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Update

Vol. 1, No. 4
1973

USDA GOES REGIONAL

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has realigned its Veterinary Services field structure into 19 area offices covering the entire country. These offices will replace the current 47 field offices through which USDA administers its Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

The purpose is to make APHIS animal health programs more responsible to the needs of the livestock industry and the public through more effective use of manpower. Included is the realignment of veterinary biological field activities as an integrated part of animal health activities.

The restructuring seems to be a healthy move and it affects HSUS activities insofar as they relate to laws or regulations administered by USDA. We recommend therefore that you get in touch with the local USDA office and find out the exact location of the new area office which covers your regional territory. It is not too early to make them aware of your presence and your work in the field of animal welfare.

CHANGE IN THE PRIBILOF ISLANDS SEAL HUNT

The International North Pacific Fur Seal Commission has announced an international ban on the commercial taking of seals from St. George's Island in the Pribilofs. The ban, which could last as long as 15 years, is purportedly to enable the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to make a study into the seals' real diet makeup and show if, indeed, they are as much of a threat to commercial fishing as is so often argued by the fishing industry and, especially, Japan.

We are happy about any reduction in the numbers of seals taken annually in the Pribilof Islands hunt. It must be noted, however, that the ban affects only St. George's Island. St. George accounts for only about 15% of all the seals taken in this so-called annual harvest. The major harvest area is on St. Paul's Island where the remaining 85% of seals are taken. We feel strongly, therefore, that we must continue to protest the hunt and the clubbing and other violent methods sometimes used in taking the animals.

LEAD SHOT PETITION LODGED WITH INTERIOR

The HSUS and the National Parks and Conservation Association have filed a petition with the U.S. Department of the Interior that would require the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife to outlaw use of lead shot in migratory bird hunting by June 15, 1974. (Lead shot kills an estimated 4% of North American migratory waterfowl populations through poisoning after shot is eaten as supposed food.)

The petition urged that iron shot be substituted for lead shot and the official commitment be made by a notice of proposed rule making in the Federal Register. This would place manufacturers and users of lead shot on notice. The petition also provides for public notice of the change and an opportunity for public expression of views and comments.

The joint HSUS-National Parks petition was filed under the authority of the Administrative Procedure Act which, among other things, requires federal agencies to allow interested parties to petition for issuance, amendment, or repeal of a rule in the Code of Federal Regulations.

1973 HSUS NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

We hope that regional offices will do everything possible to promote attendance at this year's annual Conference. As you know, it will be held on October 19-21 in Atlanta, Georgia and its theme will be "Of Men, Animals, and Morals".

It may help you to know that Ashley Montagu will probably be the keynote speaker. He is an anthropologist and an able, challenging, and dignified speaker. He is also somewhat of a television personality in that he appears fairly frequently on network talk shows.

Also, a tea with Amanda Blake is scheduled for 4:00 p.m. on October 18 and a film and lecture by Roger Tory Peterson for 8:00 p.m. that same day. We are hopeful that many people will be interested in this kind of activity and in meeting such well known personalities.

Help promote attendance by talking about the Conference in all of your contacts. Further, make sure that all letters written by your staff to humanitarians contains an invitation for the addressee to attend.

THE ANTI-RODEO CAMPAIGN

Latest development in the anti-rodeo campaign is the introduction of two bills in the Colorado Legislature relating to cattle roping exhibitions and performances involving the roping and busting of animals. HSUS has advertised for the bills and against certain rodeo events in the Denver Post and the ads have begun to draw considerable support for our position. Since we are attacking rodeo in the heart of rodeo country, we are much encouraged by the response.

To help this effort and, in general, our crusade against cruel rodeo events nationwide, we have developed a "Special Report On Rodeo" which will be sent to people making inquiry. This report was taken from the excellent and authoritative study made by Bob Bay and his associates, so you can depend upon its accuracy. A preliminary copy of the report is enclosed and, after you review it, please send us an order for the number of copies you think you can use.

John Hoyt is testifying on the Colorado bills on April 30 before the State Affairs Committee of the Colorado Senate. We are enclosing a copy of John's testimony for regional offices only since we don't have enough copies to go around at this particular time.

NEW ANIMAL CONTROL PROGRAM

Don't be discouraged because you have not yet received the new ordinance and other material relating to animal control discussed at the Regional Directors' meeting. Because of some changes in the ordinance (nothing major, however), we have not had the time to do the necessary rewriting and retyping. The material should get to you probably by the end of May.

"WHY PROTECT ANIMALS?"

The film, "Why Protect Animals?", has just received a first place award at this year's U.S. Industrial Film Festival in Chicago. It is a high honor since that festival is one of the top four in the country. It means also that the film will be plugged in some of the trade publications which, of course, is much to our advantage.

The film, incidentally, is also moving ahead on bookings. A considerable number of prints is currently circulating among television stations.

An interesting sidelight is that the International Rodeo Association requested a print from Alpo and the producer, Walter J. Klein Company of Charlotte, North Carolina. Both requests were passed along to us. Knowing the real purpose behind the IRA's request, we politely declined to supply a print at this time.

HSUS POLICY - EUTHANASIA

- Q. What does The HSUS recommend for euthanizing animals?
- A. Injection of sodium pentobarbital by a qualified veterinarian or trained technician.
- Q. If a society cannot afford a veterinarian and has no one trained in the technique of using a hypodermic needle - or if state or local law forbids anyone other than a licensed veterinarian to do this - what do you recommend?
- A. Installation of a properly constructed carbon monoxide chamber with water filter and stationary, properly maintained and constantly checked engine. This is relatively inexpensive to construct and HSUS is always happy to help with suitable plans and specifications. Carbon monoxide, however, is only our second choice.
- Q. Do you recommend the carbon monoxide method to municipal officials for their local animal control program?
- A. Yes, but only if the officials will not go along with the recommendation that sodium pentobarbital be used.
- Q. What about the oral administration of sodium pentobarbital?

A. This can be done by a layman, of course, and is sometimes used for euthanasia. The pentobarbital can be disguised in a ball of canned dog food for dogs or can be administered as one would administer any other oral drug. Physical administration is best for cats as their keen sense of smell and taste will usually prevent them from taking the drug in food, even when they are hungry. The effect is generally humane, but we feel oral administration of this drug is best used only for sedation as a pre-euthanasia technique.

Q. Do you recommend the so-called "high altitude" or "decompression" chamber?

A. We do not. There have been too many complaints about the effects of decompression on animals from animal shelters using this equipment. While the theory of death by decompression seems good, it is clear that the equipment in use and being manufactured does not accomplish humane destruction as is often claimed. We do not feel that the clean bill of health given this method by the American Veterinary Medical Association was the result of adequate study and investigation of how these machines are used in animal shelters. Our own experience with the method is extensive and raises very serious questions about its humaneness. Of course, it must always be borne in mind that the decompression chamber is better than such archaic measures as the clubbing of animals to death.

Q. What about electrocution?

A. It is humane when properly done and when the equipment is kept in good repair. Generally, however, it calls for pre-anesthetization by tranquilizer or other sedative to minimize fear in the animal. With electricity, of course, there is always present an element of danger to the operator. Generally speaking, therefore, we no longer encourage use of this method.

Q. One hears of animals being shot to death in rural communities to dispose of them. What does HSUS think of that?

A. Although obviously unaesthetic, shooting can be humane if it is done properly. The bullet must penetrate the cranial vault and travel into the brain. To find that spot for fourfooted animals, visualize an imaginary line from one ear (at the base) to the opposite eye. Repeat this for the other ear and eye. Where the two lines cross is the approximate brain center. (Note that the old claim of "shooting between the eyes" is not correct.)

Shooting should not be recommended as a continuing method of euthanasia. Too often it leads to animal control officers shooting at dogs on the run. This should not normally be done. We examine its merits here only because it is sometimes necessary in emergency cases (especially with larger animals) in field work to save an animal from suffering by dispatching it in this manner.

Q. Is any new research being done on euthanasia methods?

A. Yes. Research is now being done on a nitrogen gas flushing unit that holds good promise. Nitrogen is nonexplosive, nonflammable, odorless, colorless, and fairly safe for the operator. Further, its use is both economical and humane. We are hopeful that something concrete will be forthcoming from this research before the end of 1973.

GENERAL COMMENT ON EUTHANASIA

In dealing with euthanasia and the millions of surplus cats and dogs that constitute one of our major problems, it is good to bear in mind that the problem has literally forced the humane movement to abandon the welfare of each individual animal and to adopt as its principle "the elimination of suffering is more important than the preservation of life". We don't especially like being put in this position. It is an unsatisfactory and unhappy application of the highest principles of animal welfare, but yet the only manageable one for such a difficult problem. And we must remember that it is only defensible if, concurrently, we are doing all we can to persuade the public not to let pets breed. Under no other circumstances can the harsh necessity of putting millions of animals to death every year be justified. From our standpoint, this is the important message we should try to get across to all who come to us for advice and information on animal euthanasia.

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