Black Beauty Ranch. Fanny walked to a pond, drew water into her trunk, and sprayed herself. Later, in her corral in the elephant barn, she met Conga. As related by Christopher Byrne, manager of Black Beauty Ranch, within minutes Fanny and Conga began sharing hay and intertwining their trunks. Three weeks later Slater Park’s Himalayan bears were removed for transport to Wildlife Images Rehabilitation and Education Center, a sanctuary noted for expertise in caring for bears. Fresh apples are spread before one of the bears. Although the bears now enjoy a healthy diet, it could be years before they are no longer overweight.

Two Himalayan bears from Slater Park Zoo settle in at their new home, Wildlife Images Rehabilitation and Education Center, a sanctuary noted for expertise in caring for bears. Fresh apples are spread before one of the bears. Although the bears now enjoy a healthy diet, it could be years before they are no longer overweight. Fanny will be relocating the zoo’s three spider monkeys to Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Center in San Antonio, Texas—a facility inspected and approved by Messrs. Noe and Ribaudo. The Pawtucket City Council has not yet determined the new function of the zoo’s site, but there is strong support for recreating a farm that occupied the site in the late seventeenth century. This facility would have a few domestic animals, at most, as part of the historical farm setting.

The process of closing Slater Park Zoo and relocating its animals has been arduous. “I have never been involved with an issue so time-consuming, so intense, so draining, and so rewarding,” Mr. Ribaudo comments. “Today few cities are getting into the zoo business,” says Richard Farinato, HSUS director of captive wildlife, “and many of them will be looking to get out—for the same reasons that existed at Slater Park. A zoo is a luxury item in the budget.” He points out, however, that many “Slater Parks” remain. Of the 1,600 animal exhibitors licensed by the USDA, only 160 are AAZPA-accredited zoos; of the remaining 1,440 exhibitors, nearly 200 are municipally owned zoos.

Ultimately, public zoos are the responsibility of their respective communities, which determine whether or not a zoo will close and where any displaced animals will go. Even so, the Slater Park Zoo experience shows that, working together, animal advocates can convince communities of the need, even halt, “business as usual” at facilities that exhibit animals. Most of the zoo’s animals have now been moved to facilities better-equipped to meet their physical and psychological needs. Fanny and all the other animals relocated from Slater Park have the chance for a better life. We hope that other municipal zoos will stop to reassess how they care for animals.

Randall Lockwood, Ph.D., HSUS vice president, Educational Initiatives, formerly oversaw the activities of all regional offices.
propagate and exaggerate certain traits, ji is a local natural dog that has, more recently, been selectively bred in the West to Southeast Asia, and elsewhere show the hold and manipulate objects. An extremely such as curled tail and wrinkled forehead. coat varying in color from grayish brown, tan, or red to piebald, brindled, or entirely white; long, strong, and graceful limbs; deep chest and narrow waist; almond-shaped eyes ranging from gold to deep copper; ears either erect and pointed or slightly folded (never heavily pendulous like a cocker spaniel’s), and long tail, curled slightly upward.

Generations of rigorous natural selec­ tion, ensuring survival of the fittest, under­ lie the natural dog’s adaptiveness. The nat­ ural dog’s haunches are well muscled, for speed. The front paws are extremely flexi­ ble, giving a catlike dexterity. The front dew claws can be used, like thumbs, to hold and manipulate objects. An extremely intelligent, alert, and agile animal, with su­ perbly developed senses, the natural dog combines the best qualities seen in various dog breeds. Possessing what geneticists call hybrid vigor, the natural dog is gener­ ally healthier than purebreds, who repre­ sent a far less varied gene pool.

Propagating traits such as extreme size or flattened face requires the breeding of closely related dogs, since those traits nat­ urally occur only rarely. The resulting in­ breeding increases the likelihood of genet­ ical disorders in the offspring. Propagating even seemingly minor changes in body size or shape can profoundly affect dogs’ overall health and well-being. Exaggerated chest depth, abnormally lengthened back or shortened legs, and other unnatural characteristics cause health problems in purebred dogs.

Veterinarian Wayne H. Riser, who has studied the health problems that result from human interference with the dog’s genetic integrity, notes: “Dogs that have the same skeletal proportions, slow maturity rate, and comparable muscle mass and development as the ancestral dog have few orthopaedic diseases. The incidence of orthopa­ dual abnormalities increases as the dog’s characteristics vary from ancestral type.” Orthopaedic disease is relatively rare in natural dogs; generally their trunk, head, and legs are well-proportioned and, as mentioned earlier, their body weight lies within the range of forty to seventy pounds. The more a dog’s body weight lies outside this range—exceeding what his/hers musculature and bone structure can support—the greater the dog’s risk of orthopa­ dic disease, most notably when the body weight is above ninety-five pounds or below fifteen.

Natural dogs are able to live and multiply in the wild, and in villages and towns, as solitary or pack hunters and scavengers. Female natural dogs are indigent, protective moth­ ers. The males, usually larger and more powerful, often have a harem of three or four females. This nuclear pack has its own hunting and scav­ enging range and a horse territory, often closely guarded, for resting and for raising pups. Adult­ cent males generally roam increasingly far from the nuclear pack, especially when food is scarce. If such roaming males survive in territory between neighboring packs, they may form their own nuclear pack. Tempor­ orary packs usually consist of several males following a female in heat. When a domi­ nant male is sometimes accompanied by a subordinate male) stays with one or more females, a more permanent nuclear pack is established. Generally, the more stable the nuclear pack, the healthier its members.

Pack stability is ordinarily ensured when humans allow the dogs to scavenge. When domest­ icated dogs are accompanied by a subordinate male), they are not necessarily rabid. Like other human diseases, rabies itself is transmitted by contact with the blood, nervous tissue, or saliva of an infected animal. The incubation period for rabies is typically four to six months. After the onset of symptoms, including fever, vomiting, and confusion, the animal may die within a few days.

When village dogs are well cared for, they have no need to roam far in search of food. This reduces the chances that, while foraging or hunting in the jungle or bush, they will acquire a communicable disease—such as rabies, distemper, or mange—and transmit that disease to hu­ mans, domesticated animals, or wildlife. In less industrialized countries, natural dogs bring clear public health and environ­ mental benefits to the human community. As hunters they control the number of dis­ ease-carrying “pests.” As scavengers they keep the environment clean. Village natural dogs also readily adapt to living with humans and domesticated animals if they are raised in such an environment from puppyhood. Natural dogs become very protective of their adoptive human “pack,” including the family’s territory and property. They play with and guard young children, protect livestock, and, in the jungle or bush, hunt and roam with men and boys’ at liberty forage for food or tend live­ stock. Naturally, natural dogs may even benefit other free-living animals by scat­ tering them away from the fields and live­ stock of farmers who would retaliate for any damage done. Yet, natural dogs remain widely feared. While some people befriended them, even take them into their homes, many react to the dogs’ presence with indifference or ac­ tive hostility. When free-roaming dogs suf­ fer a rabies epidemic, for example, vil­ lagers often respond byclubbing, spearing, or stoning any sick dogs, including those that are not necessarily rabid. Like other human diseases, rabies itself is transmitted by contact with the blood, nervous tissue, or saliva of an infected animal. The incubation period for rabies is typically four to six months. After the onset of symptoms, including fever, vomiting, and confusion, the animal may die within a few days.

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Natural dogs protect livestock and guard the territory of their adoptive human “pack.” Insect, left: To avoid frightening inquisitive cur­ ious, a natural dog approaches them with a nonthreatening crawl. Above: Humans who befriended free-roaming dogs and provided them with handouts help protect the dogs from diseases they might otherwise contract while hunting or scavenging.