

The Next Time Disaster Strikes Animals Won't Be Left Behind



Care for a border collie. ©THE HSUS



Save the turtles! ©THE HSUS

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina revealed that planning for pets during disasters was woefully inadequate at every level of government. Authorities refused to allow evacuees to bring their pets to safety, and thousands were abandoned by owners fleeing the rising floodwaters.

When Congress turned its attention to the issue in a post-Katrina assessment, we provided guidance for the introduction of the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) bill to ensure adequate planning for moving companion animals out of harm's way.

From drafting the bill to launching a major national media campaign for its passage, The HSUS led the way and the PETS Act was signed into law in October.

In state capitals across the country, we also successfully pushed for stronger measures to protect pets. In addition to a resolution in New Mexico and new laws in California, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont addressing planning for companion animals during disasters, Ohio and South Dakota passed laws allowing the establishment of pet trusts to ensure that animals will be cared for after their owners die. Alabama, Delaware, Rhode Island, and Utah strengthened spay/neuter laws, bringing the total to 31 states that now have pet sterilization requirements for shelters.

A series of cruelty cases involving large numbers of domestic animals kept The HSUS busy throughout the year. They included the largest cat hoarding incident in Idaho's history with nearly 500 felines—emaciated and suffering from parasites and diseases—rescued from filthy trailers. A kitten mill holding more than 300 animals was also uncovered in the state.

We also helped rescue nearly 60 dogs being kept in squalid livestock trailers in Oklahoma. Our testimony in this case was instrumental in securing six felony counts of animal cruelty against the perpetrators.

In our collective effort with local authorities and humane groups, volunteers wearing hazmat gear rescued some 300 dogs from filthy, cramped wire cages at a Tennessee puppy mill. Many of the dogs had spent their entire lives having little contact with people or other animals. After veterinary examinations, we helped transport the dogs to an emergency clinic and shelter where they found—for the first time in their miserable existence—ample food and water, soft bedding, and space to stretch out.

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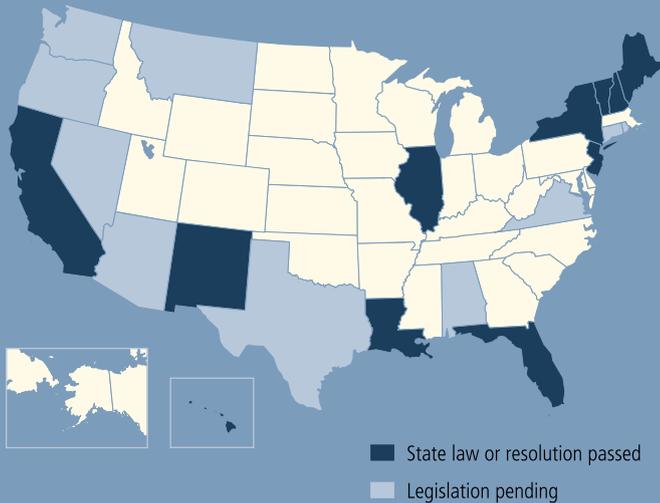


“It’s a horrible feeling when you look a dog in the eye who needs your help but have to walk away because, legally, there is nothing at that moment that you can do. It’s

incredible when you figure out a way to help, and looking the same dog in the eye, say, ‘I’m back girl, let’s get you out of here.’”

—Stephanie Shain, Director of Outreach, Companion Animals

States with Laws or Pending Legislation on Pet Disaster Plans (as of December 31, 2006)



Putting Puppy Mills Out of Business

Supporting the vital work of local animal shelters—finding new homes for unwanted dogs and cats and providing pet owners with the knowledge they need to prevent them from relinquishing their animals in the first place—has always been an HSUS priority. Today, we increasingly target the source of millions of homeless companion animals in the United States, the mass commercial breeding operations known as puppy and kitten mills.

This industry puts profits above the welfare of the animals, who are often kept in horrific conditions

and bred repeatedly without any hope of ever leaving their cages. Puppies and kittens produced often develop severe physical and behavioral problems. Many end up in shelters, adding to the problem of what to do with the nation's 6–8 million unwanted dogs and cats, half of whom are euthanized.

We hammered away at this wretched industry in 2006, helping to draft and lobby for the federal Pet Animal Welfare Statute (PAWS), which would close a loophole allowing puppy mills that sell dogs over the Internet to avoid oversight. The HSUS President and CEO Wayne Pacelle testified in favor of the bill, which also included an import restriction that would prevent puppy mills in Eastern Europe, Asia, and other regions from exporting dogs under six months old into the United States for commercial sale.

The foreign puppies, shipped to the United States in the chilly cargo holds of airliners, are most marketable at three months or younger. At that tender age, their immune systems are weaker and the animals are highly vulnerable to diseases and other threats.

While the measure did not receive floor action in 2006, we are using the support we built to ensure the momentum continues and action is taken in the 110th Congress—for the good of people and especially for the good of the dogs.

Care for Those in Greatest Need

Owners of pets and working animals in impoverished rural areas at home and abroad often have little or no access to veterinary care or the

resources to pay if care is available. But our Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAVS) program brings to disadvantaged communities free veterinary treatment, spay and neuter surgeries, and owner education programs. At the same time it provides invaluable training for veterinary students who we hope will carry on this humane work throughout their careers.

During 2006, the RAVS team:

- Provided more than 31,000 free treatments with a total estimated value of more than \$1.1 million. They included surgeries, emergency care, and preventive medicine services to animals in underserved rural communities in the United States, Latin America, and the Pacific Islands
- Conducted clinical training in surgery, anesthesia, and animal protection for more than 900 volunteer veterinary students
- Developed a formal Web-based curriculum and testing program for veterinary student volunteers
- Entered into an agreement with Mississippi State University to develop a RAVS program for the Mississippi Gulf Coast
- Offered animal-owner education on 12 Indian reservations and in 17 Appalachian communities

Rural Area Veterinary Services—2006

Communities	45
Clinic Days	143
Number of Treatments	31,528
Estimated Value of Treatments	\$1,104,843
Number of Animals Helped	8,646
Volunteers	909
Veterinary Students	653
Veterinarians	102
Veterinary Technicians	75
Veterinary Technician Students	5

