Economic Recession: What's Happening To Pets?

Recent news reports about the effects of the current recession range from unfortunate to grim: The number of battered wives and child abuse cases has risen in step with increased economic stress. In one city, 1500 unemployed people lined up in the cold to apply for 200 job vacancies. A U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics report indicated that 12,036,000 people were unemployed in the U.S. as of December 1982, and the Mortgage Bankers Association's third-quarter delinquency figures for Dec. 10, 1982, showed that approximately 170,000 home mortgages are in some stage of foreclosure -- a "historic high."

Somewhere between the unemployment line and the unpaid bills lies the family pet -- the cat or dog that depends on the family that

Continued on next page
is struggling to make ends meet. Interviews with shelter and humane-society personnel across the nation reveal that family economic problems are affecting pets in different ways, depending on regional economic conditions, the types of animal programs in place -- even cultural habits. But one thing is certain: Each animal agency must actively seek information about its community economic conditions in order to recognize and deal with symptoms of individual financial stress before they adversely affect the family pet.

* Unemployment has topped 15 percent in Birmingham, Ala., because of steel and coal industry shutdowns, making this one of the worst economic areas in the nation. However, there has been no noticeable increase in the amount of animal abuse or the number of animals turned into the Birmingham Humane Society (1713 Lomax Ave., Birmingham, AL 35208). Yet, poverty is affecting pet ownership in other ways.

"This is strictly a blue-collar area," said Executive Director John Bodie, "and people are in real financial trouble. I've definitely noticed that people are thinking two and three times before adopting a pet. Our adoption rate was 18 or 19 percent two years ago; it dropped to 15 percent last year." Bodie said that donations to the society have decreased, and society members are choosing the cheapest membership renewal options.

* Allen A. Gliisch, manager of the Illinois Citizens' Animal Welfare League (6224 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, IL 60637), believes that people are generally losing respect for animals, and he notices more pets from suburban households -- mostly cats -- turned into the League with the excuse that they are too costly to feed or provide with veterinary care. (The number of animals turned in was up roughly 25 percent in 1982 from 1981.) Gliisch also notices fewer adoptions and spay/neuter surgeries, with more stray animals unredeemed from the shelter by owners. "...the same as being abandoned," he said. He thinks the problem partially stems from people having to give up their homes and move in with relatives or friends, necessitating getting rid of pets.

(Peter Brereton, economist for the Mortgage Bankers Association in Washington, D.C., said, "Mortgage foreclosures are highly correlated with unemployment. The mortgage payment is the last bill that people let go; everything else goes first. Illinois, along with Ohio, Michigan and Indiana, currently has the greatest number of mortgages that are 30-, 60- and 90-days delinquent.")

Photo credits:
Cover, Judith Halden; Page 6 (left), Atlanta Humane Society; Page 6 (right), Bonnie Smith; Page 7, HSUS; Page 10 (left), Barbara Woodall; Page 11, HSUS/Photo credits: 

Humane Society of Jefferson County: Page 6 (right), Bonnie Smith; Page 7, HSUS; Page 10 (left), Atlanta Humane Society; Page 10 (right), Barbara Woodall; Page 11, HSUS/HSUS Vice President, Companion Animals Phyllis Wright Editor, SHELTER SENSE Deborah L. Reed Editorial Assistant Catherine M. Hess

©1983, The Humane Society of the United States, all rights reserved.
The Pima Animal Control Center (4000 North Silverbell Rd., Tucson, AZ 85705) has designed handy language cards for its animal-control officers who must communicate with Spanish-speaking pet owners. This idea could easily be adapted for use with other cultural groups.

The cards list on one side some of the most typical questions or statements directed at pet owners by the officers, with Spanish translations on the reverse side. Officers who have difficulty pronouncing Spanish can simply turn over the card and point to the appropriate Spanish statement or question that describes the officer's concerns or actions.

A new booklet offers guidelines for defining, expressing and enforcing rules and regulations for pet owners who live in condominiums, cooperatives and planned unit developments.

"Pet Peeves," published by the Community Associations Institute Research Foundation (3000 South Eads St., Arlington, VA 22202) was developed in response to concerns expressed by leaders within community housing developments. Many complain that pet owners often violate their rights to use common areas that are shared with residents who do not own or want to be near pets. One of the biggest concerns, according to the foundation's director of technical services and research, Douglas Kleine, is free-roaming pets that annoy other people and leave behind dog and cat waste.

While addressing the need to educate pet owners of all ages in an open and pleasant manner, the booklet shows sample bylaws and examples of rules for pet ownership that have been adopted by some groups. It provides tips on working with the local government, sample copies of pleasant but firm communications and administrative approaches to pet problems (including sample warning letters and pet-owner registration forms), and it discusses enforcement of pet rules through the courts.

"Pet Peeves" is available to Shelter Sense subscribers for a special, reduced price of $7 per copy plus $1.50 for shipping and handling. (Make checks payable to the Community Associations Institute Research Foundation at their address.) Prices for bulk orders are available from the foundation.

Fatal Plus, a pre-measured microfine pentobarbital without preservatives, is the least expensive of euthanasia injectables and is easier to administer.

The key to its efficiency is a controlled pH, according to John A. MacNeil, president of Vortech Pharmaceuticals Ltd., manufacturer of the product. Costly additives are not used in Fatal Plus. Other sodium pentobarbital products may contain additives that affect both the pH of the solution and its viscosity, resulting in sedimentation, post-injection pain or difficult injection through a small-gauge needle.

Fatal Plus is available through a nonbinding volume purchase plan, eliminating the necessity of a high drug inventory. Recommended for euthanasia of all species regardless of age or physical well-being, the product must be ordered on DEA form No. 222.

A quantity of a free booklet that describes Fatal Plus has been set aside for animal shelters on a "first come, first served" basis. Call toll free within Michigan, 1-800-372-2714 or outside the city, 1-800-521-4686, or write Vortech Pharmaceuticals Ltd., P.O. Box 189, Dearborn, MI 48121.
In the future, Chicago's needy pet owners may be offered several thousand pounds of generic dry dog food and some canned, moist cat food that is presently stored at the League, said Glisch. He's not optimistic about the group's humane education efforts. Five hundred letters to the Cook County school system and about 200 to the Archdiocese, offering speakers, have brought no replies.

* The Los Angeles Department of Animal Regulation (200 N. Main St., Room 1650, Los Angeles, CA 90012) has had "no appreciable increase in the number of animals coming into the shelter that is remotely connected to the economy," according to General Manager Robert Rush. Nor has Rush seen an increase in cruelty cases. The area's unemployment rate is 10.8 percent, but Rush believes that the city's established programs for low-income and elderly pet owners and the department's city auxiliary and new reserve animal-control-officer program can withstand poor economic conditions. He does admit, however, that his department could experience trouble if the economy doesn't improve within the next year or so.

* Foreman Alan C. Davis of the City of Pittsburgh Animal Control Department in Pennsylvania (Eaasor Bldg., 50th and AVRR, Pittsburgh, PA 15201) said that his workers are picking up approximately the same number of animals each year (3,000 dogs, 800 cats). Now, however, more owned animals are being given up with the excuse that they are too costly to feed or care for. When we receive a call to come pick up a pet," said Davis, "we try to talk to the owner to find out what the real problem is and what some alternatives might be."

Davis' department has a commendation program that rewards pet owners who obey animal ordinances with a certificate and a doggy bag filled with information and pet-food coupons. The department also obtained the cooperation of the assistant superintendent of the Animal Rescue League of Western Pennsylvania to impound animals, and that group maintains two big envelopes in its lobby to collect coupons for the needy.

* Jennifer Carr, a volunteer at Volunteer Services for Animals (VSA) (401 Broadway, Providence, RI 02909) is not very optimistic about animal welfare in Rhode Island. The group provides 10 municipal shelters throughout the state with lost/found, adoption, spay/neuter, veterinary care and humane education assistance.

"The Providence pound is in one of the roughest areas in the state," she said. "This area is heavily industrialized, with a waterfront; shipping and jewelry are the biggest industries. Housing authorities have recently clamped down on residents of subsidized housing because of a growing problem with pit bull dogs. Many welfare people are using them for fights. Some have three or four animals each, and they are even breaking into the shelter to steal pit bulls or smaller animals that are used for training." City residents must currently have $25,000 liability insurance in order to own a pit bull.

Carr believes the economy has negatively affected pet ownership throughout the state. More animals are arriving at the shelters, cruelty cases have increased, and fewer owners are redeeming their lost pets from the shelters.

VSA is trying to combat the situation by assisting pet owners who cannot afford veterinary care. "We make a deal with pet owners: No pay the veterinarian, and the pet owners reimburse us with weekly or monthly payments," said Carr. Ten veterinarians work with VSA, giving the group a 25-percent break on their fees. VSA also receives federal grants to conduct educational programs for college and high school teachers to train them to teach humane education to their students.

* Rocky Mount, N. Car., a city of approximately 45,000 residents, is contending with a 12-percent unemployment rate. Tobacco is one of the area's big industries. Joyce Webb, president of the Humane Society of Edgecombe-Nash (P.O. Box 1783, Rocky Mount, NC 27801) believes more animals are being abandoned, but very few people are turning in their animals with the excuse that they cannot feed or care for them. Yet Webb and her husband, Ed., the group's animal investigator, are not so certain that these aren't the real reasons for turning them in.

"Southerners are easy-going people," said Ed Webb. "They have a lot of pride. Pet owners may not want to admit that they cannot feed their animals. It is common just to 'move the ball' and room for one more mouth to feed." The couple believes that the animal-cruelty cases they see are mainly due to neglect and lack of knowledge about responsible pet care rather than stress. Whatever the circumstances, humane societies and animal-control agencies must now actively confront community economic problems by contacting psychiatric or social workers and welfare and other human-resource agents, such as food stamp personnel, to learn where specific problem areas are. Ann Cain, R.N., Ph.D., is a certified clinical specialist in psychiatric/mental health nursing and professor of psychiatric nursing at The University of Maryland public's schools in its drive to educate school children about responsible pet ownership. The information the students bring home may influence their parents. The department also contracts with the Animal Rescue League of Western Pennsylvania to impound animals, and that group maintains two big envelopes in its lobby to collect coupons for the needy.
Money-savers!

Dog Food Deals

Substantial savings are in store for organizations that feed five or more adult dogs kenneled at one location, under the Gaines Direct Delivery Feeder Plan.

Plan members can purchase the Gravy Train, Cycle, Prime Variety, Puppy Choice, Top Choice and Gaines Complete brands of dog food -- some of which are designed for puppies, overweight and elderly dogs -- at reduced prices. Members are also entitled to toll-free phone ordering (no forms to fill out!), free curbside delivery with prepaid freight charges (saving time and gasoline cost), and delayed payment via credit card. Extra benefits include dog care booklets, a nutrition guide, a motion picture lending library, product samples, merchandise credits and more.

According to A.S. Willett, director of Gaines Professional Services, members can save up to $425 per year at current prices if feeding just two 50-lb. bags of dry dog food per week under the plan.

For additional information, including an application, write Gaines Professional Services, 250 North St., White Plains, NY 10625.

Wayne Gold Label dog food is economical for its high levels of required nutrients that permit dogs to eat less while receiving a balanced diet, according to Dog World (June 1982). The lower feeding rate of highly digestible nutrients also means less stool volume.

According to the report, the dog food exceeds the National Research Council's requirements for crude protein, crude fat and all vitamins and minerals. Recommended for adult dogs, puppies, and pregnant and nursing females, Gold Label is sold in convenient 20- and 40-lb. bags. For more information, write Wayne Pet Food Division, Continental Grain Co., 10 S. Riverside Plaza, Chicago, IL 60606.

School of Nursing, reported that pets have experienced diarrhea, stomach upsets and epileptic attacks when times were tense in the family. Her findings are based on results of her 1977 survey of a sample of pet-owning families in 11 states. "I believe that during these times, pets could be described as the barometers of anxiety in the family and that they often indicate family tensions and conflicts," said Cain.

Organizations should arrange with markets and grocery stores to make available damaged merchandise at reduced prices and set up collection bins for pet food. Develop pamphlets that emphasize the benefits of pet companionship -- particularly during times of stress. Suggest inexpensive methods of feeding and caring for pets (sawdust, ground corn cobs or newspaper for cat litter or dry pet food purchased in bulk amounts). Urge pet owners to contact humane agents to discuss solutions to pet-owning problems when the going gets tough.

"What we see today goes deeper than just not being able to pay for pet food or veterinary care," said HSUS Vice President for Companion Animals Phyllis Wright. "There is a circle of frustration that begins with unemployment, unpaid bills, divorce. This moves on to depression, suicide or abuse. All these factors are interrelated, so the various welfare agencies must work together to improve the quality of all life."

Two June Conferences

The Humane Society of the United States has opened its new Southeast Regional Office in Tallahassee, Fla.

The new office will serve North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Marc S. Paulhus, an HSUS field investigator since 1977, is the regional office director. He and his staff will evaluate and assist local shelters, conduct investigations of regional importance and focus on legislative efforts to improve animal protection.

Contact The HSUS Southeast Regional Office, 325 John Knox Road, Bldg. E, Suite 203, Tallahassee, FL 32303; (904)386-3435.

Outbreaks of severe gastroenteritis in catteries and veterinary clinics in several states have been reported to Cornell University's Feline Health Center, prompting the agency to alert veterinarians about its symptoms (Veterinary Medicine/Small Animal Clinician, November 1982).

The outbreaks reportedly fell into two categories. In one, cats exhibited anorexia, vomiting, diarrhea (mucus and blood in the feces), a leukocyte count of 20,000 to 50,000 and a temperature of 105 F to 107 F. Only stressed cats seemed to be infected in veterinary clinics, and Salmonella typhimurium was isolated from all fecal cultures.

The second category occurred in adult cats and ranged from two days to two weeks in length. Signs included high fever, mucoid or hemorrhagic enteritis and vomiting. Sometimes the disease followed an outbreak of mild upper respiratory infection. A few cats died. Bacterial studies are now being conducted.

Two 1983 conferences, coordinated by the Latham Foundation, a group dedicated to furthering knowledge about people/animal relationships, will update developments in the study of human/animal relationships from a variety of sources.

The Latham Foundation emphasizes the common interests of veterinarians, psychiatrists, nurses, cardiologists, neurologists, allergists, pediatricians and others concerned with the prevention of disease in and well-being of people and animals.

A California conference will be held June 17-18 at the University of California College of Medicine on the campus at Irvine. A Minnesota conference will be held June 21-22 at the University of Minnesota Earle Brown Center for Continuing Education on the St. Paul campus.

For further information about the conferences write Dr. William J. Winchester, Animal Resources Facility, College of Medicine, University of California, Irvine, CA 92719 or Dr. Stanley L. Diesch, CENSHARE, 1-117 Health Sciences Unit A, SIS Delaware St. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455.

The City of Pittsburgh, Penn., Department of Animal Control has moved its offices, according to Alan C. Davis, Foreman. Contact the department at Eazsor Square, 30th and AYVM, Pittsburgh, PA 15201; (412)255-2036.

The new office will serve North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Marc S. Paulhus, an HSUS field investigator since 1977, is the regional office director. He and his staff will evaluate and assist local shelters, conduct investigations of regional importance and focus on legislative efforts to improve animal protection.

Outbreaks of severe gastroenteritis in catteries and veterinary clinics in several states have been reported to Cornell University's Feline Health Center, prompting the agency to alert veterinarians about its symptoms (Veterinary Medicine/Small Animal Clinician, November 1982).

The outbreaks reportedly fell into two categories. In one, cats exhibited anorexia, vomiting, diarrhea (mucus and blood in the feces), a leukocyte count of 20,000 to 50,000 and a temperature of 105 F to 107 F. Only stressed cats seemed to be infected in veterinary clinics, and Salmonella typhimurium was isolated from all fecal cultures.

The second category occurred in adult cats and ranged from two days to two weeks in length. Signs included high fever, mucoid or hemorrhagic enteritis and vomiting. Sometimes the disease followed an outbreak of mild upper respiratory infection. A few cats died. Bacterial studies are now being conducted.

The City of Pittsburgh, Penn., Department of Animal Control has moved its offices, according to Alan C. Davis, Foreman. Contact the department at Eazsor Square, 30th and AYVM, Pittsburgh, PA 15201; (412)255-2036.

The new office will serve North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Marc S. Paulhus, an HSUS field investigator since 1977, is the regional office director. He and his staff will evaluate and assist local shelters, conduct investigations of regional importance and focus on legislative efforts to improve animal protection.

Outbreaks of severe gastroenteritis in catteries and veterinary clinics in several states have been reported to Cornell University's Feline Health Center, prompting the agency to alert veterinarians about its symptoms (Veterinary Medicine/Small Animal Clinician, November 1982).

The outbreaks reportedly fell into two categories. In one, cats exhibited anorexia, vomiting, diarrhea (mucus and blood in the feces), a leukocyte count of 20,000 to 50,000 and a temperature of 105 F to 107 F. Only stressed cats seemed to be infected in veterinary clinics, and Salmonella typhimurium was isolated from all fecal cultures.

The second category occurred in adult cats and ranged from two days to two weeks in length. Signs included high fever, mucoid or hemorrhagic enteritis and vomiting. Sometimes the disease followed an outbreak of mild upper respiratory infection. A few cats died. Bacterial studies are now being conducted.
The Atlanta Humane Society has a new animal hospital, thanks to the many donations it received. The hospital, which took a year to build and cost roughly one-half million dollars, was made possible through the efforts of the Atlanta Humane Society Auxiliary, the Junior Atlanta Humane Society Auxiliary, plus donations from other individuals and groups. Completed in 1982, the new building is meeting the society's expectations beautifully with few problem areas, according to Katie Breen, the society's director of education and public relations.

The society administers the hospital and employs two staff veterinarians, four veterinary technicians, a clinic receptionist, two incoming-animal receptionists and a veterinary extern. The extern and a live-in ambulance driver who is on call 24 hours per day are provided with year-round living quarters at the hospital. All types of animals are accepted at the hospital free of charge. The facility is open to the public, but top priority is given to animals adopted from the society, animals currently housed in the shelter, and animals whose owners qualify for assistance under federal poverty guidelines. Ninety percent of the animals at the hospital fall into these categories.

The hospital contains a complete surgical preparation area, surgery room, recuperation and quarantine areas, a radiology room, pharmacy, conference room and an out-patient clinic. An incoming and processing area allows for examination of incoming animals in order to separate sick animals, or those that must be euthanized, from healthy animals. Besides the initial veterinary exam at the hospital, the group also offers a pet "warranty" (health certificate), redeemable at any veterinary office within one week after a pet is adopted from the shelter. During the second week following the adoption, if the new pet owner discovers a pet-health problem, the warranty will also cover that veterinary visit.

The society enjoys a good relationship with most of the veterinary community, according to Breen, because it offers a reduced-cost spay/neuter referral program in which approximately 43 private Atlanta-area veterinarians participate. Any veterinarian that is not on the hospital’s list can perform the surgery at full cost, and the hospital will repay the pet owner the difference between its cost and the veterinarian’s.

This Easter Chick Grew Up...

...and it was one of the lucky ones because many children stop caring after an Easter chick is no longer cute and fuzzy. Some baby bunnies, chicks and ducklings are killed when children handle or hug them too hard. Other Easter pets are cruelly abandoned in local woods or ponds—unable to feed or protect themselves—where they die. Children may catch salmonellosis, a severe intestinal infection, from chicks, ducks or rabbits. It is illegal to buy these animals in some states and cities.

This Easter, surprise your child with a stuffed toy. Or visit your local animal shelter where lots of puppies and kittens are waiting to become a special member of your family.
A new book that presents the work and philosophy regarding animals of the late Dr. Albert Schweitzer could be a perfect fund-raiser and humane education tool. More than ever, it is important to spread the humane ethic, and the words of Dr. Schweitzer are unequaled for their beauty, clarity and truth.

*Animals, Nature and Albert Schweitzer*, with editing and commentary by animal advocate Ann Cottrell Free and photographs by the late Erica Anderson, presents the doctor's views on laboratory animals, meat eating, hunting, falconry, animal fights, euthanasia and other issues. The book describes the development of Dr. Schweitzer's "Reverence for Life" philosophy, and it offers guidance for those concerned about animal abuse and environmental degradation.

The 96-page book was designed by *Kind* Editor Charles Herrmann. The HSUS published the book with the Animal Welfare Institute, The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship and The Albert Schweitzer Center.

As a fund-raiser, this book could be a tasteful gift to those who donate $25 or more to your organization. If purchased in bulk quantities, single copies may be sold for $3.50 and up at the front desk. Since "Be Kind to Animals Week" is approaching, use the book as part of a poster or photo contest. Make certain schools and local libraries receive copies, too.

*Animals, Nature and Albert Schweitzer* is available from The HSUS for $3.50 per copy (postage and handling included). Bulk purchases of 100 or more books are available for $2.80 per copy, excluding postage. (Write and tell us how many you want, and we'll let you know what the postage will be.) Send check or money order to HSUS/Schweitzer Book, 2100 L St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.