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Spring 2005

MARO Spring 2005

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Dogfighting Figure Convicted

Bob Stevens, of Pittsville, Virginia, was convicted in a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, courtroom for sending videos depicting animal cruelty across state lines, a federal offense. A jury deliberated less than an hour before rendering a guilty verdict against Stevens, who had been served with a search warrant in April 2003, the same date on which James Fricchione and Jack Kelly—publisher and former publisher, respectively, of “Sporting Dog Journal”—were also served in a well-coordinated effort by state and federal authorities in New York, Virginia, and Georgia.

The significance of the Stevens case continued on page 2.

This dog, seized in a dogfighting bust in Florida, has suffered the terrible wounds of battle.

NJ Supreme Court Stops Bear Hunt

The New Jersey Supreme Court voted unanimously to cancel the black bear hunt, scheduled for December 6–11, 2004, just four days before it was to begin. MARO’s Barbara Dyer said, “This is a victory not only for the bears, but for everyone who took action on their behalf!”

The relentless pressure by HSUS and its members, The Fund for Animals, other animal protection organizations, and the public forced Gov. James McGreevey and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bradley Campbell to stop the hunt. Campbell ordered the Division of Fish and Wildlife to withhold black bear hunting permits and closed all state land to black bear hunting. This was the first time that a DEP commissioner challenged the independent Fish and Game Council, whose members—save for Jack Schrier—all voted for the hunt.

In November, U.S. Sportsmen’s Alliance Foundation and the New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs joined two individuals to sue the DEP and the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, as well as the DEP commissioner and the Division director, for withholding bear hunting permits. Safari Club International and the Safari Club International Foundation also sued them separately for closing state land to bear hunting.

Deputy Attorney General Barbara Conklin argued both cases for the state. She contended that DEP did not have the resources to conduct a bear hunt that could guarantee public safety. She also argued that if a bear hunt was conducted, it would dominate DEP’s resources so as to preclude non-lethal bear management solutions such as education, enforcement of the feeding ban, and contraception research.

The appellate court ruled against the commissioner over the permits, but ruled in favor of the commissioner for closing all lands owned, managed, or controlled by the DEP to bear hunting, giving Campbell the ultimate authority to determine whether to open these lands to hunting. “The commissioner has established the parks, forests, and

West Virginia: Welcome to the Region!

As of February 1, 2005, West Virginia joined the states covered by HSUS’s Mid-Atlantic Regional Office. Our staff looks forward to working with animal advocates in the Mountain State. You can reach our office at 270 Rt. 206, Bartley Sq., Flanders, NJ 07836; 973-927-5611; www.hsus.org/maro.
injected a contraceptive vaccine to an anesthetized bear at HSUS’s Dr. Allen Rutberg (left) New Jersey. Wild Animal Safari Park in Jackson, New Jersey. Travelled to Six Flags Great Adventure of captive bears is the first step immunocontraception can play a role contraceptive vaccine to six female the treated bears may already have toward establishing whether American black bears. The treatment project is a cooperative effort delivered this spring, no information during the week of October 18, 2004, a team of HSUS scientists and technicians During the lawsuit to be held. HSUS would stand to reason that they be included animal shelters and pounds. With regard to the issue of proposed feral cat trap-neuter-release (TNR) programs, The HSUS believes that for any such program to be successful, it is critical that planning, infrastructure, and resources be in place before any action is taken. We believe that any recommendation of these programs should be strictly contingent on such an infrastructure. We would similarly advise that any such TNR programs be conducted on a trial basis to provide opportunities to evaluate and revise the system before large-scale operations are put in place. Task Force Findings Released After nearly two years of meetings and thousands of e-mails, the New Jersey Animal Welfare Task Force released its nearly 200-page report, which is available for download at www.state.nj.us/animalwelfaresetworkreport.pdf. Gov. James McGreevey created the task force to examine the current laws concerning animal abuse and neglect, animal population control, and animal welfare; examine the mechanisms in which the anti-cruelty laws are enforced; examine the status of population control and the animal shelter system in the state; and recommend changes to the laws and regulations to protect animals from inhumane treatment, improve the enforcement of anti-cruelty laws, and address the problem of unwanted and euthanized animals in the state. Because of the sudden departure of Gov. McGreevey, the report was released before the entire task force could meet one last time to discuss the final draft in its entirety. While much of the report will serve as a model for other states, The HSUS had some serious concerns that were expressed to the governor through his staff. A number of our suggestions were implemented, and it appears that virtually all were at least considered. A major omission in the report is the task force’s refusal to address minimum standards or oversight for animal rescue and foster agencies. Since these groups were endorsed in several areas of the report, it would stand to reason that they be included under the same umbrella of accountability as animal shelters and pounds. The HSUS salutes all who were involved in the Stevens case, from the Pennsylvania State Police, which did undercover work, to the U.S. attorneys who argued the case. Note: James Frichione, convicted in New York last year on numerous animal fighting-related crimes, has been indicted in Pennsylvania along with Jack Kelly for activities related to the promotion of animal fighting in “Sporting Dog Journal.” We will update our readers on the outcome of those cases when they are adjudicated. Your Help is Still Needed to Protect Bears The fish and Game Council will want another hunt for black bears in 2005. Watch for the 2005–2006 Game Code to be published in the “New Jersey Register” in May. There will most likely be a hearing in June. Updates will be sent to those of you who have signed up for our regional activist e-mail list. The ways to help bears are to: 1. Ask your state legislators to support these bills. ■ S. 700, sponsored by Sen. Joseph Vitale (D19), prohibits black bear hunting for five years, requires development of plan for bear population control, and appropriates $95,000 to develop a plan. ■ A. 2452, sponsored by Assemblyman Reed Gusciora (D15), prohibits black bear hunting until completion of a report submitted by Rutgers University and appropriates $95,000. To find out who represents you, call the New Jersey Office of Legislative Services at 1-800-792-8630, or go to www.njleg.state.nj.us/assembly/members/govsearch.asp. 2. Join our e-mail activist list. You will be notified when action is needed to help animals. To join, send an e-mail to maro@hsus.org giving your name, city, and state. 3. Contact acting Gov. Richard J. Codey. Let him know that you do not want a black bear hunt. Write, call, or e-mail the governor: F.O. Box 001, Trenton, New Jersey 08625; 609-292-6000; www.state.nj.us/gov/govmail.html. continued from “Bear Hunt,” page 1 recreation areas under the DEP’s jurisdiction as sanctuaries in which bears may not be hunted this season,” wrote the court. As the lawsuits were being argued, the U.S. Department of the Interior sent a letter to the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife threatening to withhold $2 million in federal aid to a New Jersey Wildlife Restoration program if a bear hunt was not held. HSUS brought this to the attention of Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg, who immediately responded with a strong letter to Interior Secretary Gale Norton, expressing his dismay over the threat and demanding that it be withdrawn. continued from “Dogfighting,” page 1 cannot be overemphasized, since it is the first time the constitutionality of a federal law enacted in 1999 has been challenged and upheld in court. The HSUS cooperated with the legal team from the U.S. Attorney’s Office by assisting with the legal defense of the law and gathering evidence on the effectiveness of the vaccine will be available until late fall. The project is a cooperative effort between The HSUS, Six Flags, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and the Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine.
Dog Behavior Training for NJ Police

Nationwide, there have been countless reported incidents of unnecessary police shootings of dogs on both private property and in public areas. Such incidents occur because law enforcement personnel in most places have no training in how to read dog behavior. So MARO was pleased to help develop a training video for police in Ocean County, New Jersey.

Heather Cammisa, executive director of the Jersey Shore Animal Center (JSAC), decided to take action after a family dog was fatally shot in Brick Township by a law enforcement authority who, according to the owners, mistakenly interpreted the dog’s friendly behavior as menacing. She called upon The HSUS, Career Training Institute, New Jersey Veterinary Medical Association, and New Jersey Certified Animal Control Officers to collaborate on developing a training video for police in Ocean County.

An existing documentary from In the Line of Duty fit the bill. Cammisa performed some editing, with input from MARO.

Ocean County Prosecutor Thomas Kelaher provided an introduction to the video, which will be shown in Ocean County police agencies. It would be desirable for such training to be mandatory and statewide. But until that happens, we hope that Ocean County’s lead may foster adoption of widespread, optional training in basic dog behavior recognition by police academies across the state and beyond.

Thanks to Disaster Responders

The HSUS is deeply grateful for the outstanding work of MARO’s volunteer Disaster Animal Response Team members who provided indispensable assistance during four successive hurricanes that devastated much of Florida last year: New Jersey’s Jim Osorio, Willie Cirone, and Bob Boyle; and New York’s Jeff Eyre and Jack Woods.

NYC Joins Seal Protest

On March 15, 2005, MARO Program Coordinator Barbara Dyer (center above) joined the International Day of Action Against the Canada Seal Hunt, which targets weeks-old baby seals, in a New York City protest. The demonstration was held in front of Canada’s Consulate General. Similar protests against the world’s largest slaughter of marine mammals were held in more than 50 cities in 22 countries. Help us protest the hunt by boycotting Canadian seafood; visit www.protectseals.org.

Porsche Helps Pooches

On March 24, 2005, MARO Program Coordinator Samantha Mullen joined the Porsche Cars North America campaign to assist animal shelters in finding loving homes for adoptable animals. The campaign, Cayenne for Canines, was launched at the International Auto Show held at the Javits Center in New York City. Animal Lovers League of Glen Cove, Long Island, was the regional shelter MARO recommended to partner with Porsche in this project. Other attendees were HSUS staff members Stephanie Shain and Sarah Comis, and comedienne Elayne Boosler. For the next six months, the shelter and others throughout the country will have the use of an SUV provided by Porsche. The company’s national dealerships will encourage the public to adopt “Certified Pre-Owned dogs.”
early in the afternoon of March 4, 2005, MARO received a call alerting us of a severe explosion at the PetCo store in Eatontown, New Jersey. The explosion was apparently caused when a construction crew member cut into an unmarked gas line. No employees or customers had been killed, but the fate of the store’s animals was unknown.

Upon contacting the Monmouth County SPCA, we learned that staff, volunteers, trucks, and rescue equipment from its shelter as well as from Associated Humane Societies had been immediately dispatched to the scene, as had veterinarian Karen Wiebers, M.D., chair of The HSUS’s board of directors.

Training Pays Off After PetCo Explosion

When a disaster strikes, who will be the heroes of the animals? This is the question posed on the cover of a brochure published by the Pennsylvania State Animal Response Team (PASART) and is the reason why this team was created through a private-public partnership to serve as a unifying network to support prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery when emergencies affecting animals occur. PASART builds County Animal Response Teams (CARTs) across the state. You can join your county’s team at www.pasart.org, or if it doesn’t exist, you can help establish one. The HSUS is proud to serve on the PASART board of directors, and we encourage Pennsylvania members to consider joining this worthy cause.

Pennsylvania and New York join an increasing number of states that are patterning their CARTs and SARTs on the model of South Carolina. New York’s SART is now in the formative stages. MARO is participating in planning meetings and has volunteered to serve on the steering committee of the New York SART, which will also operate as a public-private partnership embracing a broad spectrum of state agencies, private humane organizations and industries, and volunteer groups.

The explosion was severe enough to blow the roof off the store. The force of the blast caused a serious spill of toxic gas, creating a dangerous situation for the animals and staff. The cries of the animals could be heard by workers miles away. Local authorities evacuated the area and closed state routes from the effects of the blast. The local gas company furnished hazard control and rescue teams.

When the first responders arrived on the scene, they found the store in a state of complete disarray. The destruction was widespread, with aluminum and metal everywhere. The roof had collapsed, and the floor beneath the enclosures collapsed. Several of the quick response on the part of surrounding animal shelters, the surviving animals found safe haven until staff from nearby PetCo facilities in Edison and Old Bridge collected them. Ursula Goezt, executive director of Monmouth County SPCA, sent her staff and volunteers home at around 4:30 p.m., and the staff was allowed access to the store’s premises that day.

By Nina Astenberg
Director of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office

When I was a kid growing up in Brooklyn, children didn’t learn how to grow their own vegetables—the only plants we cared for were in window boxes. We certainly never saw farm animals, only alley cats and squirrels. Vegetables, meats and fruits came from the A&P, a meat market, or a local grocery store called Sloppy Louie’s. By the time they got to my family, these goods were wrapped in paper or plastic and didn’t remotely resemble the animals they came from. In those years, vegetables comprised the majority of the dinner plate. My mother would stretch out a pound of ground meat to feed the entire family, and eating out was a rarity.

How different things became when farm families became extinct and fast food chains began to crop up everywhere! Burgers were advertised by weight, featuring double patties and more and more meat. Fast food was quick, it was easy, and it was inexpensive. So like millions, we made these restaurants a part of our daily lives. This fast food revolution eventually generated a backlash. Gradually, activists such as Cleveland Amory made us aware of the cruelty associated with factory farming methods. I resolved to reduce my consumption of these products. Like many people, the first thing I did was give up veal. That was easy—my family never served veal when I was growing up. For one, we couldn’t afford it. But my father had grown up on a farm, and I later began to suspect that he might have other, ethical objectives to this food.

By the time I was married and had my own family, we were much more aware of the                                  issues of animal handling and slaughter. One of the first things I worked on under the leadership of Cleveland Amory was the humane slaughter bill. My son Lance gave up eating meat in junior high around the same time that one of his new teachers was required to be discussing sport hunting as part of the class curriculum. When that same teacher told parents at open school night that they shouldn’t object to sport hunting unless they were vegetarians, I decided to try to become a vegetarian. At first, I didn’t even tell my mother for fear that I wouldn’t succeed. I was also concerned about hurting my family, who—like so many—depended on meat as the centerpiece of holiday meals. As it turns out, I underestimated my family and my friends.

Within a few short years, my husband, Ken, became a vegan, and all of our children became vegetarians. Our family and friends made every picnic, wedding, or party one that included options for vegetarians. Of course, not everyone will embrace this lifestyle, but those who do can still enjoy some small pleasures in eating can make a huge difference. Meat, dairy, and produce can be purchased from natural growers who utilize organic farming techniques and allow animals to range freely.

Every meal offers you an opportunity to improve conditions for the billions of animals in this industry. And if you slip, don’t beat yourself up—just try again. And remind yourself to be just as considerate of those who don’t share your lifestyle. After all, being humane means demonstrating kindness toward animals and each other.