Vermont Farm Raided; Animals Confiscated

On the evening of February 1, 1990, the Merry-All Farm for Animals, Inc., in Hartland, Vt., was raided by authorities from the State Police, Vermont Federation of Humane Societies, Vermont Volunteer Services for Animals, Lucy McKensie Humane Society, and local veterinarians. Officials found animals in dark, dimly lit, overcrowded conditions, covered with feces and urine. Many were in small cages or tied to walls with short chains. Dogs were also found in cubby holes beneath the floor in a farmhouse and a barn. In all, 93 dogs, 13 horses, 3 cows, and various pigs, goats, and other farm animals were rescued from the property. The animals were distributed to shelters throughout the state and are currently awaiting final disposition.

Dorothy and Raymond Thompson, owners of the Merry-All Farm, were cited for cruelty to animals. Merry-All Farm has been in existence since the early 1980s. For the past three years, the farm has been under pressure from humane officials and the Vermont Department of Agriculture. In April 1988, NERO Investigator Frank Ribaudo participated in an announced inspection with the Department of Agriculture to view the premises and observe conditions. It was obvious that the Thompsons made ardent attempts to prepare for the inspection, but even with prior notice, dogs were in crowded kennels or chained to walls with two-foot chains.

For three years, Merry-All Farm has been continued on page 2

This dog, chained inside a Volkswagen bug, was only one of the 93 dogs and other livestock confiscated from the Merry-All Farm last February.

N.H. Horses Returned from Connecticut

Responding to a call from Cocheeco Valley Humane Society Director Barbara Carr, Frank Ribaudo traveled on November 19 to the Amfran Packing (horse slaughter) Plant in Plainfield, Conn., to save five standardbred horses that had erroneously been put up for sale at a private auction in Northwood, N.H.

Fifty-eight horses from the bankrupt estate of a large New Hampshire standardbred and quarterhorse stable were sold earlier that week on the auction block. Some of the horses were owned by the estate, the rest had been boarded by private parties, but all were put up for sale. All registration papers had been lost mysteriously in a fire, cutting the sale and potential breeding value of the animals and attracting bargain hunters.

Nine horses had been selected for adoption to private homes through private funding. Four were transported the day of the auction; the other five were to be shipped at a later date. However, these five standard-

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In violation of many provisions of the Vermont Animal Welfare Standards as enforced by the Department of Agriculture, state officials have been greatly criticized by humane authorities for their lackluster attempt to correct the many problems on the Thompson's farm.

Sue Skaskiw, of the Vermont Volunteer Services for Animals, has been the constant driving force keeping this case alive. Joe Silva, director of the Bennington County Humane Society, was instrumental in organizing the raid and coordinating the rescue and placement of the animals with shelters throughout the state.

The fate of Merry-All Farm and its animals will be determined in the upcoming trial. However, NERO was recently informed that the Thompsons have already collected more animals. They may have as many as 50 new animals in their possession. NERO continues to monitor this case.

**Effective Networking Catches Florida Animal-Cruelty Fugitive**

In November 1990, Cruelty Investigator John Barbeau of the Humane Society of Seminole County, Fla., contacted NERO regarding the whereabouts of J. P. Barbeau. Barbeau had pleaded no contest in a Florida Seminole County, Fla., court last fall to several counts of animal cruelty and was fined $750 and put on a one-year probation. He violated his probation agreement by leaving the state shortly thereafter, and Investigator Woodard had reason to believe that he could be found in Connecticut.

NERO issued a bulletin to humane and animal-control agencies throughout Connecticut describing the situation and requesting assistance in locating the fugitive. In March 1990, the Connecticut Canine Control Division pinpointed Barbeau's location and contacted us. We were pleased to provide Florida officials with the information.

This shows, once again, how effective networking can be. When humane societies, animal-control agencies, and animal-protection organizations work together, there is so much that we can accomplish.

**NERO Teaches Animal Issues on Campus**

NERO has had a busy winter and spring responding to requests from the public for information about endangered-species and animal-protection issues.

Frank Ribaudo conducted several courses at area schools and universities, covering many of the issues that fall under the heading "animal protection." Large audiences of college students were drawn to his course at Southern Connecticut State University, March 21, entitled "Animals Rights," and to his Hartford University program, March 29, entitled "Endangered Species: Do Animals Have Rights?"

"One of the knots I have to frequently untangle is an air of confusion the media often creates on animal rights," Ribaudo said.

"Many students think that you are either for them or against them. "If I don't make any other point in my presentations, I want the students to realize that they need to merit each issue individually and then make up their minds on how much they can endorse that concept. It's not whether you want to protect animals or not, but to what degree." In addition to his course at Southern Connecticut State University, Ribaudo also taught a course at Old Saybrook High School, about endangered species.

**NERO Opens New Building at Norma Terris Center**

For the past 12 years, NERO and the National Association for Humane and Environmental Education (NAHEE) have been housed under one roof at the Norma Terris Humane and Education Center in East Haddam, Conn. With the expanding activities and staff size of both organizations, more space was needed. A prefabricated, modular building was approved, to be erected 100 yards from the center, keeping with the concept of a regional humane complex. On March 26 we opened our new doors. At times, it seemed this dream would never happen," said Frank Ribaudo, program coordinator and interim director. The unfortunate resignation of former director John Donners came at the worst possible time. Animal suffering does not recognize building projects or moving problems. I'm just very pleased that this office has finally reached the level where animal-protection issues can once again be given our full attention.

You are welcome to visit the new regional office during our office hours, Monday through Friday, 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

**NERO invites you to come visit its offices in the new building at the Norma Terris Humane Education Center.**

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**HSUS Investigators Training Video Soon to Be Released**

For the past year, The HSUS has been working on a basic investigation-training video, which will be directed at animal-control and humane-society officers. The video's objective is to teach agents fundamental skills associated with cruelty investigations and animal-protection issues. It will serve as a step toward the additional and more formalized training necessary for today's officers.

The New England office coordinated field-footage shootings with Connecticut Video Productions, based in Old Saybrook, Conn., during the winter and spring months. The HSUS and NERO would like to extend special thanks to the Connecticut Canine Control Division, Municipal Canine Control Officers Association, The Rhode Island Animal Control Association, the Cranston, R.I., Town Hall employers, and many others for their help in the production of this educational tool. The video will be made available through the HSUS headquarter and regional offices, possibly as soon as this summer.

**The more things change, the more they stay the same.**

For the first time in over 12 years, a different hand is penning this column. John Donners resigned as regional director last fall and is now doing environmental consulting work in San Diego, Ca.

John dedicated 17 years to animal-protection issues with The HSUS. He was first hired as NAHEE director in 1973 and became NERO director in 1978. John was roysted by his peers at a private reception during the HSUS Fall Annual Conference last October. Patrick B. Parkes, vice president for field services, commented, "He (John) has been totally dedicated and unusually effective in whatever he has done...and a tireless worker on behalf of suffering animals."

John would speak softly and carry a big stick for the animals. He was a good teacher during my four-year working relationship with him. Probably the most important lesson he taught was to search for a level of common ground with your fellow human. "As difficult a task as this might seem, nothing can be sensibly accomplished if you don't sit across from each other at the same table," John would say. On some issues this may seem impossible, and yes, indeed, it might be difficult. But I have always attempted. With this lesson learned, I will continue to use it to combat pain and suffering for all our animals. Thanks John.

On a different note, the New England office now has a brand new look. We've just moved, the paint is still wet, but we welcome everyone to visit our prefabricated, modular building and to meet our new secretary, Sandra Tyron. A local Connecticut native, Sandra replaced Barbara Hoven last fall. Humane and animal-protection issues have always been a part of Sandra's own personal lifestyle. As NERO's secretary, her work makes her directly involved in affirmative action activities on our issues. As this issue of the newsletter shows, we have been very busy tackling all forms of animal-protection issues and abuses, and we will maintain the level of dedication and services you have been accustomed to receiving for the past 12 years. Yes, the past 12 years, things change, the more they will stay the same.

Frank Ribaudo visits students at Cohani­zie Middle School in Waterford, Conn., about endangered species.
breds mistakenly came up on the auction block and finally found themselves at the packing plant in Connecticut.

On the morning of Sunday, the 19th, Ribaudo enlisted the cooperation of the Amfran plant foreman, and they located the horses and arranged for their board until transportation was available to return them to New Hampshire. The horses are scheduled to be part of a 4-H project to help teach children the proper care for horses.

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The Humane Society of the United States
New England Regional Office
Norma Terris Center
PO Box 362
East Haddam, CT 06423
(203) 434-1940

NERO serves the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The office operates Monday through Friday from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

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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’ve 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 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.