Nation Outraged Over Shooting of 34 Wild Horses in Nevada

Nevada law enforcement and animal protection authorities are hopeful that the three men arrested for the shooting of 34 wild horses in northern Nevada in late December will be prosecuted to the maximum degree allowed by law. According to officials, several young colts and pregnant mares were among the free-roaming animals that were found shot to death in a popular wild horse viewing spot just east of Reno, Nevada (see above). It is the worst slaughter of wild horses in the state in a decade.

Investigators have yet to determine a motive for the shootings, but suspect that the animals were used for target practice by the three charged with firing high-powered rifles from the roadside. The bodies of nine horses were found by sheriff’s deputies responding to a report of shots being fired in the area. The rest of the horses were located with the aid of a helicopter search over the next two days. According to investigators, many of the animals endured prolonged suffering. Several horses were maimed.

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Large Dogfighting Operation Shut Down

Seized Dogs Stolen Then Recovered

On December 17, police arrested a Galt, California, couple on suspicion of running a professional dogfighting operation. Arrested on felony dogfighting and other charges were Cesar Cerda and his wife, Mercedes Ruiz Monterrubio. Assisted by WCRO staff and officers from Sacramento County Animal Care and Regulation, Galt police officers seized 55 pit bull terriers, many heavily scarred from previous fights, along with training equipment, veterinary supplies, a portable dogfighting arena, dogfighting paraphernalia, and videotapes of dogfights. “This was one of the larger professional-level operations we’ve encountered,” said Eric Sakach, WCRO regional director. During the search, law enforcement officers also found a stolen handgun and a sophisticated marijuana cultivation operation on the premises.

A fear that there would be attempts to steal the dogs, who were being held as evidence, became a reality early Christmas morning when 18 dogs were stolen from Sacramento County’s animal shelter. By a fortunate twist of fate, the animals were recovered several hours later when a Manteca police officer stopped a van with a suspected drunken driver and discovered numerous pit bulls in blood-smeared cages inside the vehicle. Unaware that the dogs had been stolen just a few hours earlier, the Manteca police officer arrested the driver and two passengers who were subsequently booked into the San Joaquin County jail on suspicion of possessing dogs for fighting purposes and cruelty to animals. Three days later, a detective with the Manteca Police Department contacted Sakach for assistance with their case and mentioned that they had seized 18 dogs. “It was just a little too coincidental,” said Sakach. “I immediately sent staff to Manteca to compare our photographs of the dogs with the dogs in Manteca, and it turned out they were the same animals! All of the dogs were positively identified as the same animals stolen from Sacramento County and were returned.” The investigation continues, and cases against all the defendants are pending trial.
**WCRO Provides Emergency Help in New Year’s Eve Cat Collector Case**

On the afternoon of New Year’s Eve, WCRO received an emergency request for assistance from Placer County Animal Control Supervisor Mike Rodriguez, whose agency was faced with rescuing and housing 92 sickly cats found huddled inside a small trailer near Newcastle, California. WCRO provided portable kennels and purchased an additional 50 cages, which were delivered to the site by WCRO Program Coordinators Geoff Simmons and Cynthia Cutler. Simmons and Cutler then assisted Placer County’s officers with the rescue operation. The Auburn Area Animal Rescue Foundation, the Animal Spay and Neuter Clinic, Friends of the Auburn/Placer County Shelter, and Animal Outreach provided additional help. Two veterinarians, Drs. Christine Mattson and Lucy Antheunis, worked around the clock in an effort to evaluate and treat the cats, many of whom were found to be suffering from disease. “The condition of the cats and the trailer where they were kept was appalling,” said Simmons. “The floors and countertops were four inches deep in animal feces and the stench was overpowering. Most of the animals were caked with fecal matter and suffering from urine burns and upper respiratory infection.”

The cats’ owner, Suzanna Youngblood, had been collecting the cats for some time by responding to free-to-good-home advertisements and taking in stray cats as she found them. She has been formally charged with felony animal cruelty. The case is pending.

**California Animal Protection Measures Pass by Wide Margins**

But Several Wildlife Groups Sue To Overturn Leghold Trap Ban

In what can only be termed a decisive victory for animals, California voters this past November approved a bill restricting the use of leghold traps to protect animals. Co-sponsored by The HSUS, Proposition 4 bans cruel and indiscriminate traps and poisons principally used to kill wildlife. The measure passed by a 57 to 43 percent margin. “This is a historic win for animals,” said WCRO Director Eric Sakach. “California is the fourth state to ban recreational or sport trapping through the initiative process.” Proposition 6, which outlaws the commercial sale of horses for human consumption, passed by a 59 to 41 percent margin.

Unfortunately, several wildlife groups, including chapters of the National Audubon Society, filed a federal lawsuit to overturn the portion of Proposition 4 that bans the steel-jaw leghold trap. The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court on December 3, seeks preliminary and permanent injunctions against the measure on the ground that leghold traps are valuable in protecting birds from predators. “The HSUS believes that both birds and mammals should be protected, and we deplore the use of these cruel and indiscriminate traps,” said Sakach. The HSUS and the other organizations that sponsored the initiative as the group ProPaw have filed a motion to intervene to protect the core provisions of Proposition 4.

**Legislative Update**

Following is an update on recently enacted legislation and a listing of possible bills that may need your support. HSUS staff are constantly in contact with state legislative offices and local activists to pass assistance from friends in humane legislation and to fend off bills considered inhumane. We cannot guarantee that The HSUS position on the bills will remain as reported here, as bills may be unfavorably amended.

California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington state legislatures are in session. Some bills have already been introduced; others have yet to be assigned a number. For up-to-the-minute information and to be placed on our Action Alert list, write or call our office.

**California**

Recently Enacted Legislation

**S.B. 1785,** by Sen. Tom Hayden, addresses holding periods for stray cats and homeless animals in shelters. Unfortunately, this bill failed to include an appropriate funding mechanism, which in turn has led a number of animal shelters to announce that they will not be able to comply with the bill’s requirements and must cancel their animal control contracts as a result. Furthermore, the bill allows non-profit entities to remove animals slated to be euthanized from shelters regardless of their suitability for adoption. **HSUS position:** Oppose unless amended. **Status:** Passed

**S.B. 991,** by Sen. Jack O’Connell, requires persons convicted of animal abuse to undergo psychological evaluation if the court deems it necessary. Under the bill’s provisions, the offender may be ordered to pay for and complete counseling designed to evaluate and treat behavior or conduct disorders. **HSUS position:** Support. **Status:** Passed

**S.B. 1659,** by Sen. Quentin Kopp, phases out the use of carbon monoxide chambers for euthanizing unwanted dogs and cats by January 1, 2000. **HSUS position:** Support. **Status:** Passed

Expected Legislation for 1999

**Possible legislation for this year’s session in California may include the introduction of bills to ban pigeon shooting contests, increase the penalties for owning a vicious animal who harms a person, a re-introduction of a bill to eliminate the animal shelter tax, and ban bear hounding.**

**Oregon**

A bill sponsored by the Oregon Humane Society and backed by The HSUS will allow alternative sentencing for dogs caught chasing livestock. Currently a dog caught harassing or killing livestock must be euthanized. Legislation to ban cruel and indiscriminate practices of bear hounding and hunting of bears, cougars, bobcats, and lynxes. The Washington State Senate and House have introduced separate bills this session to undermine or completely repeal I-655. These bills are HB 1012, S.B. 5006, S.B. 5120, and S.B. 5133. **HSUS position on all bills:** Oppose

Other Washington Legislation

**H.B. 1057,** by Rep. Romero, will prohibit the use of the steel-jaw leghold trap. This bill also tightens existing regulations concerning where traps may be placed and redacts trapper education programs run by the state toward humane solutions. **HSUS position:** Support

**S.B. 5002,** by Sen. Jacobsen, creates a hot line to report poaching, dangerous wildlife, or unlawful habitat destruction. **HSUS position:** Support

**S.B. 5656,** by Sen. Kohl-Welles and Sen. Fairley, bans the use of the steel-jaw leghold trap, conibear trap, and snares by licensed trappers. However the bill would allow such devices to be used by property owners and the state. **HSUS position:** Support if amended

**S.B. 5660,** by Sen. Fairley and Sen. Kohl-Welles, would require manufacturers of antifreeze to include a bittering or aversive agent in a concentration sufficient to render it unpalatable to humans and animals. **HSUS position:** Support

**S.B. 5794,** by Sen. Fairley, will phase-in a ban on the use of ethylene glycol, the poisonous substance in antifreeze, by the year 2003. **HSUS position:** Support
In February, World Championship Wrestling Champion Bill Goldberg joined The HSUS to announce support for federal legislation to close a loophole in the Animal Welfare Act that still allows the interstate transport of birds for cockfighting. The enormously popular Goldberg teamed up with WCRO Director Eric Sakach and HSUS Senior Vice President Wayne Pacelle during a congressional briefing and visits to offices of individual members of the Senate and House to speak in support of legislation introduced by Colorado Sen. Wayne Allard, the lone veterinarian in Congress. “When I fight, I choose to step into the ring,” said Goldberg. “But animals are forced to fight, and they suffer and die in the process. It is animal cruelty in its worst form.”

The Alternatives Loan Program: Providing Humane Learning Tools for Animal-Friendly Classrooms

In 1995, The HSUS began loaning dissection alternatives to students, teachers, and parents as a way to help those who object to dissection and to encourage the adoption of alternatives in the classroom. Since then, about 300 dissection alternatives have been loaned to students from 31 states and three countries.

The Alternatives Loan Program has more than 100 alternatives to the use of live animals for dissection or invasive exercises. Designed for middle school through college level students, they include computer programs, videos, models, and charts representing 15 animal species. In addition, The HSUS continues to counsel hundreds of students each year who object to dissection. Students are advised on how they can negotiate alternatives with teachers and administrators. They also learn about new resources available and our recently launched e-mail discussion group, the Inter-Campus Animal Advocacy Network (I-CAN).

To learn more about the Alternatives Loan Program or to receive a dissection alternatives packet, write to: HSUS West Coast Regional Office, P.O. Box 417220, Sacramento, CA 95841-7220, or send e-mail to hsslab@ix.netcom.com. A current list of available materials is on the HSUS Web site at: www.hsus.org/programs/research/alt_dissection.html.

Reflect for a moment...

How can I help animals and receive income and tax savings at the same time?

By making a planned gift to The Humane Society of the United States, you can assure that animals will receive the protection they need while providing significant tax savings and income to yourself. Naming The HSUS as a beneficiary of your estate or trust demonstrates your lasting commitment to animal welfare and strengthens the society for future tasks. We will be happy to send our latest information on planned giving and our programs to help animals.

Mail this coupon in the envelope enclosed or send it directly to The Humane Society of the United States, WCRO, P.O. Box 417220, Sacramento, CA 95841-7220.

Name ____________________________
Address -----------------------------
City ____________________________
State ____________ Zip ____________
Phone ___________________________
HSUS Uncovers Dog and Cat Slaughter for Fur Industry

In mid-December, millions of Americans watched in horror as the findings of an 18-month investigation by The HSUS were exposed during a nationally televised investigative report on “Dateline NBC.” The investigation uncovered one of the fur industry’s dirtier little secrets: The brutal slaughter of companion animals—dogs and cats—to be turned into fur coats, fur-trimmed accessories, and even stuffed toy animals.

The investigation, conducted by a nine-person team led by The HSUS’s Chief Investigator Rick Swain and German journalist Manfred Karremann, focused on practices in China, Thailand, and the Philippines. The team documented dogs and cats being kept under the worst conditions imaginable and being killed by such means as slow suffocation, hanging, clubbing, or bleeding to death. The death toll is conservatively estimated to be in the range of two million dogs and cats killed annually for their fur. It usually takes from 10 to 12 dogs or 24 cats to manufacture one coat—more if puppies or kittens are used.

The investigation found that dog and cat fur is aggressively marketed and sold in both the United States and Europe, and that some manufacturers deliberately mislead consumers about product composition. The fur from a domestic dog may be sold under such names as gae-wolf, sobaki, Mongolian dog, and Asian jackal, among others. Domestic cat fur is often marketed as wildcat, goyangi, and katzenfelle, to name a few.

While a few states, including California, have laws against selling dog or cat pelts, U.S. laws are largely ineffective, since no labeling laws regulate products costing under $150, which can include parkas, gloves, fur linings, and insoles for footwear. Unless DNA tested, dog and cat fur is often indistinguishable from other animals used by the fur industry. Federal law does not currently prohibit the importation of domestic dog and cat pelts into the United States.

Of course, the fate of wild animals that are raised in cages or cruelly trapped for the fur trade, whether here or abroad, is no better. Wearing a fur-trimmed garment is a sure way to advertise that the wearer really couldn’t care less about preventable suffering. And conscientious, forward-thinking designers such as Oleg Cassini have shown that new synthetics are a luxurious and vastly superior alternative to animal fur.

If you’d like more information about The HSUS’s investigation into the dog and cat fur trade and what you can do to help make a difference, check out our Web site at www.hsus.org. Or order our complete exposé, shown at right, for $4 (plus $1 for shipping and handling) from The HSUS, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037. (Warning: The exposé contains graphic and disturbing photos and information.)