Disease Threatens WI Deer

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) in Wisconsin’s deer herd has emerged as a serious threat to deer and a big public worry over the past several months. First found in a Mt. Horeb herd, this insidious disease threatens to spread throughout the state and decimate the deer population. Similar to mad cow disease, CWD is a nervous system illness affecting deer and elk. CWD attacks the brains of deer and causes emaciation, abnormal behavior, loss of bodily functions, and eventually death. That much is known. However, it is not known how to cure the disease or how it spreads. How CWD found its way into Wisconsin is also a mystery, although a very popular theory is that deer and elk imported into the state for game farming or canned hunts may well have introduced it to Wisconsin’s wild herd. The fact that very little is known about the disease makes dealing with it much more difficult.

After talking with their counterparts and other professionals in some western states that have been dealing with CWD for a number of years, the Wisconsin continued on page 4

CSRO Leads Effort to Stop Animal Fighting

Animal fighting will not be tolerated in our state. This is the strong message newly formed task forces in Illinois and North Carolina are sending. CSRO has facilitated the formation of these task forces, and regional director Phil Snyder heads the steering committees in both states. Task force members include animal care and control professionals, members of law enforcement, prosecuting attorneys, judges, legislators, health and environmental officials, educators, and members of the media. According to HSUS figures, Illinois and North Carolina rank among the top five states in animal fighting activity. The HSUS estimates that at least 45,000 people fight dogs or attend dog fights each year nationally.

Task force priorities include the training of law enforcement and judiciary officials, increasing legislative efforts, educating the public, and addressing the overwhelming issues that shelters often face when animals used for fighting are confiscated.

Animal shelters often face an insurmountable task of providing safe, humane care and treatment for fighting animals confiscated during a police raid. There are many public safety, health, liability, financial, and humane issues involved. Animals often must be kept as evidence for months, even years, by a local nonprofit agency or government-funded shelters. These are dangerous animals because of selective breeding and the vicious methods used to train them. They cannot safely be placed in foster home care. Caring for confiscated animals can and often does drain a local shelter’s resources, both financially and emotionally.

A strong connection between organized animal fighting and other serious crimes has been documented nationwide. In addition to animal abuse, animal fighting activities often go hand in hand with illegal drugs, gambling, and firearms. Most disturbing, perhaps, is the fact that children are often brought to these events. Being exposed to such brutality can promote insensitivity to animal suffering and an enthusiasm for violence.

The task forces are launching public awareness and educational campaigns targeting elected officials, the media, schools, and community groups, including neighborhood watch. They are using press releases, public service announcements, exhibits at state conferences, and other effective educational tools.

Animal fighting has been increasing steadily nationwide for several years. Offenders may include professionals, hobbyists, and gang-related street fighters in inner cities. The agencies that make up these task forces have worked to combat the problem individually. Now with the formation of task forces, our efforts will be continued on page 2
Disaster Update

attended, including staff from Shelby County Emergency Management and a field veterinarian from Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Also present were representatives from the American Red Cross and the Mid-South Disaster Animal Rescue Team, which is ready to be activated to assist animals in time of disaster.

CSRO is also leading an effort to update the Illinois Animal Disaster Plan, which was originally written after the Mississippi River flood of 1993, and was enacted as an official component of the state’s emergency management plan in 1997. The coalition participating in the plan’s revision seeks to create an effective and flexible plan and educate the public and animal organizations about its importance. And in Minnesota, the state disaster planning coalition has completed a model county animal disaster plan and is now at work on a state plan.

The National Conference on Animals in Disaster, sponsored by The HSUS, was held in early summer in Fort Worth, Texas. It offered more than 25 workshops on such critical disaster preparedness issues as lessons from September 11th, the threat of foreign animal disease, eqine issues, and problems facing commercial food producers. Attendees included animal control and county human society staff, emergency managers, and other government officials.

CSRO Program Coordinator Lynn Mooney recently led a two-day workshop in Memphis, Tennessee, on animals in disaster. Many people continued from “Animal Fighting,” page 1

 Legislative Update

CSRO actively pursues effective legislation that creates a more humane environment for animals. The 2002 legislative sessions in our region saw some important victories for animals. For more information about the animal-related bills pending or recently passed in all 50 states, you can check www.hsus.org/legislation.

Minnesota

There were a number of wildlife and companion animal bills this past legislative session. But few passed. In the upcoming session, CSRO will continue to watch issues involving canned hunts, deer and elk farming, exotic animals, bears, and wolves. Of course, with the entire Minnesota Legislature up for election, the retirement of some key legislators, and the election of a new governor, CSRO will have to assess the new make-up at the capitol and what it means for animals.

Wisconsin

Two key bills were signed, including—

- The Captive Wildlife Bill, which addresses, in part, canned hunts, animal health, and other wildlife issues. The bill contains a mix of provisions both animal friendly and unfriendly.
- Special Session Bill 1, addressing chronic wasting disease in deer, was a major policy legislation that committed $4 million to stopping the spread of the disease (see page 1).
- The writing of regulations also kept CSRO busy this session, with our office participating in the formulation of wolf, captive bear, and pet facility regulations.

As in Minnesota, the November elections may bring change, and there is a governor’s race and an election for all assembly members and half the senate.

Illinois

There were several newly passed laws, including—

- The prohibition of the creation, possession, receipt, or sale of any depiction of animal cruelty.
- A general sexual assault bill that includes provisions making bestiality a felony.
- Needed technical revisions to the Humane Care for Animals Act.
- An increase in penalties for injuring or killing a police animal.

Tennessee

Tennessee saw the passage of three new laws:
- Aggravated animal cruelty is now a felony in the state.
- Enforcement of puppy mill regulations has been modified, with initial funding borrowed from the spay/neuter license plate fund.
- The word “appearance” was added to the list of issues about which a neighbor cannot sue a factory farm.

Kentucky

A piece of pending legislation, HB 863, would make bestiality a felony. Measures passed involve—

- Replacing the phrase “guide dogs” with “assistance dogs,” broadening the number of service dogs protected under law
- Creating a pet-friendly license plate with funds going to the Animal Control and Care Fund.

North Carolina

An animal welfare committee is reviewing that state’s animal laws, which may result in much needed new legislation being filed in the next session.

CSRO Brings Much-Needed Clinics

This past May, HSUS staff worked with Reservation Animal Control Officer Mark Sekulich to coordinate the first spay/neuter and education event for the Leech Lake Ojibwe Reservation in northern Minnesota. The program was a cooperative effort, combining the talents of four licensed veterinarians and 22 veterinary students from across the country. The veterinary volunteers spayed or neutered nearly 275 animals during the 10-day visit. Additionally, a number of horses received basic veterinary services such as de-worming and vaccinations, and more than 350 animals received life-saving vaccines, worming, and minor medical procedures. This clinic is part of The HSUS’s exciting new program Remove Area Veterinary Services (RAVS), which provides spay/neuter and vaccination services to companion animals living in poor, rural communities and on Native American reservations. Recently, HSUS staff have developed and introduced a humane education component to the spay/neuter clinics held on the reservations.

Some native communities report that dog bites sometimes total into the thousands yearly. By respecting each community’s unique culture, and working together with tribal leaders, HSUS regional staff are able to tailor an education program for each community that delivers the message of animal care and compassion to pet owners and non-owners alike.

“The interest, understanding of the issues, and appreciation shown by the reservation residents made this endeavor fulfilling,” said CSRO’s Arnold Baer. “And the dedication of the veterinary and student staff completed a great week for the people and companion animals of the reservation.”

CSRO staff have worked hard to bring this critical program to the region, with eight RAVS clinics currently planned through 2002. With your help and continued support, we can begin to expand this life-saving service to other reservations. For more information on the program, or to see how you can become a volunteer, contact CSRO.

Continued from “Animal Fighting,” page 1

With the threats of terrorism and biological attacks still fresh in the minds of all Americans, animal owners everywhere are realizing the necessity of being prepared for the worst. CSRO is continuing to train organizations and individuals to plan for disaster.

CSRO Director Phil Snyder and Program Coordinator Lynn Mooney recently led a two-day workshop in Memphis, Tennessee, on animals in disaster. Many people
Most of us probably have at least one dog or cat, and our animals are part of the family. We love them and would do most anything for our pets. But how many of us think about what we are doing for other animals as we go about our everyday lives? Through our national campaigns, The HSUS strives to help those animals who may not be as visible as companion animals in the public eye.

Circuses: The Big Lie Behind the Big Top

Campaign focuses on the abuse suffered by performing animals. Circus animals are shipped in trucks and railway cars without heat or air conditioning, during months of travel on the road. Confined in small cages with limited veterinary care and maintained on insufficient diets, they live chained up, barely able to turn around. Trainers may use cruel methods involving clubs and sharpened hooks to coerce the animals into performing. Watching wild animals perform unnatural tricks outside their natural habitats teaches nothing about the animals.

The HSUS campaign Bucking the Myth educates the public about the cruelties inherent in rodeo. Contrary to the myth perpetuated by the rodeo industry, rodeos don’t educate people about ranching skills. In fact, rodeo events have been created specifically for public entertainment. Animals don’t live on ranches cared for by the contestans but are rented from stock contractors where, far from the range, they spend most of their lives in cramped quarters, often without proper medical care. Broncs and bulls are made to buck by being prodded with electric devices. In calf roping and steer wrestling, the animals are roped around the neck and jerked to the ground. They are frequently injured and sometimes killed.

By refusing to patronize events that promote animal abuse as entertainment, you can make a difference. By writing letters to newspaper editors, educating store personnel who put up promotional signs, and discouraging friends and neighbors who plan to attend, you can better the lives of performing animals.

Halt Hog Factories is just one of The HSUS’s campaigns to help livestock on factory farms. The traditional storybook farm is virtually a thing of the past. The vast majority of livestock are subjected to intensive confinement systems, where the greatest numbers of animals are raised in the smallest possible space at the lowest possible cost, to maximize productivity and profits for huge corporations. Detriment to the environment, human health, and rural communities are other costs of factory farming. When you purchase only humanely raised meat and dairy products, you send a message to retailers that you care about the humane treatment of animals. Or consider a vegetarian lifestyle; you may improve your health by helping animals and the environment at the same time!

It only takes a small effort to positively affect the welfare of animals. For more detailed information about these and other HSUS campaigns, contact CSRO, or check our Web site at www.hsus.org/campaigns.

Promoting the protection of all animals