EUROPEAN FOCUS

HSUS OPENS A EUROPEAN OFFICE

The HSUS has opened a new European office in Bonn, West Germany. Headed by Betty Dribben, former HSUS director of federal legislative affairs, this office will concentrate on the European Parliament and the European Commission, which oversees legislation for its twelve member European countries. Ms. Dribben will initially concentrate on tuna/dolphin issues, cosmetic testing on animals, and fur issues. The activities of this new office will be reported in a new department in the HSUS News, called "European Focus." With environmental and animal-protection issues becoming increasingly more global, this new office and magazine department offer us an opportunity to help shape laws on both sides of the ocean.

PRINCE HONORS DOLPHINS, WHALES

The dolphin could be described as a symbol of our deteriorating relationship with the Earth," explained Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, founder and president of the Bellerive Foundation. The Prince's concern for all cetaceans led him to convene a major international symposium on whales and dolphins in captivity. "We are abusing our ancient friendship with the dolphin," he said.

The Bellerive Symposium, held July 9 and 10 in Geneva, Switzerland, drew representatives from more than thirty conservation and animal-protection organizations, including The HSUS's Senior Vice President Patricia Forkan. The delegates discussed the detrimental effects of capture and captivity on cetaceans and, among other things, called for an end to all further captures of all cetaceans around the world.

INVESTIGATIONS

Chincoteague 1990

Improvements made in pony penning

For twenty long years, The HSUS has been monitoring the annual Chincoteague pony penning off the coast of Virginia (see the Fall 1989 HSUS News). During the last week in July, wild stallions, mares, and foals that reside on Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge are rounded up, penned inside holding corrals, then forced to swim the channel and penned at the fire company's carnival site. Not only did the HSUS investigators observe a number of abusive practices at pony penning, the auctioning of foals too young to be weaned from their dams, encouraging of impulse buying by spectators who have no understanding of a wild foal's needs, and permitting the riding of wild nursing mares in a carnival attraction are annual problems.

In 1988 and 1989, however, several mares died during pony penning. After mares collapsed in 1988 with no veterinarian present, The HSUS was successful in getting a stipulation added to the fire company's grazing permit requiring a veterinarian to be in attendance during future pony penning. Despite that stipulation, when ponies collapsed during the 1989 round up, no veterinarian could be located. Thanks to hundreds of letters written by HSUS members, this year the USFWS demanded that the fire company upgrade its care of the herd during pony penning. As a result, The HSUS saw real improvements at the 1990 pony penning.

For starters, the fire company enlarged the ponies' holding corral—the pen in which the ponies are held for two days before the swim," said investigator Gail Ginsburg. "The ponies aren't cramped inside that corral anymore, and they've got a shaded area where they can escape from the baking sun. This fire company also made water more accessible to the ponies and stationed a horse trailer at the corral side—with a big red cross sign bearing the words "pony ambulance"—in the event an equine emergency arose.

Most importantly, however, the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company finally retained the services of a veterinarian during the entire six-day event. Not only did the veterinarian examine the ponies to determine which newborn foals should not be forced to swim the channel, but he also put an age minimum on foals to be auctioned. (While buyers could purchase foals less than three months old, those animals had to remain on the refuge with their dams until they reached that age.)

"The USFWS has informed us that the veterinarian is keeping an eye on the herd year round, even warning the ponies on a regular basis," said Ms. Einszit. "This is particularly important because these ponies live in a very harsh environment." Last year the dead mares were found to be suffering from severe infestations of internal parasites; The HSUS and the veterinarian who performed the autopsies demanded that the fire company institute a better worming regimen.

"Of course, improvements at Chincoteague didn't happen because, suddenly, after twenty years of pony penning, the fire company realized it needed to be more responsible for the welfare of its herd," said Gail Einszit. "They happened because, with pressure from HSUS members, the USFWS threatened to cancel the entire pony penning event if the fire company didn't begin to clean up its act."

Despite some very positive changes, The HSUS will continue to monitor what remains a highly stressful event for all animals concerned.