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Spring 2002

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Recommended Citation
"MWRO Spring 2002" (2002). Midwest Regional Office. 3.
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Help Stop Cockfighting in Kansas

Last year, some 40 individuals were arrested in connection with a July 22 cockfight in Anderson County, Kansas. Investigators found two horse trailers converted to carry fighting roosters, a number of live roosters, and a dozen or so birds believed to have been killed in contests. More than 100 people were believed to have attended the three-pit cockfight that was held on land known as The Cadillac Ranch owned by Richard Radke of Olathe, Kansas.

County Attorney Fred Campbell evaluated the evidence in the July 22 arrest. The HSUS offered case review and expert testimony. Campbell initially believed he might be able to charge participants with animal cruelty and unlawful assembly. However, the lack of a state statute specifically outlawing cockfighting made him decide not to pursue the case any further.

"The fact that participants in this cockfighting incident were allowed to evade justice underscores the need for a continued on page 2"

Why Haven’t We Shut Down Puppy Mills?

This is one of the most often-asked questions at our office. The simple answer is that puppy mills won’t be shut down until individuals stop buying the puppies from the retail outlets that sell them. Unfortunately the simple answer is also the complicated answer. Much of America thinks this problem has been solved. Walk into any pet shop and customers will speak of their disdain for puppy mills, even though they may be unwittingly purchasing their puppies from them.

So, what is The HSUS doing? Much of our work goes on behind the scenes and doesn’t make the newspaper when we are successful. We work to assist the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in its efforts to enforce the laws that govern large-scale breeding facilities, informing them of cases we learn of and providing documentation, when possible, that points them to unlicensed dealers.

The USDA regulates puppy mills through licensing and inspection. Facilities not required to be licensed may still be regulated by their state’s agriculture departments. Unfortunately, not all states have such provisions, and some states have no laws at all to address large-scale breeding operations. For the past several years, The HSUS has successfully lobbied Congress for more funding for the USDA to increase enforcement. The USDA, which has been understaffed, hired more than a dozen new inspectors in 2001, due in part to The HSUS lobbying efforts in Congress. The HSUS has participated in the training of the newly hired inspectors to improve puppy mill standards. Congress approved an increase in funding for USDA of just over $5 million in 2001.

The HSUS has been working diligently in Washington, DC, to ensure passage of the Puppy Protection Act. This piece of federal legislation would affect all breeders licensed under the USDA and would ensure swift action against chronic violators of Animal Welfare Act regulations, set requirements for socialization of dogs and puppies with people and other dogs, as well as require continued on page 2
News in Farm Animal Issues

MWRO enthusiastically welcomes its newly hired HSUS Vice President of Farm Animals Dr. Michael Appleby and Farm Animal Campaign Manager Chris Bedford. When asked for their viewpoints about priorities for farm animals in the Midwest, Appleby had the following to say: "This region has both the worst and the best of the American livestock industry. It has vast factory hog farms that cause problems for the animals, the workers, the communities, and the environment. But it also has many small farms, and some of those are doing well at developing humane ways of treating their animals and avoiding most of the other problems. We need to reverse the trend towards factory farming and foster the humane farms instead."

Our office, along with The HSUS’s farm animal and sustainable agriculture section, plans a major campaign to:

- limit the use of antibiotics in animal production,
- establish close working relationships with farmers and farm organizations in an effort to help them and their animals escape destructive factory farming,
- help communities whose health and environment are threatened by animal factories,
- educate consumers about the consequences of their food choices.

The HSUS participated in the Farm Rally at the Capitol in Des Moines, Iowa, on January 15th in support of family farm organizations. If you are interested in joining The HSUS in fighting the expansion of factory farms, contact MWRO or Chris Bedford at cbedford@hsus.org or (301) 258-3006.

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The HSUS threatens to support The Capitol Life Protection Act of 2001. The Act would make it a felony to purchase, own, train, or sell birds for the purpose of fighting, and would make it a misdemeanor to be a spectator at a cockfight. Unfortunately, the cockfighters are now organized and have hired a lobbyist. This bill will only pass if legislators hear that Kansans care about this issue. You really can make a difference simply by sending a letter to your Senator and Representative in Topeka and asking them to support H.B. 2181. If you are interested in obtaining more information on cockfighting, go to www.animalfighting.org or contact MWRO. Please contact your legislators as soon as possible to express your views. Your voice is absolutely critical to the passage of this important legislation.

continued from "Puppy Mills," page 3

DOes of animal welfare organizations and 85 law enforcement agencies have endorsed the proposed anti-cockfighting bill scheduled to be debated in the Legislature this spring.

President

The Humane Society of Missouri (HSM) in St. Louis recently received a large grant to expand its statewide investigations department. HSM regularly assists MWRO with cruelty investigations.

MWRO coordinated volunteers from People for Animal Rights to join Dr. Donna Sauer in presenting testimony at a public hearing on snow goose population control held in Blue Springs. The group emphasized that lethal methods might not be the most effective long-term solution.

In 2001 Operation SPOT began a series of informational forums. The first forum was about feral cats. The second was about animal boarding, and the third and most popular was entitled Puppy Mills: A Shameful Business. Claire McCaldill, the Missouri state auditor whose work pointed out the need for changes in the Department of Agriculture’s program of licensing and inspecting dog and cat breeding facilities, served as keynote speaker for the final forum.

Operation SPOT has three new forums planned for 2002. MWRO plans on assisting with them. For more information, contact the group at 314-995-8678, or visit their Web site at www.opspot.org. You can also contact our office.

MWRO Hosts Animal Fighting Seminar

In November, MWRO, along with the Nebraska Humane Society, co-hosted a day-long training seminar in Omaha on Illegal animal fighting. The seminar featured nationally recognized cockfighting expert Robert Beals of the Los Angeles County, California, Sheriff’s Department. The seminar focused on the importance of information sharing and teamwork to combat illegal animal fighting. Attendees included law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and animal welfare advocates from Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

MWRO Director Amy Suarez (second from right) joins members of Operation SPOT.

A

round the Region

Iowa

- Keokuk Humane Society (KHS) held a strategic planning board retreat that MWRO facilitated. KHS recently purchased a downtown adoption facility to be renovated over the next year or two.
- MWRO helped Red Oak Animal Control resolve a complex nuisance problem involving 20 wolf hybrids living less than a mile from the city limits.
- Elkhorn is the latest town to resist the construction of a large-scale hog production facility within two miles of their downtown. Elkhorn is a tourist destination known for its Danish heritage. Many citizens are working for local control of hog farms.

Kansas

- Kansas Humane Society of Wichita expanded its HSUS Pet Life campaign to include pet behavior advice on its Web site as well as many new handouts available to the public, volunteers, and employees. In addition, the agency conducted a major capital campaign to fund a new facility.
- MWRO facilitated the passing of a law that bans cockfighting in Kansas, and a second bill that specifically outlawing the practice. What’s more, it is currently legal to keep and train birds for fighting or even attend a cockfight. All of these loopholes make arrests rare and convictions even less frequent.

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n the past February, MWRO and Wayside Waifs Humane Society joined together to bring nationally recognized dog trainer Sue Sternberg to Kansas City, Missouri. In her two-day seminar Ending Pet Relinquishment, Sternberg told of encounters with people who, at first, appeared to be irresponsible or negligent pet owners. Without judgement, Sternberg and her associates offered gifts such as training equipment, toys, spay/neuter assistance, and dog-houses. Within a short time, a relationship became established and communication began flowing. The relationship between the owners, their pets, and the shelter has improved.

Sternberg says, “Shelters should be proactive, not reactive. By bringing the animal shelter to the people, we can help pets and owners much earlier in the development of a pet problem.”

local animal shelter, and on the Internet.

We all must pursue a lifetime of learning. Identify learning opportunities that will enable you to do your humane work more effectively. Think of yourself as a teacher—one who can bring valuable messages to the public and in turn protect animals from pain and suffering. Together we are a dynamic team promoting a society in which the welfare of animals is protected on many fronts.

The MWRO Regional News is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States, Midwest Regional Office, 1515 Linden St., Ste. 220, Des Moines, IA 50309; 515-283-1393. Amy Suarez, director. The office is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is closed on federal holidays.

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