Reward Nets Cattle Shooters

When SWRO first heard of the crime, it sounded as though someone had gone on a shooting spree. And when the facts of the case came out, that is exactly what had happened. The victims were 11 defenseless cows, shot in their own pastures.

Cattle owners in the north central Texas counties of Tarrant, Johnson, Parker, and Hood reported to local authorities that a number of their cows had been shot and killed during the night. We knew that one way in which our office could immediately help was to offer a reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrators. And it paid off when authorities arrested two men who confessed to the crimes.

The two men decided to shoot the cows for no apparent reason. The $2,500 reward goes to the person who tipped off investigators after hearing the two brag about their involvement as publicity of the shootings spread on Texas television stations. The accused are being charged with livestock theft, which in Texas carries a higher penalty than animal cruelty.

H.D. Brittain, a field inspector with the Texas Rangers and the lead investigator in the case, credits The HSUS reward as bringing about the perpetrators’ arrest.

Cows like these fell victim to two violent men who were caught thanks to an HSUS reward offer.

Illegally Fighting Cattle is endemic in South Texas. Every Friday and Saturday night brings the horrible mutilation of dogs and roosters as they are forced to fight in the pit for the amusement and wagering of their owners. These animals are used and then discarded like the empty beer bottles that litter the floor when the fights are over. Most of these animal fighters see nothing wrong with their “sport,” even though it is a felony offense in Texas, as well as in many other states.

From now on, things are going to be different in Corpus Christi, Texas. The Corpus Christi Police Department has decided to prosecute illegal animal fighting as the crime that it is. This has happened because SWRO spent two days with the Department providing materials, instruction, and helping to educate them about animal cruelty investigations and animal fighting under Texas law.

For years, local police departments have had little or no training in combating this vicious crime. Many law enforcement officers considered illegal animal fighting to be a lower-echelon crime, not really worthy of their time, especially when they’ve been inundated with robberies, homicides, and other violent crimes against people.

However, many modern police departments are beginning to realize that illegal animal fighting is not only a crime against animals, but it also is a harbinger of other criminal activities. Illegal gambling, drugs, and illegal firearms are often found at the scenes of these crimes. These criminals often intimidate their neighbors. They may steal neighborhood pets and use them to train their fighting dogs. Many are in criminal gangs. Some animal fighters even bring their children to the fights, essentially desensitizing them to the violence and horror of the activity.

The HSUS is committed to stopping animal fighting. To that end, SWRO continues to meet with law-enforcement agencies to convince them of the seriousness of this crime and to give them the knowledge and tools they need to stop it.

It is not an easy task. As local governments slash budgets, police officers and county sheriffs are quickly becoming overwhelmed. This situation tends to push animal fighting offenses even further down on the priority chain. As police training continued on page 2.
Keeping Your Cat Safe

Did you know that it’s not necessary for cats to roam freely outside? They can be happy living indoors full-time and will ultimately live longer, healthier lives as a result? That’s the message of the new HSUS Safe Cats campaign. Contrary to popular belief, a cat’s natural habitat is not the great outdoors, but is instead the home in which he lives with his family. The goal of Safe Cats is to educate cat owners about the benefits of keeping cats indoors as well as how to make the indoors appealing to cats. When you think about some of the dangers that cats face outside, what comes to mind? Being hit by a car or being harmed by cruel people are two possibilities. Cats also face the dangers of being attacked by dogs or other predators; engaging in fights with other cats; exposure to diseases such as rabies, feline leukemia, and feline immunodeficiency virus—all of which are fatal; exposure to poisons and pests such as fleas; and becoming lost and unable to return home. Cats at large only add to the pet overpopulation crisis.

SWRO receives hundreds of phone calls and e-mails each year about the untimely and often torturous deaths suffered by cats in our region. For example: In Bella Vista, Arkansas, a badly beaten cat was found in a trashcan after someone had attempted—but failed—to drown him. He was later euthanized at a local animal hospital. In Dallas, Texas, a severely burned cat was found at an elementary school.

In 2003, damaging legislation was introduced in Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, and New York under the guise of fighting terrorism. In 2004, Arizona, South Carolina, and Washington joined the group. Following are provisions of the legislation in our southwestern states.

In Oklahoma, S.B. 594, signed by the Governor in 2003, creates the Oklahoma Farm Animal, Crop, and Research Facilities Protection Act, which prohibits removing or damaging animals or products of the facilities.

In Texas, H.B. 433 would have criminalized legitimate political and social protests, demonstrations, civil disobedience, and debate by animal or environmental advocates. It sought to prohibit anyone from donating money to an animal or environmental organization engaging in these activities and to criminalize legitimate investigative means such as photographing and videotaping of animal or environmental facility. It called for a state-run Web site to identify individuals who violate the law. This bill died in committee.

The organization claiming credit for drafting this legislation is American Legislative Exchange Council. This little-known group refers to its model legislation as the Animal and Ecological Terrorism Act. In its words, the legislation creates penalties for persons encouraging, financing, assisting, or engaging in acts of animal and ecological terrorism. A similar legislative initiative is also being promoted by the U.S. Sportsman’s Alliance (a trade association of archery, firearms, and hunting companies). Although a number of the bills that have been introduced in the past few years have focused on increasing penalties for arson and other forms of property destruction aimed at animal facilities, the worst form of the legislation also seeks the imposition of severe penalties for any of the following: 1) photographing or taking video of any animal facility without permission. Since almost every use of animals occurs on private lands, this provision would make it nearly impossible to obtain documentation of animal cruelty, and ending videotaping a cockfight or the abuse of sows at a hog factory. 2) Contributing money to animal rights or environmental protection organizations that are “blacklisted” organizations. This legislation also includes a provision that mandates that the name, picture, and address of any offender be posted on a Web registry accessible to the public for up to three years.

Making it a crime to commit abuse at continued on page 3

I want to learn how I can help my 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 thanks the town of Flower Mound for recognizing the horror of horse slaughter. "This proclamation helps raise awareness and supports the efforts of many Texans who have labored hard this year to stop horse slaughter in this state. We encourage all citizens of Flower Mound—and indeed all Texans—to support the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act. Horses are not food animals, and they share a long history of companionship with people in this country. Now is the time for this great nation to demand a halt to this barbaric practice."

SWRO continues to fight horse slaughter at all levels. We appreciate your continued support and assistance. You can learn more at www.hsus.org/ace/11787.

Regional Coordinator Jay Sabanci was also there and received a proclamation from Flower Mound’s mayor. "The Humane Society of the United States thanks the town of Flower Mound for recognizing the horror of horse slaughter," Sabanci said. This proclamation helps raise awareness and supports the efforts of many Texans who have labored hard this year to stop horse slaughter in this state. We encourage all citizens of Flower Mound—and indeed all Texans—to support the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act. Horses are not food animals, and they share a long history of companionship with people in this country. Now is the time for this great nation to demand a halt to this barbaric practice."

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By Lou Guyton
Director of the Southwest Regional Office

My, How Times Have Changed

Seventeen years ago when I first started volunteering to help animals, there were no felony penalties for heinous acts of cruelty to animals. Cruelty “investigations” meant simply removing animals to safety and almost never resulted in prosecution. Law enforcement agencies rarely agreed to assist with animal cases, and prosecutors were concerned only about crimes against people. Most shelters were merely dumping grounds for unwanted animals. Only the most progressive agencies were beginning to develop humane education programs for school children. The concept of animal protection was evolving. The frustration I experienced only served to lay the groundwork to make the changes were beginning to develop humane concepts of animal protection was evolving.

I am also glad that The HSUS, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, laid the groundwork to make the changes that I have witnessed in my career. HSUS has worked for 50 years to bring to light the connection between animal abuse and human violence. We have spent countless hours educating the children, media, law enforcement agencies, and the public. We now hear more about animal cruelty in the media, and we become outraged at the reports. However, I can tell you that 17 years ago, the same things were happening, but you never heard about them. Bringing the reality of animal cruelty to the public eye was an HSUS strategy. And it is paying off every day for the animals.

More good news: The cruelty and protection laws in most states are stronger. Yes, we still have to fight in the legislature to protect those laws and our opponents are more organized than before. But the public has come to understand that violence and animal cruelty are unacceptable. Felony animal cruelty provisions have been passed in 41 states. We continue to educate prosecutors and law enforcement officers. We continue to train animal control officers and animal welfare professionals in the skills of investigation and education. We continue to strategize to effect positive change for the animals.

What do I hope to accomplish from these efforts? I hope that somebody’s 8-year-old child whom I taught a humane education course to 17 years ago still remembers the lesson and will pass it on to her children. I hope someone I investigated still remembers more than just basic animal care. I hope someone who adopted a pet from me remembers the animal dearly or is still guardian to a cherished friend. But this isn’t about me. It is about our anniversary—everyone who has supported The HSUS and those fighting for the animals for the last 50 years. It is about protecting the animals. I hope I’m still around when we celebrate 100!

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animal facilities strikes at the core of the work of legitimate animal protection advocates. With the exception of hunting and trapping on public lands (where animal advocates are now not allowed to protest because of hunter-harassment laws), animal use—and abuse—takes place on private lands, whether it involves animal agriculture, animal research, the training of wild animals in circuses, or cockfighting. If there are specific legal prohibitions against documenting animal abuse, it puts us at a terrible disadvantage in attempting to bring cruelty charges or expose unethical practices.

Laws already exist to prohibit trespass and breaking and entering. The adoption of this legislation sets up differential penalties because of the political views of the animal activists. The HSUS encourages our constituents and state legislators to reject this kind of legislation.