SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM SHELTER SENSE -- May your holidays be spent before warm hearths in the company of good friends. (photo by Bonnie Smith)

Christmas pets and pets at Christmas

Cuddly puppies and kittens under the Christmas tree are great on greeting cards -- but bad in real life, for pets and people.

When people come to your shelter to adopt a new pet for a holiday gift, urge them to announce the gift with a card and pick up the animal after Christmas day is over. Or suggest they take the new pet home a few weeks before Christmas, and have the fun of opening pet toys on the holiday.

The bustle and excitement of holidays make the wrong atmosphere for introducing a new animal to a home and
beginning its training as a good pet. The animal could be
inadvertently mistreated, injured or simply terrified -- as
when enthusiastic givers wrap the little fellow as a "gift."
Also, remind area residents with pets that Christmas
decorations can become dangerous playthings for curious
animals -- nibbling poinsettia can poison a pet. Eating
tinsel can result in impaction, and chowing electrical wiring
can be hazardous to both pet and owner because of fire.
The holiday season is a good time for fund-raising for your
organization -- check with local stores selling pet toys and
other supplies to see if you can set up a canister for
donations near the pet shelf. Stores may donate a portion of
holiday sales. You can also issue press releases asking
residents to contribute to your organization the same amount
they spend on toys for their own pets.
By informing your community about responsible pet ownership,
you can make the holiday season better for pets and people.

The HSUS accreditation program for humane societies and
animal control agencies is being expanded with the
addition of two accreditation associates.

Leslie Eustace, who comes to The HSUS From ASPCA in New York,
will serve the western states and maintain an office in the
new HSUS Rocky Mountain Regional Office in Denver. This office serves Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and Arizona, and the
director is Don Cashen, formerly of the Indianapolis Humane Society. The address is 1780 South Bellaire St., Denver, CO
80222 - tel. (303) 759-8880.

Accreditation associate Hurd "Bill" Smith is based in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and can be reached at 4831 Springhill Dr., Tuscaloosa, AL 35401 - tel. (205) 553-8665. Smith is
well known throughout the southeast for his many years of
work devoted to improving animal shelters in the region.

HSUS accredits humane societies and animal control agencies that meet certain professional standards of operation.
Complete information on accreditation requirements are
available from HSUS Accreditation, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.

The Animal Welfare Act and you
by Margaret Morrison
Morrison is HSUS Animal Welfare Act Coordinator.

The federal Animal Welfare Act has the potential to be an
effective tool for every humane society and animal shelter
investigating certain cruelty cases.

Through the Act, the U.S. Department of Agriculture regulates
animal dealers, research laboratories, zoos, circuses, and
other forms of animal enterprises such as pet stores that
sell wild animals, and common carriers.
The Act does not affect such groups as hobby breeders, retail
pet stores that do not sell wild animals or dealers selling
only to individuals and not to research laboratories or on the
wholesale level.
The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service through
its regional offices, enforces regulations for the humane
care, handling, treatment and transportation of animals. The
Department can order facilities into compliance, and in extreme
cases, levy fines, suspend or revoke licenses. The
Animal Welfare Act can be used to supplement but not to
replace cruelty prosecutions. In some instances where criminal
prosecution has not been successful, action through the Act
may stop the cruelty.

All too often, however, violators of the Act are simply warned.
Animal Welfare Act cases can drag on for several years and the
cruelty continues unabated. This commonly occurs when a
cease and desist order or a 21-day license suspension is not
sufficient incentive for the violator to comply fully with the
Act.

Dr. Dale Schwindeman, head of the Animal Care Staff which
administers the Act, says USDA finds it useful to work with
local societies and law enforcement agencies which investigate
cruelty cases.

A word of caution...in the past, USDA inspectors have been
derelict in their duty to enforce the Act, and have filed
misleading reports ignoring violations. Last year, The HSUS
lost a cruelty case in which we considered the evidence very
strong. The judge cited the fact that USDA had approved the
facility.

We hope similar situations won't continue to occur and have been monitoring USDA's enforcement of the Act. APHIS
officials have been conducting training programs to school
their employees in the specifics of the Act and the proper
way to conduct investigations.

You can help the USDA by informing them of violations. Animal
Welfare Act enforcement is over-burdened and under-staffed.
The funding provided by Congress is inadequate to assure that
USDA can do an effective job.

Currently, USDA can inspect a facility on the average of
twice per year - six times should be the minimum. Therefore,
USDA relies on reports of abuses and will schedule special
inspections to investigate specific complaints. Dr.
Schwindeman has said that he places great value on the reports
of those professionally involved with animals.

In what is termed a "new approach," APHIS has assigned
several employees to work only on the Act. Previously, all
APHIS regional employees had been assigned to work on all
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