ban on the commercial importation of wild birds to the United States by introducing another bill, H.R. 5013, the Wild Bird Conservation Act. H.R. 5013 would limit or prohibit imports of exotic birds when necessary to ensure that exotic wild bird populations are not harmed by the trade and that exotic birds in trade are not subject to inhumane treatment. The HSUS is part of a coalition represented at a House hearing held June 16 on H.R. 5013 and a Senate hearing on July 31.

The bill was approved by two House committees in July and was passed by the full House on August 11. Sen. Max Baucus of Montana will introduce another bill, H.R. 5013, in the Senate. The HSUS will be exploring avenues to strengthen the Wild Bird Conservation Act as it moves through the Senate.

REGIONS REVIEW

NEW ENGLAND

SPAY/NEUTER BILL IS LAW

Connecticut Gov. Lowell Weicker has signed a bill instituting a low-cost spaying and neutering program for dogs and cats adopted from Connecticut municipal pounds after July 1, 1994. This landmark legislation, which parallels a New Jersey program that the HSUS was instrumental in passing (see above), creates a self-sustaining program that will reduce not only uncontrolled breeding of pets and the consequence of rabies, but also the euthanasia of companion animals and the cost of municipal animal control. The legislation entitles an adopter of a dog or cat from a municipal pound to have the animal spayed or neutered and receive rabies and presurgical inoculations for $10. Funding is provided, for the most part, by a license-differential fee for unsterilized dogs.

The bill is the fruit of seven months’ work by a coalition of state and national animal protection groups. After its first meeting at the New England Legislative Forum last fall, the coalition grew and continued to work together. Essential to passage was support from Rep. Mary Mushinsky; her commitment and guidance at key points were invaluable.

ALLIGATOR CASE INVESTIGATED

The American alligator has been protected under the federal Endangered Species Act since 1973. The alligator’s status has recently been changed to threatened because of an increase in the species’ population. The case is under investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. Any information regarding this incident should be directed to those agencies.

MID-ATLANTIC

"RABIESGATE" IN NEW JERSEY

In May representatives from animal-protection groups, animal shelters, and kennel clubs, as well as private citizens, marched in front of the New Jersey statehouse to protest the health department’s mishandling of the state Animal Protection Control (APC) Fund. The APC Fund was created expressly to provide low-cost spaying and neutering, through a model program with participating veterinarians, for pets of people on public assistance and pets adopted from shelters. The program was totally funded by a surcharge of $3 on dog licenses.

At least $600,000 was transferred from the APC Fund to the Rabies Trust Fund. Agricultural Director Nina Austenberg said that “the health department did not have a lot of money for the rabies trust fund.” Instead of $600,000, the APC Fund was required to develop more stringent space requirements for exhibition animals; and development of more stringent guidelines for the humane handling and care of exhibition animals.

HEARING HELD ON EXHIBITION ANIMALS

On July 8 the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Department Operations, Research, and Foreign Agriculture held a hearing on the treatment of animals in exhibition, such as in zoos, aquaria, and circuses, and on the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

John W. Grandy, Ph.D., HSUS vice president, Wildlife and Habitat Protection, presented strong evidence documenting the USDA’s inability to enforce effectively the regulations of the AWA in zoos, circuses, and traveling acts. The evidence included specific cases in which exhibition animals suffered and, in some instances, died due to inhumane treatment. The HSUS recommended establishment of a blue-ribbon advisory committee, including representatives from the animal-protection community, to review and recommend improvements in relevant regulations; establishment of more stringent licensing standards for animal exhibitors; development of more specific space requirements for exhibition animals; and development of more stringent guidelines for the humane handling and care of exhibition animals.

On July 30 The HSUS and other organizations met with USDA Assistant Secretary for Marketing and Inspection Services Jo Ann Smith and other USDA staff to discuss further the need for stronger enforcement of the AWA regulations for exhibition animals.

In July the HSUS documented the USDA’s lax enforcement of the AWA for exhibited animals, such as these African lions.

More than a decade has passed since Congress, in amendments to the Lacey Act, required the secretary of the DOI to “prescribe such requirements . . . necessary for the transportation of wild animals and birds under humane and healthful conditions.” The act states that “it shall be unlawful for any person, including any importer, knowingly to cause or permit any wild animal or bird to be transported to the United States . . . under inhumane or unhealthful conditions.”

On June 17 the DOI issued the long-awaited regulations governing such transport. The regulations govern care, food and water requirements, handling, temperature and ventilation requirements, enclosure size, and vehicle-stocking density. Issuance of the regulations had been held up since 1965 by the pet industry and other animal traders who profited from animal imports despite the trade’s tremendous mortality rates.

The HSUS and other organizations successfully sued the DOI in 1988 for not issuing the regulations in a timely manner. The regulations became effective September 15, 1992.

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The City of Cameron, Missouri, founded the Nevada Humane Society, offered a grant for the purpose of hiring an evaluation team headed by Nicholas Gilman of the HSUS Companion Animals section. The team spent four days touring the area and will submit its recommendations soon.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture has made it possible to get Noble County, Ohio, to comply with animal laws that mandate humane housing and treatment of stray dogs by the county government itself, it was reported to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the state auditor’s office. The USDA is still investigating the matter and the state attorney and attorney general are maddeningly cautious.

The Great Lakes program coordinator Robin Weinrich met with the county prosecutor and later with the puppy-mill owners. After considerable negotiation, she obtained an agreement from the owners to surrender all animals and refrain from future breeding and selling of animals, in Indiana and elsewhere. Seventy-one dogs were removed in the last phase of this rescue and immediately transferred to shelters willing to take them in for potential adoption.

The Great Lakes region. Particular circumstances led the Great Lakes office staff to conclude that surrender of the more than 225 animals by the owners would be a better course of action than pursuit of criminal animal-neglect charges based on the facility’s extreme overcrowding and poor living conditions. Great Lakes program coordinator Robin Weinrich met with the county prosecutor and later with the puppy-mill owners. After considerable negotiation, she obtained an agreement from the owners to surrender all animals and refrain from future breeding and selling of animals, in Indiana and elsewhere. Seventy-one dogs were removed in the last phase of this rescue and immediately transferred to shelters willing to take them in for potential adoption.

The Northern Rockies office has been monitoring the U.S. Bureau of Land Management’s wolf and bison adoption programs. We inspected the animals offered for adoption upon their arrival in Billings, Montana; the properties of potential adopters; and the trailers for transportation at adoption days for both horses and burros. We are also researching the viability of using wild burros to deter coyote predation in sheep flocks.

We recently investigated the death of a wild horse on the Pryor Mountain National Wild Horse Refuge. The horse had become entangled in a barbed-wire fence near a remote natural spring. His body was discovered months later by a park visitor on horseback.

Although the death was accidental, barbed wire should not have been used in the area of the spring. The Northern Rockies office is coordinating several work days for volunteers to remove miles of old barbed-wire fencing and fence posts from horse-management areas.
Nine felony charges were brought to light by an auditor Charlene Drennon.

CONFERENCE IN APRIL A SUCCESS

More than 150 people attended the “Animal Welfare: Outlooks for Success” conference sponsored by the Gulf States Regional Office and the Texas Federation of Humane Societies April 23-25, in Austin, Texas. Workshops addressing search and seizure and the psychology of cruelty, as well as mock trials, were very popular. Workshops concerning nonprofit administration, grant writing, and newsletters were well attended by board members, executive directors, and shelter managers from the area.

More than 315,000 horses were slaughtered for human consumption in 1991.

A mare and foal in Texas await shipment to slaughter, more than 315,000 horses were killed for human consumption in 1991.

In Texas, the Gulf States office is investigating the interstate shipment of horses destined for slaughter to determine the care these animals receive in transit. Also of concern is theft of horses, many of whom end up in slaughter plants. State Sen. Ted Lyon is expected to introduce legislation to curtail horse theft in Texas.

GERALD JOHNSON

In Arkansas, Gulf States regional director James Noe and Rick Evans of the humane society of Pulaski County have met with Gov. Bill Clinton’s staff to discuss the need for minimum operating standards for animal shelters across that state. The HSUS is optimistic that needed changes will take place in the very near future.

In Louisiana, Legislation in Support of Animals has successfully pushed through a bill that criminalizes wrestling-bear acts in the state. The new law provides up to a $500 fine or six-month jail penalty for those convicted.

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If these changes are not made, we will seek to end all exploitation of the ponies.

HORSE Slaughter, theft are problems

More than 315,000 horses were slaughtered for human consumption in the United States in 1991.

Of twelve U.S. horse-slaughter plants, four operate in Texas. The Gulf States office is investigating the interstate shipment of horses destined for slaughter to determine the care these animals receive in transit. Also of concern is theft of horses, many of whom end up in slaughter plants. State Sen. Ted Lyon is expected to introduce legislation to curtail horse theft in Texas.

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