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HSUS Investigates Shelter Starvations

Just outside of Corpus Christi, Tex., a small, out-of-the-way animal shelter, operated for Nueces County residents, has become a living nightmare for the animals. Several years ago, The HSUS advised the county government to comply with minimum standards required by state law, and, at first, the county agreed, even though a technicality exempted it from the law. Then, as the years passed, less and less attention was paid to the shelter operation.

In late July 1988, the entire system collapsed. The shelter attendant called in sick and did not come in for several days. Since the county supervisor had no one else assigned to the shelter operation, he simply let the animals go unfed and unwatered. As a result, several dogs died agonizing deaths from deprivation. Other dogs turned to cannibalism in a desperate bid for survival.

The tragedy hit the news media the following morning, and a number of volunteers set about caring for the remaining dogs. Our field investigator worked with the officials to establish where the fault lay. Unfortunately, we met with the typical response of government agencies that attempt to cover up their wrongdoing. The county attorney stated he would hold no county supervisor responsible because care of the animals “wasn’t their job.”

The HSUS is maintaining its position that local governments are responsible for the care of animals in their custody, regardless of whether or not employees show up for work. At press time, we were still pushing for prosecution of the responsible parties in the case.

Arkansans For Animals Organized

Arkansas has a newly formed, statewide group to work for animals. Arkansans for Animals (AFA) is an organization with a unique blend of lawyers, animal-control officers, and concerned citizens from around the state. It has as its goal the “prevention and eventual elimination of all forms of animal abuse and exploitation.” In particular, AFA organized for the purpose of promoting passage of humane legislation and to disseminate humane education information. The president, Craig Lambert, has already prepared letters asking each state senator and representative to consider introduction of three bills in the next legislative session. These bills will:

1) make dogfighting and cockfighting felonies in Arkansas;
2) prevent surgical alteration of animals for entertainment purposes; and
3) give animal-control and humane-society officers authority to seize animals during emergency situations.

AFA plans to hold quarterly meetings in various places around Arkansas. For more information, write to Arkansans for Animals, Inc., Suite 1700, First Commercial Building, Little Rock, AR 72201, (501) 375-5848.
Violence Begets Violence—Cockfight Scene of Gang Rape

San Diego, Tex., was a sleepy little town where everybody knew or was related to everyone else. However, late one Saturday night in March, a nineteen-year-old woman was reportedly abducted a half-block from her home and allegedly gang-raped by as many as twenty men. The rapes occurred at the scene of a large cockfight. Most of the estimated thirty men and boys attacking the cockfight knew the assault was occurring in a parked car near the cockpit. No one tried to stop the assault, even though the victim cried out for help.

Charges were filed against eleven men. Seven of the men were charged with sexual assault, three were charged with sexual assault and kidnapping, and one was charged with kidnapping, according to Justice of the Peace Amado Gardia, Jr.

Reportedly, approximately one-quarter of the five thousand San Diego residents participate in cockfighting. Children are often among the spectators. By participating in this activity, cockfighters are teaching their children that violence and breaking the law are acceptable.

The HSUS stated in the press that if society tolerates this type of violent bloodsport, we will never overcome violent social crimes such as rape. And the bottom line cannot be ignored. As this incident clearly indicates, violence begets violence.

Livestock Abuse Continues In Texas Auction Barns

The HSUS Gulf States Regional Office has received a number of complaints from cattle ranchers regarding the rough abuse suffered by their cattle at Texas livestock-sale barns. Upon examination, Bernie Weller, our field investigator, found ponytails slashed across the faces of calves and oak canes slammed across hips and spines to bring the animals through chutes. He also found live electrical current being used to shock cattle into moving.

Our investigator informed the sale-barn owners of possible cruelty violations and discussed the corrections needed to comply with the law. Mr. Weller was assured that corrections would be made, and it was not their intent to abuse animals.

Returning to one of the sale barns a few weeks later, our investigator found much less abusive handling of the livestock. This is not universally true, as just one sale barn, and there are hundreds in our region where animals are handled roughly. We will continue to work to stop mistreatment of livestock.

HSUS Speaks Out Against Rodeo Events

Recently, Regional Director Bill Meade took part in a Houston, Tex., radio talk show that invited the public to call in comments. The topic for the day was: “Do you believe rodeos cause cruelty to animals?”

The HSUS presented the facts, which showed clearly that animals are injured, tormented, and sometimes killed in rodeo performances. Further, rodeo producers rationalize the injuries or deaths by saying they are just “accidental,” and rodeo cowboys really “love” their animals.

Then the public began to call in their comments. Surprisingly, out of approximately ten callers, seven were opposed to rodeo. Perhaps we are making more progress than we sometimes realize.

Of the other three callers, two supported rodeo and gave the usual timeworn argument that participating animals are expensive and certainly wouldn’t be mistreated. The third caller, however, was truly frightening. He said he believed that rodeos were cruel and did cause suffering to animals. But, he said, he intended to continue supporting rodeos because “God made animals for only one reason, to be used and to suffer for any activity that please man!”

University of Texas Violates Care Standards for Animals

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced that the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, Tex., paid a $15,000 penalty in connection with charges of violating the Federal Animal Welfare Act. The university operates a research facility that ranks as one of the largest users of animals for experiments in which no anesthesia is used to relieve pain.

According to the USDA, the University of Texas, for a number of years, filed false annual reports. Allegedly, the Health Science Center stated there was a program of veterinary care and anesthetics were used to relieve pain when, in fact, no attending veterinarian even had access to the animals, and even if they had, no one could verify whether any standards were being complied with.

During recent months, a number of newspaper and magazine articles have been written defending animal experimentation. The standard defense is that researchers are responsible professionals who would never knowingly violate animal-care laws. The American public has been told not to worry about these animals because they are in good hands. This case clearly points out the fallacy of that position.

Cockfighting Protested

The legalized, bloody “sport” of cockfighting faces strong opposition in Louisiana. A statewide legislative group, the Coalition of Louisiana Animal Activists (COLAA), is promoting bills sponsored by Rep. Stan Choctaw, Rep. Forster, and Rep. Herling to outlaw these cruel events. Unfortunately, the first attempt was not successful, as cockfighting forces persuaded rural legislators to oppose the bills.

COLAA and Louisiana groups are already planning for new legislation for the next session. If you can help get petitions signed, write to the Jefferson SPCA, 4636 Sanford St., Metairie, LA 70006.

Educators’ Association Organized

A new region-wide humane educators’ association has been formed by The HSUS with the goal of expanding humane education within our communities. Humane education is essentially the process of sensitizing young people and adults to the philosophy of reverence and respect for life. This is accomplished by giving people the needed information and making them aware of current actions within our communities.

The Oklahoma Humane Legislative Committee and The HSUS backed a bill (SB 70) to establish minimum standards of care for all Oklahoma shelters. The bill was written very simply and required only that local governments provide shelter animals with food, water, sanitation, and protection from freezing. This is not more than an individual pet owner is required by law to do for his or her own pet.

The bill failed in the legislature because some local governments opposed it.

We urge all our Oklahoma members to write their state legislators and ask them to support a minimum shelter-standards bill.

Oklahoma Shelter Bill Fails

In Oklahoma, many shelter animals often go for days without sufficient food or clean water. In winter, newly born puppies and kittens have sometimes been allowed to freeze to frigid concrete floors. In summer, fifth and flies are often the animals’ only, unwelcomed, companions. Why does this happen? Simply because counties and small cities in Oklahoma won’t spend the money necessary to furnish these shelter animals with basic, decent care.

In an effort to correct these problems, the Oklahoma Humane Legislative Committee and The HSUS backed a bill (S.B. 70) to
There are simply too many opinions of what constitutes “cruelty” to have a clearly defined meaning to the public. Because of this ambiguity, we need to state publicly our underlying philosophy in a way that will not be misconstrued.

My suggestion for a philosophical position is the following: Reverence and respect for all life expressed through a nonviolent lifestyle. Reverence for life excludes selfish or unnecessary killing. Respect allows all creatures to live a fulfilling, natural existence; nonviolence excludes all actions that destroy and harm our world, other people, animals, or ourselves.

Certainly, there will be those people who will debate what is “necessary” killing and what is “harmful” to life. For instance, is it necessary to kill surplus shelter animals, or is it necessary to kill food animals? Is it necessary to experiment on animals? These questions can be answered through pragmatic, factual inquiry. The answers are there. The question is, are we and the public willing to accept the answers?

I firmly believe we have a much greater ability to influence the public and motivate positive change if we advocate and demonstrate a philosophy that unquestionably stands for reverence, respect, and nonviolence.