Felony Cockfight Bust Under New Penn. Law

While most Americans were relaxing on the Fourth of July weekend, a cockfight was about to commence in Pottsville, Penn.

Flags lined the small town’s main street. The hot summer sun began to make the undercover vice detectives staked out along the way very uncomfortable. Crammed into the back seat of a small car, MARO investigator Henry Brzezinski, also undercover, sat next to an old-time cockfighter. Brzezinski knew that state police were tailing them by helicopter and by car.

The previous night, troopers from the Pennsylvania state police vice and narcotics unit from Reading, Troop L-Reedsville, the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, and Luzerne County met with Brzezinski and agents of the Luzerne County SPCA to finalize details of the investigation.

After months of surveillance, planning, and strategy meetings with the Luzerne County SPCA, Brzezinski was now participating in the first major cockfighting bust under the new and more stringent Pennsylvania law of 1987. Prior to 1987, Pennsylvania imposed only a $300 fine or 30 days in jail for convictions for cockfighting. The new law takes a much tougher stance, levying a term of 7 years or a $15,000 fine and making cockfighting a felony of the third degree.

For more than two hours, Brzezinski and his companions were tailed along winding roads deep into the mountains. Brzezinski continued on page 2

Gamecock fighting paraphernalia such as these needle sharp gaffs (inset) were seized during the July 4 raid, the biggest cockfight raid to date under the new felony law.

Pennsylvania Pigeons Are Sitting Ducks

Live pigeons rather than clay disks are being used as targets in many pigeon shoots held at approximately 15 gun clubs and parks in Pennsylvania. At some localities, contests are held and cash prizes awarded. Some gun clubs stock live pigeons at all times, while others import the live targets for specially arranged shoots.

Guy R. Hodge, director of data and information services for The HSUS and a native of Pennsylvania, testified on May 26, 1989, before the members of the judiciary committee of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania on H.B. 696, introduced by Rep. George Saurman. Another important witness scheduled to testify for the bill was forced to send testimony rather than appear in person due to threats of physical damage to her family. Among the compelling and gruesome testimony, a note of hilarity was struck when the target shooters claimed to provide a public service by eliminating these disease-carrying birds from city streets where they are a bane to urban continued on page 3
had earlier acquired a map showing the fight location under the pretext of helping choose the site for the event. Provided with marked money, Brezinski insinuated himself into the close-knit circle of young handlers and old-time cockfighters and was allowed entry to the fights. Throughout the brutal rounds, barbecue and corn roasted over a pit, giving a picnic atmosphere to the proceedings.

Spectators and handlers gambled on both the “hack” fights and the “derby” fights that followed. Young children were engrossed in the action around the fight pit; some were even placing bets. The fighting gamecocks raked and punctured each other with needle sharp gaffs. Even when the birds were exhausted, their handlers would place them beak to beak to encourage further combat. Not only were many losing gamecocks killed, but many winning birds were, too.

The new law imposes a term of 7 years or a $15,000 fine for cockfighting.

The HSUS praised U.S. Secretary of Interior Manuel Lujan for recommending an end to all international trade in ivory. Lujan said he will recommend that the elephant be placed on the more restrictive Appendix I listing of the Convention on International Trade In Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), raising it from its present Appendix II classification. The CITES conference in October 1989 will decide the fate of the African elephant.

The HSUS, leading a coalition of animal-protection and conservation groups, petitioned the U.S. Department of Interior in February to upgrade the status of the African elephant—dies endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Lujan agreed to review this reclassification as well as make his CITES recommendation.

“We are delighted that Secretary Lujan agrees that the elephant is in dire straits,” said John A. Hoyt, president of The HSUS. “Ivory poachers have decimated whole herds of these magnificent creatures for the commercial ivory trade. Secretary Lujan’s recommendation allows the United States to be a leader in saving the elephant.”

“The Interior Department’s support for an end to the commercial ivory trade is critical,” said Dr. Susan Lieberman, associate director of wildlife and environment for The HSUS. “No trinket is worth the death of an elephant or the extinction of a species.”

Bats are very beneficial to mankind; they eat great quantities of insects. Many people do not realize that bats are beneficial—they eat great quantities of insects. Unfortunately, because of common myths and apprehension caused by negative publicity regarding rabies, bats have always had a bad reputation.

The discovery of rabies in bats in 1953 brought about a strong reaction to their presence in a house. In fact, outbreaks of rabies in a house colony very seldom occur, and only an occasional outside bat is infected.

The MARO was recently alerted by the Southeast Regional Office about a product advertised as Bat-Skat, and a descriptive brochure was obtained by investigator Henry Brezinski. Bat-Skat mutilates and kills by catching bats with barbs that hook into their wings. The brochure goes on to state, “the bat plays itself out and hangs folded up ready for disposal.” Alternatively, if the bat flaps until it pulls the hook and leader loose, it flies off with the hook and dies of starvation because “its ability to fly and obtain food is greatly impeded.”

After writing the New Jersey Dept. of Health, the MARO obtained an opinion from the New Jersey Division of Fish, Game, and Wildlife that Bat-Skat would be illegal if used in New Jersey. We are attempting to have it declared illegal in other states. Guy R. Hodge, director of The HSUS’s department of data and information services and an expert on many nuisance wildlife issues, is working with the New York State Department of Health to obtain a ruling.

Each year many cruel pest-control products appear on the market. The MARO will continue to monitor and work to end the use of such inhumane devices. If you should have questions or concerns about any pest-control products, please feel free to call the MARO.

Not only were many losing gamecocks killed, but many winning birds were, too, for “not performing properly” in the derby and hack fights held that day.
Gallo Introduces Double-Hull Tanker Legislation

Rep. Dean Gallo introduced legislation to the House requiring double hulls on all newly constructed tankers and other vessels carrying oil and hazardous materials in U.S. waters. The recent devastating oil spill in Alaska, which caused tragic loss of wildlife and irreparable damage to pristine shore areas, has sparked renewed concern in this bill, according to Gallo.

“The cost of natural and commercial destruction far outweighs the added investment in double-hull vessels,” he explained. “The issue of federal requirements for double hulls has been hotly debated several times in the past, and decisions were made not to require them. I believe that the Alaskan spill and its aftermath require us to fully consider this issue once again.”

A double hull provides a margin of safety between the outer skin of the vessel and the cargo. In a double-hulled tanker the size of the Valdez, the oil-containing compartments would have been six feet above the point of impact with the reef in Prince William Sound. An internal Coast Guard study presented in August to the Senate Commerce Committee concluded that 25-60 percent less oil would have spilled if the Valdez had been built with at least a conventional double bottom.

Pigeons continued from page 1

residents. Asked why they would allow children at their shoots to actually handle these supposedly disease-carrying birds, they replied that the children wore surgical masks and rubber gloves. Investigators for The HSUS have witnessed the contempt and this claim was greeted with sustained laughter.

The pigeon suffers from an unfounded reputation as a pest. The birds are actually beneficial to the urban environment, scavenging the streets for garbage that would otherwise attract rats. Most diseases attributed to pigeons are so common in nature, so rare in humans, or so mild in their symptoms that attempted control of the birds is pointless and futile, according to Hodge.

Animal-protection organizations are renewing their efforts to have H.B. 696 brought up for a vote on the floor of the House. If passed, the bill will be referred to the Senate, which must vote before the legislation reaches Gov. Robert Casey for his signature. Now that the lawmakers have organized their summer recess, the MARO has launched efforts to convince House Majority Leader Robert O’Donnell of Philadelphia to schedule a vote as soon as possible. To convince legislators to vote for H.B. 696 (we will need 103 votes in the House for passage); to begin contacting senators to encourage them to vote for H.B. 696 when it comes before that body.

All legislators can be reached at the following address: The Honorable, State Capitol, Harrisburg, PA 17120. (717) 787-2121 (switchboard).

Attention educators! The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) needs to hear from you by November 1, 1989, so that you can join educators from as many as sixty-five countries all over the world to unite your students in the international children’s campaign “Helping Hands for Pets.”

Oscar nominee River Phoenix of Running on Empty, Stand by Me, and The Mosquito Coast fame is serving as international honorary chairman for “Helping Hands for Pets.” “‘Kids need something to believe in’,” states River Phoenix. “‘Helping Hands for Pets’ encourages kids to believe in themselves and their world neighbors, to believe in the power we have to make this world a better place for all people and animals.”

“Helping Hands for Pets” will culminate in worldwide displays of children’s banners in cities, villages, marketplaces, and schools on May 7, 1990, International “Helping Hands for Pets” Banner Day. This coincides with the first weekday of the thirty-fifth anniversary of Be Kind to Animals Week. The banners, made by children from Boston to Bangkok, will feature each child’s handprint, symbolizing the need for helping hands for our best friends—the dog and cat. Pet overpopulation is the worst problem facing our four-footed friends; and the children know that together, with hands joined in compassion, commitment, and love, we can eliminate pet overpopulation.

As part of the campaign, and in preparation for the worldwide banner display, children from around the world will engage in many classroom activities.

• Children will learn about pets and how to help them through fun-filled, innovative lesson plans provided to teachers at no cost. The lessons include many hands-on activities, including computer programming, model building, play-acting, singing, and much more.

• Children will write letters for the international goodwill pen pal exchange. From December 1989 to June 1990, children will correspond with another classroom of children, perhaps from across the world, who are also participating in the campaign.

• Lastly, children will prepare their banners. In the United States, the banners will be sent to regional representatives, who will sew them together to form multiple gigantic superbanners as part of the display on May 7, 1990. But that’s not all! On May 7, children will further take part in the display by wearing paper handprints on their shirts, as well as children in the USSR, Great Britain, Colombia, South Africa, Japan, Australia...every corner of the world. Children will learn that their small hands are big enough to make a difference, even in today’s world.

“Helping Hands for Pets” is jointly sponsored by The Humane Society of the United States and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the HSUS counterpart in Great Britain. Joining in participation are the more than 200,000 members of the Kids in Nature’s Defense (KIND) Club and the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC), comprised of approximately 10,000 clubs in the United States in addition to clubs in 40 nations. The GFWC clubs will be celebrating the GFWC centennial anniversary in 1990 by making special “Helping Hands for Pets” banners.

Educators are the key to the success of “Helping Hands for Pets.” “Teachers and other youth leaders can receive, at no cost, a ‘Helping Hands for Pets’ poster. On the back of the poster are lesson plans for grades one through six and directions for participating in the goodwill pen pal exchange and the banner project. In addition, all organizations and classes participating in the making of the super-banners will receive a “Helping Hands for Pets” certificate. Please write to HSUS ‘Helping Hands for Pets,’ 67 Salem Road, East Haddam, CT 06424. Requests must be received by November 1, 1989, to allow classes time to participate in the goodwill pen pal exchange.”

Contact: Patty Finch, NAAHE Director, The Humane Society of the United States, 67 Salem Road, East Haddam, CT 06424: (203) 434-8666, Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST.

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When I was young, on a hot summer’s day we would walk to the train and go to Coney Island. We brought along our towels, blankets, bags of sandwiches, and thermoses of juice. The sandwiches, usually egg-salad or peanut-butter and jelly, were wrapped in wax paper and carried in a large paper bag. The beach was clean, and the water was cold. The sandwiches were usually hot. When we walked back to the train, sandy and sunburned, we usually stopped at Nathan’s for a cold juice served in a glass with the famous green logo.

Over the years, my family started using plastic containers, plates, and cups. It was easier than carrying home the glass soda and milk bottles. We went to fast-food places where the styrofoam boxes were used for just a few minutes to hold our food. I used disposable diapers for the children, and we started to use the dryer rather than the summer sun to dry the blankets.

Now the beaches are strewn with plastic sandwich bags, six-pack holders, and plastic bottles; the ocean is full of waste, oil, and plastic. There is no place for the garbage. Burners and landfills are the hot topics at town meetings.

What we did not realize when we first started using these new conveniences was that these containers would never leave our environment. There is an old Pennsylvania Dutch saying, “We don’t inherit the land from our ancestors, we are borrowing it from our children.” I would add, “...and from the animals.” And now the land we’ve borrowed has become damaged almost beyond repair.

We at the Austenberg homestead are making serious changes in our life-styles because of the garbage crisis. If all of our regional and national members did the same, surely we could begin to repair this Earth that supports us all.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

MARO will hold its 16th protest against deer hunting at the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge on December 7-9, 1989. Last year, more than 60 people turned out in snow and bitter winds to face the hunters on opening morning. Pro-hunt demonstrators also appeared to show their support for the hunt. Even though some protesters may think the effort futile, counter demonstrations by the hunters show the opposition is getting nervous.

**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, your will can provide for animals after you’re gone. Naming The HSUS demonstrates your lasting commitment to animal welfare and strengthens the Society for this task. We will be happy to send information about our animal programs and material that will assist in planning a will.

Please send will information to:

Name _________________________________
Address ________________________________
City __________________ State __________
Zip code __________

Mail in confidence to: Murdough S. Madden, Vice President/General Counsel, The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

The Regional Report is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States Mid-Atlantic Regional Office Bartley Square, 270 Route 206 Flanders, NJ 07836 (201) 927-5611 Nina Austenberg, Director

MARO serves the states of New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. The office operates Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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