Wonder Zoo’s Wanderings
Blaze Trail of Cruelty

A traveling menagerie of exotic and domestic animals has stirred up controversy during its journey through the Southeast and beyond. For the past several months, we have tracked Dick Garden’s “Wonder Zoo” as it has skipped from one town to the next. Allegations of cruelty and neglect have made repeated headlines. Now, at last, the wanderings of the Wonder Zoo have ceased and both federal and state charges are pending.

The protracted effort to help the “Wonder Zoo” animals began in a Gainesville, Fla. shopping mall, where the animals were found in unsanitary conditions with little or no water. Several animals appeared ill, especially one baby elephant named “Susie.” Veterinarians from the University of Florida were contacted and the elephant was eventually moved to nearby medical facilities for proper treatment. Andrea Mitchell of The HSUS/SERO worked closely with the Alachua County Humane Society and began the long process of trying to persuade state and federal agencies to take action. Representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Costly Defeat For Florida Pet Owners

Pet owners suffered a costly defeat when a bill to reform rabies-control programs died in the Florida legislature. The proposed law would have increased the percentage of dogs and cats inoculated against rabies while at the same time saving Florida pet owners an estimated $50 to $100 million a year.

H.B.891/S.B.773, sponsored by Rep. Al Lawson of Tallahassee and Sen. “Doc” Myers of Hobe Sound, offered a comprehensive solution to rabies control. Of primary interest to pet owners was a provision in the bill recognizing three-year rabies vaccines. Currently, many veterinarians administer a three-year vaccine to dogs and cats but fail to inform their clients of the shot’s full duration of immunity. Pet owners then return to the vet every year and pay unnecessary revaccination costs. Local governments may unknowingly further this scam by enacting laws that require annual rabies shots, while others are equally irresponsible in that they have no rabies control requirements. Only a statewide law can ensure uniformity and fairness.

The HSUS/SERO authored the bill’s provision regarding the three-year vaccine and walked the halls of the legislature to ensure that it was not removed. SERO Program

This five-year-old African elephant, ill when the “Wonder Zoo” visited Gainesville, Fla., was destroyed after veterinary treatment proved unsuccessful.
The deleuge of publicility afforded pit bulls in past months has centered public atten­tion on the problem of vicious dogs. Newspaper accounts indicate that more than a dozen people die each year as a result of dog attacks, though experts believe the actual number may be much higher. Thousands more are seriously injured, and millions are bitten. With those facts in mind, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina all considered dangerous-dog bills this year. Of the four states, only Georgia suc­ceeded in passing a dangerous-dog law. HSUS regional staff provided guidelines for drafting the bill and spoke in its sup­port during committee hearings. Sponsored by Rep. Howard Rainey, the new law creates the categories of “potentially dangerous” and “dangerous” dogs. It re­quires counties or cities to investigate com­plaints of unprovoked dog attacks and determine which animals require more strict control. Pet owners of dangerous dogs will have to register them with the local authority, provide proof of adequate immunization, and demonstrate their ability to prevent future attacks. An owner could face severe penalties if his dog again inflicts un­provoked injuries.

The fatal mauling of a seven-year-old Dodge County boy by two dogs underscored the urgency for the pending legisla­tion and influenced its passage. But, sadly, before the bill could be signed into law by the recent two-year-old Delahay County boy was killed when he awoke from a nap and wandered out to play and was killed by one of many chained pit bulls. At the re­quest of the District Attorney’s Office, SERO Director Marc Paulhus was called in to examine the dogs and evaluate their aggressive propensities. Evidence indicated the dogs had been trained for illegal dogfights. Although the boy’s mother had been in effect, the dog’s owner might well have been prosecuted for something other than animal cruelty. Florida lawmakers were unable to agree on key elements for regulating dangerous dogs. Some wanted the new law to be a carefully crafted proposal. Rep. Irma Rochein came close to final passage. Rep. LeRoy Collins cleared several hurdles and the full house; however, its companion bill in the senate failed.

South Carolina and Alabama also neglected to enact vicious-animal legislation, although the issue is likely to resur­face in these states next year. The regulation of vicious dogs can be ad­dressed on a community level in the absence of statewide statutes. HSUS Direc­tor of Higher Education Randy Lockwood and Mr. Paulhus have presented seminars on the responsible control of dangerous dogs throughout the Southeast and as far away as Puerto Rico. Cities and counties have incorporated their suggestions and passed ordinances which adequately ad­dress public-safety issues, while protecting dogs and their owners from undue discrimination. “We needed to bring balance to the arguments,” said Mr. Paulhus. “Some protective measures are necessary, but breed-specific dog bans or other unjust restrictions were not the answer.”

Four States Consider Dangerous-Dog Laws

Effective dangerous-dog laws and regula­tions protect both animals and the public.

The physiology course was dropped as a graduation requirement, an independent study class was substituted, and Ms. Mur­phy’s straight A average remained un­bowed. The study class was substituted, and Ms. Murphy’s average remained un­bowed. The study class was substituted, and Ms. Murphy’s average remained un­bowed. The study class was substituted, and Ms. Murphy’s average remained un­bowed. The study class was substituted, and Ms. Murphy’s average remained un­bowed. The study class was substituted, and Ms. Murphy’s average remained un­bowed. The study class was substituted, and Ms. Murphy’s average remained un­bowed. The study class was substituted, and Ms. Murphy’s average remained un­bowed. The study class was substituted, and Ms. Murphy’s average remained un­bowed. The study class was substituted, and Ms. Murphy’s average remained un­bowed. The study class was substituted, and Ms. Murphy’s average remained un­bowed. 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Halting the Horrors of Animal Sacrifices

The Southeast Regional Office has achieved steady progress in our ongoing efforts to halt animal sacrifice in South Florida. Following disclosures that a Santeria cult intended to open a public church in Hialeah, a coalition of groups organized by The HSUS helped to create a grassroots backlash against the cult’s bloody practices.

An attorney general’s opinion issued last summer declared animal sacrifice illegal under Florida’s animal-cruelty statutes. That, coupled with our recommendations and testimony, was all the city of Hialeah needed to pass, not one, but three local ordinances that ban the sacrificial killing of animals. Santeria priest Ernesto Pichardo responded by filing suit claiming the new laws violate the U.S. Constitution’s guarantee of religious freedom. The American Civil Liberties Union is helping Mr. Pichardo plead his case that animal sacrifice is an acceptable religious practice.

The HSUS has placed itself firmly in the camp of the city and is pursuing the possibility of filing legal briefs as a “friend of the court” arguing against the ritual killings. We maintain that the Constitution protects the free exercise of religion, of course, but in this case Santeria’s interests are outweighed by the public interest in animal welfare.

The constitutional battle over the practice of animal sacrifice could drag on for years, since neither side is likely to retreat from its position and both have vowed to continue the fight all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In the meantime, thousands of animals are being maimed or decapitated daily to gain the blessing of the Santeria gods.

Efforts now will focus on educating the greater Miami community and making the average citizen aware that cult activities and animal-sacrifice practices are taking place on a large scale. The SERO is already in contact with concerned residents who are interested in becoming part of a major campaign to graphically depict exactly what the cult entails and how its continued presence will further blight the image of South Florida. Also, we are organizing a task force of these individuals, local civic groups, and community leaders. The ultimate goal is to enact stronger and specific laws on cult sacrifice at both the state and local levels. Too, we must gain aggressive enforcement of these measures.

The issue of animal sacrifice is one that we cannot turn aside from—nor can we relax our vigilance. The HSUS will continue to attack the cruelty involved, not only in Florida, but throughout the entire country.

Cockfighters Busted

Law Enforcement officials are at last taking seriously the prevalence of illegal cockfighting in South Florida. With the assistance of The Humane Society of the United States and the Humane Society of Greater Miami, a police raid was conducted at the Los Amigos Club in Hialeah, September 17. Almost 200 people were arrested, 43 fighting cocks confiscated and $11,000 in cash seized.

The bust came about after we received a letter giving startling details about an elaborate cockfighting club, complete with a large arena, an adjoining bar and restaurant. The facility was said to operate quite openly even though cockfighting was made a felony in 1986.

Director Marc Paulhus met with an official from the governor’s staff to demand an investigation of the Los Amigos Club. The Dade County State Attorney’s office was then notified and they coordinated the raid using agents from the Metro-Dade Police Department. The HSUS and Miami Humane Society cared for the injured or seized fighting birds.

Three years ago, Florida legislative hearings on animal fighting revealed this bloodsport to be widespread in the Miami area. One pit owner proudly flaunted his operational permit and sales tax records. We hope this cockfighting raid heralds the end of official tolerance.
ALABAMA—The Dekalb County SPCA has opened the doors of its new shelter in Fort Payne, thanks to the generosity of Teddy Gentry of the country music group “Alabama.” Gentry has allowed the group to lease his private kennel facilities for the housing of stray or relinquished animals. The SPCA has been in close contact with us as they worked to establish shelter operating guidelines and procedures.

- The Alabama Federation of Animal Welfare Agencies is struggling to stay alive. Efforts by the statewide organization to increase its membership through a massive mailing has created little response. The group has worked hard with the SERO to promote progressive legislation and to serve as a resource of information on animal-related issues for Alabama citizens. It would be a shame to allow the federation to dissolve because of a lack of support by Alabama animal lovers. For information on joining the Alabama Federation contact: Marie Moncrief, Rt. 4, Box 160, Alexander City, AL 35010.

FLORIDA—Duval County school children will receive a more well-rounded view of wildlife conservation efforts, thanks to The HSUS/SERO and Jacksonville animal activists. The school system was considering adoption of the “Project Wild” curriculum guide when objections were raised concerning the pro-hunting and -trapping biases of the materials. Regional Director Marc Paulhus attended an advisory council meeting and persuaded its members to incorporate changes proposed by The HSUS into the curriculum to give a more balanced outlook on the complex issues of wildlife conservation.

- The Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission has banned gopher tortoise hunting in the state. The reptile is one of North America’s largest land tortoises and is on the federal government’s threatened species list for several of the states it inhabits. The commission imposed the ban after warnings from The HSUS/SERO, environmental groups, and commission staff that the tortoise population is declining rapidly due to habitat loss and excessive hunting in this state. Its demise also impacts on several other species that depend on the reptile’s burrows to survive. We hope the commission’s step is the first of many in the state to save this special creature.

GEORGIA—A cruel hoax by an Atlanta radio station upset many caring people earlier this year. WGST conducted interviews, billed as authentic, with confessed contestants in a “cat toss” championship. The competition supposedly involved throwing live cats out of airplanes while parachutists attempted to catch them in midair. Shocked listeners called the regional office, sure that the story was true. Though we determined quickly it was a sick joke, the radio station refused to admit it publicly. A fake “live” remote of the championship was even broadcast, complete with the sounds of cats crying in terror as they were purportedly tossed from the plane. We hope that in the end this insensitive farce backfired. Complaints were filed with the Federal Communications Commission, a state broadcasters association, and station advertisers. Mr. Paulhus says the “joke” was a little too cruel to ignore.

- Humane Services of Middle Georgia announces the opening of its low-cost veterinary clinic in Macon. The clinic will emphasize spaying and neutering to control the overpopulation of pets, but it will also provide inoculations and a complete range of health services and products. To contact the clinic, call (912) 745-CARE.

SOUTH CAROLINA—The state has taken a major step in revamping its animal-cruelty law. Violations in the past carried only a maximum $100 fine and/or thirty days in jail. The new law recognizes habitual offenders and the degree of cruelty involved in the offense. The penalties now range from a maximum $200 for a first offense to a $1,000 fine and/or a year in jail for three or more violations. For extreme cruelty, the penalties include sixty days in jail and/or a $500 fine.

- South Carolinians are working towards upgrading the penalties for cockfighting. Legislation proposed for next year calls for increasing fines to a possible $1,000 for all those arrested at a fight. The HSUS/SERO will work with legislators and animal-protection groups to strengthen the laws penalizing those who take part in this bloody sport.

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.

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