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Help Ban Cruel Traps and Poisons in Oregon, Washington

One glimpse of a wild animal struggling desperately to free herself from the steel jaws of a leghold trap should be enough to convince anybody that trapping is cruel.

Every year in Oregon and Washington, more than 60,000 wild animals, including otters, bobcats, mink, and beavers, are killed by commercial and recreational trappers. These animals struggle and suffer prolonged, painful deaths after being caught in steel-jawed leghold traps, snares, and other body-gripping traps. Some animals even resort to chewing off their own legs in a vain attempt to escape the pain. In reality, the number of animals trapped is even higher because traps are indiscriminate and severely injure and kill thousands of non-target animals, including family pets, songbirds, birds of prey, deer, and even threatened and endangered species.

Poisons used to kill fur-bearing animals such as coyotes are equally cruel and indiscriminate. Animals poisoned continued on page 2

Otters are one of the species that suffer and die because of indiscriminate traps and poisons. You can help stop the suffering.

WTO Breaks Trade Barriers But Imperils Animals

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is a group of 134 countries bound by a trade agreement. In order to join the WTO, member nations make a deal: They agree to obey WTO laws in exchange for trade without barriers. In doing so, nations are forfeiting their rights to pass and enforce meaningful animal and environmental protection laws that prohibit the international trade in animals and animal related products.

The WTO may be great for free trade, but as far as animals are concerned, it is probably the single most destructive international organization ever formed. Nothing is sacred in the eyes of the WTO. Regulations on handling, slaughtering, and care of animals as well as those governing trapping, pollution, and habitat destruction are all fair game. Whenever a nation has challenged an animal protection regulation, WTO has held those regulations to be in violation of WTO rules. The nation that has enacted the offending rules must either change its law or pay a heavy financial penalty. The nation usually prefers to change the law. As a result, animal protection laws are being undermined.

Take sea turtle protection. It has been shown that the shrimp fishing industry can substantially reduce sea turtle mortality by using Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs). TEDs allow turtles to escape from shrimp nets rather than drowning in them. A WTO dispute panel twice ruled against U.S. trade policy that banned the import of shrimp from countries that do not require the use of TEDs. As a result, the U.S. must now accept imports of shrimp from countries that kill turtles in shrimp nets. Such policies could spell extinction for species of sea turtles that are already endangered.

Don't Trade Animal Laws For Free-Trade Rules

When delegates from WTO member governments gathered in Seattle, Washington, last November for a week-long meeting to discuss international trade rules, they were greeted by 250 sea-turtle-clad activists who carried the banner for the animals and The HSUS.

The turtles' first appearance was on Monday, November 29, at a march and rally co-sponsored by The HSUS, Animal Welfare Institute, the Sierra Club, and Friends of the Earth. The 250 sea turtles, along with thousands of other animal and environmental advocates, marched peacefully to the rally, which featured speakers from Congress and the animal and continued on page 2
Two Million and One Signatures by 2001

The HSUS has drafted a petition calling for Congress and the president of the United States to negotiate a bilateral agreement with the government of the European Union in which both governments pledge to desist from challenging animal protection laws under the auspices of the WTO. The petition further requests that the bilateral agreement be in force until such time as WTO adopts clear meaningful rules that safeguard animal protection laws. Here's how you can help.
- Sign the petition to go to www.hsus.org/forms/wto99petition.html.
- For a copy of the petition, contact Lisa Walsh at 202-367-0228.
- For more information about WTO and its impact on animals, go to the following link on the HSUS Web site: www.hsus.org/wto.

Las Vegas Hosts Expo 2000

The largest ever Animal Care Expo was held in Las Vegas, Nevada, in February, with animal care and control professionals from across the nation and around the world. Already the largest trade show in the world for animal care and control professionals, Animal Care Expo 2000 set a new record with some 1,500 exhibitors and about 30,000 attendees. The HSUS, Animal Care Expo is a full-scale, international trade show and educational conference that focuses on helping individuals who work in animal care and control accomplish their jobs in the most efficient, safe, and humane manner possible. Animal Care Expo provides an opportunity to network with others, see the latest and best products and services available, and attend specialized workshops and day-long courses.

Legislative Update

Following is an update on recently enacted legislation and a listing of bills that may need your support. HSUS staff are constantly in contact with state legislative offices and local activists to assist in passage of humane legislation and to stop bills considered inhumane. We cannot guarantee that the HSUS position on the bills will remain as reported here, as bills may be unfavorably amended. For up-to-the-minute information and to be placed on our Action Alert list, contact WCRO.

California
- A.B. 238, by Assemblyman Mike Honda, prohibits the Fish and Game Commission from banning the importation of turtles and tortoises for human consumption in California. This bill also establishes a permitting system for live food markets, but does not include provisions for revenue or enforcement other than revoking the permit. HSUS position: Oppose. Status: In Natural Resources and Water committee
- A.B. 980, by Assemblywoman Helen Norton, prevents lease agreements signed after January 1, 2000, from prohibiting pets in mobile home parks. This legislation is supported by U.S. government negotiators, particularly regarding farm animal welfare issues. HSUS is working to take animal welfare issues out of the trade rules because as these rules are written, laws protecting animals are deemed unfair trade barriers. Our petition (see sidebar at left) is in a step that direction.

Reflect for a moment...

How can I help animals and receive income and tax savings at the same time?
By making a planned gift, you can both support The Humane Society of the United States and benefit from tax savings. For more information, contact The HSUS at 526-0949 (Voice) or 520-526-0989 (Fax).
WCRO Responds to Northern California Wildfires

Wildfires hit California hard in 1999, harming the environment and creating an air quality hazard. According to the National Interagency Fire Center, more than 735,000 acres were consumed by some 4,300 fires in northern California. WCRO staff contacted local humane societies and animal control agencies in affected areas throughout the state to offer assistance. WCRO Program Coordinator Cynthia Cutler assisted Yuba and Humboldt counties. Working with Garry Goemann, DVM, director coordinator for Yuba County, Cutler helped deliver supplies to several veterinary hospitals that served as staging areas for threatened communities. At the request of the Humboldt County Department of Agriculture, Cutler then traveled to assist their staff in setting up a temporary animal shelter near the Red Cross shelter at the Redwood Acres Fairgrounds in Eureka. The Sequoia Humane Society also received some of the evacuated pets. A special thanks goes to the volunteers who helped in setting up the temporary animal shelter and to PETSMART, Yuba County Animal Control, and Animal Outreach of the Mother Lode for donating needed supplies.

While WCRO continues to provide training and resources to assist pet owners and local animal service agencies during emergencies, the need for personal preparation cannot be overemphasized. To receive a free HSUS/AMERICAN RED CROSS disaster preparedness brochure, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to WCRO.

California Gov. Gray Davis Signs Three Animal Welfare Bills

In September, Gov. Gray Davis signed A.B. 363, the Pet Adoptions Sales Tax Relief Act of 1999, authored by Assemblyman Mike Honda. The new law eliminates the sales tax requirement imposed on animals adopted from municipal and non-profit animal shelters and associated services, including spay/neuter surgery and health exams. Sponsored by The HSUS, the California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association, and the Board of Equalization (BOE), the law correctly characterizes pet adoptions as an act of kindness rather than as a "taxable title transfer," which was based on a 1941 Attorney General's opinion that concluded the state sales tax applies to receipts from the sale of living animals. A survey conducted by BOE found that two-thirds of California's animal shelters were not complying or were incorrectly assessing sales tax. Gov. Davis also signed into law S. B. 103, by Sen. Maurice Johannessen, which raises the penalty (currently a misdemeanor) to a possible felony if a dog or a horse or a dog or a horse 

Left: An investigating officer cuddles a pit bull puppy rescued from a California dogfighting case. WCRO assisted with.

with injuries and scars. WCRO commends San Joaquin County Deputy District Attorney Ron Goodreau, who prosecuted the case.

Shelter Personnel Recognized in San Diego

In November, downtown San Diego was the site of a special event held to recognize animal shelter workers for their outstanding service, leadership, and commitment to the animals and people in the community they serve. Coinciding with National Animal Shelter Appreciation Week (November 7-13, 1999), WCRO hosted a breakfast and awards event attended by more than 75 people representing every major animal sheltering facility in the county as well as businesses that focus on pet care. The keynote speaker was San Diego County Supervisor and Chairwoman Pam Slater. Slater presented The HSUS and attending organizations with a proclamation recognizing National Animal Shelter Appreciation Week.

WCRO Director Eric Saechak recently assisted San Diego County Animal Care and Regulation authorities during the execution of a search warrant at the property of an individual suspected of possessing dogs for fighting purposes. Terry Williams, who was found over for felony trial in February, is also known to be the publisher of an underground dogfighting magazine that contains advertisements for fighting dogs and reports on illegal matches held around the country. The bust caps off a prolific year for WCRO in handling dogfighting cases. The work has yielded enormous intelligence gains about those involved in this cruel and illegal activity.

In another case, a San Joaquin County jury found Samuel McCoy, 44, guilty of animal sexual assault, and Dr. Randall Lockwood and MRI plan to advance courses in California this year. The program was designed and led by Dr. Randall Lockwood, HSUS vice president for training initiatives, and Dr. Lynn Loo, research associate with MRI.

"We are working to design an advanced course for students interested in research and investigation, and we are excited about the potential for this course to improve our ability to prevent violence against animals," said Dr. Randall Lockwood.

"This is the first time I know of that both shelter staff and volunteers received well-deserved, formal recognition for the wonderful rescue, sheltering, and care services they unfailingly provide for animals within the community." Nineteen recipients, including 10 volunteers, received framed certificates of appreciation and gifts donated by area businesses. "We hope to recognize more shelter workers throughout the year at other special events," Doors added.

WCRO Shakes Up Dogfighting World

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WCRO's John Donners accepts a proclamation from San Diego County Chairwoman Pam Slater.

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In another case, a San Joaquin County jury found Samuel McCoy, 44, guilty of animal sexual assault; and designing treatment plans for youth and adult offenders. The HSUS and MRI plan to conduct additional introductory and advanced courses in California this year.

From left: Board of Equalization Legislative Coordinator Sheila Sarem, Assemblyman Mike Honda, Sanata Clara Humane Society Executive Director Christine Arnold, and WCRO's Geoff Stammons announce the elimination of sales tax on adopted animals at a press conference.

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Finally, another bill supported by The HSUS makes the abandonment of any animal an illegal act. Gov. Davis signed A.B. 1540, by Assemblyman Ed Vincent, expanding existing abandonment laws to cover all animals. Before passage of this bill, any person who abandoned any domestic dog or cat was guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding six months, or by a fine not exceeding $1,000, or by both. This new law addresses the many animals besides cats and dogs who are abandoned when people move away or they can no longer afford to care for them. Abandoned animals may suffer and die from neglect if not rescued in time by an animal services agency. A.B. 1540 clearly raises the legal status not only of companion animals but also of all other animals dependent on humans for sustenance and care.

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By Eric Sakach
Director of the West Coast Regional Office

Stamping Out “Crush” Videos

Warning: This column should be avoided if you are easily offended by graphic details of animal abuse.

Try and get away. Come on, try and get away. I want you to,” says the star of a video called “The ‘Tails’ of Charlie’s Ankles.” The star then proceeds to crush live mice who had been taped to the floor under her stiletto heels.

The sickening scene is not simulated. It is from what is known as a “crush” film. “Crushing” is a sexual fetish in which men, for the most part, obtain sexual gratification from watching scantily clad women crush objects or small animals, usually with high heels. In such videos, mice, rats, hamsters, guinea pigs, frogs, and other small animals are kicked, stabbed, or suffocated before being crushed to death with a spiked heel or bare foot. Although the acts depicted violate most states’ anti-cruelty statutes, and the detectives I spoke with told me that the videos made them physically ill, prosecutors discovered that neither the videotapes nor their distribution was illegal under current state or federal laws. Ventura County law enforcement officials subsequently launched a year-long investigation that ultimately led to the arrest of Diane Chaffin, who appeared in “The ‘Tails’ of Charlie’s Ankles,” along with Gary Thomason, who produced and distributed the video. Chaffin pled no contest to three felony counts of animal cruelty in November. A court found Thomason guilty in February. Both he and Chaffin received three-year suspended prison sentences and three years probation.

Following this disturbing case, Rep. Elton Gallegly, with the backing of The HSUS, introduced H.R. 1887 in Congress after Ventura County law enforcement officials alerted the congressman that they were unable to prosecute Thomason for the sale and distribution of the video. By December, President Clinton signed H.R. 1887 into law, which prohibits the interstate commerce and commercial gain from the distribution of “crush” videos. The law applies to interstate commerce, state laws throughout the nation are in serious need of improvement to prohibit the making and distribution of these films. In California, Ventura County Assemblyman Tom Calderon has introduced a bill (A.B. 1853) similar to the federal bill, along with Gary Thomason, who was arrested for the sale and distribution of the video.

The HSUS will continue to support legislation that will prohibit the sale of such depraved material and provide substantial penalties for those who make or distribute it. Our thanks to Rep. Gallegly and Assemblyman Calderon for taking this matter seriously and for introducing A.B. 1853 to curtail these activities.

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Promoting the protection of all animals