GLRO TRACES PET SENT TO RESEARCH

Rarely a day passes that the Great Lakes Regional Office staff is not working in some way to prevent pets from ending up in research facilities.

The staff continually work on legislation affecting animals in research. They assist local humane societies in halting “bunching” at pounds. They write action alerts and compile statistics and work on other projects dealing with research animals.

Recently, Director Sandy Rowland was asked by a humane agent to help locate a pet dog sold from an Ohio pound to an animal dealer who buys and sells animals for research.

The dog, Rocky, had escaped from his heated garage while his owner was away. A neighbor accidentally had let him out.

When the owner contacted the county pound, he was told his dog was not there. Three days later he was told his dog had indeed been there but was sold to another family. Frustrated by the various stories he received from the pound, the owner contacted the county humane agent. Checking the public records, the agent found Rocky had been sold to a known animal dealer.

Rocky had been gone from the pound a month when the GLRO was contacted. It was urgent to locate the dog before he became a victim of research.

The humane agent went to the kennel where the dealer keeps his dogs and, at first, was not allowed to look for Rocky. When law-enforcement officials insisted, the dealer finally allowed the agent to search the kennels but refused permission to check his records to see where the dog had gone. The dealer insisted he never had Rocky.

Rowland, Program Coordinator Kurt Lapham, and the agent began the task of contacting every research facility in the area. After several days of telephoning, their big fear became a reality: Rocky had been sold by the Ohio dealer to a Pennsylvania dealer. From there he was sold to an east coast research facility.

Rocky was a gentle German shepherd loved by his owner and the owner’s three-year-old son. The owner doesn’t have the heart to tell his son what happened to Rocky. The child still asks when Rocky will be back.

The sad, true story of Rocky is a vivid example that shows the need for stiff laws against bunching and pound seizure. It has strengthened our resolve, however, to continue to do everything we can to prevent pets winding up in research facilities.

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TASKFORCE OFFERS

The Great Lakes Animal Fighting Taskforce has initiated a reward system that offers up to $1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons involved in animal fighting.

The taskforce is composed of invited individuals who have been actively involved in investigating animal-fighting ventures. The group is composed of humane society and animal-control personnel as well as representatives from law-enforcement agencies.

The taskforce is also planning to produce audio-visual materials to aid in training authorities in the investigation of animal fighting.
Legislative Roundup

The key to effectiveness in animal protection is having good laws with which to work. For this reason, the GLRO believes it is imperative to emphasize legislative activities throughout the entire region.

We have previously reported on the success experienced in the legislature in Indiana last year. The new anti-cruelty statute was passed, and today it is benefiting many animals.

Michigan humanitarians fought hard last fall for two bills to stop the use of pets in research. Although the Senate only the second time Governor Richard Lugar turned out in force to show the legislature their objections to the use of pets in research.

In November, nearly 500 Michigan residents took part in a rally on the steps of the Capitol Building in Lansing, Michigan, against pets in research. Organized by the Michigan Federation of Humane Societies and Michigan Humane Society, the event coincided with hearings held by the legislature when we seek to upgrade penalties for this cruel activity. (It is HSUS' belief that felony laws accompanied by stiff fines and lengthy prison terms are the only effective deterrent to participation in this activity.)

Program Coordinator Kurt Lapham is very much involved in this kind of investigative work around the region. He can develop information but we need your help to end these spectacles.

Around the Region

The Great Lakes Regional Office is interested in establishing a circus and rodeo watch within the region. The purpose is to have a network of individuals and/or organizations willing to be called upon to monitor these traveling exhibitions when they stop in an area. The participating society or individual in the community where the circus or rodeo stops would find out where and when the next performance is scheduled. They would then contact GLRO and we, in turn, would notify the proper organization to cover the event at the next location. This networking effect will assure a constant monitoring of these events.

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Almost every weekend, at various clandestine sites around the region, hundreds of men, women, and children gather for an evening at the dogfights. They plunk down admission fees to eat, drink, cheer, and place bets as pit bull terriers tear each other to bits. To the spectators and participants, it's just another evening of pure, unabashed fun. Yet to thousands of fighting dogs that engage in this savagery every year, it means suffering and death—a bloody conclusion for a loyal pet.

HSUS investigators have, for years, been working to stop these brutal spectacles in the Great Lakes region and across the nation. Unlike legitimate dogfight rings is, however, a difficult and dangerous proposition; our investigators have had their lives threatened, they've been followed—some had even been shot! Yet this kind of risky investigative work is essential to "bust" these illegal rings and obtain documentation of atrocities for use in testifying before state legislators when we seek to upgrade penalties for this cruel activity. (It is HSUS' belief that felony laws accompanied by stiff fines and lengthy prison terms are the only effective deterrent to participation in this activity.)

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Here's what you can do:

- Find out if dogfighting is a felony in your state and, if not, write us for a fact sheet and initiate a campaign for a stronger law.
- Educate local and state law enforcement officials and ask them to enforce the law.

By Sandy Rowland

Director's Comment

Whenever I read in the newspaper about a disaster such as a tornado, a flood, or a chemical spill, I become concerned about whether or not provisions are adequate for taking care of animals caught in these emergencies. Several years ago we incorporated a session into the regional workshop that involved planning for disasters. Perhaps it is time to remind everyone again of the importance of planning now—before tragedy strikes.

Unfortunately, there cannot be just one common guide to use in the various types of disasters that can affect animals. However, every humane organization and animal--control agency can and should have outlines of plans for the disasters common in their own areas. These would certainly include tornadoes, floods, and fires.

Your first step is to contact your county disaster services department. Their role is to assist in meeting the needs of humans. You need to impress upon them that, in disasters, people are concerned about the welfare of their pets, and in this regard you can help them. Let them know of your interest in developing a plan and ask for their input. The extent of your involvement may vary, depending on the resources you have available for the various situations.

As always, our office is ready and willing to aid you should a disaster strike. Our past experience can help, we are sure, to make your job easier.
Ownership of exotic animals has been of interest to various city councils and state legislatures in the Great Lakes region. Over the past two years the GLRO has provided information documenting why private ownership of exotic pets should not be permitted.

Recently, Kurt Lapham took a closer look at what goes on in the exotic animal trade by attending exotic animal auctions around the region. What he found was appalling but not surprising. People from as far away as Maine attended some auctions. Many were looking for “good deals” on animals to buy and sell later at a higher price. Animals auctioned included hooved stock, lions, bears, and exotic birds.

Lapham found that housing did not meet even the minimal standards of the Animal Welfare Act. Cages were extremely small and insecure. Lapham observed one bear bite the finger of a spectator. Later, the same bear was auctioned off as a “tame” animal.

When the investigation was concluded, all violations of the Animal Welfare Act observed by Lapham were reported to the enforcing agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The GLRO will follow up to monitor what remedial action is taken by USDA.