us to give you exact wording, but here are some points that might help you deal better with these complaints.

If a potential adopter complains because he or she has been turned down, you can explain that your responsibility for sheltering the animal extends to providing for its future. Your shelter has set certain standards for adoptions to make sure the animals get permanent, responsible homes and do not become a burden on the community -- it's your job to observe those standards.

You may be able to make your point by telling the complainer what percentage of animals in your shelter are turned in by owners -- this "recycling" is hard on the animal and wasteful as well. The animal is in the shelter in the first place because someone acted irresponsibly.

If someone from outside your jurisdiction wants to adopt an animal, you can explain that it's very difficult for you to enforce the provisions of the adoption contract elsewhere. Since the contract is your means to protect the animals, you have to be able to enforce it.

Last year, a person from a nearby county called HSUS to complain about pet adoption fees at area shelters. "How much should I have to pay for love?" he screamed into the phone. With this complaint, you can point out that people will take a free pamphlet knowing they can throw it away later -- but they'll pause before buying a book for $12.95 to make sure they really want to read it.

People who are looking for bargain pets generally give them bargain care. When adopters complain about fees, tell them the fee is another assurance that they are willing and financially able to provide proper care.

There will probably come a time when an angry person will lean over your shelter counter and shout, "Do you mean you'd rather have the dog dead than living with me?" The best advice I can give you for these uncomfortable situations is to answer calmly and quietly, "Yes."