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 due to stress of transport. The two female bears were placed in separate ventilated cages just five hours' distance from 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 due to stress of transport. The two female bears were placed in separate ventilated cages just five hours' distance from Wildlife Images.

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. As related by Christopher Byrne, manager of Black Beauty Ranch, within minutes Fanny and Conga began sharing hay and intertwining their trunks.

"Today few cities are getting into the zoo business," says Richard Farinato, HSUS director of captive wildlife, "and many of them will be looking to get out—for the same reasons that existed at Slater Park. A zoo is a luxury item in the budget." He points out, however, that many "Slater Parks" remain. Of the 1,600 animal exhibitors licensed by the USDA, only 160 are AAZPA-accredited zoos; of the remaining 1,440 exhibitors, nearly 200 are municipally owned zoos.

Ultimately, public zoos are the responsibility of their respective communities, which determine whether or not a zoo will close and where any displaced animals will go. Even so, the Slater Park Zoo experience shows that, working together, animal advocates can convince communities to close, even halt, "business as usual" at facilities that exhibit animals. Most of the zoo's animals have now been moved to facilities better-equipped to meet their physical and psychological needs. Fanny and all the other animals relocated from Slater Park have the chance for a better life. We hope that other municipal zoos will stop to reassess how they care for animals.
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 buff; 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 and 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 super-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 purebreds, who represent 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 range of forty to seventy pounds. 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 indulgent, protective mothers. The males, usually larger and more powerful, often have a harem 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 their new territory from intruders, including dogs new to the area, they may form their own nuclear pack. Temporary packs usually consist of several males following a female in heat. When a dominant male (generally 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 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, human infants clean by licking them. This reduces the chances that, while searching for food, dogs will come into contact with 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 jungle or bush, hunt and roam with men and boys to forage for food or tend livestock. Indirectly, natural dogs may even benefit other free-living animals by scaring 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 ac­tive hostility. When free-roaming dogs suffer a rabies epidemic, for example, villagers often respond by clubbing, spearing, or stoning any sick dogs, including those that are not necessarily rabid. Like other prejudices, the negative attitude toward natural dogs arises from ignorance. Fifty years ago Margrit Gans wrote 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 environs they often have difficulty exist­ting. When war, drought, or famine afflicts the human community, the natural-dog community also suffers. In some societies the dogs may be abandoned. 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, where he/she will likely find a nonthreatening dog that resembles a natural dog. And those who resemble them, have excellent temperaments, provided they have been社会化 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.

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