RAVS Vets Serve Rural Areas

Last year, The HSUS announced the launch of a program designed to bring much needed veterinary services and animal care information to rural areas across the U.S. and abroad, while providing veterinary students with on-the-job training unlike anything experienced in a classroom.

Under the direction of veterinarian Eric Davis, The HSUS Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAVS) program is bringing free spay/neuter services, quality veterinary care, and pet care information to people and animals in remote communities who have no access to such services on a regular basis. Each year, hundreds of veterinary students from universities across the country leave the comforts of the classroom and put their skills to use where they are critically needed—performing about 5,000 spay/neuter surgeries per year. The clinics are typically set up in needy areas at community centers, firehouses, or school auditoriums.

The HSUS RAVS program serves communities in Appalachia and on 20 Native American reservations across Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Wyoming, Utah, South Dakota, North Dakota, Arizona, New Mexico, and Minnesota.

“Humane education is also an important aspect of our program. HSUS staffers Betsy McFarland (left) and Cynthia Cutler stand ready to teach pet care tips during a RAVS clinic.”

WCRO Helps Close Major Cockfighting Operation

More than 70 officers from a host of law enforcement agencies and animal control and humane organizations—including The HSUS—swooped down on a gamecock training and breeding facility in Napa County on February 22, the culmination of a six-month investigation into one of the largest cockfighting operations in Northern California history.

HSUS personnel, as well as a team of law enforcement and animal-control officers from agencies throughout California, assisted deputies and animal-control officers with the Napa County Sheriff's Department in raiding the five-acre property. Over the course of two days, they seized 1,546 gamecocks and bags full of cockfighting paraphernalia, including razor-sharp gaffs, fighting muffs, training aids, and medical supplies.

Investigators also found several guns within the maze of cages and coops on the property. What’s more, they discovered several dead, sick, or injured birds, which triggered members of the Exotic Newcastle Disease Task Force of the California Department of Food and Agriculture to test a sampling of birds for evidence of the deadly disease. Exotic Newcastle has already led to the destruction of more than 3 million birds in Southern California. Thankfully, the test results were negative for that disease.

The Napa County operation is thought to be the largest in California since authorities shut down a 20-acre facility in San Diego County in May of 2001, said WCRO Director Eric Sakach, who served as a special advisor to the Napa County Sheriff's Department throughout the investigation. "Undercover officers purchased gamecocks on several occasions in the months preceding the action during which they observed demonstrations of the birds' fighting abilities," Sakach said.

Authorities met with no resistance when they raided the Napa County site. Ultimately, 13 men were cited and released, and two individuals were arrested and booked into the Napa County jail. Charges ranged from possession of fighting cocks, possession of cockfighting implements, and continued on page 5.
Spay/Neuter Stamp Fete

On September 20, 2002, WCRO Director Eric Sakach and WCRO Program Coordinator Cynthia Cutler co-attended the spaysneuter stamp unveiling ceremony during America’s Family Pet Expo in Sacramento, California. The occasion was to celebrate the release of two stamps promoting the importance of spaying and neutering companion animals. The stamps feature a puppy named Kirby and a kitten named Samantha, both of whom were adopted from animal shelters in Connecticut.

An estimated 6 to 8 million animals are brought to shelters each year. Of those, 3 to 4 million are euthanized because there are not enough homes for them all or because of behavioral problems. The stray and feral animal population may be as high as tens of millions. Because stray animals are a public safety concern, communities spend millions of dollars on animal care and control. Sterilizing animals provides a wide variety of benefits to communities, as well as to individual pets and their owners. Spayed and neutered animals live longer, healthier lives and enjoy a reduced risk of some cancers, ovarian, uterine or prostate cancer than unsterilized animals; they are less likely to roam, spray urine, or fight; and may be less likely to bite.

The HSUS is one of the national and regional animal protection organizations that have signed on as community partners to promote the stamps. Go to www.americanpartnershipsforpets.org to learn more.

Sacramento Mayor Heather Fargo greets WCRO Regional Coordinator Bob Reder at the city shelter’s Stamp Out Pet Overpopulation open house.

HSUS Contributes to Rewards

Help Find Pelicans ‘Attacker’

Since late December of last year, 14 California brown pelicans have turned up dead or missing, mostly at Cabrillo Beach, south of Los Angeles. Nine of the birds were shot in the neck; the rest suffered from broken wings. Although some of the birds were found alive, their injuries were so extensive that they had to be humanely euthanized. Authorities believe that the attacks were deliberate. The HSUS immediately joined other groups in posting reward money, now totaling $15,000, in a dedicated effort to find and prosecute those responsible for this brutality. “It is hoped that this sizeable reward will encourage someone to come forward with information needed for authorities to make an arrest,” said WCRO staffer John Dommers.

Dommers attended a press conference on January 28 at the International Bird Rescue and Research Center in San Pedro, California, which focused on the crime against these harmless birds. California brown pelicans are an endangered species. Anyone harming an endangered animal can receive a year in prison and a fine of up to $100,000.

Bring Puppy Stubby to Justice

The HSUS has offered a $2,500 reward to find the culprit in a brutal puppy stabbing in Fresno, California. The puppy was found in early December along the side of a road in a plastic bag with his mouth and legs bound in duct tape. He was suffering from several knife wounds to his abdomen and throat. Amazingly he survived his attack, and has since been forced to relinquish his dogs because they own a specific breed.

Ark Trust and HSUS Combine

The Ark Trust, presenter of the annual Genesis Awards, has joined forces with The HSUS to become The HSUS Hollywood Office. The Ark Trust motto “Cruelty can’t stand the spotlight!” remains the guiding principle of the new HSUS Hollywood Office, which will continue to produce the annual Genesis Awards, now in its 17th year. The Genesis Awards recognizes outstanding members of the film, television, and print media for propelling animal protection issues into the mainstream. Founder and President of the Ark Trust Gretchen Wyler heads up the new HSUS Hollywood Office as vice president, and she is still at the helm as executive producer of the awards show. In addition, Hollywood Office staff will continue to monitor animal issues examined and portrayed in the news and entertainment media, pitch animal-related stories to print, television, and film. The HSUS Hollywood Office offers the following services to the media:

- Information on virtually every issue involving animals;
- Referrals to animal protection experts;
- Consultation on storylines for television and film;
- Access to an extensive video library;

continued from “R.A.V.,” page 1

Important component of the R.A.V. program,” said WCRO Program Coordinator Cynthia Cutler. “Beyond administering vaccinations and performing surgery, the R.A.V. team educates community members about pet care, animal behavior, and more.

In April, the R.A.V. team traveled to Nevada to the Walker River, Duck Water, and Gosbridge reservations for the first time, and they returned to Ft. McDermit and Duck Valley reservations. All animals brought to the clinics received wellness exams, and were spayed or neutered and vaccinated. WCRO commends tribal officials and Andrea Hors and Doris Meek, environmental health officers with the Nevada Indian Health Service, for all their work in helping to bring this important service to their communities. WCRO would also like to thank Pfizer for donating a portion of the vaccines, and Alameda County Animal Control for providing free pet food.

Have You Experienced Breed Discrimination Concerning Homeowners Insurance?

WCRO would like to hear from all California residents who have been denied home­owners’ or renter’s insurance, who have had their policies canceled, who have experienced increases in rates, or who have been forced to relinquish their dogs because they own a specific breed.

Our office has joined other animal protection organizations to propose state legislation in California that would prohibit insurance companies from making decisions on coverage based on the breed of dog someone owns. We urge any California resident who has experienced breed-specific discrimination to e-mail our office at wcro@hsus.org. We would like to gather as much information about this problem as soon as possible so that legislators may know the far-reaching effects of current insurance company policies.

continued from “Cockfighting,” page 1

Cockfighting is currently a misdemeanor in California, but a bill introduced in February by Sen. Neil Soto would significantly strengthen the state’s cockfighting laws. Those convicted of possessing, fighting, or betting on birds could face penalties of up to three years in prison and a fine of up to $20,000. The proposed law would also make it a repeat offender ineligible for probation or a conditional or suspended sentence.

‘Illegal cockfighting has been growing in popularity in Napa County,’ said Santiago. “We commend the Napa County Sheriff’s Department for taking the necessary steps to stop these incidents from occurring, and we’ve been assured they will ask for stiff prosecution for the offenders. We’re committed to helping law enforcement find the resources necessary to combat this cruel and illegal activity.”

To that end, this past October, more than 100 local, state, and federal law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and judges attended a course on illegal animal fighting led by Sakach and sponsored by The HSUS in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

The first meeting of the National Illegal Animal Fighting Task Force (NIAFTF) was held in the county’s Peace Office, with the Task Force consists of more than 130 representatives of participating local, state, and federal agencies with an interest in stopping animal fighting.

During the same month on the West Coast, Sakach instructed two Peace Officer Standards Training (POST) certified courses on illegal animal fighting that attracted more than 250 officers. The courses were sponsored in part by Animal Issues Movement, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. In February nearly 300 LAPD commanders, vice detectives, and prosecutors attended two more POST courses.

At the invitation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Office of Inspector General, Sakach met with supervisory-level U.S. Department of Agriculture officials in California and Nevada to discuss the growth in animal fighting and the need for federal involvement.
THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES  WCBO Regional News  Spring 2003

HSUS Sponsors California Disaster Dog Teams

W CBO welcomes two teams to The HSUS Disaster Dog program. Carol Herse and her yellow Labrador retriever, Teka, of Santa Cruz, California, are advanced-rated members of The Humane Society of the United States. Carol and Teka are currently the training director of her task force and assists other handlers. She is also a member of the Santa Cruz Sheriff’s Search and Rescue team, Monterey Bay Search Dogs, and the California state group that is formulating new standards for all forms of search dog testing.

The other new team is Bob Macaulay and his five-year-old golden retriever, Orion, of Vacaville, California. They form an advanced-rated team and were deployed with the California Task Forces to the World Trade Center in September 2001. Bob’s earlier deployments include the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 with his first search partner, Quasar; the Yosemite rock slide; the Atlanta Olympics; and the Sierra chemical explosion in Reno in 1998. A lead evaluator for both basic and advanced FEMA ratings, he is also affiliated with the California Task Forces to the World Trade Center in September 2001.

The Humane Society of the United States welcomes two teams to The HSUS Disaster Dog program from California, Washington, Florida, and Virginia.

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES
700 5TH STREET NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20001

I want to learn how I can help my animal friends and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Please send me information about Making a memorial donation in honor of the life of a pet, friend, or relative. Providing for my pets in my will and in case of emergency. Planning my estate and will to help animals and The HSUS.

Carol Herse and Teka work out of Santa Cruz, California. members of the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Response Task Forces and are among the most highly trained urban search-and-rescue dogs in the country. The HSUS Disaster Dog program provides direct financial support to these volunteer teams to help them promote humane training methods and excellence in search capability.

Promoting the protection of all animals

Carol Herse and Orion are Disaster Dog team members in Vacaville, California.

Left: Bob Macaulay and Orion are Disaster Dog team members in Vacaville, California.

Legislative Update

D uring the 2002 legislative session, the following bills passed and have been signed into law.

- Human: Treatment of Animal Blood Donors. Commercial animal blood banks are now required to submit a written protocol to the California Food and Agriculture Department (CDFG), which includes the humane treatment of the donors. The law also requires annual inspections of these facilities and allows the CDFG to work with humane societies to ensure compliance.

- Cuts_reporting_of_Abuse. Administrators of shelters or employees of humane societies and animal control agencies are now required to report suspected abuse cases of elderly and dependent adults. Another law encourages employees of county child or adult protective service agencies to report suspected animal abuse.

- Pet Consumers to Receive Vital Information. Pet stores must now give purchasers of dogs and cats information on the benefits of spay and neutering, veterinary care, and licensing. Another new law requires that written care information be provided to households registering as housing, equipment, cleaning, and feeding accompany each animal sold.

- Baiting of Ants Anti-Forces. A new law requires manufacturers to add a bittering agent to any anti-freeze that contains more than 10 percent ethylene glycol.

- Guidelines for the Use of Certain Drugs in Horses. Guidelines that mirror those of the National Horse Association must be established for the therapeutic use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs in horse shows.

- Licensing of Commercial Non-Une Traps. Predator and nuisance animal trappers must now be licensed and regulated. The law also requires competency tests, limitations on cruel killing methods, a ban on sale of the fur, annual reports, and inclusion in the Fish and Game regulations.

- Fevers Permitted Veterinary Care. Veterinarians are now permitted to treat certain animals that cannot be legally owned (such as ferrets) without fear of prosecution.

Proposed State Legislation for 2003

California

- The Wildlife Protection Act of 2003 is sponsored by The HSUS and was introduced by Assembly Member Paul Koretz. A.B. 342 would prohibit the cruel and unsporting activity of hunting bears and bobcats with dogs. The bill is also co-sponsored by The Fund For Animals, the Doris Day Animal League, and the Animal Protection Institute and came in the wake of a statewide sting operation that resulted in the arrest of a number of hunters for illegally killing a large number of black bears. Please show your support for this bill that will protect bears, bobcats, and dogs by writing a brief letter to Assembly Member Koretz.

- Cockettig Agent Increase. S.B. 732, introduced by Sen. Nell Soto, would allow prosecutors the discretion of charging offenders with either a misdemeanor or a felony. Prosecutors and law enforcement officials need this ability to curb the growth of this cruel blood sport, which is often associated with other criminal activities. Cockettig -ing promotes the shipping of birds worldwide. This activity now threatens California’s pelt industry and pet birds with the spread of the fatal Exotic Newcastle disease. Please join The HSUS in support of this legislation by writing a brief letter to Sen. Soto.

- Ban Dove Hunting. The HSUS has joined the Animal Protection Institute and the Fund for Animals in co-sponsoring A.B. 1190, introduced by Assembly Member Joe Nation, which would stop the unnecessary killing of over two million doves each year in California. According to a number of studies, hunters fail to retrieve more than one-third of the fallen birds, leaving the wounded to suffer a slow and painful death. Please send a brief letter of support to Assembly Member Nation.

- Pound Seizure. A.B. 518, introduced by Assembly Member Paul Koretz and supported by The HSUS, would prohibit the practice of selling or giving unclaimed animals from animal shelters for use in cruel and inhumane testing methods and procedures. Please send a letter of support to Assembly Member Koretz, 5301 West 5th Street, Sacramento, CA 95824-0001.

- Please visit the official California Legislative Information at www.leginfo.ca.gov

Hawaii

- Felony Animal Cruelty. Hawaii members are urged to support S.B. 1581, introduced by Sen. Suzanne Chun, which will toughen the state’s animal-cruelty laws by allowing felony charges to be filed against anyone who intentionally kills a domestic animal or who is a repeat animal cruelty offender. This bill is co-sponsored by The HSUS, Hawaiian Humane Society, police, and prosecutors.

- Please visit the official California Legislative Information at www.leginfo.ca.gov

- Safe Anti-Freeze. Sen. Ann O’Connell has introduced S.B. 304, which would require manufacturers of sweet tasting ethylene glycol and alcohol to add a bitter ingredient to their products, which will help safeguard children, pets, and wildlife from accidentally or intentionally ingesting this often fatal product. Please send letters of support to Sen. O’Connell, State Capitol, 101 N Carson St., Carson City, Nev. 89701.

Please send a letter of support to Assembly Member Kohl, State Capitol, 94249-0001. Letters to California Assembly Members may be mailed to California State Assembly, PO Box 942948, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 94284-0042. State Senate, 1190, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 94249-0001. Find official California Legislative Information at www.leginfo.ca.gov.

Letters to

Letters to
By Eric Sakach
Director of the West Coast Regional Office

Help Make Every Cat a Safe Cat

In case you weren’t aware, cats now surpass dogs as the most popular companion animal in the U.S. by nearly 2 million. The increasing popularity of cats is a mixed blessing, as cats now exceed dogs in shelter admissions and in the number of animals who are euthanized each year when homes cannot be found. Although society has long accepted the protection as are dogs. But millions of cats suffer and die needlessly because they are allowed to roam. The vast majority of these are victims of outmoded perceptions that cast them as independent, natural explorers who prefer to be left to their own devices. The reality is that cats who are allowed outdoors unsupervised typically live only two to five years, while cats who live indoors often survive past the age of 15.

Outdoor cats also have a negative impact on wildlife. Each year, free-roaming cats kill millions of small, native wild animals. Studies have shown that most are small mammals including meadow voles, white-footed mice, chipmunks, and ground squirrels. But many birds—some of whom are threatened or endangered species—also fall prey to cats. Unfortunately, many cat owners see this as a process of nature. Outdoor cats are also exposed to risks including automobile accidents, attacks by dogs, traps, exposure to poisons, disease, and cruel humans.

With the Safe Cats campaign, we hope to raise awareness that cats are safer indoors and will live longer, happier, healthier lives when kept inside. The campaign provides cat owners with the information and tools needed to make the transition from outdoor cat to indoor cat easier.

In March, the West Coast Regional Office and The HSUS’s Wildlife and Companion Animals sections teamed up with Sacramento Mayor Heather Fargo, international public relations firm Porter Novelli, the Rivercats baseball team, local humane societies, cat fanciers groups, and animal care and control agencies in the Greater Sacramento area to launch this campaign. The campaign kickoff featured a press conference held in downtown Sacramento coinciding with outdoor advertising (see below), bus posters, and radio public service announcements featuring Montel Williams. Participating animal shelters have been provided with Safe Cats literature to distribute to their customers and the public.

Cats are healthier and happier when safely confined. Please protect your cat from the lurking dangers of outdoor life. Keep your cat indoors or supervised when outside. For more information about the Safe Cats program, please contact us or visit our Web site at www.hsus.org/safecats.

The WCRO Regional News is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States, West Coast Regional Office, P.O. Box 417220, Sacramento, CA 95841-7220; 916-344-1710. Eric Sakach, director. The office is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is closed on federal holidays. © 2003 by The Humane Society of the United States. All rights reserved. A COPY OF THE LATEST REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION FILED BY THE HSUS MAY BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING THE HSUS, OFFICE OF THE TREASURER, 2100 L ST., NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20037, 202-452-1100. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT. Printed on recycled paper.