In many cases, a good photograph can make the difference between a successful animal cruelty case and one that ends in favor of the defendant. Perhaps it is time to believe the phrase that “a picture is worth a thousand words” and look at some of the ways you can make this powerful medium help you in the courtroom.

While almost any type of camera can be used effectively in cruelty cases, there are two types preferred for most applications. One of the most common cameras in use today by investigators is the “instant picture” type made by Polaroid and Eastman Kodak Co. These, like all systems, have both advantages and disadvantages in field operations.

The advantages are obvious; a finished print within a few seconds can be a tremendous asset to you when you attempt to convince a judge that probable cause exists for a search warrant, or when you are presenting the facts of the case to the district attorney to get a complaint issued.

The major disadvantage is not having a negative for the instant print. You can send the print to a photofinisher for extra copies, but you may find the quality of the print has been reduced or that enlargements lack the sharpness other systems can offer.

The 35mm single lens reflex (SLR) camera is perhaps best suited for investigative photography. Not only is it possible to change lenses from a wide-angle to perhaps a telephoto to bring subjects closer, but you also have a wide range of film types to work with and the photos can be enlarged to show more detail.

The Kodak Guidebook “Using Photography to Preserve Evidence” is available for $2.50 from Advertising Distribution Dept., Eastman Kodak Co., Rochester, NY 14650.

There was a time when many potential users would avoid a camera with adjustments to set, since they believed it would be too technical. With the past few years, however, camera equipment has changed considerably, and it is now possible for anyone to get excellent results by simply following the instruction manual included with the camera. Most SLR cameras have built-in light meters and other features that eliminate the guesswork.

Equipment does not have to be expensive, either, to produce good results for the investigative photographer. If the cameras mentioned above are not within your price range, talk to your camera dealer about your photographic needs and finances to select the most appropriate equipment.

By using the camera’s normal lens (50mm) and by getting close to the subject, this item of evidence was recorded on film during a recent cockfighting raid. The author used high-speed B&W film (Kodak Tri-X) to cope with a wide range of lighting conditions.
Black and white prints, however, do not have this disadvantage. Frequently, you will find that black and white will render the subject matter in a mood that more accurately reflects the seriousness of the situation. In addition, the processing charges for black and white are less, and you will find that they reproduce far easier in your newsletter than converting a color print to black and white for reproduction purposes.

Color slides are still another option you can consider. While slides are well suited for presentations and other applications, they are difficult to use effectively in court. Arrangements must be made for a screen and projector, making the case more difficult and complicated for you.

In the next issue of SHELTER SENSE, I will discuss techniques for good investigative photography, and how to learn to see as the camera "sees" to get the best results with your equipment.

SHELTER SENSE has available samples of pet care literature from major pet product manufacturers, along with details on how quantities of the booklets can be obtained.

The booklets include "How to Bathe Your Dog" from Beecham, Inc., "The Borden Guide to the Care and Feeding of Orphan and Rejected Kittens," and "How to Care for, Train, and Feed Your Dog" from The Quaker Oats Company.

Request your free sample packet from SHELTER SENSE, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.

(Please note that The HSUS does not endorse commercial products; these pamphlets are provided solely as an information resource for SHELTER SENSE readers, and should not be construed in any way as an approval or endorsement of any of the manufacturers' products.)

Bowling Green-Warren County Humane Society (Bowling Green, KY) has had a successful spaying program for 10 years, which includes these provisions:

- six veterinarians in the area are cooperating in a low-cost surgery program.
- a time payment plan is available to pet owners for the cost of the surgery.
- no puppy or dog leaves the shelter unless neutered.
- when female dogs are picked up for licensing infringement, the impoundment fee is waived if the owner will have the dog spayed.
- the society receives the names of persons who purchase dog licenses in the city and county, and these pet owners are telephoned and encouraged to have their pets neutered.
- persons placing advertisements for 'free puppies' are telephoned and encouraged to bring the puppies to the shelter and to have the mother dog spayed.

(Bowling Green-Warren Co. Humane Society, 902 W. Main St., Bowling Green, KY 42101)

Cruelty cases

The following cases have been brought to our attention over the past several months. If your society or agency has successfully resolved an animal problem, write SHELTER SENSE about it. Please remember to include details on how you solved the problem so other animal groups and agencies can make use of the information.

A resident of Edgewater, MD, has been found guilty of cruelty to animals for not caring adequately for 13 horses and a mule. The charges were filed when the SPCA of Anne Arundel County impounded 12 of the animals. The maximum fine is $1,000 and up to 90 days in jail.

The woman convicted owned all the animals but four, which she was boarding for a fee. She blamed the animals' condition partly on inadequate care from two teenagers whom she had hired to water and feed them -- the judge pointed out that she was still the responsible party.

The tenant on the farm where the animals were kept complained to the SPCA that they were undernourished. Humane officer George Wilkins spent an entire day at the farm as part of his investigation. No one came to feed and water them, so Wilkins did so himself. He said the horses were tied and unable to get to water.

The judge said his verdict was based on a veterinarian's testimony, and also on the significant weight gains and improved condition of the animals while they were being cared for by the SPCA. He is quoted in an area newspaper as saying, "If the SPCA could put on weight in that time, I don't know why that couldn't have happened under (the defendant's) care." (SPCA of Anne Arundel Co., 1915 Bay Ridge Ave., Annapolis, MD 21403)

An East Palo Alto, CA, woman was sentenced to four months in jail with three years formal probation and fined $630 for animal cruelty. The Santa Clara County Times reported the sentence as the harshest ever given in San Mateo County for animal cruelty.

The woman placed a flea collar on her German Shepherd dog when it was three months of age and left it on for six months. It became embeded in the animal's neck, resulting in an open sore. The woman was quoted as saying she did not realize the seriousness of the wound.

In passing the sentence, the judge commented, "The veterinarian indicated that she felt the dog was in pain for four months. So I thought (the owner) ought to be in jail for four months." One appeal for a reduced sentence was denied; she has since been released pending another appeal. (Peninsula Humane Society, 12 Airport Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94401)

Patches is a Shetland pony who was rescued from neglect and near-starvation by the New Hampshire Humane Society. The owner protested that he had been well cared for, but quickly surrendered him when threatened with legal action. "Before" and "after" photos (taken with society employees and some small friends) show his improved condition. (New Hampshire Humane Society, PO Box 572, Laconia, NH 03246)