Walker County Raid Reveals Massive Cruelty

“[It was] the grossest thing I have ever seen in all my years with the USDA.” That’s how a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) veterinarian, Dr. Hugh Hendrix, described a dog dealer’s operation in northwest Georgia.

On January 26 representatives of the SERO and two local humane societies, state agriculture officials, local police officers, and Hendrix raided the property of Raymond David Cook and his father in Walker County. More than 150 dogs were on the 88-acre site. The animals, mostly hunting dogs, were apparently being fed only stale bread and the decaying carcases of deer, cattle, and pigs. Some dogs roamed free, but others were chained or penned in areas with no visible food or water. By the end of the day Cook had been charged with animal cruelty.

The horrific situation came to light soon after New Year’s Day. The Humane Society of Northwest Georgia received a complaint about the condition of Cook’s dogs. When members of the group visited the property with a sheriff’s detective, they were shocked. They immediately asked the SERO for help. “We had never worked a cruelty complaint involving that many animals before and hardly knew where to begin,” said the group’s past president, Linda Woodham.

According to SERO Program Coordinator Laura Bevan, difficulties quickly arose. “Although the sheriff’s department had helped the local group check out the complaint, it was less enthusiastic about filing charges or confiscating animals,” Bevan said. “It took a lot of talking to...continued on page 3

This seven-month-old puppy was confiscated during the Walker County raid. Its hind legs were so bowed as a result of malnutrition that it had to hop to move around.

HSUS Opposes Appointments To Commission

Members of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission are generally chosen from among the ranks of hunters. Because 97 percent of the state’s residents do not engage in the “sport” of hunting, the SERO is taking part in a campaign to give nonhunters a voice in deciding the future of Florida’s wildlife.

Over the years the commission’s duties expanded beyond the regulation of hunting and fishing to include the protection of nongame animals and their habitats. However, two recent appointments to the commission caused members of animal- and environmental-protection groups to fear that it was retreating from its responsibilities.

Those new appointees, Tampa attorney Joe Spicola, Jr., and Gainesville publisher James Rowe, are both hunters and are both thought to lack the kind of education and experience required to deal with environmental or biological issues. Two of Spicola’s first votes were to reject...continued on page 3

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The HSUS believes that wolf hybrids are unsuitable as pets and has recommended that their breeding and possession be banned. Following a severe attack on a young girl by a wolf hybrid, South Carolina animal-control facilities uncovered a major addition to the shelter. A new local shelter was hired, and funds have been allocated for a full-time cruelty investigator.

The legislation, sponsored by State Rep. Bubba Cromer of Richland County, would make it a misdemeanor to own a wolf hybrid. The penalty would be a jail term of up to six months, a fine of $1,000, or both. We are helping the South Carolina Animal Control Association with its campaign to gain the passage of the bill.

Wolf hybrids rarely conform to people’s expectations of pets. They can’t be housebroken; they frequently escape from their enclosures; and they are likely to destroy property and display predatory behavior even toward other animals as well as small children.

In the end, it is the wolf hybrid that suffers. When its own discomfort is untreatable, it cannot be controlled, it is dumped at a local shelter, which usually has little choice but to euthanize it.

In the past three years at least six human deaths were caused by wolf hybrids. According to Dr. Randall Lockwood, HSUS vice president of field services, people were attacked by wolf hybrids. "Wolves belong in the wild, not in a family’s backyard. Humans spent more than $2 billion in 2006 to control wolves. In two such appointments and the controversy that was the result appears elsewhere in this issue.

A state’s wildlife policies should reflect the concerns of all of its citizens. The preservation of wildlife is best entrusted to those who feel that animals can be appreciated without being killed.

Marc Paulhus

Wolf-Hybrid Ban Proposed for S.C.

Walker County Case

by Marc Paulhus

Hunters enjoy an extraordinary amount of influence over state wildlife agencies. Although they rarely exceed 5 percent of the population, they maintain a self-serving stranglehold on such agencies’ policies. Few wild animals benefit from that cozy relationship between state officials and a special-interest group. Indeed, most wild animals suffer because of it.

Wildlife agencies or fish and game commissions are charged with conserving a diverse group of species and their natural habitats. However, many such agencies expend overwhelming proportions of their budgets on programs designed solely to guarantee a “harvestable surplus” of game animals. The many wild mammals, birds, and reptiles that fall into the category of nongame species are virtually ignored, as are endangered and threatened species. Even the much-ballyhooed effort to save the Florida panther did not induce an end to deer hunting in key areas of its dwindling range. The big cats continue to dodge the guns of autumn to compete for a critical food supply.

There is a solution, however. Everyone who cares about the survival of wildlife and wild places should urge their state’s governor to sign a humane application to the game commission who were more "good ole boys" and hunting buddies.

As the month of August began, two such appointments and the controversy that was the result appears elsewhere in this issue.

A state’s wildlife policies should reflect the concerns of all of its citizens. The preservation of wildlife is best entrusted to those who feel that animals can be appreciated without being killed.

I’ve already written my letter. Your state’s governor needs to hear from you!

SEERO Director Marc Paulhus has advocated better appointments to the commission for years. According to Paulhus, “Commissioners have sometimes acted to ensure hunting opportunities for a tiny constituency even at the expense of adequately protecting endangered or threatened species. They have often demonstrated indifference or even hostility toward those who advocate biodiversity and wildlife preservation.”

The massive lobbying campaign mounted by the five groups succeeded in preventing Spicola’s confirmation. The SEERO will continue to urge Chiles to select appointees who will respect and protect all of Florida’s wildlife and respond to the concerns of all of its citizens, not just to those of a vocal minority.
RACE HORSES—For the second year in a row The HSUS successfully fought off attempts to weaken Florida’s prohibition of the prerace drugging of racehorses. Key legislators were contacted and urged not to pass amendments permitting track veterinarians to administer “therapeutic medications” to horses before a race.

Our position has always been that sick or injured horses require care and rest and should not be raced again until they have recovered or their injuries have healed. Had track lobbyists prevailed in their attempts to weaken the antidoping law, Florida would be the racing state with the most permissive drug policy.

We are also awaiting an administrative hearings officer’s decision on our challenge to an emergency rule enacted by the Florida Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering. The HSUS contended that the rule is illegal because it allows the prerace use of corticosteroids, powerful painkillers that enable horses to race despite their illnesses or injuries. We presented a strong case and are optimistic about the prospect of victory.

SANTERIA—Three incidents in Miami, Fla., have resulted in the first felony charges of animal cruelty to be filed against Santeria followers for sacrificing animals. A total of 26 people were arrested while participating in Santeria ceremonies. In the largest case, police officers were called to a residence by neighbors who thought they heard children screaming. When the officers arrived, they found goats being sacrificed. The Humane Society of Greater Miami assisted local law-enforcement agencies in the raids.

Reflect for a moment . . .

HOW CAN I HELP ANIMALS EVEN WHEN I NO LONGER SHARE THEIR WORLD?

By your bequest for animal protection to The Humane Society of the United States, your will can provide for animals after you’re gone. Naming The HSUS demonstrates your lasting commitment to animal welfare and strengthens the society for this task. We will be happy to send information about our animal programs and material that will assist you in planning a will.

Please send will information to:

Name ___________________________ _
Address __________________________ _
City ___________________________ State _______ Zip code _______ 

Mail in confidence to Murdaugh S. Madden, Vice President/Senior Counsel, The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

Easter Chicks Cause Woes

Some Mississippians saw red this Easter when promoters of a Biloxi arts and crafts festival announced plans to hand out 2,000 dyed baby chickens to children. The distribution of artificially colored or baby “Easter pets” is illegal in 24 states, but not in Mississippi.

The SERO worked with the Coast Coalition for Animals and the Environment to publicize the many pitfalls of giving day-old chicks to children. Often the tiny animals die as a result of rough handling or improper care. A child may be traumatized by the death of a chick or given the impression that animals are disposable toys.

Although we were unable to halt the giveaway, the promoters of the festival agreed to warn parents of the difficulties involved in raising chicks. Windup toys were offered to the children as alternative gifts.

In the end, our fears were borne out. Within days of the festival the local humane society began receiving calls from parents whose families no longer wanted their chicks or were upset because the animals had died. We hope that the tragic episode will encourage state and local legislators to enact laws banning such giveaways.

HSUS Animal Care Expo ’92 Scheduled

Plan now to travel to Las Vegas, Nev., February 2–5, 1992, to attend a one-of-a-kind expo for animal-sheltering, -care, and -control professionals. Sponsored by The HSUS, Animal Care Expo ’92 will feature seminars, demonstrations, and the latest in practical, contemporary, and humane equipment and services. Special emphasis will be given to environmentally friendly and energy-efficient products and supplies. Contact the SERO for more details.

The Regional Report is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States, Southeast Regional Office, 1624 Metropolitan Circle, Suite B, Tallahassee, FL 32308; (904) 386-3435. Marc Paulhus, Director. The Humane Society of the United States is a charitable, tax-exempt animal-protection organization with headquarters in Washington, D.C., regional offices, and an education center in Connecticut. © 1991 by The Humane Society of the United States. All rights reserved.