A Call to Personal Action
By John A. Hoyt

One of the frequently asked questions communicated to me by HSUS members is "What can I do personally to assist in preventing cruelty to animals?" It is not always easy to give a specific answer to that question. Often many of the conditions and situations affecting cruelty to animals are so remote to individual humanitarians or so complexly interwoven between governmental or industrial policies that direct personal action is virtually impossible. It is for these reasons that it is vitally important that strong organizations such as HSUS exist.

On other occasions, however, the action of the individual, when added to that of millions of others, will be much more effective than the actions and protests of any organization. I am quite convinced that the tuna-porpoise issue is just such a case.

On page 12 of this issue of The Humane Society News you will read about the incredible cruelty and suffering being inflicted upon porpoises by the tuna industry. Literally thousands upon thousands of these sensitive creatures are being brutalized and destroyed each year to accommodate an industry that is presumably catering to the needs and desires of the American public.

There comes a point when the price to be paid in animal exploitation and suffering can no longer be tolerated in the interest of man. We believe that threshold has now been crossed by the American tuna industry. Consequently, HSUS calls upon you as a concerned humanitarian to refuse to buy any tuna products, either for personal consumption or as food for pets. No longer can we tolerate the excuses and indecisiveness of this industry and the federal government that have resulted in failure to correct and eliminate those procedures that cause suffering and destruction.

While it is clear that certain tuna products, specifically "white" or albacore tuna, are not obtained by the purse seining method that results in the suffering and destruction of porpoises, it is not always certain that this distinction can be made by the purchaser. Consequently, a refusal to buy all tuna products will ensure the effectiveness of your protest.

I further urge you to express your protest by writing to the presidents of the major tuna canners listed on page 13. We know for certain that consumers' letters of protest have been crossed by the American tuna industry. Consequently, HSUS made the request on March 3, after inspecting the Gray 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 prodded the tail of a German shepherd who 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., who had been made to improve the 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 prodded the tail of a German shepherd who 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.

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