Fighting Cruelty Here and Yon

Talent on Loan to California

There seems to be no “off season” during which animal issues subside. Therefore the skills of SWRO staff are constantly in demand, not only here in the southwest region, but across the country. Just as our office can rely on the abilities of other HSUS staff outside our region, so too are we called upon when our talents are needed. Such was the case as the summer of 2005 heated up with a variety of animal issues—here and yon.

It began in May, when Cynthia Armstrong, SWRO state coordinator in Oklahoma, received a call from Eric Sakach, director of The HSUS West Coast Regional Office in Sacramento, California. A large-scale raid on an illegal cockfighting operation in a rural Amador County, California, would soon be carried out, and he asked Armstrong to assist. The raid would be the culmination of a year-long investigation, and Sakach realized that not only could he use her expertise, but it would also be an excellent opportunity for Armstrong to experience first-hand the horrors of the blood sport she continued on page 4

SWRO’s Cynthia Armstrong was happy to help shut down a large California cockfighting operation.

HSUS’s Massive Rescue Effort in Wake of Hurricane Katrina

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 in the stricken areas.

The presence of HSUS personnel was good news for nearly 130 dogs and cats in Gulfport, Mississippi. There, HSUS team members rescued these animals from the animal shelter of the Humane Society of South Mississippi, which was flooded by the combination of a storm surge with an overflow discharge of human waste from the sewage treatment plant next door. Some animals swam in their cages for hours, somehow managing to keep their heads above water. Others were not so lucky. Those rescued went to Jackson, Mississippi, where the HSUS logistical team worked to place them with humane societies around the country.

The rescue in Gulfport occurred as 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.

But the devastated city of New Orleans was still waiting.

Answering the Call

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 the nation’s capital, and dozens of staff members suspended their normal duties to handle external communications, logging thousands of telephone calls and e-mails from around 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.

Many of the calls came from the afflicted city of New Orleans: A man who couldn’t contact a friend with whom he had left his continued on page 2
An Overwhelming Task

On their first foray into the embattled city of New Orleans on September 4, members of the HSUS DARL, together with animal control staff from the Louisiana SPCA (LASPCA), targeted stranded animals 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.

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Internet Hunting Deleted

The introduction of Internet hunting has created some strange bedfellows. Both The HSUS and the National Rifle Association have blasted this new form of animal abuse.

Internet hunting is anything but virtual. It’s a video “game” in which animals are actually killed by participants who pay outrageous sums of money to manipulate a servo-equipped rifle and zero in on a captive exotic animal over the Internet. People can hunt from their desks, anywhere in the world. All it takes is a computer, an Internet hookup, and a lot of cash.

Hunting groups have joined animal activists against this most unseemly practice in which animals are led in front of the mechanically remote-controlled rifles so they may be shot easily, and the shooter can get a trophy without even getting his hands dirty.

This dot-com carnage is now illegal in Texas. The bill prohibiting it was signed by the Governor on June 19, 2005, and became effective immediately. Thanks to the efforts of SWRO and the many fine people who called their congressional representatives, the only thing shot down was this form of “pay-per-view” slaughter.

Send a Message to Trader Joe’s

Unlike its competitors in the natural foods market, such as Whole Foods and Wild Oats, Trader Joe’s still sells eggs from hens confined in “battery” cages so small they can’t even spread their wings. These animals are so intensively confined that they never engage in many important behaviors, including nesting, perching, and dust bathing. Their lives are filled with immense suffering.

In the past, Trader Joe’s has been responsive to customer concern for animal welfare, but the chain is refusing to stop selling eggs from caged hens. The HSUS needs you to ask Trader Joe’s to can the cages and sell only cage-free eggs. Call Trader Joe’s at 626-599-3817 and ask the customer service reps to adopt a policy to sell only cage-free eggs. During your next trip to Trader Joe’s, talk with the store manager and request that the chain adopt a policy selling battery cage eggs.

Please send us your Trader Joe’s receipts. We’ll collect them and send them to the company to show that their consumers care about the welfare of laying hens.

Loopholes in State Cruelty Laws Left Open

Efforts to tighten some of the loopholes in the Texas animal cruelty laws fell victim to legislator apathy during this session. S.B. 172 would have allowed people who abuse feral cats to be prosecuted under the penal code. It also would have changed some of the wording in the current law to require more humane treatment of some animals by their owners.

Thousands of people called their senators in support of the bill, but to no avail. It died in committee.

The hunting and agriculture lobbies were vehemently opposed to S.B. 172, even though hunting and agricultural uses of animals were exempted. One representative jokingly remarked that he was unsure if the people reading the bill could actually read, since they were pointedly ignoring the wording that exempted their special interest groups.

The battle may be lost, but the war is not. SWRO is committed to changing these laws to protect animals. We will continue to lobby, working diligently to make better lives for animals, year after year, until it is done.

You need our help! It is very difficult to battle with large special interest groups that have seemingly bottomless coffers. Any help you can give, whether financially or as part of our Humane Action Network, will help save animals from abuse and torture at the hands of vicious individuals. Our Humane Action Network is a national grassroots network of people who work to pass animal protection legislation, and it needs you to be a success. By working together, we can amplify our voice for animals and make a real difference. To sign up, visit the Web site at www.hsus.org/join and check the box to subscribe to HumaneLines, the weekly e-mail newsletter of the Humane Action Network. You can also contact Kelly Dupps, Grassroots Outreach Coordinator, The HSUS, 519 C Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002; 202-955-3078; kedupps@hsus.org.
continued from “Cruelty,” page 1 has spent years battling in the Oklahoma Legislature (see sidebar on page 3).

On May 15, Amador County sheriff’s deputies arrested 28 people, some captured climbing down from trees where they had attempted to hide. Richard Warren Bohn, the owner of the 10-acre tract of land in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains known locally as the California Game Farm, was also arrested. Authorities seized and removed 58 roosters, while more than 350 additional gamecocks were tagged, photographed, and impounded on the property.

Armstrong and other investigators found hundreds of razor-sharp “slashers,” the knife-like instruments attached to the legs of the birds in a fight. Further scrutiny revealed three blood-stained cockfighting arenas, along with firearms, drugs, and thousands of dollars in cash. Even though cockfighting is not yet a felony in California, several felony charges were filed against Bohn as a result of his alleged activities related to organizing a cockfight. Sakach believes that felony charges for animal fighting are an important tool that law enforcement officers in every state should have at their disposal. “California,” he adds, “has become a bit of a refuge for cockfighters because it is only a misdemeanor here.”

RAVS Clinic Reveals Rural Neglect

This past June, SWRO Program Coordinator Tammy Hawley was asked to assist in a case of animal neglect in Bledsoe County, one of the poorest regions in Tennessee. The case was discovered almost by accident during an HSUS Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAVS) clinic, when a local woman brought in an emaciated dog for spaying. The animal was in such bad condition that the veterinarian recommended she be immediately euthanized, to which the owner agreed. While talking to the dog’s owner, RAVS team leaders learned that the woman had more animals, and clinic coordinator Tammy Rouse was able to secure an invitation to visit her property. What she saw shocked her, and she immediately placed a call to Hawley, knowing she could help humanely remove the neglected animals and properly document the case for judicial action.

What Hawley and Rouse encountered when they arrived was dismayingly familiar to Hawley, who spent years in north Texas successfully prosecuting hundreds of animal neglect and cruelty cases. Team members comprised of Hawley, Rouse, several other HSUS staff members, and RAVS veterinarians and student volunteers found a ramshackle mobile home that served as the residence. There was no running water, and animal feces covered the floor, which in places had caved in. The human residents were using bleach bottles as toilets.

Nearly all of the 30 dogs were suffering from serious hair loss and malnutrition. They, along with a rabbit, a duck, a pig, two horses, and three chickens, were removed from the property and taken to the Young-Williams Animal Center in Knoxville. Unfortunately, 11 dogs had to be humanely euthanized, as they were so ill that attempt­ed treatment would only cause additional suffering. The remaining animals were all treated and transferred to other animal care organizations for adoption.

In addition to cruelty charges, the couple also faces charges because they failed to appear for their arraignment in July. Hawley says steps are being taken to involve adult protective services on behalf of the couple, who fit the profile of animal hoarders. She adds that it is important to understand that hoarding is a mental aberrance, the signs of which were all too evident in the sad little barnyard. “We should all be aware of the signs that hoarding or neglect are occurring,” she advises, “and take action for those who cannot help themselves.”

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.
- Providing for my pets in my will and in case of emergency.
- Planning my estate and will to help animals and The HSUS.
- Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS.
- Giving The HSUS a gift of stock.

Promoting the protection of all animals

THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL OFFICE
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“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. Petsy 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 bulls.

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 Animal Hop Productions.

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. Brown spent three years infiltrating the underground subculture of pit bull fighting, gaining the trust of the well-established “dog men” who allowed him to film behind their veil of secrecy. But he also captured another side: the loving nature of the dogs and the brutal misuse by those supposed to be their caretakers. The HSUS’s Eric Sakach is featured in the documentary.

Brown is donating to The HSUS one-third of the proceeds from sales of “Off the Chain” DVD sold through The HSUS. To order, go to www.offthechainproductions.com

Director’s Report

I have often written in this column about the variety of creatures who live with me and my family. The daily routine of feeding and caring for our extensive menagerie of rescued critters (seven horses, a donkey, a cow, multiple chickens, two goats, two dogs, two parrots, two rabbits, and a handful of cats) has become more complex than I ever dreamed it would.

Betrayal of Man’s Best Friend

One of nearly 60 dogs The HSUS helped rescue from the property of convicted dogfighter Floyd Boudreaux.

La Dogfighting “Godfather” Goes Down

On March 9, 2005, Louisiana’s dogfighting industry suffered a fatal wound with the early morning arrest of Floyd Boudreaux and his son Gary. A task force comprised of SWRO’s Tammy Hawley; HSUS staff from Washington, Florida, and Montana; Louisiana SPCA (LASPCA) officials; and state and local law enforcement officers pooled resources and information to execute the successful warrant. In all, 39 pit bulls were removed from Boudreaux’s premises, in Broussard, Louisiana, all bearing scars and injuries from the effects of this most horrendous blood sport.

While the task force collected the evidence for Boudreaux’s prosecution, animal care professionals removed the dogs and documented their physical condition. Industrial belt cutters were needed to cut the heavy logging chains shackled to each dog’s neck. With tails wagging furiously, the dogs may have been pleasantly surprised to meet people who showed them kindness.

At the end of the day, all the dogs were loaded into waiting transport vehicles for the hour trip to the LASPCA, where each dog was again evaluated by a licensed veterinarian, then sent to a special “comfort station” where all were allowed to visit with compassionate LASPCA staff members. The dogs received petting and kind words, perhaps for the first time. Because the dogs were trained fighters and not safe around other animals or children, they had to be humanely euthanized not long after their rescue. Their days of suffering were over at last.

Boudreaux was the self-proclaimed “godfather” of Louisiana dogfighting. His arrest initiated a rush of citizen tips, which led to several additional raids and subsequent arrests of more notorious dogfighters. Father and son were both charged with 57 felony counts of dogfighting and two counts of animal cruelty. In addition to the state felony charges, the two could face federal charges too for selling and transporting fighting dogs across state lines. All told, they might have sold a total of 10 years in prison for each of the 57 charges. For 70-year-old Floyd Boudreaux, that might as well be a life sentence.

This successful rescue operation could not have occurred were it not for the combined talents of all agencies involved. The warrant against Boudreaux was issued based on months of investigative work done by local law enforcement, the LASPCA, and data collected and maintained by The HSUS. Evidence included graphic surveillance video and photographs that proved the illegal activities carried out. In talking to Hawley about the team effort, Louisiana State Crime Lab’s Pat Lane said, “I can’t even imagine attempting to undertake this kind of endeavor without all of you and the equipment and expertise you brought to the operation. It was, in my opinion, a model of how agencies can and must be able to work together to enforce the laws of our state and to protect our citizens and animals.”

“One of the best things we can do is to educate the public about animal cruelty. The HSUS’s Laura H. Hawley.

By Lou Guyton

Director of the Southwest Regional Office

Relationships Forged in Love

It’s true that we resemble our pets, then Colby and Teri are identical twins. I have known Teri for many years, she has become one of my most dear friends. Her dog Colby, a veteran yet faithful old pit bull mix, was certainly one of the few friends Teri loved unconditionally. Her dog graciously returned the favor, even up to the moment of her passing while in Teri’s arms, tail safely wagging, old blind eyes gently telling Teri she was okay to let go now.

When it was Colby’s time, Teri called me, knowing that I would understand her pain and perhaps be able to help her manage her grief. We talked on the phone like reunited soldiers from some foreign war, sharing stories of our past, our dogs, and each other’s lives. I love to the touch was the way she was in the hospital, but I wonder if our friendship would be as strong were we not had our dogs, their lives, their sparkle that makes them who they are, as the common bond between us all these years? I am forever amazed at the quiet, nearly invisible power our animals have on who we are.

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Promoting the protection of all animals

Mary Lou Guyton feels Norma Jean Christmas Carol the Cow.

Without words, without effort, and without fail, our animals teach us that unconditional love brings loyalty, respect, and friendship like no other you will ever experience.

It is for this reason that I continue my work with animals and people despite the conflicts, conflicts that prevent many people from knowing the true joy of having an animal as a friend. It is for this reason that I continue to work hard on behalf of animals, that you too will feel the overwhelming joy of an animal’s unconditional love, and carry it with you for the rest of your life, even after that cherished animal companion passes on. It is why we do what we do.

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Mary Lou Guyton, director of the Southwestern Division of The Humane Society of the United States, helps a visitor find a calf at the office’s Southwest Regional Office in Dallas. The office is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States, Southwest Regional Office, 3001 LBJ Freeway, Ste. 224, Dallas, TX 75234; phone 972-488-2964. Lou Guyton, director. The office is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is closed on federal holidays. © 2005 by The Humane Society of the United States. All rights reserved. A COPY OF THE LATEST REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION FILED WITH THE HSUS MAY BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING THE HSUS OFFICE OF THE TREASURER, 2100 L ST., NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20037; telephone (202) 432-1100. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT. Printed on recycled paper.