HSUS Helps in Katrina's Wake

As the National Guard entered New Orleans to quell civil disorder coming in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, members of the HSUS National Disaster Animal Response Team (DART) worked their way into the nearly obliterated regions of southern Mississippi and Louisiana. The situation could not have been more urgent in both areas, with reports of animals locked in homes, kennels, veterinary clinics, and other locations. It was a race against time for our first responders on the ground.

Dozens of HSUS relief workers extended their reach into devastated areas of Louisiana and Mississippi, working to establish pet-friendly shelters, coordinating animal relief activities with local partners in both government and the nonprofit sector, and improvising solutions to a host of animal-related emergencies.

Phones began ringing at The HSUS almost as soon as Katrina struck. The HSUS moved quickly to set up a dedicated Disaster Call Center at its headquarters in

An airboat moves down a flooded New Orleans street September 5 with animal rescue workers, a rifle-toting guard, and several rescued dogs. With thousands of stranded pets in the city, HSUS rescuers were frantically trying to reach as many animals as they could.

Animal Hoarding Exposed by CSRO, RAVS Team

It was a case of being in the right place at the right time—and none too soon for nearly 40 animals suffering from neglect in rural Tennessee.

HSUS’s Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAVS) clinic was underway in Pikeville, Tennessee, as part of the program’s Appalachian Project, which provides free veterinary care and spay/neuter surgeries to the pets of owners who can’t otherwise afford them. A woman had brought a dog to be spayed, but the dog was clearly in no condition for surgery. Clinic Coordinator Tammy Rouse noted that the veterinarian who examined the dog found that she was suffering from severe mange, a heart murmur, and heartworm disease, all complicated by the fact that she was also emaciated. The veterinarian’s advice was to humanely euthanize the dog and end her terrible suffering. When Rouse discussed the dog’s condition with the owner, she learned that the woman had another dog at home in a similar state. Rouse convinced the woman to bring the other dog to the clinic for evaluation.

The second dog was in even worse shape than the first. “She was covered with infected, oozing tumors, one the size of a softball,” according to Rouse. “Her toenails had grown so long that she couldn’t walk.” This dog was also emaciated. Rouse tried to determine what other animals might be in need, and offered to visit the woman’s home with some of the volunteer veterinary students to check on them. What they found was shocking even to Rouse, who is seasoned in handling animal cruelty cases.

At the ramshackle mobile home, Rouse and the student volunteers found numerous dogs, most underweight and with hair loss. There was no running water in the home; animal feces carpeted the floor, which had caved in in places, and the human residents continued on page 2.

Indiana, Michigan, Ohio: Welcome to the Region!

As of February 1, 2005, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio joined the states covered by HSUS’s Central States Regional Office. Our staff looks forward to working with animal advocates in these great states. You can reach our office at 800 W. 5th Ave., Ste. 110, Naperville, IL 60563; 630-357-7015; www.hsus.org/csr0.
“Off the Chain” Reveals Betrayal of Man’s Best Friend

President Theodore Roosevelt owned one. So did Helen Keller. This breed of dog was the trademark of Buster Brown shoes and RCA Victor. Pete was the canine star of television’s “Our Gang.” And Stubby was the most decorated dog in American history, having received numerous medals and the honorary rank of Sergeant for his services during World War I. What do these famous dogs have in common? They were all American pit bull terriers. How did such a beloved breed come to be feared as a “public enemy” that is now banned in more than 200 counties and the entire province of Ontario, Canada? That’s what director Bobby J. Brown seeks to show in his new film “Off the Chain,” available on DVD from Artistry Home Entertainment.

Beginning with a history of the American pit bull terrier, the film explores the evolution of the breed and gives viewers a disturbing look into the minds of the dog owners and trainers who participate in the gruesome world of dogfighting. As HSUS West Coast Regional Director Eric Sakacs says, “This film goes inside the belly of the beast, and the beast isn’t the pit bull terrier, it’s man. This is the ultimate betrayal of man’s best friend. The director exposes the fastest growing crime in America—dogfighting. ‘Off the Chain’ is a horrifying glimpse into the world where the special relationship between man and dog has been perverted.”

Brown spent three years infiltrating the underground subculture of pit bull fighting. Gaining the trust of well-established “dog men” who allowed him to film behind their veil of secrecy, Brown shot footage of dog training, police raids, and the fights themselves. But he also captured another side: the loving nature of the dogs and their brutal misuse by those who are supposed to be their caretakers.

Brown is generously donating to The HSUS one-third of the proceeds from sales of “Off the Chain” DVDs sold through The HSUS. To order The HSUS’ Eric Sakacs puts it, “Off the Chain’ will grab you and shake you, and, hopefully, it will stir you into action.”

How To Get Involved in Animal Protection

Do you wish you knew more about the legislative process and how you could become an important part of it? Would you like to become a member of our team of advocates and work in concert with thousands of others who care deeply about protecting animals and are in a position to make things happen?

The HSUS/Fund for Animals has created the Humane Action Network—a national grassroots network of people who work to promote animal protection legislation—and we need you to help make the Network a success. By working together, we can amplify our voice for animals and make a real difference.

To sign up, visit our Web site at: http://www.hsus.org/join, or contact Kelley Dupps, Grassroots Outreach Coordinator, The HSUS, 519 C Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002; 202-955-3678; ldupps@hsus.org.

Legislative Update

CSRO actively pursues legislation that creates a more humane environment for animals. The 2005 legislative sessions in our region saw some important issues raised and victories won for animal protection.

Illinois

CSRO supported H.B. 313/S.B. 2078, which creates the Illinois Public Health and Safety Animal Population Control Act, allowing for a program of reimbursement to veterinarians for the sterilization and rabies vaccination of the dogs and cats of low-income owners and feral cat colony caretakers. It also establishes a voluntary individual income tax check-off to fund the program.

CSRO supported H.B. 3787, which amends the Humane Care for Animals Act. It defines “adequate shelter and protection from the weather” that an owner is required to provide as an enclosed, roofed structure that acts as a windbreak and allows the animal to retain body heat.

Indiana

CSRO supported S.B. 159, which requires that individuals convicted of committing animal cruelty receive psychological, behavioral, or other counseling.

CSRO opposed a bill that would have expanded canned hunting of elk and deer and removed the authority to regulate canned hunts from the state Department of Natural Resources to the state Agriculture Department. Fortunately, this bill died in committee.

Kentucky

The Kentucky Legislature was not in session this year. We will follow numerous bills when the session begins in January 2006.

Michigan

The Michigan Legislature is still in session, and the following bills are pending:

- H.B. 4254, dissection choice, requires schools to provide alternatives for students with a moral objection to dissection. HSUS Position: Support.
- H.B. 4670 and S.B. 373, Internet hunting, prohibits hunting animals via the Internet. HSUS Position: Support.
- H.B. 4898, canned hunts, prohibits a person from buying or selling the right to hunt a non-native wild mammal held in an enclosure in the state of Michigan. HSUS Position: Support.

Ohio

The Ohio Legislature is still in session, and the following bills are pending:

- S.B. 9, animal terrorism, adds a definition for “animal or ecological terrorism” to the Ohio Revised Code for acts that are already covered by existing law. HSUS Position: Oppose.

Wisconsin

CSRO supported A.B. 179/S.B. 207, which prohibits any hunter from shooting at a wild animal on a deer or game farm without being physically in possession of the weapon. This is to prevent what is known as Internet hunting.

Laws to ban Internet hunting, in which animals are gained down remotely, are being considered in Michigan and Wisconsin.

I want to learn how I can help our animal friends and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Please send me information about:
- Making a memorial donation to honor the life of a pet, friend, or relative.
- Planning my estate and will to help animals and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).
- Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS.
- Providing for my pets in my will and in case of emergency.
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Promoting the protection of all animals
Dogfighting is not a sport. That was the message seen by thousands in Chicago, thanks to a public awareness campaign spearheaded by CSRO. In cooperation with the Chicago Police Department and Chicago Animal Care and Control, 50 Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) buses were outfitted with message boards featuring information in English and Spanish to raise public awareness about the brutal blood sport of dogfighting.

Chicago officials recognize that illegal animal fighting is prevalent in many communities and are making strides to combat the activity. In fact, no community is immune from animal fighting. Illinois law enforcement agencies have become increasingly aware that in addition to being considered a felony-level criminal offense in Illinois, dogfighting is typically only one of many crimes associated with the activity. It is common for animal fighting events to be hotbeds for illegal gambling, drug use, and firearms.

The investigation of illegal animal fighting activities by local law enforcement, animal control, and humane agencies is frequently difficult, frustrating, and unsuccessful. The lack of success is most often due to circumstances beyond the control of the investigating agency. Dogfights are conducted in secrecy. In order to permeate organized underground animal fighting rings, law enforcement officials may depend on the public to gather information and disclose details that might lead to an arrest. Additionally, with animal fighting on the rise among juveniles and street gangs, it is likely that members of the public may come across suspicious activities in their day-to-day routines, perhaps just by walking down the street and witnessing two dogs being encouraged to fight. The CTA message boards offered a reminder that anyone can report animal fighting by simply dialing 911.

The HSUS is working hard to rid the entire nation of animal fighting. In addition to efforts in Chicago and within our region, we’re also working to pass the Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act, S. 382/H.R. 817, which builds on amendments to the 2002 Farm Bill that banned the interstate transport of or foreign commerce in fighting animals. The act creates felony-level penalties for animal fighting activities. We are also working to secure funding for proper enforcement of these provisions.

Contacting HSUS

Write:  
HSUS Central States Regional Office  
800 W. 5th Ave., Ste. 110  
Naperville, IL 60563

Call: 630-357-7015  
Fax: 630-357-5725  
Web Page: www.hsus.org/csro

Promoting the protection of all animals

continued from “Katrina,” page 1 the nation’s capital, and dozens of staff members suspended their normal duties to handle thousands of telephone calls and e-mails from across the country—many from people seeking urgent assistance as they tried to locate, recover, or keep their animal companions in the midst of the disaster.

On their first foray into the embattled city of New Orleans on September 4, members of the HSUS DART, together with animal control staff from the Louisiana SPCA, targeted animals stranded at the Superdome as their priority. There, they rescued dozens of animals relinquished or abandoned by desperate evacuees who fled the city to escape Katrina’s rage.

The HSUS is helping place evacuated animals into adoption programs in Texas and other states. Working with local humane groups, rescuers saved more than 6,000 animals on the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast.

“The total number of animals lost to the storm will be difficult to detect for months,” said Laura Bevan, director of HSUS’s Southeast Regional Office and head of the Mississippi rescue effort. Tens of thousands of people and animals are still waiting for assistance. “This is going to require a massive, long-term effort,” she said. But The HSUS is committed to the task.

To support HSUS’s animal protection efforts, go to www.hsus.org/join.

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