For the people who care about community animal control

Be Prepared To Handle Rabies

By Rhonda Lucas Donald, in consultation with Dr. Gary J. Patronek, VMD, Director of the Chester County, PA, SPCA, and Dr. Suzanne Jenkins, VMD, MPH, Assistant State Epidemiologist for VA

The fear of rabies can cause panic, confusion, and over-reaction in a community threatened by this almost always fatal disease. The majority of people are not knowledgeable about the virus and its transmission and can create an atmosphere of hysteria when rabid animals are found. Veterinarians, physicians, and public health officials can fan the flames by not working cooperatively to disseminate proper information to the public and the media. As the animal agency for your community, you will be in the thick of any rabies problem and will be called upon to answer...
Cooperation Among Involved Groups

Fear and unnecessarily drastic tactics can be prevented if all the agencies involved meet and plan ahead for a rabies outbreak. Human groups and animal control agencies can be the catalyst for such a meeting that would include physicians, veterinarians, public health officials, and animal sheltering and control professionals. These people should meet and review the clinical information and the latest rabies statistics. The SPCA's strict policies and careful animal handling and adoption procedures can be avoided. If all participating professionals and agencies present a calm, assured image and provide the public with consistent information and education, the hysteria and panic often associated with a rabies epizootic can be avoided.

A Plan To Protect the Public and the Pets

"People are going to acquire pets one way or another," says Dr. Patronek, "and a shelter, with proper policies in place, can play an important role in monitoring the transfer of animals." The SPCA's strict policies and careful animal handling convinced public health officials that there was no need to halt animal adoptions even during a period when several rabid domestic animals were being found. These policies are outlined here as a model for other shelters:

- Do not mix animals in kennels or cages unless they are brought in together. This includes not putting animals together in outdoor pens for exercise.
- Keep animals in the same pens for the duration of their stay at the shelter. Exceptions would be medical or security emergency situations that necessitate moving an animal to a restricted area.
- Identify each animal clearly by cage description card and by individual collar. Identify each pen individually with a number that is recorded daily along with the ID number of the animal inside.
- Check every incoming animal for wounds or injuries. NO animal with a wound or injury of unknown origin should ever be put up for adoption. All adopters should be required to have their pet examined by a veterinarian within seven days of adoption to evaluate the health of the animal. To facilitate this, over 40 veterinary hospitals in Chester County offer the examination at no cost. The results of the examination should be noted on a card that is returned to the shelter.

Don't put up for adoption feral animals.

Rabies Statistics for 1988

It is important to know that for 1988, the latest year for which the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has complete statistics, there were no known cases of human rabies. Wild animals accounted for 88 percent (4,174 cases) of all known rabid animals in 1988, while only 12 percent (550) were domestic animals. Of this 12 percent, cats were the most commonly reported species (192), followed by cows (171) and dogs (129). These statistics are relevant due to the fact that they include the large number of cases from the mid-Atlantic epizootic, which began in 1982.

CDC reports in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report for 1988 that "the most effective methods of reducing the number of people exposed to rabies are to educate the public to avoid unfamiliar, especially wild, animals and to vaccinate susceptible pets against rabies. Rabies vaccination programs should target cats as well as dogs. Two cases of imported canine rabies [from Mexico] emphasized the need to educate travelers of the risk of canine rabies in developing countries."

The CDC provides weekly rabies statistics in its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), available for $38 a year (52 issues) if delivered by third class mail or $52 first class. You may order MMWR from Massachusetts Medical Society, CSPO Box 9120, Waltham, MA 02254-9120.

Outbreaks of rabies are mainly in wildlife, even if the vast majority of cases are in domestic animals in the country at one point during the mid-Atlantic outbreak. People turn in stray and unwanted animals because they believe or prefer to believe that the animal has a chance of getting a new home. Should that chance of getting a new home. Should that
trapped wild cats, or animals who indicate a tendency to bite or scratch.

Do not put up for adoption domesticated wild animals and ferrets (for which there is not an approved rabies vaccine).

Do not allow persons visiting the shelter to handle any animal without the assistance of a shelter attendant. This helps reduce the likelihood of bites or scratches that could occur if people were allowed to grab animals they are not familiar with and that might be frightened. All persons should be required to show valid identification before they are allowed to handle animals. This information should be recorded along with the ID numbers of any animals they handle.

Require that all persons surrendering an animal to the shelter fill out a questionnaire listing information about the animal's health, vaccination status, previous injuries or wounds, or exposure to wild animals.

Avoid adopting animals out to other areas where follow-up would be difficult.

Isolate any animal that becomes ill, acts in a strange manner, or exhibits neurological signs. Any animal that bites or scratches a shelter attendant or citizen should either be confined and observed for ten days or euthanized and tested for rabies.

Develop a public education program to teach people about rabies and the importance of vaccinating all domestic animals, including horses and livestock.

Protect Shelter Staff

The HSUS as well as the Centers for Disease Control recommends that animal control officers and shelter workers receive pre-exposure rabies vaccines. These vaccines are easily administered, relatively inexpensive, and safe. They are designed to protect people from unknown exposure to rabies. In addition, should a vaccinated person be bitten by a rabid animal, the treatment regimen of five injections is reduced to only two.

The human diploid cell vaccine (HDCV) is administered intradermally in three doses given over a period of a few weeks. Anyone who handles animals should be given the opportunity to receive the vaccine. It should be understood that the vaccine does not guarantee that a person will not develop the disease if exposed. If a worker is bitten by a rabid animal, he or she will need booster injections.

Obtain and distribute current information about the movement of rabies in the area to animal control officers and kennel staff.

Greater caution and discretion should be used when handling and making placement decisions about animals from areas where wildlife rabies is prevalent.

Require that all adopted animals be spayed or neutered and collect the fee for the surgery in advance. When the pet owner takes the animal in for the surgery, it most likely be required that the animal be current on its vaccinations before it can be admitted, thus increasing rabies immunizations.

Give all adopters information about rabies and provide a return postcard that verifies rabies inoculation.

Develop a public education program to teach people about rabies and the importance of vaccinating all domestic animals, including horses and livestock.

Pit Bull Owner Found Guilty of Manslaughter

By Dr. Randall Lockwood, HSUS Director of Higher Education

On June 13, 1987, Michael Patrick Berry’s 50-pound pit bull named “Willy” attacked two and a half-year-old James Soto of Morgan Hill, California. Willy was chained to a buried car axle in Berry’s unfenced yard, guarding 243 marijuana plants. The boy, who lived next door, had wandered out of his yard onto Berry’s property while his parents were out shopping. He sustained over 100 bites, primarily to the head and face, and bled to death at the scene.

December 22, 1989, marked the culmination of Berry’s trial. The case had attracted worldwide attention since Berry had been charged with second-degree murder, making him the first person to face murder charges for the actions of a pet. Berry was convicted of involuntary manslaughter. He was also found guilty of cultivation of marijuana and allowing a “mischievous animal” to cause a death, both felonies. In addition, he was convicted on misdemeanor charges of keeping and training a dog for the purposes of dogfighting. He faced a sentence of nearly five years in prison on these charges.

Investigation and testimony by humane officials were the keys in this case. Investigating officers found evidence of involvement in dogfighting at Berry’s home, including a treadmill and other training apparatus, books and magazines devoted to blood sports, personal photographs of dog fights, and correspondence with known and suspected fighters. Based on this evidence, Santa Clara County Deputy District Attorney Dale Sanderson upgraded the charges against Berry from manslaughter to second-degree murder. Since he believed the evidence showed that Willy had been bred, raised, and trained as a fighting dog, he felt that Berry knew the hazards presented by the dog but “consciously and totally disregarded the dangerous situation.”

In most cases, a murder charge requires evidence of malice towards the victim. Sanderson believed that Berry’s involvement in dogfighting could be construed as “implied malice” and disregard for the safety of others, just as if someone had set a trap with a gun to go off at any intruder. The state’s right to try Berry for murder was upheld by the California State Supreme Court.

In May of 1989, Berry lost a civil suit
brought by the boy's family. He was ordered to pay $205,000. Berry's trial on criminal charges began December 4th. A key witness was former HSUS investigator Paul Miller, who at the time of the attack was an investigator with the Humane Society of Santa Clara Valley. Miller was on the scene when police conducted their search of Berry's property, and identified much of the evidence that was used to confirm Berry's involvement in dogfighting. During nearly two days of testimony, Miller gave details of the dogfighting underworld and explained the significance of the materials found at Berry's home.

My testimony provided a detailed review of Willy's pedigree. I noted that the animal was clearly from very recent fighting stock and was, in fact, descended from several of the most infamous animals in dogfighting history. This was supported by letters to Michael Berry from the dog's breeder in York and through a partnership of Executive Service Corps.

Executive Service Corps Provides Non-profits With Affordable Management Consulting
By Geoffrey L. Handy

At one time or another, every humane society sets out to improve some aspect of its overall operations. It may want to design a new fund-raising and membership campaign, develop a more active board of directors, improve its budgeting system, or launch a capital campaign to build that much-needed new shelter. Ideally, the humane group would hire a professional management consultant to come in and work with the group to tackle the problem. In the real world, however, few organizations can afford to spend several thousand dollars on a consultant, even if that expertise might save them time and money in the long run. For most organizations, such an investment would comprise a considerable portion of the budget, and some might not be able to afford it at all.

Enter the National Executive Service Corps (NESC). A non-profit organization, NESC helps other non-profits solve their problems by providing them with retired executives who contribute their time and expertise as consultants. Charging fees far below market rates, NESC serves educational, cultural, health care, religious, and social service (which includes animal protection) organizations from its national headquarters in New York and through a partnership of Executive Service Corps in 35 cities throughout the country.

The Corps is staffed by former executives from all segments of business and the professions. These retirees can offer effective solutions in a broad number of problem areas, which include fund-raising strategies, financial controls, board development, and public relations.

The way NESC works is simple. Say a local humane society has decided to expand its membership base, and needs assistance in developing a strategy that will work in its particular community. Knowing it cannot afford to pay the hefty price tag of a regular consulting firm, the organization contacts NESC.

Through preliminary telephone conversations, NESC learns the organization's exact needs and what the scope of the job would be. NESC then determines if their headquarters or one of their local affiliates has a retired executive consultant available with expertise relevant to the humane society's problem. Further discussions culminate in a consultant or a team of consultants being assigned to the task.

Thus, all parties come out winners. The local humane society now has a seasoned professional consultant at an affordable price, and the former executive has a challenging, socially responsible project to enliven his retirement.

Unfortunately, NESC does not accept all potential clients. For instance, they may turn down a non-profit because an appropriate executive is not available in the organization's geographic region. In some cases, even NESC's low fees may be too much for a small non-profit to afford. Whatever the reason, if NESC or their network of local Corps cannot help the organization, they may be able to refer it to someone else locally who can.

Humane groups should also be aware that NESC as yet has no prior experience with animal protection organizations. However, the NESC is there to assist with the business and organizational aspects of managing a non-profit. The Corp's retired executives can't suggest how to best clean the kennels, but they can help a humane agency raise money for a new facility, help streamline its financial system, or suggest how to install a computer system to make things run more smoothly.

Finally, why does NESC charge its clients anything? Aside from the fact that NESC is a non-profit that survives on contributions itself, there is another reason. As former NESC Chairman Frank Pace, Jr., says, “All people tend to value advice more when they have a stake in the consulting process.”

Humane organizations can write NESC at 257 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010, or call (212) 529-6660.
Cruelty Cases Illustrate Need for Better Laws Regarding the Disposition of Animals

By Geoffrey L. Handy

Two closely related cruelty and neglect cases in Paterson, New Jersey, offer a classic example of the need for statutes that would prevent animals from being returned to defendants convicted on cruelty charges. Handled flawlessly by animal control officers, the cases came two years apart and involved the mistreatment of a sheepdog and one of her offspring.

According to John DeCando, Paterson's chief animal control officer (Paterson Dept. of Animal Control, 337 E. 36th St., Paterson, NJ 07504), the first case resulted in one of the most severe sentences ever handed down in New Jersey on a cruelty complaint—a $1,000 fine and ten days in jail.

DeCando's office received a complaint on July 12, 1987, from a woman concerned about the way her neighbors were treating their dog. When his officers went to investigate, they found an Old English sheepdog, Kelly, tied to a two-foot chain in the garage. The dog was infested with maggots, and lay in excrement along with her seven puppies. Her condition was so poor that an exposed bone and massive sore were visible on the left hind leg.

Kelly was taken immediately to a veterinarian for treatment before being sent to the city shelter, where she stayed during the trial of her owner. The woman pleaded not guilty to charges of cruelty to animals, but was convicted with the help of photographs and testimony from her neighbors. She agreed to pay both the fine and the dog's veterinary bills and served three days in jail as part of a suspended sentence. The dog was given back to the owner, under the agreement that DeCando would monitor the animal until she was fully healed.

The woman eventually gave Kelly and all but one of the seven puppies away to other homes. But two years after the first case, the one dog she kept was found to be mistreated as well. This time, a phone call from a man wishing to remain anonymous led DeCando back to the woman's home, where he found the dog unlicensed, running at large, and without food, water, or shelter. Although he had no witness, DeCando was able to provide photographs and testify himself. The woman's daughter assumed full responsibility for the dog in municipal court, and was fined $355 on July 28, 1989.

Less than two weeks after the daughter's first conviction, DeCando issued her three additional tickets. The dog was still unlicensed, running at large, and without food, water, and shelter. With more photos from DeCando as evidence, the judge levied a fine of over $400 on the daughter. The dog was again returned to the woman before she decided to give the animal away.

The cases were handled extremely well by DeCando and his staff, and each resulted in conviction with a strong penalty. But they also illustrate the need for more effective laws (called post-trial procedural statutes) regarding the disposition of animals involved in cruelty and neglect cases.

Judges in New Jersey technically have the leeway to determine the disposition of an animal after a trial. But even DeCando, who works with judges who believe in stiff penalties for violators of animal cruelty and neglect laws, says, "I don't think any judge would have agreed to return the original sheepdog's offspring to the defendant actually convicted of cruelty or neglect." The animals would have been returned to a defendant actually convicted of cruelty or neglect, says Roger Kindler, General Counsel for The HSUS. "In fact, the post-trial procedural statute should provide for forfeiture of not only the animals that were the victims of cruelty or neglect, but also, arguably, all animals kept by a convicted defendant." The animals would be surrendered to the local humane society or animal control department, where they would either be placed for adoption or euthanized.

Had such a post-trial procedural statute been on the books in New Jersey—as it is in Tennessee, for example—chances are good that the second and third convictions involving the original defendant's daughter would have been avoided. Furthermore, the prospects of any of the original sheepdog's offspring living in a quality home would have been enhanced.

An ideal post-trial procedural statute would also protect the welfare of animals involved in abuse or neglect cases even if their owners are acquitted of charges against them. Many humane officers know only too well the frustration of returning animals to defendants that have been found not guilty in court despite substantial evidence of mistreatment.

The HSUS believes that the welfare of animals should not be solely dependent upon the outcome of a criminal trial. "A progressive statute," says Kindler, "should provide for a post-acquittal custody hearing in which the court would determine, in light of the best interests of the animal, whether the defendant is a fit person to have custody of the animal."

As reported in the November 1989 issue of Shelter Sense, The HSUS is preparing a model post-trial procedural statute that will include provisions that ensure the humane treatment of animals after both convictions and acquittals. The comprehensive statute will also address the issue of who pays the costs of keeping animals during cruelty and neglect trials. ("The costs of maintaining the animal during the prosecution," Kindler says, "should be levied directly against the defendant's income and assets other than the animals involved.")

If you have felt the sting of inadequate laws dealing with the disposition of animals after trials, the costs of keeping animals during them, or other trial-related problems that ignore the welfare of the animals involved, please report the cases to Roger Kindler, General Counsel, HSUS, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

Despite her horrendous condition and being returned to her original owner, Kelly was eventually nursed back to health under the guidance of Chief Animal Control Officer John DeCando.
Wholesaler Donates Food to SPCA

Many sheltered humane organizations are pros at asking their members for donations of dog and cat food and other goods. Few, however, are in the enviable position of the York County SPCA (RD 1, Thomasville, PA 17364).

For the past three years, the SPCA has had nearly all its pet food and cat litter needs met by donations of “damaged” goods from a local grocery wholesaler and distributor. The distributor, Associated Wholesalers, Inc. (AWI), routinely delivers trailer-loads of merchandise to the SPCA that can’t be sold in stores—dented cans of dog food, torn bags of kitty litter, etc.

“You haven’t lived until you’ve tried to store a tractor-trailer load full of food,” says Cindy Stoll, shelter manager. But she knows the SPCA is very lucky to have both the arrangement and the storage space. “We’ve got a three-bay garage on the premises—each load takes up one entire bay and most of the next one.” The food and litter almost always lasts until AWI makes its next delivery.

AWI initiated the donations after the creation of its reclamation center, a depository for all damaged items and other groceries returned to them by retail stores. After receiving a shipment from AWI, the York County SPCA transfers dry dog and cat food into large, sealed, plastic pails. They carefully examine the food for bugs, mold, signs of staleness, and odor, and throw it away when in doubt. They also toss canned goods that are severely dented, and make sure their stock of food is properly rotated.

Grants Available

The Parks Foundation provides financial support to organizations for programs that improve the status of animals. Grant proposals for the 1990 review cycle are due by May 1. Awards are made either for specific projects, construction of shelters, or for general operating costs. To be eligible, organizations must have established IRC 501 (c)(3) status. For details on program areas of interest to the Foundation and how to apply, write to: The William and Charlotte Parks Foundation for Animal Welfare, c/o Maine National Bank, P.O. Box 3555, Portland, ME 04104.

Dog Breed Guide Helps Adopters

How many pounds of food does an Irish wolfhound eat per week? Are chows good with kids? Do dachshunds have any particular health problems? These questions and many others are answered in a dog breed guide compiled for adopters at the Animal Shelter of Waco/McLennan County (2032 Circle Rd., Waco, TX 76706).

Waco’s director JoAnne Jackson found that she and her staff were being asked many questions about various breeds that weren’t readily answered in dog books. So she decided to create her own book that included the information adopters want and need to know. The project took some time, but the result is a useful tool and an idea that other shelters could copy. Jackson says, “We want people to know what to expect in the way of problems and expenses that can develop down the line. That way, they’ll be able to make a more informed decision before they take the animal home.”

Working with a local obedience trainer and existing books, Jackson gathered data on each breed’s full-grown size and weight, grooming needs, weekly food intake, aggressive tendencies, protective instincts, disposition, training potential, suitability for children, adaptability to new environments, and common health problems. Each entry features a picture of the breed with the information typed alongside the picture. The pages of the book are kept in a loose-leaf binder on the adoption counter for easy access. The book took Jackson about a year to complete, but her efforts have paid off since most adopters use it. The book even helps people who are considering mixed breeds because they can learn the characteristics of the breeds involved and make a decision based on the possible combination of traits.

Jackson plans to get the book professionally printed and has begun work on a cat breed book. For the Waco shelter, whose small staff is always busy, the breed book has not only informed adopters, it has also saved the staff time. After adopters have looked through the book, they have a better idea of what they’re looking for. Adoption counselors don’t have to start from the ground when helping them choose a pet.

Correction

We are sorry to inform you that the survey on job-related stress conducted by the Halifax Humane Society of Volusia County is not available as reported in the November 1989 issue of Shelter Sense. We sincerely regret any inconvenience this may have caused anyone interested in obtaining a copy of the survey. Jack W. Clapper, executive director of the society, is willing to offer advice and guidance based on the society’s experience in creating, administering, and evaluating the survey. If you would like more information, please write to him at Halifax Humane Society of Volusia County, P.O. Box 624, Daytona Beach, FL 32107.
Guide Rates Supermarket Products

It’s now easy to tell if the brand-name products you buy at the supermarket are made by companies that test on animals. The Council on Economic Priorities (CEP) has prepared a guide that rates some 1,800 brand-name products and the 168 companies that make them on animal testing and ten other social criteria: the environment, nuclear power, charitable giving, community outreach, advancement of women, advancement of minorities, family benefits, social disclosure, military contracts, and investment in South Africa.

Entitled Shopping for a Better World—A Quick & Easy Guide to Socially Responsible Supermarket Shopping, the 292-page booklet can quickly tell you that Tom’s of Maine deodorant isn’t. Or that both Prego (by Campbell Soup) and Newman’s Own spaghetti sauces are cruelty-free, while Old Spice deodorant (made by American Cyanamid) isn’t. Or that both Ragu (by Unilever) and Newman’s Own spaghetti sauces rate higher than Ragu (by Unilever) in animal testing and several other categories. Or that Ida Grae Cosmetics are free of animal testing and several other categories.

The newly updated and expanded guide is available from Professional Programs Audio Cassettes, 12035 Saticoy St., Suite B, North Hollywood, CA 91605, for $8.00 each, plus shipping and handling. Contact Professional Programs for complete ordering information.

1989 Conference Tapes Available

Audio cassette recordings of the 1989 HSUS Conference speakers and workshop leaders, including keynote speaker Jeremy Rifkin, luncheon speaker John Robbins, and the Rev. Dr. Andrew Linzey, are available from Professional Programs Audio Cassettes, 12035 Saticoy St., Suite B, North Hollywood, CA 91605, for $8.00 each, plus shipping and handling. Write CEP at 30 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or call 1 (800) 822-6435 (in New York State call (212) 429-1133).

Greetings for Pets’ Loved Ones

Greeting Cards for Pets’ Loved Ones offers kind sentiments upon a pet’s death. In 10–49 cards are 90¢, 50–99 are 70¢, 100–149 are 60¢, and 150 and over are 50¢ apiece. For an order form and shipping information, write Mesopetamia Cards, P.O. Box 905, Boulder, CO 80306.

Get-well cards cheer pet owners during their companion’s illness.

Condoleence cards offer kind sentiments upon a pet’s death.

Raccoons and Your Home

A brochure put out by the Toronto Humane Society (THS) can help the public deal with raccoon pests in ways that are both humane and effective. Ainslie Willock of THS says that since the introduction of the brochure, which was made available through their newsletter, they have had fewer and fewer calls requesting the agency’s help in dealing with raccoons. "Raccoons and Your Home" discusses ways to "raccoon proof" garbage cans and secure any home to prevent the animals from setting up residence. Sealing possible entrances around the home, capping chimneys, and installing yard lights are ways presented to keep raccoons away. For those who already have the uninvited guests, tactics are outlined to convince the animals to relocate. Am-
Raccoons raiding the garbage is one of many topics covered in the brochure “Raccoons and Your Home.”

MonIALIZ repellents, loud music, or bright lights in the raccoons’ quarters may do the job. If not, live trapping is covered. In all cases, the brochure takes the welfare of the animals into account, carefully pointing out that a mother should not be separated from her babies during attempts to remove them.

In addition to tips on dealing with unwanted raccoons around the home, the brochure includes background information on the behavior and habits of raccoons to help unknowing people understand them better. Sections on living with raccoons in suburban areas, guarding against rabies, protecting gardens, and warning against making raccoons into pets answer many commonly asked questions.

Considering the prevalence of raccoon rabies in certain parts of the country, “Raccoons and Your Home” would come in handy to educate the public. The brochure provides information on what a person should do if he or she sees a suspicious-looking raccoon or is bitten.

Copies of this brochure are available in bulk quantities. Postage-paid prices are $3.25/$4.50, $5/$6, $10/$9, and $31. Order them from the Toronto Humane Society, c/o Barry McKay, 11 River St., Toronto, Ontario M5A 4C2, Canada.

---

Clever Magnets Could Save Cats

Cat owners know that their feline companions like to get into things— and not always things that are good for them. Jeff Malinowski discovered that his cats liked to crawl into the warm clothes dryer while he was unloading it. Luckily, he noticed them before turning the appliance on again. Unfortunately, many other cats aren’t so lucky.

So Malinowski invented Kitty Finder Reminder Washer ‘n Dryer Magnets. These colorful vinyl magnets won’t scratch the appliances as they remind the pet owner to check for curious or napping cats before starting the machines.

The magnets come in three designs and are available for sale as fund-raisers or gifts to adopters. The magnets retail for $3.00 each, but the cost to humane groups is $1.15 apiece, postage paid. You can request only one design or an assortment. To order the Kitty Finder Reminder magnets, write JMD Products, 407 Avalon, Marine City, MI 48039.

---

Pick one... and kiss the others goodbye.

---

Kitty Finder Reminder Washer ‘n Dryer Magnets come in three bright, eye-catching designs and won’t harm the finish on appliances.
PetLine Is a Great Service

By Phyllis Wright, HSUS Vice President, Companion Animals

I am pleased to tell you about a new service offered to pet owners everywhere. PetLine offers sound information via recorded messages on over 300 pet health and behavioral topics. Recorded by a veterinarian, these three-to-five-minute messages are available 24 hours a day by dialing a 900 number. Callers pay about $2.50 for the average recorded message. Printed directories listing all topics and other helpful information are available free to humane groups and animal control departments from PetLine.

PetLine is the first service or product to be endorsed by The HSUS and is a new step forward in helping pet owners care for their animals. Dr. John P. Aldridge, DVM, chief of staff at the San Francisco SPCA, lends his 17 years of veterinary medical experience to the project by overseeing the writing and recording of the messages. Topics covered range from dental health to cancer, allergic conditions to nutrition, and birth control to old age. The recordings are not meant to replace the advice of a pet owner’s veterinarian, but to provide information when questions arise.

In addition to health topics, there are messages on solving behavioral problems such as destructive chewing, barking, digging, and spraying. By explaining why animals do undesirable things and offering solutions, these recordings could help a pet owner work through the problem and keep the pet rather than relinquish it. In addition to a wealth of informational topics, PetLine also offers a free Veterinary Resource Service that will help callers locate veterinarians, specialists, and emergency treatment for pets in their area.

Shortly, all Shelter Sense subscribers will be receiving a letter and sample PetLine Directory in the mail. I urge all of you to request and distribute the free PetLine Directories in your communities. You can obtain as many copies of the Directory as you want, absolutely free. Take advantage of this offer and help promote this valuable resource by calling PetLine at 1 (800) 334-PETS.