Veal and Swine Farm
Deaths Investigated

Responding to a report in mid-April that 28 veal calves had been found dead behind a barn in Richford, Vt., NERO Program Coordinator Frank Ribaudo investigated and discovered that the calves, part of a franchised veal-calf farming operation, had died over a six-month period. Ribaudo also uncovered evidence of the widespread use of antibiotics to keep the nearly 100 veal calves on this farm from getting sick while being raised in small stalls and in almost total darkness.

The owner of the veal farm had started his operation following the federal government’s dairy-farm buy-out program several years ago. He attributed this high calf-mortality rate to his inexperience in the business, and local officials did not file charges against him.

While investigating the veal-farm deaths, Ribaudo was asked to assist officials with a major farm-cruelty case.

Upon entering Hog-Heaven, a swine farm in Highgate, Vt., authorities discovered 21 dead pigs among the 139 living in overcrowded pens. Many of the animals were eating the carcasses. One pig suffering from a broken leg had to be euthanized by a veterinarian. Ribaudo noted that “there was no food available. It looked like the farm had been abandoned.” He photographed the live and dead animals as evidence of cruelty, for legal purposes.

Swine-farm owner John Reynolds was charged with 21 counts of cruelty for letting his pigs starve to death. Reynolds reportedly told local authorities that, since he couldn’t make enough money raising the pigs because of low pork prices and high grain prices, he had to choose between shooting the pigs and letting them starve. Reynolds plans to close his operation.

Many of the pigs found at the Hog Heaven Swine Farm appeared to have been dead for weeks when discovered in April. The owner was charged with 21 counts of cruelty.

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Six HSUS Rewards Help Investigations

Shortly after the NERO announced a $1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of anyone cruelly treating any animal used in a pulling contest, several individuals contacted Program Coordinator Frank Ribaudo and met with him to detail cruel training methods.

“Even though the reward offer hasn’t led to any arrests yet, we expect to get a break before long, now that other humane groups have offered to match the reward,” Ribaudo explains. “The information I’ve obtained from informants has been extremely valuable. Some individuals are looking for financial gain. Others have called with helpful details because we’re doing something positive to remedy the problems—the reward money is secondary.”

From its earliest days, The HSUS has offered several standing rewards for conviction in specific cruelty cases. In addition to the regional pulling-contest reward, The HSUS offers several others:
Ribaudo Commented for N.Y. Rescue Placing 150 Animals

Racing against time and bitter cold weather, Frank Ribaudo organized an adoption effort that resulted in the placement of more than 150 animals seized after one of the country’s worst mass cruelty cases ended in New York. Ribaudo mobilized humane societies in New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, and Connecticut to take pets from the Animal Farm Home in Ellenville, N.Y., following the conviction of owner Justin McCarthy on cruelty charges. The animals were adopted into good homes.

Samantha Mullen, public affairs and program administrator for the New York Humane Association, stated, “The people involved in Frank’s creative solution to a terrible dilemma became bonded in a special way as a result of his unforgettable work.”

John Dommers noted, “In my 17 years with The HSUS, I’ve never witnessed such extraordinary cooperation among so many groups on one project!”

Special thanks are due to the following New England groups:

New Hampshire—New Hampshire SPCA, Concord, N.H.
New England—New Hampshire SPCA, Cochecho Valley SPCA, N.H.
Massachusetts—Massachusetts SPCA, Animal Rescue League of Boston.
Connecticut—Connecticut Humane Society.

AROUND THE REGION

Mythic, Conn.—Marc Paulhus, SERO director, conducted a major presentation at the annual conference of the New England Federation of Humane Societies on the use of animals by cult groups. John Dommers co-presented a workshop on fund-raising with Fritz Sabbow, director of the New Hampshire Humane Society. Frank Ribaudo presented a video review featuring new programs available from The HSUS.

Concord, N.H.—Regional staff members spoke in opposition to a bill that would provide funding for state funds to study the feasibility of building a state-run zoo. Dommers and Ribaudo cited the many problems that caused Benson’s Zoo in Hudson, N.H., to close, including poor climate, decreasing revenues, and high operating costs.

Augusta, Maine—Despite strong opposition from The HSUS and local groups, Gov. John McKernan allowed a coyote-hunting “award” bill to become law. The HSUS noted that the so-called award is a bounty in disguise. “Bounties just don’t work,” states Dommers. “Gov. Brennan (of Maine) and Gov. Celeste (of Ohio) vetoed similar bills in 1985. Missouri, too, repealed its outdated bounty law. It looks like time is marching backward in Maine on this one.”

John Dommers (left) praised Frank Ribaudo for his Animals Farm Home rescue.

New Videos Offer More Variety, Cost Less than Slide Shows

“Video has become the most popular medium for education in the home and school,” reports John Dommers, audio-visual specialist for The HSUS. “It is an indispensable part of our cruelty investigations and has helped us win cases and pass animal-protection laws.”

In cooperation with Connecticut Video Productions in Old Saybrook, Conn., Dommers assisted in the production of several popular video programs offered by The HSUS. He has also worked with Dr. Michael Fox to convert several slide presentations to VHS cassettes, including “Guide to Dog and Cat Behavior and Psychology.” “Animals, Nature and Religion.” “Steps toward a Humane Society.” “silent World.” Each is $20 (slide shows were $60).

The HSUS’s fur campaign video, graphically documenting the cruelty of steel-jaw traps and so-called fur-farming operations, is available for only $10 in VHS video format. This program has been a valuable tool in local and state campaigns to ban traps in New England. NERO is also currently assisting in the production of a video focusing on cruelty investigation techniques.

What’s Your Problem?

A friend, who is not a member of any humane society, recently quizzed me about animal welfare. “What’s your problem?” he asked. For a moment, while my mental wheels spun, I was speechless. How does one answer a question like that? I could have enumerated a lengthy list of animal abuses ranging from roadside abandonment to elementary school sadism and showed him plenty. But what he wanted was an all-compromising quick answer. Is there such a thing?

I believe there is. The principal problem in animal welfare, stated in one boldface word, is ignorance. That’s easy to explain in terms of mass children or deprived human groups. They treat animals badly because they don’t know any better. Somewhat the same rationale applies to hunters, trappers, commercial animal explorers, and calloused animal-care attendants. Figuratively, they are wearing blinders and can’t see the cruelty they inflict or tolerate. The same is true for government men who legislate, ministering, enforcing, or judging: where animals are concerned they all too often don’t know enough about the subject to act intelligently or humanely.

Now, and this may surprise you, I am going to lump some humanitarians in the same category, regardless of their good intentions. Really, it’s true. You may rightly ask, “What’s your problem?” Here’s how: many humanitarians, on occasion, cannot distinguish cruelty, do not know the law, have no conception of the non-humanitarian motivations, are unable to inculcate the humane ethic in others, are untrained in leadership, communicating, inspiring, or—continued on page 4

Helium Balloon Bill Deflated, Regional Efforts Continue

Despite the failure to pass of a Connecticut bill that would have prohibited the launching of 10 or more helium-filled balloons at any given time, the NERO will continue its effort to halt the practice throughout Connecticut and elsewhere in New England. Balloons can be very harmful to wildlife, especially sea turtles, whales, and sea birds. Many marine animals mistake latex and mylar balloons floating on the water for jellyfish and other food. A balloon and its string can choke an animal or become lodged in the intestines where it blocks the passage of digested food.

Working with the Connecticut coordinator of the Fund for Animals, Regional Director John Dommers was able to persuade a Hartford group to cancel the launch of 2,000 balloons earlier this year. Several other planned launches by schools, churches, and community groups have also been cancelled after the organizations were contacted by the regional office. Dommers notes, “There are several alternatives to balloon launches that won’t endanger animals. They’re listed in our legislative testimony.” Anyone may receive a free copy of this list by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the NERO.

On an optimistic note, Florida has passed a law prohibiting the release of helium balloons in any large quantity. This bill will become effective November 1, 1989.

Geats such as these are often used in cult animal sacrifice, says Paulhus of SERO.

Hunting-Harassment Bill Fails in Conn., Succeeds in N.H.

The good news about hunter-harassment bills is that Connecticut’s 1989 legislation attempt failed. The U.S. Supreme Court has also upheld a ruling by a U.S. district judge in Hartford, Conn., that a 1985 Connecticut law making it a crime to interfere with hunters is unconstitutional.

The bad news is that, despite strong opposition from The HSUS, the Fund for Animals, New Hampshire animal-protection groups, and the New Hampshire Civil Liberties Union, the New Hampshire legislature has gone ahead and enacted a hunter-harassment law. The New Hampshire Civil Liberties Union and animal-protection groups believe the law is unconstitutional and will be ruled as such if a court challenge takes place.

According to John Dommers, “We’ll continue to oppose any attempts to pass hunter-harassment laws in any form. It’s a waste of time and money for anyone to propose such bills.” He adds, “New Hampshire’s law will surely fail a court test, and taxpayers would foot the bill—as they did in Connecticut.”
Towels for Wildlife

Soon after a request for towels was issued by the Seward Sea Otter Rescue Center in Alaska, WEBE 108 FM of Bridgeport, Conn., launched a towel-collection drive. Thousands of towels for cleaning oil-soaked sea otters were donated by schools, businesses, community groups, and individuals, collected by the radio station, and shipped to Alaska at no charge by Federal Express.

When the NERO set up its own towel drive in cooperation with WEBE 108 FM, John Dommers contacted the Seward Sea Otter Rescue Center and learned that no more towels were needed. The question of what to do with the remaining cartons and bags of towels delivered to the radio station was raised by station officials, and the NERO suggested the towels be donated to wildlife rescue, rehabilitation, and release programs in the region. Regional staff agreed to pick up the towels and distribute them to the North American Wildlife Association in East Lyme, Conn., the Nature Connection in Madison, Conn., Natural Balance in Carver, Mass., and other nature center wildlife-rescue programs. Each of these groups operates on a volunteer basis with a small budget, and they greatly appreciated the donation of towels.

The HSUS awarded a Certificate of Appreciation to WEBE 108 FM for its outstanding effort to help animals and the people who work to rescue them.

Rewards continued from page 1

- up to $2,500 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any wholesale dealer in dogs and cats who knowingly buys or otherwise procures any stolen animal;
- up to $2,500 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person (or persons) who organizes dogfights, fights dogs, promotes dogfighting, or officiates at dogfights;
- up to $2,500 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person (or persons) who organizes cockfights, fights cocks, promotes cockfighting, or officiates at cockfights;
- up to $1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person (or persons) who willfully poisons or attempts to poison any dog or cat;
- and up to $2,500 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person (or persons) who uses any live animals as a lure in the training and racing of greyhounds.

Individuals with information on any of the above listed acts of animal cruelty are encouraged to contact the NERO investigator. Copies of the pulling-contest reward poster are available free; call or write the regional office.

Director’s Comment continued from page 3

organizing, funding, and doing the myriad tasks that must be done in every community if kindness is to supplant cruelty. So all of us in the humane movement, when confronted with a problem, must think in terms of, “Perhaps I don’t know, but I’m surely going to find out. Furthermore, when I do know for sure, I’m going to tell others.” This brings us to the role of The Humane Society of the United States as an educational institution founded to delineate areas of ignorance and then to enlist all people of goodwill to dispel that ignorance which, in turn, should torpedo the causes of cruelty. Thus, The HSUS is in effect a catalyst endeavoring to instruct and inspire all the people in how to promote kindness and halt cruelty.

In accomplishing these purposes, The HSUS today is blessed with the most highly regarded reputation in our Society’s history and with its most knowledgeable membership of all time. The public does look, listen, learn, and act when we do or say something in behalf of animals.

In the humane movement, ignorance is not bliss. On the contrary, it can be hell for the animals. It’s up to us, all of us, to learn the facts, pass the word, and lead the action. I have great faith in you, our valued members, that you will do just that today, as you have in the past.

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