Treatment of Elephants Demands Attention

Since San Diego zoo officials accused trainers at the San Diego Wild Animal Park of cruelly beating an 18-year-old female African elephant named Dunda last February (see HSUS NEWS, Fall 1988), the issue of what constitutes abuse of elephants versus what is considered acceptable discipline has drawn considerable attention from all directions.

California State Senator Dan McCorquodale, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife, held a public hearing in southern California to investigate the alleged beating of Dunda. Without denying that the beatings occurred, representatives of the San Diego Zoological Society attempted to defend its actions.

HSUS Captive Wildlife Specialist David Herbet presented the findings of his investigation on behalf of ten animal-welfare and environmental organizations. As a direct result of those hearings, Senator McCorquodale moved forward with the formation of a broad-based task force made up of representatives of zoological institutions, animal-welfare organizations, and government regulatory agencies. The task force, it was hoped, would define abuse and develop guidelines for the humane handling of wild and exotic animals in captivity. Later, these guidelines can be reinforced through legislation, if necessary.

Attempts early on to define abuse by the California Association of Zoos and Aquariums for the task force were cited as being “too vague” by WCRO investigator Eric Sakach, who serves as a member of the task force. “They failed to address (continued on page 2)

Pet Centers Sued

In January, attorney Martin Blake of San Francisco announced the filing of a class action lawsuit against Docktor Pet Centers, Inc., the largest pet store franchisor in the U.S. The action is brought by Sacramento area buyers on behalf of all California consumers who have allegedly been sold diseased and defective puppies, or who purportedly have been victims of deceptive business practices by the pet store chain.

Plaintiffs in the case seek an injunction restraining Docktor from selling unhealthy puppies and continuing unsanitary and inhumane pet practices. An unspecified amount for damages to compensate purchasers is also being sought.

The suit alleges that Docktor sells unhealthy and defective puppies to the public, charges exhorbitant and inflated prices, and engages in unfair and deceptive business practices.

The complaint further alleges that many of the puppies sold are knowingly obtained by Docktor from commercial puppy breeding enterprises commonly referred to as “puppy mills.” (Such establishments have been the target of ongoing investigations by The HSUS and numerous exposes. Puppies from these operations are often bred under unsanitary and inhumane conditions and transported at a premature age causing them to be unsound, weakened, and unhealthy.) The suit further contends that Docktor stores do not maintain sanitary, healthy, or humane conditions for their puppies and such conditions contribute to ill health and suffering.

(continued on page 3)


**Progress For Animals in the Northwest**

In January, Field Investigator Kurt Lapham travelled to the Northwest on an extensive two-state shelter visitation trip, reaching from Eugene, Oregon to Bellingham, Washington. “I was really pleased to finally meet in person people I had previously only known over the phone—such as Susan Lapham.” Although he has occasion to travel to the Northwest, those trips are arranged for a special event or investigation, and rarely leave time for visiting local shelters and meeting staff members.

Lapham noted that the shelters in the area are striving to improve, and in many cases are rebuilding their existing facilities in order to meet the growing demands of their various communities. As in every area of the country, there is of course a need for more humane education, better funding, and larger facilities. However, community concern in many areas has prompted a flood of interest in new developing and creative ways to meet those needs. There is a sense of the old meeting the new, foreshadowing great benefit for animals throughout the Northwest in the years to come.
LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

WASHINGTON

HB 1614 — On February 17, Dr. Susan Lieberman, Associate Director of Wildlife & Environment for The HSUS, testified before the Washington State House Committee on Fisheries & Wildlife. Dr. Lieberman was supporting Representative Ken Jacobsen’s exotic bird bill, HB 1614, which will prohibit the sale of any bird or bird egg taken from the wild, and ban the importation of such birds or eggs into the state of Washington. HB 1614 would not prohibit the sale of captive-bred birds; it will allow licensed bird breeders to import wild birds on a limited basis, so as not to genetically overbreed their captive stock.

Although HB 1614 was held up in committee, the WCRO is urging all of its Washington members to call or write their state representatives, and ask for the reintroduction of a similar bill next session.

CALIFORNIA

SB 1110 — California State Senator Milton Marks, who will be sponsoring steel-jaw trap legislation this year (see story below), will also be carrying a bill similar to Assemblyman Tom Bates’ AB 2653, which failed passage in the 1988 legislature. The Senator’s bill will seek to increase the size of milk-fed veal calf crates, enabling the calves to stand up, lie down, turn around, and make other normal postural adjustments. Please write to your state legislators and urge them to support this important piece of legislation.

SB 60 — Senator Alan Robbins has introduced a bill requiring the labeling of all cosmetic and household products that test on animals. SB 60 states, in part, “All cosmetic and household products offered for sale or exchange in this state for which live animals were used in the consumer safety testing of those products, shall contain upon their label or package a conspicuous statement indicating that live animals were used for that testing.” Please write to your state legislators, and urge their support.

AB 2001 — In response to all of the interest generated over last session’s Puppy Mill Bill (AB 4500), Assemblyman Sam Farr has introduced a new bill in an attempt to combat the serious problems consumers are experiencing with animals purchased from pet stores. Among other provisions, Mr. Farr’s bill will prohibit the sale of any dog in a pet shop if it is less than 12 weeks old; require frequent veterinary examinations of the animal while it is on the store’s premises; set warranty provisions; and allow the consumer reimbursement of up to $2,000 if the animal becomes ill or dies during the warranty period, because it was sick at the time of the sale.

The pet industry is countering Mr. Farr’s bill with a much weaker one of their own (AB 786, by Assemblyman Richard Polanco). It calls for less stringent veterinary exams, and replacement of the animal, or a refund of the purchase price of a dead animal, if it is certified by a veterinarian (within 14 days of sale) to have been unfit for sale due to illness. The WCRO urges all of its members to contact Mr. Polanco, asking him to drop his bill in favor of AB 2001, and also to contact their legislators, urging strong support of AB 2001, especially the “twelve-week” clause.

AB 860 — Assemblyman Richard Katz is continuing his support of the California mountain lion. He has introduced AB 860, which is a two-pronged effort that will prohibit the sport-hunting of mountain lions, declaring them a specially protected mammal; and create the Habitat Conservation Fund, to appropriate $15,000,000 dollars annually from the General Fund, to be used to acquire habitat for the protection of mountain lions, deer, and endangered and threatened species.

A similarly-worded statewide initiative has been launched by the California Wildlife Protection Committee. Beginning in June, 1989, they will have five months to gather almost 600,000 signatures of registered voters — the number needed to qualify the initiative for the June 1990 ballot.

Both of these measures are very important. For more information, or to lend much needed support, contact: Assemblyman Richard Katz, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814 (for AB 860); the California Wildlife Protection Committee, 909-12th Street, Suite 203, Sacramento, CA 95814 (for the initiative).

All California State legislators can be reached at: State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814.

STEEL - JAW TRAPS: On the way out?

The use of steel-jawed leghold traps is becoming increasingly unpopular across the United States, as efforts by animal welfare and conservation groups to educate the public to the horrors of trapping become more successful. This educational push has been fueled by new, and ongoing, anti-fur campaigns.

In California, increasing public awareness has resulted in steel-jaw trap bans in Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, and Nevada Counties (San Francisco City and County had banned the trap some years ago), and similar efforts are now under way in several other California counties. Senator Milton Marks has once again introduced a bill calling for a total ban on steel-jawed leghold traps in California. We are urging our members to write to their state senators and assembly members, and urge their support of the Senator’s bill, SB 756.

The WCRO will also continue its campaign to ban the steel-jaw trap county-by-county; if you are interested in doing so in your county, please write: TRAPPING, West Coast Regional Office, 1713 J Street, Suite 211, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Reflect for a moment....

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