Black Beauty Ranch. Fanny was loaded onto a forty-five-foot truck by Ed Novack, an animal-transport expert with a history of many flawless elephant transfers. Farrny, a sixty-year-old female African elephant, was one of the ranch's residents. Animal sanctuary personnel familiar with elephant behavior believed Conga and Fanny would be compatible.

In January 1993 we mailed our Rhode Island members an Action Alert calling for the zoo's relocation to a suitable sanctuary. In July Mr. Ribaudo reiterated the offer to Pawtucket mayor Robert Metivier and expressed our willingness to assist in finding suitable new homes for the other animals as well. In January 1993 we mailed our Rhode Island members an Action Alert calling for the zoo's relocation to a suitable sanctuary. In July Mr. Ribaudo reiterated the offer to Pawtucket mayor Robert Metivier and expressed our willingness to assist in finding suitable new homes for the other animals as well.

In May the committee chose Black Beauty Ranch in Murchison, Texas—a 620-acre animal sanctuary run by the Fund for Animals—as the most suitable new home for Fanny. Black Beauty Ranch had recently relocated the zoo's animals, and Director James Noe visited Fanny in July and found her doing well. On a healthier diet, she has already lost some excess weight. She and Conga socialize daily. As related by Christopher Byrne, manager of Black Beauty Ranch, within minutes Fanny and Conga began sharing hay and intertwining their trunks.

Three weeks later Slater Park's Himalayan bears were removed for transport to Wildlife Images Rehabilitation and Education Center, a sanctuary noted for expertise in caring for bears. Fresh apples are spread before one of the bears. Although the bears now enjoy a healthy diet, it could be years before they are no longer overweight. Conga. As related by Christopher Byrne, manager of Black Beauty Ranch, within minutes Fanny and Conga began sharing hay and intertwining their trunks.

Two Himalayan bears from Slater Park Zoo settle in at their new home, Wildlife Images Rehabilitation and Education Center. A sanctuary noted for expertise in caring for bears. Fresh apples are spread before one of the bears. Although the bears now enjoy a healthy diet, it could be years before they are no longer overweight. Conga. As related by Christopher Byrne, manager of Black Beauty Ranch, within minutes Fanny and Conga began sharing hay and intertwining their trunks.

Three weeks later Slater Park's Himalayan bears were removed for transport to Wildlife Images Rehabilitation and Education Center. Located in Grants Pass, Oregon, this animal sanctuary is noted for its expertise in caring for bears. With the assistance of two veterinarians, the bears were placed in separate ventilated cages for the cross-country journey. Tragically, just five hours' distance from Wildlife Images, the male bear was found dead in his cage. The apparent cause of death, as later determined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Forensic Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon, was acute failure of the pancreas induced by poor diet, obesity, and the stress of transport. The two female bears reached Wildlife Images safely. Three weeks later Slater Park's Himalayan bears were removed for transport to Wildlife Images Rehabilitation and Education Center. Located in Grants Pass, Oregon, this animal sanctuary is noted for its expertise in caring for bears. With the assistance of two veterinarians, the bears were placed in separate ventilated cages for the cross-country journey. Tragically, just five hours' distance from Wildlife Images, the male bear was found dead in his cage. The apparent cause of death, as later determined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Forensic Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon, was acute failure of the pancreas induced by poor diet, obesity, and the stress of transport. The two female bears reached Wildlife Images safely.

Mr. Ribaudo and Gulf States Regional Director James Noe visited Fanny in July and found her doing well. On a healthier diet, she has already lost some excess weight. She and Conga socialize daily. Mr. Ribaudo and Gulf States Regional Director James Noe visited Fanny in July and found her doing well. On a healthier diet, she has already lost some excess weight. She and Conga socialize daily.

Randall Lockwood, Ph.D., HSUS vice president, Educational Initiatives, formerly oversaw the activities of all regional offices to the Pawtucket City Council. During the next several months, the council reviewed various reports and recommendations. The difficulty of finding a new home for Fanny, and officials' reluctance to lose her as an attraction, delayed definitive action. Meanwhile we began searching for new homes for Fanny and the bears. In June 1992 John W. Grandy, Ph.D., HSUS vice president, Wildlife and Habitat Protection, wrote to the city council. He repeated HSUS objections to conditions at Slater Park Zoo and conveyed our offer to pay for Fanny's relocation to a suitable sanctuary. In July Mr. Ribaudo reiterated the offer to Pawtucket mayor Robert Metivier and expressed our willingness to assist in finding suitable new homes for the other animals as well.
undomesticated state). The African Basenji is a local natural dog that has, more recently, been selectively bred in the West to propagate and exaggerate certain traits, such as curled tail and wrinkled forehead. Village dogs in the Andes, East Africa, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere show the natural dog’s typical form: body weight of forty to seventy pounds; short, smooth coat varying in color from grayish brown, tan, or red to pitted, brindled, or entirely white; long, strong, and graceful limbs; deep chest and narrow waist; almond-shaped eyes ranging from gold to deep copper; ears either erect or pointed or slightly folded (never heavily pendulous like a cocker spaniel’s) and, long tail, curled slightly upward.

Generations of rigorous natural selection, ensuring survival of the fittest, underlie the natural dog’s adaptiveness. The natural dog’s haunches are well muscled, for speed. The front paws are extremely flexible, giving a catlike dexterity. The front dew claws can be used, like thumbs, to hold and manipulate objects. An extremely intelligent, alert, and agile animal, with superbly developed senses, the natural dog combines the best qualities seen in various dog breeds. Possessing what geneticists call hybrid vigor, the natural dog is generally healthier than purebred, which repre­resents a far less varied gene pool.

Propagating traits such as extreme size or flattened face requires the breeding of closely related dogs, since those traits naturally occur only rarely. The resulting in-breeding increases the likelihood of genetic disorders in the offspring. Propagating even seemingly minor changes in body size or shape can profoundly affect dogs’ overall health and well-being. Exaggerated chest depth, abnormally lengthened back or shortened legs, and other unnatural characteristics cause health problems in purebred dogs.

Veterinarian Wayne H. Riser, who has studied the health problems that result from human interference with the dog’s genetic integrity, notes: “Dogs that have the same skeletal proportions, slow maturity rate, and comparable muscle mass and development as the ancestral dog have fewer orthopaedic diseases. The incidence of orthopaedic abnormalities increases as the dog’s characteristics vary from ancestral type.” Orthopaedic disease is relatively rare in natural dogs; generally their trunk, head, and legs are well-proportioned and, as mentioned earlier, their body weight lies within the forty- to seventy-pound range. The more a dog’s body weight lies outside this range—exceeding what his/her musculature and bone structure can support—the greater the dog’s risk of orthopaedic disease, most notably when the body weight is above ninety-five pounds or below fifteen.

Natural dogs are able to live and multiply in the wild, and in villages and towns, as solitary or pack hunters and scavengers. Female natural dogs are indig­ental, protective moth­ers. The males, usually larger and more powerful, often have a furem of three or four females. This nuclear pack has its own hunting and scavenging range and a home territory, often closely guarded, for resting and for raising pups. Adoles­cent males generally roam increasingly far from the natal pack, especially when food is scarce. If such roaming males survive in territory between neighboring packs, they may form their own nuclear pack. Tem­porary packs usually consist of several males following a female in heat. When a domi­nantly-males and females sometimes accompanied by a subordinate male) stays with one or more females, a more permanent nuclear pack is established. Generally, the more stable the nuclear pack, the healthier its members.

Pack stability is ordinarily ensured when humans allow the dogs to scavenge within the neighborhood; it is further enhanced when a human family or individual regularly provides the dogs with food and water. The dogs quickly learn not to kill or in­jure domesticated animals, such as chicken­s and sheep. They also defend their ter­ritory from intruders, including dogs new­ly arrived from other territory. When village dogs are well cared for, they have no need to roam far in search of food. This reduces the chances that, while foraging or hunting in the jungle or bush, they will acquire a communicable disease—such as rabies, distemper, or mange—and transmit that disease to hu­mans, domesticated animals, or wildlife.

In less industrialized countries, natural dogs bring clear public-health and environ­mental benefits to the human community. As hunters they control the number of disease-carrying “pests.” As scavengers they keep the environment clean. Village nat­ural dogs eat such organic waste as discard­ed food and human excrement, even keep­ing human infants clean by licking them. Through their digestive processes, natural dogs transform human pathogens, such as potentially harmful bacteria, into harmless by-products. In poor communities that lack sewage and garbage-disposal ser­vices, these dogs play an important public-health role.

Natural dogs also readily adapt to living with humans and domesticated animals if they are raised in such an environment from puppyhood. Natural dogs become very protective of their adoptive human “pack,” including the family’s territory and property. They play with and guard young children, protect livestock, and, in the jin­gle or bush, hunt and roam with men and boys a lot for food or tend live­stock. Indirectly, natural dogs may even benefit other free-living animals by scan­ning them away from the fields and live­stock of farmers who would retaliate for any damage done.

Yet, natural dogs remain widely feared. While some people befriend them, even take them into their homes, many react to the dogs’ presence with indifference or ac­tion. Hostility. When free-roaming dogs suf­fer a rabies epidemic, for example, vil­lagers often respond by clubbing, spearing, or stoning any sick dogs, including those who are not necessarily rabid. Like other prejudices, the negative attitude toward natural dogs arises from ignorance. Fifty years ago Mahatma Gandhi noted that lack of compassion for India’s roving dogs re­flected human “ignorance and lethargy.” Although natural dogs may seem paragons of self-sufficiency, within human environments they often have difficulty subsist­ing. When war, drought, or famine afflicts the human community, the natural-dog community also suffers. In some societies the dogs may be eaten. Subsidized rabies and distemper vaccinations, routine anti­parasite treatments, and effective birth control are needed to help free-roaming dogs whose circumstances cause them to suffer.

Natural dog look-alikes can be found from Detroit to Delhi, Rio to Rome. Any­one looking for a good canine companion should visit his/her local animal shelter. Natural dogs, and those who resemble them, have excellant temperaments, pro­vided they have been socialized and not abused. I can virtually guarantee that, at any shelter at any time, you will find at least one such dog waiting to be adopted into a loving home. With a little experience or advice, you can easily pick out an adult or puppy with the exemplary traits of the mixed-breed natural dog.

Michael W. Fox, D.S.C., Ph.D., B. Vet. Med., ARCVS, is HSUS vice president, Farm An­imals and Bioethics; he has studied natural­dog communities in several countries.