SERO Fall 1986

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POUND SEIZURE: NEEDLESS SUFFERING WE MUST STOP

Thousands of former pets are sent from animal shelters every year to research facilities. This practice, known as “pound seizure,” is widespread throughout the southeast and is of major concern to The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Animal shelters that release dogs and cats for research fail to fulfill their most important objective. They are charged, first and foremost, with the obligation to provide a humane sanctuary for lost, stray or owner-relinquished pets. They have the responsibility to prevent or abate animal suffering. If an animal shelter is unable to return or adopt a lost pet, then the shelter is morally bound to provide the animal with a painless death by humane euthanasia.

Pound seizure is not an acceptable alternative to euthanasia. It does not prevent suffering and death. Too often, it simply assures that the pet will suffer before it is ultimately killed.

Ethically, using former pets for experimentation is a sad betrayal of the special relationship existing between humans and pets. Dogs and cats, having shared our homes and affections, are neither physically nor emotionally conditioned to the pain and trauma of lab research. They are our companions, helpers, and protectors—not research tools.

The scientific community itself questions the suitability of pound animals for research. The National Institutes of Health, the largest single funding agency in the world for medical experimentation, prohibits the use of pound or “random-source” animals for its own in-house research projects. Many prominent scientists have publicly stated that experimentation on pound animals can produce unreliable or invalid results—data which fails to advance the goal of protecting human health and draws erroneous conclusions that may endanger our well-being.

Good scientific methods require the strict control of variables. The use of shelter animals with unknown genetic, environmental or medical histories is as inappropriate for accurate evaluations as using rats from the town dump for cancer studies.

Why, then, are pound animals used in research? The answer is simple. Strays and former pets are cheap and abundant. During 1985, the University (continued on page 2)

This unidentified dog was lucky enough to end up in loving, caring hands. Many untagged pets suffer the cruel fate of being picked up by animal control and later released to a research laboratory.

Legislative Update

The Animal Protection Act of Georgia will regulate and license pet dealers and operators of kennels, stables, and animal shelters. Each licensee shall be responsible for providing humane care and treatment for all animals in his/her possession. Other requirements included are sanitary conditions, adequate ventilation, and proper nutrition.

A new Florida law now gives all counties the authority to enact animal cruelty/animal-control ordinances and issue citations for violations.

Another new law elevates the penalty for killing or aggravated abuse of registered horses and cattle to a second-degree felony.

The Animal Fighting Act of Florida was amended to ban cockfighting and coursing (the practice of training greyhounds with live animals). After working for ten years to stop these brutal practices, humanitarians are delighted to see both made felonies.

South Carolina has become the fiftieth state to specifically prohibit dogfighting. While the recently passed felony law was originally drafted to prohibit all types of animal fighting, legislators loaded the bill with several exemptions. Cockfighting will still be considered a lesser crime, resulting in mere $100 fines. Bear baiting, a particularly loathsome “sport,” may still be legal as the new law exempts “bear baying.” Several legislators were adamant that their fellow South Carolinians be allowed to continue this and other odious hunting games.
of Florida acquired nearly 2,000 dogs and cats from nearby shelters in Jacksonville and Clay County. The animals were used for a variety of medical and psychological experiments and for student teaching. The university's veterinary school, for example, supplied students with live dogs on which to practice life-saving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) techniques. After each dog was used, it was killed for post-mortem examination to determine if the procedure was done correctly. Sadly, this use of living dogs was completely unnecessary. A much better alternative for CPR training is a computerized mannequin dog, called Resusci-Dog, which provides students with instant evaluation of their technique. Because it is reusable, it can replace hundreds of living animals. But despite its clear advantages and modest cost, the veterinary school did not use Resusci-Dog until one was presented as a gift from the Florida Federation of Humane Societies.

We are not willing to wait until researchers voluntarily abandon the practice of conducting experiments on un- derage pets. The HSUS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) is active in all local and statewide campaigns to ban pound seizure and we will keep on fighting as long as this despicable practice continues.

The HSUS is Working to Achieve the Solution

When our office opened in Tallahassee in January 1988, there were six animal-control facilities in Florida sending animals to research laboratories. Nearly 10,000 former pets were annually shipped to several universities for experimentation and practice surgery. Today, there is only one county animal shelter, Hillsborough, which continues to do so. That is the sole remaining target in Florida to abolish pound seizure in Florida.

There are no laws in the southeast that require veterinarians to return animals to owners or sell them to researchers. It is simply a matter of local option. Therefore, pound seizure must first be viewed as a community problem, and successful opposition is largely dependent upon local ac- tivism. Our task is to heighten public awareness among the citizenry and to properly focus growing concern.

Take, for example, the case in Jacksonville. Several months ago SERO was contacted by Marjorie Angelo who had only recently learned that her local animal-control department sent unclaimed dogs and cats to the laboratories of the University of Florida. Angelo wanted to unite all opposition and form a grassroots lobby and pro-cockfighting politicians.

In 1976, while working as a cruelty in- vestigator for a local animal shelter, I encountered my first case of cockfighting in Florida. I was shocked, almost beyond belief that this malicious blood sport was not specifically illegal. In fact, cockfighting pits in some countries were issued occupational licenses to operate openly and legally. They even collected state sales taxes.

The following year, I investigated and attempted to prosecute a game, hound trainer for using live jackrabbits in a bloody training exercise called coursing. The racing dogs were turned loose in a large fenced enclosure to chase, kill and dismember the rabbits. This case, too, never went to trial, partly as a result of previously unsuccess- ful attempts at criminal prosecu- tion. One judge in another county had ruled that greyhound coursing did not violate the state's anti-cruelty law because, in his opinion, the jackrabbits were not animals; they were rodents.

Even though I left Florida to join The HSUS headquarters staff in 1977, I remained interested in getting thousands of people and dozens of groups, but it always seemed the massive greyhound lobby and pro-cockfighting politicians found ways to defeat the legislation.

Since my return to the glorious south, I have worked to get coursing and cockfighting anti-ex- perimentation and the HSUS. Angelo wanted to unite all opposition and form a grassroots lobby and pro-cockfighting politicians.

Passengers on S.S. Norway crowd on deck to see Flo and demonstrators against Norway's refusal to stop whaling.
**Around the Region**

- **ALABAMA**—The Birmingham Humane Society and the Alabama Federation for Animal Welfare hosted a day-long cruelty investigations workshop on May 31, 1986. SERO director Marc Paulhus was the program instructor. Participants learned how to professionally investigate, document, and prepare an animal abuse case for court. Also, since Alabama has only recently been included in the geographical area serviced by SERO, the meeting gave Paulhus the opportunity to become acquainted with animal-welfare leaders from across the state.

- **FLORIDA**—In April, SERO attended a seminar entitled “Survival of the Florida Panther—A Conference on the Issues.” After two days of sessions, it was obvious that a great many obstacles face the twenty or so endangered panthers existing in the wild. Chief among these are habitat encroachment, vehicular kills, inbreeding, disease, and starvation. Some experts contend that the panthers on public lands are severely malnourished due to excessive deer hunting. Since deer are the preferred prey species for panther, an obvious solution would be to restrict deer hunting in areas of the Fakahatchee Strand and Big Cypress Preserve. Powerful pro-hunting groups, such as the Florida Wildlife Federation, oppose such restrictions, making state and federal wildlife agencies reluctant to impose stricter limits on deer kills.

- **SOUTH CAROLINA**—In a state long held to have some of the most archaic attitudes toward living creatures, bear-baiting, coon-on-a-log contests, and other vicious activities in which wildlife is tormented for amusement are still taking place. Long prohibited in virtually all other states, these blood sports regularly take place in backwoods locations. SERO pledges to prosecute these crimes under existing laws, if possible, and to work statewide with animal-protection leaders to enact new and tougher laws during the upcoming legislative session.

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**Reflect for a moment....**

**HOW CAN I HELP ANIMALS EVEN WHEN I NO LONGER SHARE THEIR WORLD?**

By your bequest for animal protection to The Humane Society of the United States.

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Name __________________________
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Mail in confidence to Murdagh S. Madden, Vice President/General Counsel, The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

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The Humane Society of the United States is a charitable, tax-exempt, national animal-welfare organization with headquarters in Washington, D.C., regional field offices, and an education center in Connecticut.

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