HSUS Opens a European Office

The HSUS has opened a new European office in Bonn, West Germany. Headed by Bozy Driband, former HSUS director of federal legislative affairs, this office will concentrate on the European Parliament and the European Commission, which oversees legislation for its twelve member European countries. Ms. Driband will initially concentrate on tuna/dolphin issues, cosmetic testing on animals, and fur issues. The activities of this new office will be reported in a new department in the HSUS News, called "European Focus." With environmental and animal-protection issues becoming increasingly more global, this new office and magazine department offer us an opportunity to help shape laws on both sides of the ocean.

PRince Honors

THe dolphin could be described as a symbol of our deteriorating relationship with the Earth," explained Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, founder and president of the Bellerive Foundation. The prince's concern for other cetaceans led him to convene a major international symposium on whales and dolphins in captivity. "We are abusing our ancient friendship with the dolphin," he said. The Bellerive Symposium, held July 9 and 10 in Geneva, Switzerland, drew representatives from more than thirty conservation and animal-protection organizations, including The HSUS's Senior Vice President Patricia Forkan. The delegates discussed the detrimental effects of capture and captivity on cetaceans and, among other things, called for an end to all further captures of all cetaceans around the world.

A thirsty foal nurses from its dam shortly after Chincoteague mares and foals have been herded into the holding corral prior to the ponies' annual swim.

Chincoteague 1990

Improvements made in pony penning

For twenty long years, the HSUS has been monitoring the annual Chincoteague pony penning of the coast of Virginia (see the Fall 1989 HSUS News). During the last week in July, wild stallions, mares, and foals that reside on Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge are rounded up, penned inside holding corrals, then forced to swim the channel that separates the refuge from the mainland. Before crews of cheering spectators, the animals are paraded through town and penned at the fire company's carnival site. The day after the swim, newborn foals are separated from their dams and auctioned to the highest bidders.

The Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company owns the ponies and has a U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) permit allowing it to graze its ponies on the refuge. The HSUS has charged that the fire company does not provide the ponies with adequate care year 'round but only exploits them at auction time. With most foals selling for $500 and up, the fire company makes a sizable profit. HSUS investigators have observed a number of abusive practices at pony penning. The auctioning of foals too young to be weaned from their dams, encouragement of impulse buying by spectators who have no understanding of a wild foal's needs, and permitting the riding of wild nursing mares in a carnival attraction are annual problems.

In 1988 and 1989, however, several mares died during pony penning. After mares collapsed in 1988 with no veterinarian present, The HSUS was successful in getting a stipulation added to the fire company's grazing permit requiring a veterinarian to be in attendance during future pony penning. Despite that stipulation, when ponies collapsed during the 1989 round up, no veterinarian could be located.

Thanks to hundreds of letters written by HSUS members, this year the USFWS demanded that the fire company upgrade its care of the herd during pony penning. As a result, The HSUS saw real improvements at the 1990 pony penning. "For starters, the fire company enlarged the ponies' holding corral—the pen in which the ponies are held for two days before the swim," said investigator Gail Eskin. "The ponies aren't crammed inside that corral anymore, and they've got a shaded area where they can escape from the baking sun." The fire company also made water more accessible to the ponies and stationed a horse trailer at the corral site—"with a big red sign bearing the words 'pony ambulance'"—in the event an equine emergency arose.

Most importantly, however, the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company finally retained the services of a veterinarian during the entire six-day event. Not only did the veterinarian examine the ponies to determine which newborn foals should not be forced to swim the channel, but he also put an age minimum on foals to be auctioned. (While buyers could purchase foals less than three months old, those animals had to remain on the refuge with their dams until they reached that age.)

"The USFWS has informed us that the veterinarian is keeping an eye on the herd year 'round, even worming the ponies on a regular basis," said Ms. Eskin. "This is particularly important because these ponies live in a very harsh environment.

Last year the dead mares were found to be suffering from severe infestations of internal parasites; The HSUS and the veterinarian who performed the autopsies demanded that the fire company institute a better worming regimen.

"Of course, improvements at Chincoteague didn't happen because, suddenly, after sixty-four years of pony penning, the fire company realized it needed to be more responsible for the welfare of its herd," said Gail Eskin. "They happened because, with pressure from HSUS members, the USFWS threatened to cancel the entire pony penning event if the fire company didn't begin to clean up its act.

Despite some very positive changes, The HSUS will continue to monitor what remains a highly stressful event for all animals concerned.
Building Bridges to Medicine
HSUS, patient-advocacy groups talk

It's peace breaking out on the animal research front! Judging from recent outreach efforts of the HSUS Laboratory Animals Department, you might think there is a diplomatic solution to the animal research conflicts. In fact, year-long negotiations between HSUS staff and leaders in medicine and patient advocacy are beginning to bear fruit.

In early 1989, as polarization between patient-centered and animal-centered interest groups threatened progress in laboratory-animal protection, Laboratory Animals scientists held an olive branch. They offered their expertise in nonanimal research methods to professional medical societies and patient-advocacy groups. "At first they were skeptical of both our concern for human health and our understanding of biomedical research," recalls Dr. Brandon P. Reines, Laboratory Animals associate director. "But once they appreciated our sincerity and depth of knowledge, a few groups started listening."

Such outreach has helped the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), the Interstitial Cystitis Association (ICA) and others who are interested in alternatives to animal experimentation issue to bypass the experimental model and organized a relationship between the animal protection movement and organized medicine.

Based on the historical record, the HSUS told NAMI members that the prospects for discovering better drugs for mental illness are bright. The key is to inaugurate an alternative method of drug discovery known as "computer-assisted monitoring and postmarketing surveillance" (CPMS). This method uses computers to process data on the mood-altering side effects of drugs, from antihypertensives to antibiotics, already on the market.

The president of the American Psychiatric Association dismissed the HSUS proposal as animal-protectionist inspired, but NAMI President Thomas Posey suggested it "in spirit ignores all the methods we are exploring." NAMI, he said, is always interested in anything that might discover another 'tool' in our fight against mental illness and would be interested in further exploring your idea for CPMS.

Interaction between The HSUS and the American College of Sports Medicine has already paid off. The HSUS had originally contacted the ACSM in mid-1989 to criticize a particular sports medical research project on pigs. HSUS analysis of the potential for alternatives to the experiment intrigued the president of the ACSM, Dr. Barbara Drinkwater.

Dr. Drinkwater proposed that The HSUS help plan a special forum on alternatives to animal research for the 1991 annual conference of the ACSM in Florida. Laboratory Animals Department staff identified potential speakers who are experts on alternatives to sports medical research on animals, including computer simulation, clinical investigation, biomedical telemetry, biomechanical modeling, and in-vitro studies; Dr. Reines is scheduled to deliver the introductory address on the historical development of alternatives to animal research.

"I think it is time for moderates on both sides of the animal experimentation issue to bypass the extemists and look for areas where scientific and educational goals can be achieved with less reliance on the animal model." The HSUS hopes the event will mark the beginning of a relationship between the animal protection movement and organized medicine.

Testskin, a living skin equivalent, reacts to toxic substances much as does normal skin; HSUS describes such animal-est altematives to patient-centered groups.

In the meantime, it will continue to ignore resolutions passed yearly by the IWC that say that Norway's "science" will contribute nothing to the comprehensive assessment of whale stocks. ("Scientific" whaling conducted by Japan in the Antarctic was similarly condemned.)

Several important political actions were taken at a resolution passed calling on the IWC scientific committee to prepare a report on the status of small cetaceans, one positive first step toward bringing the plight of these animals to the world's attention. Another adopted resolution called on nations to use nonlethal means to conduct research. This was another desecration of "scientific" whaling, which kills whales in order to study them. The HSUS is particularly concerned about finding humane alternatives to the totally unacceptable explosive harpoon. There is no real way to kill whales humanely, a major reason why The HSUS objects to whaling.

One of the gratifying aspects of the 1990 IWC meeting was evidence of worldwide support to continue the moratorium. In the United States, Congress unanimously passed a resolution calling for zero catch in the future, with a voice vote to the growing international chorus condemning whaling by adopting a resolution supporting the moratorium and criticizing any efforts to overturn it.

The formation of the Global Cetacean Coalition last December, at a meeting hosted by The HSUS, certainly contributed to this outpouring of support. Coalition member groups in more than twenty countries are working for the moratorium.

We must now begin to lay the groundwork for the next year's meeting, to be held in Iceland. The Icelandic government, by offering to act as IWC's host, could be hoping for a diplomatic climate more favorable to its views. The world's citizens must insist that their governments stand firm for whales regardless of where the IWC meets. U.S. citizens must continue to make their wishes known to President George Bush, who can use trade sanctions to keep the whalers from resuming their bloody activities. We will all be ready for an even tougher attack on the moratorium next year.