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Changes Needed in Famous Pony Auction

For children familiar with Marguerite Henry’s story of a pony Misty of Chincoteague, the annual roundup of wild horses on Assateague Island (in Maryland and Virginia) and their swim to Chincoteague Island (in Virginia) is the stuff of which dreams are made. However, for the horses the event is more like a nightmare. Mares, stallions, and foals who live on Assateague are rounded up, forced to swim the channel between the two islands, and herded down the streets of Chincoteague village to its carnival grounds. Then the foals are auctioned off to raise funds for the local volunteer fire company.

SCRO Director Jim Tedford and other HSUS staff attended last summer’s roundup, where they witnessed serious problems. Each year, the first foal to swim to shore is raffled off to a tourist, who may be completely ignorant of proper horse care, lack appropriate means of transporting the foal, and lack adequate housing facilities back home. Tedford and HSUS Investigator Stephen Dickstein watched as Chincoteague volunteer fire fighters dragged the first foal from the holding coral to the raffle bandstand. Clearly terri-

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Unwanted Millions Remembered

In recognition of all the homeless animals who were euthanatized last year in U.S. shelters, many local animal-protection organizations held candlelight vigils on August 22, 1992. This was a day to mourn the millions of companion animals who annually die because they have no home. SCRO Director Jim Tedford attended a vigil sponsored by the Craven County Humane Society in New Bern, N.C. In a speech to the nearly 300 people gathered for the event, he said that more than 7 million homeless dogs and cats are killed in this country every year. “While statistics are crucial to understanding the magnitude of the problem, they are utterly insignificant if we never take the time to consider that each of those 7.5 million animals represents a pair of hopeful eyes,” Tedford said. “You see, the figure that counts more continued on page 2
Tennessee Dog Breeder Told to Clean Things Up

In August 1992, acting on tips from several complainants, the sheriff's department of Cocke County, Tenn., investigated alleged cruelty to animals by a dog breeder living near Newport. Sheriff Turner Moore discovered two cats and 98 dogs at the rural residence. According to Moore's affidavit of complaint, “The animals were living near Newport. Sheriff Tunney accompanied the property by several volunteers. The team found dogs housed in extremely unsanitary conditions. Two decomposing animal carcasses were retrieved from trash cans. Smith examined all the animals present and elected to remove 34 dogs for immediate intensive care. Skin diseases, as well as infections of fleas and internal parasites, were prevalent. Rather than pay for the recommended extensive medical treatments, the breeder elected to surrender ownership of all but three of the dogs removed.

Negotiations between Assistant District Attorney General Jimmy Dunn and the defendant’s attorney resulted in a one-year pre-trial agreement limiting the number of animals the defendant may maintain, requiring her to reimburse the City of Newport more than $1,300 for care provided to the animals taken from her property, specifying monthly unannounced inspections by a veterinarian and an animal-control board representative, and mandating the defendant’s compliance with all state and local animal-control laws. All animals must be vaccinated, treated to control fleas and other parasites, and kept clean and well-groomed. If all of these criteria are met, charges might be dropped at the end of the one-year period. The HSUS and local authorities plan to watch this situation closely.

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than any other is ‘1.’ As long as one animal has to die because there aren’t enough homes, that is a tragedy.” Tyker Gonzalez, then president of the Craven County Humane Society, added, “It’s time to take the blame off the shelter workers and put it on society.” The event culminated in the display of a symbolic chain of 4,702 “collars” representing all of the animals euthanized at the local animal shelter in the previous year.

Other North Carolina organizations participating in the Craven County vigil included humane societies from Beaufort, N.C., Edgecombe, and Wilson counties. Many organizations across the South Central region held similar events. Plans are underway for 1993 vigils.

Investigators Trained to Spot Cruelty to Horses

In Raleigh, N.C., animal-care and -control professionals received training in horse-abuse investigations during a March 3-4 course cosponsored by the Animal Protection Society of Orange County and the North Carolina State University (NCSU) Animal Science Department. The first day’s sessions featured SCRO Director Jim Tedford, who detailed the process of a cruelty investigation. Raleigh attorney Doug Ruley discussed search-and-seizure laws and presenting cases to the courts. B.J. Smith, Ph.D., of North Carolina State University covered basic horse nutrition. Durham County Assistant District Attorney Joan Cunningham and area veterinarians held a roundtable discussion.

The second day’s training was held at the NCSU Horse Teaching Facility. Christine Uhlinger, D.V.M., of the NCSU College of Veterinary Medicine outlined common horse ailments. Dale Barnett, coordinator of the Horse Teaching Facility, discussed and demonstrated basic horse-handling techniques.

For information on next year’s course, contact Amanda Graham, Liaison Officer, The HSUS, 108 Orange County Airport Rd., Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514; (919) 967-7383.

Almost 100 dogs were found at a breeder’s rural residence when the sheriff’s department of Cocke County investigated complaints of alleged cruelty to animals. Officials found dogs housed in sheds, makeshift pens, even old washing machines and air conditioners.

Pony Auction continued from page 3

fied, the foal collapsed to the ground several times during the ordeal. Each foal is separated from his/her mother by being lassoed, then converged upon—often tackled—by a team of participants. Desperate to escape, mares and stallions run frantically around the holding pen. After several days of severe stress, the exhausted mares are chased into a rodeo chute and used in “wild pony” rides. For many years, The HSUS has recommended changes to make the Chincoteague event more humane. These include weaning foals at a later age, eliminating both the pony rides and the raffle, and scheduling the swim for Labor Day rather than July so that the horses will be less likely to suffer from extreme heat. Recent veterinary care has improved—but only after ponies died from eating toxic vegetation while in the holding pen. Last year the HSUS saw stricter requirements regarding acceptable vehicles for transporting purchased foals. Currently the 1993 roundup and swim is scheduled for the last week of July. We will continue to press for improvements.

Stephen Smith, D.V.M., examines one of the many dogs from the Cocke County residence who were found to be suffering from skin disease, fleas, and/or parasites.

by Jim Tedford

By Jim Tedford

Exciting news: effective January 1, 1993, I was promoted to SCRO director. Ever since joining The HSUS, I have been honored and humbled by the opportunity to work for the world’s finest animal-protection organization alongside an incredibly talented group of people. I value, too, the friends and colleagues with whom I’ve had the pleasure of collaborating in the past two-and-a-half years. I want to say thanks, and I look forward to a long and productive association with all of you.

Sadly, in the same month as my promotion, I lost a close friend. Four years ago I adopted a 12-year-old whippet from the local animal shelter. Within about five minutes, "Scottie" had become a beloved family member. His original owners had surrendered him to the shelter because of what they called his "nervous, destructive" behavior. I felt I had found a mystery to me. In our household, Scottie generally slept 22 hours a day; the remaining two hours he spent eating and cuddling with the family! On a cold January night, Scottie curled up in his bed and quietly went to sleep. During his sleep, he died. It was extremely peaceful.

I’ve often reflected on the brief time Scottie was part of our family. I’m grateful that he allowed us to become so close to him, especially given that other people had not earned his trust. Frequently I think about the shelter animals who are not as fortunate as Scottie—the ones who are too damaged physically or emotionally ever to adjust to a new home and the ones who might have adjusted readily but were never given the chance.

We at The HSUS are very excited to be taking part in "The Year of the Cat" celebration. On page 4 we’ve listed some of the ways you can celebrate the mystery and beauty of the cats who share our lives. Your local humane society can supply materials.

My challenge to everyone out there is to make every year "The Year of the Shelter Animal". The Tedfords have a household of adoptees who have given us far more than we can ever hope to give back to them.
**County Fair’s Novelty Act Should Take a Nosedive**

Do mules, ponies, and dogs normally climb steep ramps and plunge into small tubs of water? Most of us would answer such a question with an emphatic NO! However, the Washington County Fair and Burley Festival in Abingdon, Va., featured this unnatural behavior as spectacle. In an event touted as good, clean fun, two mules, a pony, and a dog each climbed a 30-foot ramp, and—given no alternative—plunged into a tub of water. While the diving act was in progress, representatives from The HSUS and the Bristol Humane Society, as well as dozens of concerned citizens, gathered for a peaceful protest just outside the fairground gates.

Prior to the fair, The HSUS and the Bristol Humane Society had held a joint news conference in an effort to inform the public about the exploitation and coercion involved in such acts. As a result, one of the festival’s major sponsors withdrew its support. Unfortunately, fair organizers refused to cancel the diving act. Because most such exploitative acts are not perceived as life-threatening to the animals involved, it is very difficult to obtain a prosecution under state anti-cruelty laws. It is up to The HSUS and those in the community to voice their opposition to these spectacles.