EVEN AS THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER BEGAN to spill over its banks in June, few anticipated the Great Flood of '93. Before subsiding, the floodwaters would build into the greatest natural disaster in the history of the Midwest, demolishing homes, fragmenting communities, leaving behind the homeless and the helpless—including thousands of animals.

As the floodwaters rose, The HSUS focused on protecting the flood region's animals. Our experience with natural disasters—most recently, Hurricane Andrew—had taught us that animals' needs are often overlooked in the midst of pressing human needs. HSUS North Central Regional Director Phil Snyder began calling animal shelters, animal-control agencies, wildlife experts, and others along the Mississippi's route in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois to ask if they needed help. Everyone appreciated the call but couldn't foresee the impending calamity. When HSUS Midwest Regional Director Wendell Maddox started contacting those involved in animal work throughout Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri, the consensus was that the situation seemed manageable.

As the Mississippi continued to overflow, however, the Missouri River and other smaller waterways approached flood level. Messrs. Snyder and Maddox set out for the flood area. While Mr. Snyder traveled through southern Illinois, Mr. Maddox set out for Davenport, Iowa, beside the Mississippi River.

Early in July the staff of Davenport's Scott County Humane Society knew the flood would hit their facility. They prepared to relocate more than a hundred animals—a move to foster homes, others to temporary shelter at the Iowa Fairgrounds. When water from the Mississippi crept over the shelter's parking lot, they moved the animals out. Eventually the entire

SAVING ANIMALS FROM THE FLOOD
A HSUS consultant worked the phone in Kansas City, and Leavenworth, Kansas; Lexington, Richmond, St. Charles, St. Moines, Keokuk, and Muscatine, Iowa; and other areas and agencies in greatest need. While the flood areas spun out of control. Overtaxed levees broke. Normally quiet and gentle streams raged. Suddenly eye-level. Dogs ex-hausted by swimming were stranded. Rescuers tried to huddle together in mud. They attempted to save themselves and their animals, making their job of helping animals even more difficult.

Attempts to rescue wildlife presented special problems. When The HSUS met with employees of Missouri’s Department of Natural Resources, we agreed with them that, in general, unobserv ed animals probably fare as well, or better, without human intervention. Nevertheless, we were notified of several fawn stranded on a levee south of St. Louis, three HSUS Task Force members participated in a rescue attempt, complete with helicopters and boats, involving, among others, Missouri and Coast Guard personnel. Unfortunately, the fawns continually eluded capture, racing up and down a long stretch of levee. Finally, agreeing that the fawns were in more potential danger from the levee than from the floodwater, the HSUS was told the fawns’ condition would be monitored and the fawns would be rescued if their safety was threatened.

Everyone on the HSUS Task Force agreed that the stranding shown by the flood region’s residents; animal-protection organizations and animal-control agencies inside and outside the flood zones; organizations charged with human-relief efforts, including the Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and the Coast Guard and the National Guard. Mr. Snyder was especially grateful to Coast Guard crews, who provided generous assistance and demonstrated extraordinary concern and perseverance in rescuing animals, some of whom they offered to adopt.

By the second week in August, rescue workers had found shelter for most of the animals they were able to rescue.

For humane organizations in the flood area, the next challenge will be reunite pets with their human companions, many of whom no longer have homes, and find new homes for displaced animals. Many of the animals trapped by the flood are suffering from respiratory, skin, and gastrointestinal problems—brought on by contact with the floodwater—and will need medical care. More than six shelters have been destroyed or at least temporarily relo cated, making their job of helping animals even more difficult.

The HSUS will continue to counsel local shelters and animal-control agencies during the flood’s aftermath. By working together, we can speed the recovery of numerous animals who suffered in the disaster and help shelters be better prepared for disasters to come.