Wildlife in your shelter

by Sue Pressman

Pressman is director of wildlife protection for HSUS.

When your shelter receives a non-domestic animal from the wild and you must decide what to do with it, your first consideration should be to give it a humane death. This probably sounds surprising, since wild animals are becoming more rare all the time. The wilderness and its preservation are in the news today, and when you receive a wild animal, you have a little piece of wilderness right in your hand.

You may be required to impound a wild animal, or there may be other legal reasons to keep it. If so, the guidelines in the second part of this article will help you care for it.

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Workshop

The HSUS Gulf States Regional Office will host a HSUS Animal Control Workshop February 23-25 at Incarnate Word College, San Antonio, TX. For complete information, contact HSUS Gulf States Regional Office, 5333 Everhart Rd., #209-A, Corpus Christi, TX 78411... (512) 854-3142. Sue Pressman, author of this issue's cover article, will be a participant.

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Investigative photography
by Frantz Dantzler

Dantzler is director of field services and investigations for HSUS.

Photo showing size reference and identification (this photo was used in a precedent-setting case for Virginia's "Ratter chic" law).

(Part 2 of a two-part series, beginning in December SHELTER SENSE)

Newcomers to photography are often disappointed with the results of their picture-taking efforts because they forget that the camera does not "see" things as they do. Consider for a moment the vast difference between the function of your eyes and that of the camera. Your eyes always select and center on objects that attract you, and this is done so quickly and automatically that you rarely give it any thought. Other objects in your field of view are out of focus and do not distract from the object you are concentrating on at that moment.

The camera, however, sees everything and does not "select" objects automatically. This makes it necessary to get closer to your subject than you normally would to eliminate those subjects that distract from the central point of interest.

With a little practice, you can learn to "see" with the camera's viewfinder, taking notice of everything it takes in. Soon, you will be able to isolate subjects with the camera, just as you do with your eyes. To exclude scenery and other distractions in the photo, blur the background by making the camera lens opening larger (a setting of 5.6 or larger).

Remember: what you see is not always what the camera sees.

When photographing for evidence, it is a good idea to include a highly legible written document in the picture showing the date and time of the photo, the case identification number, the name of the investigator and any other pertinent information. The identification is especially important when the animal involved may be impounded or otherwise removed from the scene.

Sometimes it is helpful also to include yourself or an associate in the photo to verify that you were indeed present and saw the conditions the animals were subjected to at the time. You should also consider the need for size references.

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in close-ups -- a yardstick or a person's hand can help show, for example, the size of a wound on an animal. Be sure that you do not distort the scene, however. Don't try to recreate cruelty scenes, either, and make sure your negatives are protected from tampering. Make sure that your film is never cut.

If you use black and white film, always request a "proof sheet" or "contact sheet" from the processor. A proof sheet is inexpensive and will enable you to see all your photos printed on one sheet of paper so you can determine those suitable for printing.

Before making the decision, however, review the photos with the prosecuting attorney. This gives the attorney an opportunity to see which aspects of the case are strong as far as photographs are concerned and also helps point out the weaker aspects that did not photograph as well. You then pay to print only the photos you use.

Remember that the more photographs you take on the scene, the better your selection will be when it's time to prepare for court.

When you have a choice, always have 8" x 10" prints made for courtroom use. Any additional cost for the larger prints is negligible when you consider the overall investment you make in your investigation.

The larger prints will set you apart from amateurish, less efficient investigators in the minds of a jury or judge. They help increase your credibility in a setting where the burden of proving cruelty is on you!

Finally, if you are presenting several photos, take the time to prepare a sketch showing the overall view of the property and the areas the photos cover. Show the location and direction of the camera at the time the photos were taken. When you testify, explain the setting and how you took the photos, and give specific details.

With a little practice and patience, you can take good investigative photographs that will help the jury and judge toward full understanding of what happened. This, in turn, will secure more cruelty convictions and help the cause of animal protection.

"Contact sheet" or "proof sheet."
Animal-Kind (Davidson Bldg., 1627 Main, Kansas City, MO 64108) has given a humane award to the city of Grandview, MO, for supporting a humane education program in the schools. The group hopes the award will encourage other cities to support humane programs.

Peninsula Humane Society (12 Airport Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94401) has interviewed their "shelter cat" in their member magazine. "Rocky" passes along valuable pet care tips from the "cat's point of view" in this appealing format.

Rocky reports that even short-haired cats like to be groomed and that no cat cares to be put out at night. He urges fellow cats to have their owners purchase the cat registration tag made available by PHS: "It's on a safety collar that will break away if I get caught in a tight spot, which happens to cats sometimes."

He also points out that being neutered "keeps me out of trouble, if you know what I mean...."

San Francisco SPCA (2500 16th St., San Francisco, CA 94103) offers vaccinations for pets for $2 per inoculation to low income families. The family must present a valid document indicating a maximum annual income of $6,000.

Monterey County SPCA (PO Box 3058, Monterey, CA 93940) hands out this form to shelter visitors to find out where their operation needs improvement and how they can better serve the public.

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THANK YOU FOR VISITING THE MONTEREY COUNTY S.P.C.A.

Your opinion is important to us in evaluating our services. Please check the appropriate boxes and make comments in the spaces below. Your responses will enable us to provide an increasingly high quality service to both the public and their animals.

PROMPT SERVICE

ATTITUDE OF EMPLOYEES

EXCELLENT AVERAGE POOR

CONDITION OF KENNELS

CLEAR EXPLANATION OF FEES, SERVICES, ADOPTION REQUIREMENTS, ETC.

AVAILABILITY OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR LITERATURE ON RELATED TOPICS

NAME OF EMPLOYEE YOU DEALT WITH

I was pleased with the SPCA because

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Jefferson Parish Animal Shelter Department (Ames Blvd. at Belle Terre, PO Box 589, Marrero, LA 70073) has a mobile rabies unit, staffed by the shelter veterinarian and two assistants, serving the low income areas of the community.

A rabies shot is $2, and a heartworm check is $5. The mobile unit is introducing more citizens to the animal control department while encouraging pet owner responsibility.

Animal shelter director Richard Collard with new mobile unit.

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Animal shelters seeking funding should check these two sources:

The US Department of Agriculture makes loans available through the individual states for community facilities in rural areas. To qualify for a construction loan, the parties building the shelter will need to show that the shelter is a valuable service to all the public. Typical projects include hospitals, nursing homes and street improvements.

According to the Community Facilities Loan Division of the Farmers Home Administration, each state receives funds based on rural population, income levels and other factors. The loans are available to a local government or a private, non-profit group, and in either case, the loan can be secured with tax revenues by the local government. The interest rate is 5%, and the payback period is the life of the building to a maximum of 40 years. The community served must have fewer than 10,000 people.

For complete information, contact the Farmers Home Administration County Supervisor listed in your telephone book under Farmers Home Administration or under the county government offices.

Communities receiving federal revenue sharing funds can make these funds available for the construction or operation of animal shelters.

The federal government requires cities and counties to hold hearings on the distribution of revenue sharing money, according to the Office of Federal Revenue Sharing, US Department of Treasury. Shelters can request funding at these hearings.

There are few restrictions on using the money. Distribution depends on local priorities. Shelters will be competing against other interests for these dollars and should be prepared to show that they are performing a community service.

For complete information, contact your city or county budget or financial director.
in the last issue of SHELTER SENSE, it was reported that the U.S. Department of Agriculture had postponed a plan to hire part-time employees to assist with enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act. (The Act regulates animal dealers, laboratories, zoos, circuses, airlines transporting animals and other commercial operations.)

The hiring plan has now been approved, and USDA is seeking humanely motivated employees with some practical experience in dealing with animal problems. For complete information, contact Dr. Dale Schwindaman, Senior Staff Veterinarian, Animal Care Staff, APHIS-VS, Federal Building, Hyattsville, MD 20782.

Don’t allow it to become a plaything or object of curiosity for visitors or shelter staff, or the shelter “mascot” animal. The game warden can help you identify the animal and tell you if it is endangered or comes under a state or federal regulation. Shelters can encounter as many as 30 species of local mammals and reptiles and 50 species of local birds, plus an occasional “pet” lion or other exotic animal. The game warden can help you or the veterinarian. (If an animal brought in from the wild has a broken limb or some other medical problem that can be treated quickly and the fish and game authorities will be available to assist with its disposition. And if you are impounding a wild animal, the guidelines below will help you maintain it.

But unless the animal is received under special circumstances or you are required to keep it for some legal reason, a painless death must be recognized as a humane disposition for it. The chances for smooth and successful recovery from illness, adoption or survival in the wild are slim. The shelter worker must prevent suffering and maintain the quality of life for animals — not maintain animal life at any cost.

Your shelter will receive adorable orphaned animals that will tempt you to try rearing them. But these little animals may be internally injured even though they appear sound. They are suffering the shock and stress of being handled by many people in a noisy, unfamiliar situation.

The young mammals should get their mother’s milk which is much thinner than cow’s milk, and although substitute milks can be purchased for them, even these are not the “real McCoy.” Milks too heavy with butterfat can give them dysentery, which can be fatal if prolonged.

And these orphans will not have an opportunity to learn about survival in the wild. They can seldom be reintroduced to their own kind. The wild animal pet who suddenly bit its owner, or has simply outgrown its cuteness, usually cannot be reintroduced to the wild. Your shelter should set a firm policy against wild animal adoption.

If an animal brought in from the wild has a broken limb or other medical problem that can be treated quickly and the animal released, then the shelter may want to take the time to do this. If the animal is endangered or regulated for some other reason, the fish and game authorities will be available to assist with its disposition. And if you are impounding a wild animal, the guidelines below will help you maintain it.

In most cases, euthanasia will be specified by the expert. If you must maintain the animal, the specialists can offer some information on care.

From the time the wild animal comes into your shelter, until the time it is disposed of, it should be given warmth, quiet and rest. Treat it like a “patient.”

Give one copy of the form to the person releasing the animal, file one copy by number and file one copy by the person’s last name.

Also, have the person perforate the form at the dotted line, and use the lower portion of one copy as a kennel card. Using it, the cage and make sure it goes with the animal whenever it is moved.

Treat it like a “patient.”
Some of the more common animals to come to your shelter will be skunk, raccoon, squirrel, chipmunk, possum, fox, rabbit and such non-native visitors as the coati-mundi. From time to time, you may have to maintain an impounded wild animal, or keep one for some other legal reason. Animals old enough to eat on their own are easier to care for than nursery animals, which will be discussed later in this article.

For the wild animal you are required to maintain, a nutritious and palatable diet can be created with "in-stock" or readily available supplies: dry and canned dog and cat food, primate chow (such as monkey chow) and canned fruit cocktail (packed in water or with the syrup rinsed off before serving).

Keep in mind that you are holding the animal only temporarily so a long-term prime conditioning diet is not necessary. In many cases, even the maintenance diet you serve may be the best food the animal has had since it got into the situation that brought it to you.

The "chow" products as well as dry dog and cat foods are designed for the specific animal named; however, they are a satisfactory food for the exotic animal on a temporary basis. All these foods are cereal-based, a major food requirement for the majority of mammals coming into the shelter.

You can offer your wildlife visitor both dog and monkey chow to see which is preferred. The consistency can be softened to "wet cookie" stage by adding hot water and draining, accommodating little teeth not designed for large chunks of food. Canned fruit cocktail adds the food interest needed by some species such as monkeys, without the shelter spending money on fresh fruit not necessary for proper diet.

Turtles and iguanas need food interest also; softened monkey chow and fruit cocktail are satisfactory, but these animals can have a hard-boiled egg or cut lettuce leaves.

Reptiles that require high protein in the form of insects or meat can be fed canned dog or cat food. The food containing some cereal filler is best; 100% meat is not necessary in the canned food.

The use of commercial products for feeding wild animals can help prevent dietary upsets. These products have been tested and used extensively and found to be safe. "Home remedies" can be successful, but should be used carefully with precise recordkeeping on the foods consumed and the result.

Wild rabbits can be difficult, but they will generally accept the rabbit pellets sold in pet shops. Carrots with a very occasional green are fine. Rabbits also like nibbling dry cat or dog food.

Remember that animals called carnivores are not "meat-eaters" but "animal-eaters" -- the food animal is made up of more than just meat.

Carnivorous birds (such as migratory songbirds and birds of prey) will probably come under a federal or state regulation and should be reported and turned over to the fish and game department. Until they claim it, they will advise you about feeding requirements. Young birds can generally be hand-fed canned dog food with cereal filler.

Feathered & Furred: A Guide for Wildlife Handling and Care, by Mae Hickman and Maxine Guy (Unity Press, PO Box 1037, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, $7.95). This book will help you identify and care for the wild animals you must hold.
Family Pet Killed 'By Mistake' at Shelter" -- this headline describes something many shelters have experienced and many more shelter directors have bad dreams about.

Sometimes mistakes are made -- but shelters may often find that they and the particular animal euthanized 'by mistake' simply got caught between separated spouses or squabbling neighbors.

Every public and private shelter should have a euthanasia release form for each person turning in an animal to sign. If there is a complaint about an animal being destroyed, you can produce the name of the person who authorized it.

You can reproduce this form and add your shelter name with a rubber stamp or develop a form of your own.

AUTHORIZATION TO PERFORM EUTHANASIA

As owner, or duly authorized agent of the owner, of the animal described below, I hereby consent to euthanasia being performed on same. I further authorize the animal facility to dispose of the remains in accordance with its policy. To my knowledge and belief, this animal has not bitten any person during the fifteen days preceding this date.

signature __________________________

ID (driver's license or other) __________________________

species of animal __________________________

breed __________________________ sex __________________________

color, markings __________________________

age __________________________

shelter in-ticket number __________________________