Weathering a Second “Storm”

Every dog needs a home. And every home needs a dog—or two or three. But not 477!
Authorities found that many dogs at Every Dog Needs a Home (EDNAH) “sanctuary,” in Gamaliel, Arkansas. More than 100 of the animals had been rescued from Hurricane Katrina and shipped to EDNAH upon checking references, which appeared to vouch for owners Tammy and William Hanson. The HSUS had declined to send Katrina survivors from temporary shelters it was running to EDNAH.

Conditions at EDNAH were typical of a hoarding case, yet there were no buildings or residence. The only water on the property came from an old well, and electricity was limited. Most of the dogs were contained in two large open enclosures. Many others were loose and unsocialized. None had wholesome food or adequate water and shelter. Males and females continued on page 3

These “Barkansas” dogs are happy to see WCRO’s Inga Gibson, who helped care for them and nearly 500 others after they were found in deplorable conditions.

Stories from the “Year of Disasters”

Paul Bruce’s Story: Mending Mississippi

When Hurricane Katrina smashed into the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, the small coastal town of Waveland, Mississippi, was hit by a 40-foot storm surge that destroyed 90 percent of the homes, took an untold number of human lives, and drowned most of the animals at the Hancock County animal shelter.

I spent two weeks in Waveland as part of HSUS’s massive response to the unprecedented disaster. While there, I directed a temporary shelter that rescued, fed, and sheltered more than 500 animals, provided veterinary care to hundreds more, and distributed literally tons of animal food and supplies. Animals brought to the shelter were held for two or three days, then transferred to Hattiesburg to await reunion with their owners or placement in foster care.

Conditions were primitive, and daytime temperatures reached 100 degrees with humidity at 90 percent or greater. Animal control workers from across the country worked 16-hour days setting humane traps, picking up strays, and answering calls for assistance. Shelter and veterinary personnel provided care 24 hours a day for up to 60 animals at a time. Huge supplies of dog and cat food, horse pellets, hay, veterinary and

Continued on page 2

Oregon, Washington: Welcome!

The HSUS’s Pacific Northwest Regional Office (PNRO) has recently closed in an effort to improve the efficiency of all the regional offices, and Oregon and Washington are now being served by WCRO. Former PNRO Program Coordinator Inga Gibson has joined the WCRO staff as a state coordinator working out of the Seattle area.

Remember that WCRO is your office if you live in one of the following states: California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, or Washington.
Storm Stats

Because of the personal sacrifices of staff and volunteers, HSUS was able to step into the crisis, leading a massive search and rescue effort that saved more than 10,000 pets and owners. And it poured in to care for the animals, providing for the needs of the work crews and veterinary teams.

Nights were spent caring for animals, sometimes until well after midnight, then crawling off to a tent to get a few hours of miserable, sticky sleep. The constant, oppressive heat made the job potentially oppressive heat made the job potentially unbearable. The organizers of the relief effort were determined that the animals would have water, food, and shelter. Camp veterinarians determined that the eye was beyond repair and removed it.

Reunions were the highlight of any day. At 6:30 one morning, a gentleman came in with his eight-year-old son, looking for his dog. Tears flowed freely as they determined (and the dog confirmed) that we had indeed found their dog, Max. Later, a man with a booming voice came in and said, “I’m hoping you found my two dogs.” Immediately, two dogs at opposite corners of the kennel began barking and jumping up and down in their pens. “ Might it be these two?” joked a worker as the jubilant owner and staff celebrated another family reunited.

What started as a primitive camp with a sheet metal roof, a generator, a hose, and a dozen die-hard volunteers had grown into a bustling shelter with air-conditioned cat cages, large exercise runs, a mobile surgery unit, a communications center, showers, a mess tent, and more than 25 volunteers and staff. The camp was abandoned at the imminent approach of Hurricane Rita, after making some memorable reunions like those mentioned here possible.

Curt Ramsden’s Story: One Among Thousands

Working at the temporary animal shelter Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales, Louisiana, following Hurricane Katrina was the most memorable experience of my 32-year career. This cooperation of national and local animal protection groups, agencies, and individuals was an intense turning point for the future of disaster response and animal welfare.

The Lamar-Dixon Expo Center is a huge multi-purpose equestrian and events complex just 25 miles west of New Orleans. I was deployed there for two, eight-hour shifts in mid-September 2005. The emergency animal shelter had been established just a week prior to my arrival.

Volunteers poured in to care for the hundreds of animals arriving daily from all parts of southeast Louisiana, mostly from New Orleans. But the night of September 10, 2005, we saw perhaps the greatest one-day influx of displaced animals in disaster history. The train of more than 70 animal transport vehicles stretched from the intake tent all the way out to the entrance of the facility. That night alone, 177 dogs received...

Oregon Cougars

Oregon’s Cougar Management Plan doesn’t “manage” cougars; it allows them to be killed. That’s why The HSUS, the Sierra Club, and concerned animal activists from across Oregon have spoken out against the plan, which allows the hunting of cougars deemed as causing conflict. In addition to using killing as a primary method of cougar control, the plan—out of date, not grounded on scientific and environmental grounds—thwarts the efforts of organizations like those mentioned here possible.

Finding, feeding, and rescuing lost and free-roaming animals was a huge job for The HSUS after Hurricane Katrina. Some 10,000 animals like this cat were helped.

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shots, microchips, and veterinary examinations. The following morning, there were more than 2,300 animals at the facility, making the place the largest animal shelter in the world.

This was overwhelming, but one incident makes this night all the more memorable. A woman came to Laman Dixon sobbing because she was not allowed back to her apartment to retrieve her cat. It had been 10 days since Katrina struck. She gave me the address and told me that her long-haired, white cat was in the upstairs apartment, probably hiding under the bed. For several more days I kept in contact with the Louisiana SPCA, officers who repeatedly rescued animals amid horrific conditions. Every day the owner came to Laman Dixon to look for her cat and contact me for any news. Each time she would collapse in tears. She was now homeless, and the only thing that kept her going was the hope of finding her baby. Communication problems and logistical frustrations prevented anyone from getting into the apartment complex. But early one morning I was able to personally contact the SPCA and give them the woman's address and description of the cat. We both knew it was unlikely the cat was still alive at this point.

I didn't hear anything until the next afternoon, when the woman found me. She collapsed into my arms, sobbing and saying that she found her baby and that I had saved her life. There was not a dry eye in the house—especially mine.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, it became clear that animal issues are a major consideration during disaster evacuations. As a result, The HSUS has devised a plan to expand its disaster services program both domestically and internationally. In addition to adding dedicated staff members, including a specialized team of animal handlers, and other medical problems. Some were found dead. The purposefully-concealed, remote location had kept the neglectful situation hidden for years.

For several more days I kept in contact with the cat owner, who was sobbing and saying that she found her baby and that I had saved her life. There was not a dry eye in the house—especially mine. The Baxter County Sheriff's Office granted The HSUS's temporary custody of the animals in order to clean up the site, care for the animals remaining there, and allow time to prepare for the upcoming hurricanes. Two of the eight dogs fostered at SpokAnimal Care have been reunited with their owners in the Gulf of Mexico.

Regional Wrap-up

MudBay Saves the Day

Midday, the largest northwest shelter of healthy pet food, made a donation to The HSUS for northwest shelters that assisted with hurricane relief efforts. The generous donations were raised through MudBay's Gulf Coast Disaster Relief Project. Funds were collected through in-store donations from compassionate customers and then matched by MudBay. The HSUS is distributing these funds to northwest shelters that helped hundreds of animals following the Gulf Coast hurricanes.

Alleged Cockfight Jadied for Domestic Violence

According to news reports obtained by WCR0, accused cockfight promoter Richard Bohn of Fiddletown, California, was jailed in late November after being accused of domestic violence. Bohn is currently facing charges stemming from a May 15, 2005, raid on a cockfighting derby held at his California farm; they are currently in a process involving charges stemming from a May 15, 2005, raid on a cockfighting derby held at his California farm (see fall 2005 WCR0 National News). According to the “Alamod Ledger Dispatch,” Amador County sheriff's deputies arrested Richard Bohn at about 9:30 a.m., Sunday, November 27, 2005, at his Mount Whitney Drive home after a dispute with his estranged wife, Gina May Bohn. Richard Bohn was also charged with corporal injury to a spouse, threatening a witness, and for receiving an allegedly stolen shotgun.

Amador County deputies arrested about 30 people during the May 15 cockfighting derby while an equal number escaped into the surrounding hills. Gina Bohn, who has since filed for divorce, was also arrested, and she pleaded no contest November 3 to one count of bringing a minor to a cockfight. About a dozen men have been convicted of attending the cockfight thus far. A trial date for Richard Bohn has not yet been set.

Nothing Goody About This Expo

This year The Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, California, served as the site for the Animal Care Expo, the premier international educational conference and trade show for animal sheltering professionals. Hosted by The HSUS and held March 8–11, 2006, the goal of the annual event is to help people working in the fields of animal sheltering, care, and rescue do their jobs better and more efficiently.

Featuring dozens of specialized workshops and day-long courses, the trade show allows animal shelter professionals to learn about the latest and best products and services in the field. Animal Care Expo also attracts the largest gathering of animal care and control professionals and volunteers in the world. In recent years, conference attendance has reached 1,500, attracting professionals from all 50 states and nearly 30 countries.
impossible thanks to the nightly cacophony of continuously running generators and barking dogs, and the early morning visits by armed military units patrolling for looters. Still, we were glad to be there. A week later, I transferred management of the shelter to Paul Bruce’s capable hands as I received word that I was to be redeployed to Louisiana.

The Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales, Louisiana, served as the primary sheltering facility for animals rescued from New Orleans. By the time I arrived, it was a bustling operation with staffers from several national groups, teams of veterinarians, and hundreds of volunteers. The massive steel barns at the center were home to about 1,000 animals displaced by Katrina at any given time. Melissa Rubin, HSUS vice president for field services, was the outgoing incident commander (IC) at Lamar-Dixon. She quickly got me up to speed. But within several days of having assumed IC duties at Lamar-Dixon, I received reports that Hurricane Rita was poised to hit Texas and Louisiana with nearly the same ferocity as Katrina. While we were away from the storm’s eye, we were still going to feel Rita’s wrath, and we had to prepare.

While we were confident that the steel, open-air barns on the Lamar-Dixon grounds could withstand high winds, we positioned tractor trailers around the sides of the structures to form a protective barrier to keep the animals safe from flying debris and to reduce the chance that vehicles could be overturned. All supplies including food, crates, equipment, and pet carriers were loaded into the trailers to keep them undamaged.

Once preparations for the hurricane were completed, the number of staff and volunteers on-site was scaled down to 50 to care for the animals. Those of us who remained also had to deal with two tornado warnings in the Gonzales area. Workers were forced to find shelter in bathrooms in the barns and wait out the threat of twisters. Thankfully, no one was injured.

The weather not only slowed down our work of rescuing and sheltering animals, but Rita’s rains also opened up breaches in previously damaged levees in New Orleans, pouring water into the Ninth Ward, which had already sustained heavy flooding. The rising water levels made it even more difficult for animal rescuers. Once Rita had passed, we were able to resume animal exports to outside shelters, allowing additional animals to be brought into Lamar-Dixon.

Aside from the privilege of working with the many dedicated volunteers and professionals I met in Mississippi and Louisiana, the most encouraging thing about my experience happened when I learned that emergency officials in Texas had urged evacuees from Hurricane Rita to take their pets with them, and that many animal shelters in south Texas evacuated ahead of time.