



Tales of Survival

Rescued by The HSUS, these resilient animals overcome suffering to find happy endings

Clara Mason stands in the doorway of a West Virginia barn, a late August rain falling behind her. In the distance over her right shoulder, a horse grazes intently on delectable green grass.

"I've never seen a horse come back from the edge of death as well as he has, and thrived," says Mason, a veterinarian who's been involved in some 28 rescues, including one in late May that saved 49 neglected equines from a property in Wayne County, W.Va.

What does the edge of death look like? For the 5-year-old bay horse now known as Second Chance, it was rib after rib after rib, visible against

his side as if he had swallowed a washboard. It was unsightly grey patches of skin along his spine, where the hair had fallen out.

"He was probably about 14 inches from hip bone to hip bone," says Summer Wyatt, The HSUS's West Virginia state director, who coordinated the rescue with the Huntington-Cabell-Wayne Animal Control Shelter and local authorities. "If you looked at him from behind, it was just like seeing a skeleton walking." Rescuers were so concerned that they placed hay on the tailgate of a truck so the horse wouldn't have to bend over to eat.

Fast forward through the summer, and Second Chance revels in the quiet of the West Virginia countryside at the home of adopter Sandy Bolen. There's a newfound shine to his coat, and he's grown from a woeful 459 pounds in late May to more than 700 pounds in September.

He's even sporting a little potbelly.

"I think he's just genuinely pleased that someone is being kind to him," says Tim Kemper, who helps Bolen care for the horse.

Second Chance is still a bit wary of men and of being inside, especially at night. But each morning, he greets Kemper at the gate for a pre-breakfast stroll in the pasture.

"He's found his home," Bolen says. "He captured my heart. That's where his name comes from—we finally gave him the second chance he deserves."

— *Michael Sharp*



Of the 157 cats rescued from a Wyoming home in August, a staggering 91 of them were packed into a single dark basement room. They hid under a dresser. They hopped down off shelves. A group of kittens lay nursing under a cabinet.

But as an HSUS responder entered the property in the small city of Powell, his attention quickly turned to a black kitten huddled in the center of the room, struggling to breathe. The animal's eyes were crusted over, and his nose was caked with discharge.

"When I picked him up, the first thing I noticed was that he didn't weigh anything," says Adam Parascandola, HSUS director of animal cruelty issues. "I mean, he was maybe a pound. He just was skin and bones.

"I think he would have died that night or the next day if we hadn't been there."

The kitten, just 4 weeks old at the time, was taken to a temporary shelter at the Park County Fairgrounds. Volunteers gave him subcutaneous fluids, washed his face off, and fed him. Three days later, Parascandola drove him about 100 miles north to Billings Animal Rescue



Kare in Montana.

Though he was nearing pneumonia then, his upper-respiratory problems having reached his lungs, hints of a spunky personality began to emerge.

"This little kitten, no matter how sick he was, he always had a tremendous energy level," says Sandy Price, director of BARK. "The day they brought him in, he was climbing the doors to his house. . . . Now he's off the wall. He's a typical kitten."

As summer turned to fall, BARK officials were awaiting more progress in his physical condition before making him available for adoption—a step they hoped would come in October.

But his eyes were clean. His temperature was back to normal, after a dangerous spike. Antibiotics were helping to slowly clear his airways, and a bath every three days had helped battle a bad case of ringworm.

And home, for the time being, was a quiet office with a big window and a kitten named Chloe to keep him company.

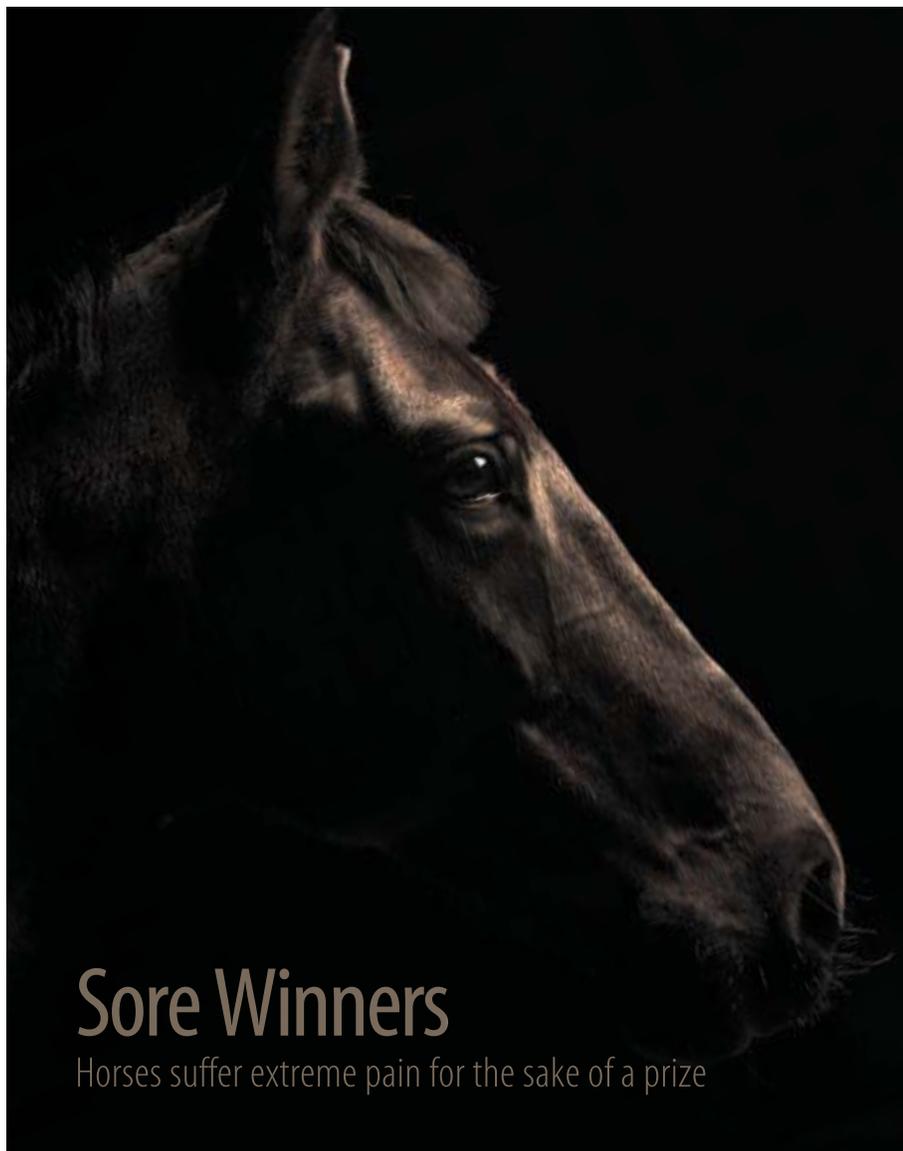
"We named him Powell," says Price. "So whoever adopts him, they'll never forget what he came from."

—Michael Sharp

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Second Chance and Powell are two of thousands of animals The HSUS saved this year in partnership with local authorities, shelters, and rescue groups. Watch their stories of survival—and the story of Boomer, a third survivor rescued from a Mississippi puppy mill—at humanesociety.org/survivorstories. Then find out how you can help more animals survive—and thrive—in 2011.





Sore Winners

Horses suffer extreme pain for the sake of a prize

Standing in a stall one late winter day in 2005, John Henry captured his future owner's heart with his kind eye. But otherwise, the Tennessee walking horse sure was a mess.

Another horse had chewed off most of his tail. The heels of his hooves had been cut out. And three lines of scars marked his ankles, a telltale sign he'd been a victim of soring—a practice whereby trainers cause intense pain in an effort to exaggerate the breed's high-stepping gait and gain an unfair edge in shows.

But in the case of John Henry, there were other scars that took much longer to surface.

Three years after purchasing the

abused, underweight animal, Hal Bowden took him to a North Carolina show as part of the rehabilitation process; he wanted to see how John Henry would react to the setting. After leaving the barn to have dinner, Bowden returned to find him cowering, covered in a cold sweat.

"To tell you the honest truth, I just cried. And I just went and held him for awhile," Bowden says, adding: "I'll never forget that big old horse, standing in the corner of that stall, trembling in fear."

It was a tragic sight—the very sort that Congress had aimed to prevent four decades ago when it passed the Horse Protection Act to crack down on soring.

Yet the illegal practice persists today.

Just last year, inspectors observed more than 400 violations of the law at the 71st Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration in Shelbyville, Tenn. Another 243 were recorded at this year's event, representing 9 percent of the inspections conducted.

The twisted goal of soring is to make stepping down particularly painful, so that horses will quickly lift their front legs back up high in an unnaturally animated gait, known as the "big lick." Some trainers spread caustic chemicals like mustard oil or diesel fuel just above the hooves, then wrap the legs in plastic so the chemicals cook into the skin for days. During practice and competition, a metal chain slides up and down the blistered skin, exacerbating the pain.

Others use a method called pressure shoeing: cutting hooves down to the sensitive quick before tightly nailing on the shoes. Sometimes, hard or sharp metal objects like marbles or nails are inserted between the hooves and the heavy stacks of pads the horse is forced to wear.

The abuse can lead to chronic health problems, even fatal cases of colic, says Keith Dane, HSUS director of equine protection.

"Because of the intensity of the suffering that's inflicted, and the longevity of the time that it's inflicted on them—which is essentially their entire show ring careers—it's one of the most egregious forms of equine cruelty that we've identified," says Dane.

The practice continues in part because funding shortfalls prevent the USDA from sending inspectors to more than 5 percent of shows. Advocates have serious concerns about what happens at the other 95 percent, where industry insiders conduct the inspections.

In March, a bipartisan group of 40 senators and 131 representatives supported President Obama's request for an additional \$400,000 to enforce the Horse Protection Act during fiscal 2011, bringing the total to \$900,000; House and Senate committees later gave preliminary approval. And in August, The HSUS and several other organizations petitioned the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to enact new regulations.

The Miracle of No Births

Controlling elephant populations through darts, not bullets

A decade ago, a herd of elephants in South Africa's Greater Makalali Private Game Reserve was predicted to become so big its members threatened the very habitat upon which they and other animals depended. Approaching 55 members, the population was expected to more than double in 10 years—in a country where elephants have been killed, or “culled,” to keep their numbers down.

Then arrived a vaccine that uses female elephants' immune systems to prevent sperm from fertilizing their eggs. By 2002, the reserve had achieved zero population growth. Later, even with a few select females allowed to get pregnant, the number of elephants increased just 3 percent annually, versus an average growth of 9 percent before contraception began.

Now, after 10 years of careful observation and refinement, researchers have presented a paper calling the vaccine a safe and proven way to manage populations in reserves with as many as 500 elephants—and avoid culling.

“We know that this works,” says Teresa Telecky, director of wildlife at Humane Society International, which with The HSUS helped fund the

research. “The results are clear.”

The method used at Makalali involves darting females two times the first year, then annually afterwards. By contrast, culling in South Africa has involved herding elephants together with helicopters and shooting every animal in the group dead—any survivors would likely be too traumatized to function normally. Because culling doesn't stop elephant populations from continuing to grow, it must be done again and again.

To encourage the adoption of contraception, work is under way on a “one-shot” vaccine that would only have to be delivered once every other year, potentially cutting the cost in half. This would make contraception more economical for protected areas with large herds, such as Kruger National Park, which has 13,000 elephants. But researchers at Makalali argue parks like Kruger shouldn't wait for the one-shot vaccine to start contraception.

Says Audrey Delsink, field director at Makalali, “The sooner you implement it, the sooner you start to have this contraceptive effect. ... The longer you wait, the greater your problem becomes.”

— *Karen E. Lange*



A month later, at the national “Celebration” event, Dane found reason for both concern and guarded optimism. On one hand, more stringent protocols were in place, including the USDA's rule that any horse identified as a soring victim be disqualified for the remainder of the show. On the other, large tarps kept the inspection area hidden—a change from previous years.

“The question is: If you think you're doing a great job and you're really improving, then why do you need to shield the public from your work?” says Dane. “Based on this year's Celebration, there's certainly the potential for progress. And I liked some of the things that I saw. It needs to be sustained, and even more progress is needed.”

John Henry has made some improvements of his own: His hooves have almost grown back to normal. He's become more trusting of people, and he's befriended an old show horse named Boo. A year ago, he returned to competition in the National Walking Horse Association, which Bowden helped found in an effort to move away from soring and instead celebrate walking horses' naturally smooth gaits.

— *Michael Sharp*

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The Humane Touch

Adam Parascandola had to watch the disturbing images again and again: employees at the Bushway Packing slaughterhouse in Vermont kicking veal calves, cursing at them, and shocking them with an electric prod.

As The HSUS's director of animal cruelty issues, Parascandola believed the footage—recorded last fall by an HSUS undercover investigator—revealed acts that violated Vermont's cruelty code. A successful prosecution, he knew, would depend on his ability to demonstrate that the behavior fell outside the realm of common practices sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. And to pursue a felony charge, he'd have to show malicious intent.

So he kept his eyes glued to the video. Though USDA regulations prohibit excessive use of electric prods on downed animals, the footage showed a worker shocking a downed calf 11 times; a second calf was shocked eight times, picked up and dropped, shocked five more times, then kicked. "I was counting up every shock to be able to show that this is really excessive," says Parascandola.

The evidence helped persuade the

Vermont attorney general to charge a Bushway worker with felony aggravated cruelty; the worker and one of the plant's owners were also charged with cruelty misdemeanors. The USDA and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture shuttered the slaughterhouse.

Though it was Parascandola's first major farm animal case since joining The HSUS in 2009, he's had plenty to keep him busy. So far this year, he and his staff have rescued nearly 2,000 animals from hoarding and other cases of neglect, coordinating with HSUS investigators and emergency services teams to respond to complaints. Parascandola's knowledge of the law, combined with his field experience, made his hiring "quite a coup," says Ann Chynoweth, senior director of The HSUS's Animal Cruelty and Fighting Campaign.

But for this former humane officer and shelter director, effectiveness stems from something less tangible—and more rare—than book learning and street smarts. "He was always sort of famous for going above and beyond with the people involved in his casework," says HSUS colleague and friend Cory Smith, who worked

with Parascandola at the Washington Humane Society. As the director of the shelter's law enforcement efforts, Parascandola befriended a woman while investigating complaints about her petkeeping, Smith recalls. Instead of removing the animals and forgetting about her, Parascandola provided years of support. "He took her grocery shopping, and he picked her up from the hospital and visited her in the hospital until the day she died," Smith says. "He is just that kind of person."

This summer, Parascandola led a rescue at a Montana property with nearly 100 dogs, most of whom had never been outside; some had chewed through the walls. The owner, whose wife had died, was sleeping on feces-encrusted boards and hadn't left the property in years. With no phone and no transportation, the man and his animals relied on food from a neighbor. "Everybody, I think, was very moved by the situation," Parascandola says.

Allowed to keep four dogs whom rescuers had spayed and neutered, the man also received food, a sleeping bag, and a pillow; the local sheriff planned a clothing drive and arranged help from adult protective services. "My hope is that once things get cleaned up ... he'll be able to recognize that actually this is a better way to live," says Parascandola.

To prevent recidivism, many hoarding cases end up in court. Parascandola's gentle touch inspires trust. "Even if you are going in with a warrant and you're removing the animals under the authority of the law and you're prosecuting people, you still have to be compassionate with people," he says.

Law enforcement agencies unfamiliar with cruelty cases or unable to seize large numbers of animals often turn to The HSUS for help. To ensure wise use of resources, Parascandola inquires about probable cause, state cruelty codes, and authorities' plans for gaining custody of the animals. It's a role he relishes, knowing he's helping animals and local agencies not just in one city but nationwide. "For me," he says, "it's totally a dream job."

— James Hettinger

A Holiday for Forgotten Pooches

In Washington, D.C., the winter holidays are a mixed bag. Politicians have flown back home, so Capitol grounds are quieter. The days hover just around freezing but are typically snowless. Lights and glowing plastic Santas decorate some neighborhoods, while other parts of the city remain dark, the only decorations the graffiti on the walls of abandoned businesses.

Among the more forlorn sights around the nation's capital are dozens of guard dogs who do not know it's Christmastime at all. For them, it's just another day tethered in a rocky lot or patrolling a chain-link fence for intruders—or so it was until, more than 10 years ago, a humane officer from the Washington Humane Society decided to play Santa.

While making his rounds, Adam Parascandola was touched by the plight of the city's guard dogs. Now the director of animal cruelty issues for The HSUS, Parascandola saw them as the loneliest of animals. "Most of them are really sweet, and they just want attention," he says.

He began to take toys and treats to them, eventually making the practice an official shelter program during the holidays. With no kids of his own, he tried to work on Christmas Day so officers with families could stay home. The timing of the deliveries was both symbolic and practical:



Few people were around, allowing him to check on the dogs' health and well-being without getting into an argument with their sometimes less-than-friendly owners.

When Parascandola took a new job in California, others stepped in to play elf. "We start making notes a couple months before Christmas. We make a list and we check it twice," jokes humane officer Ann Russell.

On Christmas Day, a few staff members—sometimes accompanied by partners or spouses to make the ritual more fun—divide the city into quadrants and head out to the lots on their list. Instead of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, they bring treasures dogs will actually enjoy, usually donated Kongs stuffed with frozen peanut butter and treats. They drop the gifts off with animals who, on Christmas Day, may not see a single soul, much less enjoy a scratch behind the ears.

A citywide crackdown on black market car sales has had an unintended but welcome effect, Russell is happy to report: reduction in the number of guard dogs, and in the number of cruelty and neglect cases involving these animals.

During one checkup of a property that hadn't been visited in a while, Russell and a fellow officer found a vacant lot. Her colleague remembered seeing poorly treated animals there but now saw only remnants of the pens, including the elevated wood pallet where a makeshift doghouse had once stood.

But the most poignant sign of the previous tenants was a single, chewed-up Kong toy, delivered by Washington Humane Society officers on a previous Christmas. It was, Russell says, probably the only toy those dogs ever got.

— Carrie Allan



SHELTER SPOTLIGHT: Washington Humane Society

STATS: Nearly 100 employees and 300 volunteers.

SERVICES: Runs a private shelter, animal control facility, and spay/neuter clinic, as well as the behavior facility that hosts Dog Tags, a program pairing wounded veterans with shelter dogs in need of training (see "Someone to Watch Over Me," p. 12).

WHAT THEY'RE PROUD OF: Whether adopting a dog to the parents of an autistic child or working with veterans, staff help both people and animals. "To us, it often just seems like a busy workweek," says animal behavior and training director Kevin Simpson, who started Dog Tags. "But then you see what it means to these guys."

BACK AND FORTH: The HSUS has long recruited talented employees like Adam Parascandola from local shelters—and apparently turnabout is fair play. Recently, the Washington Humane Society tagged former HSUS Puppy Mills Campaign director Stephanie Shain to be its new chief operating officer. The two organizations also co-host the District of Columbia's annual Walk for the Animals. Helping the shelter in its work to save more animals and improve their care, Shain looks forward to fostering further collaboration and taking advantage of the "breadth of what HSUS offers to shelters," she says.

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