

Is Gary Dog Pound Cruel?



NO ROOM TO STAND—HSUS Investigator Phil Steward photographed this inhumane dog cage at the Gary, Ind., pound during HSUS's most recent inspection of the facility.

HSUS has asked Lake County, Ind., prosecutor John L. Paylo to formally charge Gary, Ind., Mayor Richard Hatcher and the entire Gary City Council with cruelty to animals. HSUS made the request on March 3, after inspecting the Gary Dog Pound for the fifth time in 3 years and finding animals suffering in inhumane conditions, despite repeated HSUS recommendations for its improvement.

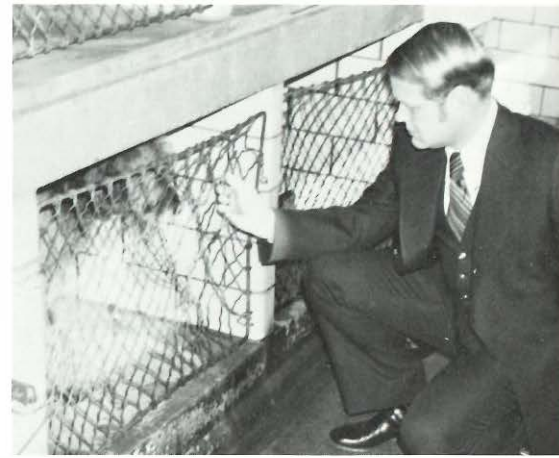
After inspecting the pound, HSUS Great Lakes Regional Director John Inman and HSUS Investigator Philip Steward concluded that no changes had been made to improve treatment or housing conditions for the animals. Inman said when he first entered the kennel area of the pound that he was "almost knocked over by the extremely foul odor of excrement. We found animals wallowing in their own urine, vomit, and feces, most of which had been left to cake up in the cages for God knows how long," he said. When Steward protested the filth a German shepherd was lying in, the kennel worker grabbed the dog by the back of the neck and threw him, yelping and struggling, into a clean cage. Steward

said that the speech and movements of the kennel worker indicated that he may have been under the influence of alcohol.

In one cage the investigators found a puppy that had been dead for some time. Many animals appeared to be very sick, including one dog with a bloody discharge coming from his eyes and nose. Other animals were housed in cages so small that they could not stand up.

More than half the cage doors in the pound were broken, with sharp strands of wire protruding inward toward the animals. There was no food or water for many of the animals, and one dog was observed trying to quench its thirst from a bowl in which ice had formed.

After their inspection, Inman and Steward met with John Lawshe, an official of the Gary Health Dept. which is responsible for operation of the pound. When asked why no improvements had been made at the pound, Lawshe said, "I just can't get the money from the mayor and city council." Through Lawshe's statements, Inman and Steward confirmed that the mayor and the city council have been aware of conditions



Photos by Phil Steward

at the pound since May 1973, when they were informed of HSUS's first investigative report on its inhumane conditions. Since then city officials have received other investigative reports on the pound, as well as publications and guidelines for improvement, but have failed to act upon them.

In a letter to Prosecutor Paylo, accompanied by his investigative report, Steward said HSUS would no longer tolerate the cruel treatment of animals at the pound. He charged that the pound is in violation of Indiana cruelty laws and asked that it be closed immediately until improvements can be made. He also asked that the mayor, Gary Health Dept. Director James Hedrick, and city council members be charged with cruelty to animals for knowingly operating the pound in an inhumane and unlawful manner in total disregard for the welfare and safety of the animals.

At press time, Paylo had not yet acted upon HSUS's requests. HSUS fears that political considerations may result in further prolonged inaction and is considering filing a civil suit to stop the continuing cruelty.