

# The Humane Movement: Past and Present

1868  
First animal welfare magazine, *Our Dumb Animals*, delivered to Boston residents by policemen.

1873  
28 Hour Law passed stating livestock transported by rail be rested after 28 hours in transit.

1882  
American Band of Mercy, humane education program for all children established.

1889  
ASPCA opened first humane society animal shelter in Manhattan.

1890  
The first humane education book, "Black Beauty" published by the American Humane Educational Society.

1910  
First humane cattle car introduced by Pennsylvania Railroad.

1910  
Electric horse ambulance first used by Pennsylvania SPCA.

1914  
Be Kind To Animals Week first celebrated.

1915  
Angell Memorial Hospital, the first humane society animal clinic founded by Massachusetts SPCA.

1922  
Pennsylvania SPCA and WIP Radio in Phila. produced first humane education broadcast.

1927  
Steel jaw traps first prohibited from use in S.C.

In 1641 the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony enacted the first statutory measure protecting domestic animals from mistreatment and overwork. Entitled "Liberties of Brute Creatures" the Puritan rules were not in the form of laws, but were a code of conduct not including any penalty for non-compliance.

It is difficult to comprehend the abuses to which living creatures were subjected in 18th and 19th century America. Many citizens were indifferent to or unaware of the cruelties which were routinely inflicted upon animals. The most visible animal in the 1800's was the horse, the backbone of commerce and an important mode of transportation. Horse-drawn streetcars were regularly overloaded with passengers. Exhausted horses, unable to pull the cars, were frequently beaten to death on the streets and received not a murmur of sympathy from their passengers. In New York City an estimated 25,000 horses suffered from poor care, overwork, and abuse.

Working horses found a champion in Henry Bergh, a New York socialite and career diplomat. While on assignment in Russia, Bergh was alarmed at the mistreatment of animals there. Vowing to help animals everywhere, Bergh left the diplomatic corps and resolved to dedicate his life to the prevention of cruelty to animals. On February 8, 1866 Bergh gave a moving public speech in which he resolved that "the bl: This is something cruelty shall no longer tortuets allow torture of without impunity". At that rt's one's essential York's Clinton Hall, the first: somehow or another organization in the Unites it, and then has established. It was named isticated and lose th Society for the Prevention of Cthe interdependence (ASPCA). r. Lilly's goal is t

Shortly thereafter, Bergh coworld for dolphin York State Legislature to iss with dolphins ar charter to the ASPCA. He als: illard: tive: u a bill through the Legislature, The Animal Welfare Act of 1866, which provided "every person who shall, by his act or neglect, maliciously kill, maim, wound, injure, torture, or cruelly beat any horse, mule, cow, cattle, sheep, or other animal belonging to himself or another shall, upon conviction, be adjudged guilty of a misdemeanor". This Act, the first enforceable statute containing specific criminal

sanctions for animal abuse, was to be the forerunner of contemporary state animal welfare laws which remain remarkably similar in wording to Bergh's original draft.

On April 25, 1866, only six days after enactment of the Animal Welfare Act, a Brooklyn butcher was convicted in court and fined \$10.00 for piling tied calves and sheep into a cart. In the first twelve months of operation Henry Bergh and the ASPCA were to prosecute 119 persons and obtain 66 convictions for the mistreatment of animals.

Bergh was an athletic and yet a dignified man ideally suited for his mission. Bergh did not hesitate to use his impressive physical strength to bring a halt to the mistreatment of an animal. On a stormy evening in 1871 Bergh stepped in front of an overloaded streetcar pulled by two exhausted horses. A cursing driver ignored Bergh's admonitions, was lifted into the air, and tossed into a snow bank. Bergh unharnessed the horses and watched as enraged and startled riders walked off through freezing slush.

Henry Bergh was a zealot who worked from dawn to dark of each day seeking to halt animal mistreatment. The work of the ASPCA was supported largely with Bergh's personal funds. However, the continuous drain on Bergh's income forced him to seek additional sources of funds. In an attempt to gain publicity and support, Bergh arrested the captain and first officer of a ship which had kept turtles tied on their backs and without food for three weeks. Bergh's action was thought extreme and he became the subject of vicious newspaper editorials. Captioned the "Great Meddler", Bergh came under ridicule and scorn.

Henry Bergh originally envisioned the ASPCA as a national organization. However, realizing the Society's charter and jurisdiction were confined to New York State and faced with a shortage of funds, Bergh abandoned his plan for a national animal welfare program.

Despondent, ridiculed, and broke, Henry Bergh and his great crusade faced a bleak future when two important events occurred. First, Bergh was summoned to the death bed of a

French fur trader. The trader, having reflected upon the animal suffering which had enabled him to amass a fortune, decided to bequeath to the ASPCA the "small sum" of \$150,000. Shortly thereafter, the rescue of a kitten which had been unintentionally sealed behind the archplate of a new building turned public sentiment in favor of the ASPCA. The American humane movement was firmly established.

Bergh's efforts were to have a lasting impact upon the American humane movement. Drawing upon Bergh's experiences in New York, animal welfare organizations were independently established in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and California. By the time Bergh died in March, 1888 there were 33 animal welfare agencies in the United States and his own ASPCA had 15 state branches employing 230 workers.

Despite its laudable beginnings, many obstacles remained before the American humane movement. Plagued by a perpetual shortage of funds and dominated by strong-willed, aggressive moralists, humane societies were faced with internal disputes which led to the division and dissolution of several animal welfare agencies. In 1877 a national federation of animal welfare agencies was formed in an effort to bring unity and cohesiveness to animal welfare programs. In 1954 that federation was to experience a division which resulted in the formation of The Humane Society of the United States. The founders of The HSUS sought a

means of attacking national animal welfare problems which were beyond the capabilities of local societies or state federations. Assuming the role of the national animal welfare agency originally envisioned by Bergh, The HSUS spearheaded campaigns which led to federal humane slaughter and laboratory animal welfare legislation.

Today there are almost 2,000 local, state, and national animal welfare organizations in the United States. These groups are known by several generic names such as humane society, SPCA, animal welfare league, and a variety of other titles. Some agencies operate shelters and employ professional staff. Others operate out of private homes and continue to exist only because of the persistent efforts of dedicated volunteers.

Some societies are concerned primarily with the operation of shelters, others with cruelty investigations, and several concentrate on humane education. Although different in programs and structure these groups are bound by a common goal, the prevention of animal suffering.

While the American humane movement reflects upon its first century of service to animals during this Bicentennial year, some of the same cruelties against which Henry Bergh labored are still witnessed. Nevertheless, HSUS pledges to continue its endeavors so 1976 is truly the beginning of a new era for animals!

(Material for this article was gathered by Guy R. Hodge, HSUS Director Research and Data Services with the assistance of Massachusetts SPCA, ASPCA, and Pennsylvania SPCA.)

1936  
Livestock Loss Prevention Program established to reduce injury to livestock.

1954  
The Humane Society of the United States organized as a national individual membership society for animal welfare.

1958  
Humane Slaughter Law first signed requiring animals be rendered insensible to pain before slaughtering.

1959  
American Humane Education Society organized Project Braille.

1966  
Life Magazine article on the mistreatment of dogs by laboratory animal supply dealers. Based upon an investigation of the late HSUS staffer Frank McMahon, it generated more mail than any other Life article.

1966  
Laboratory Animal Welfare Act passed containing provisions to curtail pet thefts and provide minimum standards of care for animals intended for lab experiments.

1972  
Marine Mammal Protection Act enacted affording protection against abuse to marine mammals.

1974  
First meeting of pet trade representatives, breeders, humane groups, and veterinarians to examine the surplus dog and cat problems and to seek solutions.



First electric powered horse ambulance. Penn. S.P.C.A. 1910