TThere has been loud grumbling in the senate halls recently about regulations setting minimum standards for living conditions and care for a variety of dogs, cats, and primates used for laboratory experiments. In July the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) passed its final standards for the care and housing of laboratory rabbits, guinea pigs, and hamsters. Those new standards, intended to implement Animal Welfare Act (AWA) amendments passed in 1985, contain important improvements in nutrition and care for a variety of dogs, cats, and chimpanzees. The USDA, responsible for administering the AWA with the approval of an in-house review board. The AWA amendments passed twenty-five years ago, contain important provisions allowing researchers to continue their work without unnecessarily killing animals for research purposes. As a result of the USDA's inaction, many senators have met with USDA administrators to discuss this issue. The USDA has taken no action to address these concerns, and the Senate is considering a bill to mandate the USDA to issue regulations without further delay. The USDA plans to take this message to senior administration officials in face-to-face meetings.

The care these primates receive in the laboratory is still not regulated, five years after standards were amended to the AWA.

FEDERAL REPORT

USDA STANDARDS NOT GOOD ENOUGH

Eighty years after the federal Animal Damage Control (ADC) program was established to control wildlife that interfered with human activities, the program is facing criticism for ineffective and costly methods of controlling wildlife. The ADC program, recently issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that would have cost over $226,000,000 in additional federal tax dollars. The USDA, responsible for administering the ADC program, recently issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that would have cost over $226,000,000 in additional federal tax dollars.

ADC PROGRAM NEEDS NEW FOCUS

For eighty years, the federal Animal Damage Control (ADC) program has sought to control wildlife that interfered with human activities. To achieve this "control," federal ADC agents annually kill hundreds of thousands of crows, wolves, mountain lions, bears, prairie dogs, foxes, and birds of all kinds. The public pays for the wasteful destruction with federal tax dollars.

The USDA, responsible for administering the ADC program, recently issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that would set ADC policy for the next ten years. Commenting on the deficiencies in, and inadequacies of, this draft, The HSUS has recommended that the USDA withdraw or rewrite the document. The deadline for comments on the DEIS was August 31. But The HSUS still urges you to let the USDA know that you do not approve of the ADC's relentless and senseless slaughter of wild animals. Instead, the USDA should emphasize non-lethal methods, such as fencing and guard dogs, that have proved to be effective in reducing wildlife-caused problems without unnecessarily killing wildlife. Please write to or call: The Hon. Jo Ann Smith, Assistant Secretary of Marketing and Export, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Administration Bldg., Rm. 2289, 14th and Independence Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20250, (202) 448-4266; or The Hon. Clayton Yeutter, Rm. 2004, USDA, Washington, DC 20250, (202) 447-3631.

BREAK-IN BILLS MAY HIDE ABUSES

Laboratory break-ins and threats to the lives of biomedical researchers and their families have resulted in several bills being introduced in Congress that are intended to address this issue. The HSUS has submitted testimony to congressional committees stressing our long-standing and firmly held abhorrence of violence in any form and stating that we have consistently and encouraged the use of legal means for achieving the protection of animals. We have told these committees that The HSUS not only opposes arson, vandalism, theft, threats, and acts of violence against people, but we also believe that such acts do not achieve the cause of animal protection.

Nevertheless, we have expressed deep concern about S. 3270, sponsored by Rep. Charles Bennett of Florida, for offering a veal-calf protection amendment to the 1990 Farm Bill that would have authorized the USDA to take injunctive action against the operations of those who are suspected of violating prohibitions of the Animal Welfare Act.

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"Control" usually means "kill" at the hands of the ADC. Coyotes may be destroyed in a wildlife refuge in order to reduce the number of predators that may compete with hunters for game. Support of S. 2044. The USDA is pushing to get this legislation through Congress before adjournment.

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FARM BILL A DISAPPOINTMENT

A farm bill is enacted every five years to establish agricultural policy and set forth the responsibilities of the USDA. The Senate and the House of Representatives approved separate versions of the 1990 Farm Bill on July 27 and August 1 respectively. Now senators and representatives will meet in a joint conference to negotiate a single bill to be sent to the president.

During the development of the 1990 Farm Bill, The HSUS lobbied for a number of animal-protection initiatives, including:
- a low-input, sustainable agriculture program that addresses an economically and ecologically sound reduced use of chemicals or pharmaceuti­cals in animal as well as crop production;
- the creation of national organic-food production standards;
- a prohibition in regulatory loopholes that permit stolen cals in animal as well as crop of chemicals or pharmaceuti­cals; and
- animal-protection initiatives, including:
  - the responsibilities of the senators and representatives sent to the president.

DISAPPOINTMENT

The HSUS was a leader, in cooperation with other animal-protection and environmental organizations, in an effort to amend the Farm Bill to include real-calf protection, a ban on the government requirement for use of the Lethal-Dose 50 (LD-50) Test on animals, and USDA authority to seek temporary restraining orders and injunctions against violators of the AWA. Although these efforts were not successful this year, this was the first time these issues have been considered before the full House of Representatives or Senate. The senate version of the Farm Bill (S. 2830) authorizes substantial new funding for the Low-Input Sustainable Agriculture (LISA) program, which emphasizes the exploration of alternative livestock-production systems. The bill also includes a detailed organic-certification program that would set forth basic production standards for organically raised food, including livestock and poultry.

Language designed to address the animal welfare problem is also included in S. 2830. It would require that identifying information accompany each animal obtained by dealers and would establish stricter fines and penalties for illegal transactions.

Unfortunately, prior to final passage of the senate bill, an amendment proposed by Sens. Howell Heflin and Charles Grassley was adopted to remove important language on the promotion of “animal well-being” from the LISA program. It was also tabled Sen. Harry Reid’s amendment that would ban the LD-50 toxicity-testing procedure.

The House adopted a farm bill (H.R. 3950) that also includes authorization for research on and education in sustainable agriculture practices. On the floor, three other animal-protection amendments were considered. Rep. Peter DeFazio’s amendment was passed, establishing national standards for foods labeled as organic. The amendment is less extensive than the corresponding provision in the senate bill. Rep. Charles Bennett’s amendment to provide for the humane production of veal calves was defeated on an unrecorded “voice vote.” And, under a procedural ruling, consideration was prevented of Rep. Toby Roth’s amendment, which would have given the secretary of agriculture much needed authority to seek temporary restraining orders and injunctions against violators of the AWA.

The final version of the Farm Bill will also include provisions benefiting wildlife by protecting wetlands, reducing water contamination, and promoting tree planting. Differences in the house and senate versions will be resolved before Congress adjourns this fall.

To combat pet theft, the senate Farm Bill requires that pets bought and sold by dealers must have identifying paperwork accompanying each animal.

ES A IS ITSELF ENDANGERED

The U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA) was passed in 1973 to preserve and restore this nation’s vanishing wildlife. Despite its enactment, both the number of endangered species and the loss of wildlife habitat continue to grow. The act itself is threatened by an administration that would ban the LD-50 testing procedure, which has been the subject of intense debate and public concern.

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ALTERNATIVES TO ANIMAL TESTING

As a result of the ruling, federal agencies that are funding or carrying out activities such as construction projects must consult with the USFWS if any project may adversely affect endangered species abroad. Where the survival of a species or population would be put in jeopardy, the project may not go forward as planned. Less harmful alternatives would be required.

Wildlife refuges, originally intended to be “inviolate sanctuaries,” do not offer any safety to white-tailed deer during hunting season.

Refuge Reform Gains Speed

As a result of the ruling, federal agencies that are funding or carrying out activities such as construction projects must consult with the USFWS if any project may adversely affect endangered species abroad. Where the survival of a species or population would be put in jeopardy, the project may not go forward as planned. Less harmful alternatives would be required.